

## Basingstoke District Association of Parish & Town Councils

Meeting & AGM - 29 September 2022

### Rural England Prosperity Fund

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[Slide deck](#)

Daniel introduced that he was going to spend time to give an overview of the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund & test some initial ideas with the audience

#### Rural England Prosperity Fund

##### Slide 2 - Overview

- Part of the Government's Levelling Up Agenda focused on reducing inequalities and tackling deprivation across the country
- Complements the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with a specific focus on addressing challenges faced by rural areas
- Rural areas classified as towns and villages with less than 10,000 inhabitants and the wider countryside, and market or hub towns with populations of up to 30,000 that serve surrounding rural areas (Eg – Basingstoke would not qualify as inhabitants are way over the maximum numbers, however Whitchurch & Overton etc would qualify).
- Capital funding only (no revenue funding) over two years in 2023/24 and 2024/25
- Most places with large rural economies in England have received an allocation.
- Based on a very complicated formula - BDBC to receive an allocation of £439,000 with 25% in 2023/24 and 75% in 2024/25

##### Slide 3 - Investment Priorities

The fund focusses on 2 investment priorities -

- **Community and Place:**
  - Supporting new and improved community infrastructure providing essential services and assets to local people (eg community facility like a village hall, park etc)
- **Supporting Local Businesses:**
  - Support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will benefit the wider economy

#### **Slide 4 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

- BDBC allocated £1M over 2022/23 to 2024/25 period
- Council will use funds to develop grant schemes for
  - Community-led interventions aimed at responding to community needs
  - Business grants to support apprenticeships and training
  - Services aimed at supporting people facing barriers to employment (in 2024/25)
- Grants are open to all parts of the borough
- Funding is mostly revenue
- Once the council's investment plan has been approved by Government, new schemes will be launched
- Funding will be split over the 3 years – with the bulk of the funding available in 2024/25

#### **Slide 5 - Proposed approach**

- REPF will be used to set up grant schemes to support rural communities & businesses in rural areas
- Limited funding so will need to prioritise as £439k over 2 years isn't a massive amount in real terms.
- Engagement with Partners to test ideas / proposals hence why talking to Parish & Town Councils

#### **Slide 6 - Community and Place**

- Focus on community infrastructure – Capital only – to improve resident and visitor experience.
- Looking to set up grant funding to support (initial ideas):
  - improvements to village and town centres
  - enhancements to green spaces to support biodiversity and sustainability
  - improvements to the public realm and community facilities.

#### **Slide 7 - Supporting local businesses**

- Two areas of focus
  - Low carbon and sustainability
  - Tourism and visitor economy (most of strong attractions are based in rural part of Basingstoke and Deane district)
- Funding to support businesses with
  - Reducing carbon emissions and impact on the Environment
  - Improvements and diversification of visitor infrastructure.

#### **Slide 8 - Next Steps**

- Further engagement with local partners
- Development of investment plan to be submitted to Government by 30 November 2022
- Approval of plans expected by January 2023
- Schemes expected to be launched in April 2023.

#### **Questions**

##### **What sort of size of project are you looking for?**

- Want to make the funding go as far as it can.

- Capital projects can sometimes take longer to get off the ground than revenue projects (as they may need planning permission, for example).
- There may be a 2 tier approach of smaller grants being issued in year 1 with larger grants in year 2 giving more lead time for applicants to prepare their projects.

Cllr Jenny Vaux stated that if the threshold is set too low it might mean that actually we can't help sufficient projects because they would need a lot more money and would need to find multiple sources of income. If we make the grants or parameters too large then we can only help a limited number of projects. She wanted Parishes & Town Councils to be thoughtful on this dynamic and to send through any thoughts / suggestions.

Su Turner – one of the Parishes she looks after as Clerk & RFO has taken out a lease on a chalk farm where they were looking to do some improvement projects. She wanted to know whether that would come under 'infrastructure' and could it be considered under the schemes?

Daniel responded that technically it should give that it was improving the wider public realm and green spaces. He also suggested that there might also be a possibility of combining two types of grants for the different aspects of the project.

Tray from Whitchurch questioned whether the Whitchurch Conservation group had been in contact to which Daniel responded that there had been several conversations & email exchanges already.

Peter from Old Basing & Lychpit raised a question on whether the funding was secure given the turmoil at national level with the current government and whether it could be impacted by any environmental aspect changes to government policy.

Daniel responded that as it was part of previous budget rounds as part of the levelling up agenda, then it should not be impacted in terms of policy.

Daniel closed off this part of the meeting by requesting members to get in contact with him with any further questions or to discuss any proposals for the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund.