

Appointments and Staffing Committee

Tuesday, 13 September 2022

Report of the Assistant Director - Growth & Regeneration

Shared Prosperity Resource

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To agree a new post associated solely with the day to day delivery of the UK shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) allocation to Tamworth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Approves the creation of the following post:
 - Shared Prosperity Officer – Grade G – Up to the end of March 2025
2. Authorises the Head of Paid Service to implement the changes.

Executive Summary

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is part of the wider Levelling Up agenda and aims to deliver significant support for all areas of the UK. It seeks to invest in domestic priorities and targeting funding where it is most needed. The primary focus of SPF is on the following high level objectives:

- Building pride in place
- Supporting high quality skills training
- Supporting pay, employment and productivity growth
- Increasing life changes.

The SPF is defined in Government terms as a structural fund and therefore, is seen as a replacement for European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF), which primarily came in two forms – ESF (European Social Funds – people and skills) and ERDF – European regional Development fund – business and place).

Tamworth Borough Council (The Council) has been defined as a lead authority and will be directly accountable for setting up the fund framework; commissioning and awarding projects; ensuring programme delivery; ensuring spend is on target and conducting monitoring and evaluation of the whole programme.

The Council will receive a direct allocation of **£2,328,244** to deliver the programme over three financial years over, starting from April 2022, up until the end of March 2025.

SPF is primarily a revenue fund with limited ability to spend capital. In order to secure these funds, the Council had to produce a high-level investment plan, which was submitted at the end of July. The Council will be notified in October 2022 if the submitted investment plan has been approved and can commence spend.

The Council must allocate funding both in collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders and manage this through a local partnership group. This means that the Council cannot make decisions in isolation or based solely on its own needs. It also means that Council based projects / interventions submitted to the local partnership group are not guaranteed to be successful.

Additional resource is essential to ensure that all relevant processes to meet the requirements of the new fund can be met and that the funding can be best allocated to achieve the most impact locally.

Options Considered

1. Use existing officer resources

Capacity across the organisation, with regards the skills and experience needed to deliver SPF, is highly limited. Options have been explored based on current skills within the Community partnerships and Economic Development teams, however due to the fund timescales, its complexity and amount of funding to disperse, using officers from existing services would mean other planned activity would have to completely stop. Capacity within these existing teams is can only deliver current planned activity, and therefore it is not possible to deliver SPF in addition.

2. Appoint external consultancy support

An external organisation could be appointed to support the day to day operations of the programme, however the budget allocated by government, currently 4% of fund allocation (c£93,100) is very limited and would not stretch very far, with current commercial day rates. Additionally the delivery of the fund requires relationships to be built with internal departments and external stakeholders, with a strong understanding of council processes particularly around monitoring, audit, finance and procurement. An externally appointed organisation is unlikely to be able to meet these needs to the quality expected.

3. Appoint an interim temporary officer

Similar to the above, appointing an interim member of staff through an agency would be slightly cheaper than appointing an external agency, but not considerably so, as day rates for experienced officers have increased considerably in the last few years, based on growing market demand. The Council would not be able to afford an interim officer on a full time basis, more likely up to 3 days a week. Whilst this could be mitigated, dependent upon the quality of the person hired, the delivery of SPF requires at least 4 days a week, especially in the short term. This option has not been dismissed and should be seen as a backstop, if recruitment under the proposed route is not successful.

4. Create a new role on the establishment

A new role could be added to the establishment focusing purely on SPF. Whilst the current round of SPF is only until March 2025, Government, have currently indicated there will a total of 6 years of funding across two rounds. Based on current circumstances this could change, however, having an internal resource in place, who by March 2025 will have a strong understanding of SPF would be a considerable benefit, if SPF is indeed extended as planned. The requirements of the role also add considerable skills and experience to the Council in terms of future sustainability and succession planning. The role requires in depth engagement with stakeholders, a strong grasp of procurement and commissioning and the ability to monitor, evaluate and review funded projects with the ability to apply for more funding. Based on the current Government approach, more and more funding is being devolved to local authorities, therefore the retention of these skills within the Council will be vital to support future delivery opportunities.

Proposal

Based on the options appraisal above it is therefore proposed to create a role new to the establishment of Shared Prosperity Officer.

This role will be initially offered as a full time post up until the end of March 2025, with flexibility being given for the right candidate to work no less than 4 days, (29.6 hours).

This role has been job evaluated at grade G and will be funded through a top slice from the overall allocation from Government, see the resource implications section for more details.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration (HEDR) is the lead officer for UKSPF for the Council and will be the line manager of the post.

The role will focus on the following key activity:

- Organising and managing all aspects of the SPF Governance board
- Commissioning and procuring contracts in order to deliver the local objectives of Tamworth SPF investment plan.
- Monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on all aspects of performance to multiple audiences, including Councillors, committees, stakeholders and Government.
- Manage all contracts put in place to deliver SPF.

Resource Implications

The costs for the officer based upon a start date of December are as follows:

Shared Prosperity Officer					
37 hours	Salary		28 months temporary		Total
SCP – 29 (G)			On costs		
2022/23 - 4 months	£	11,441	£	3,060	£ 14,501
2023/24	£	36,113	£	9,660	£ 45,773
2024/2025	£	38,052	£	10,179	£ 48,231
TOTAL	£	85,606	£	22,900	£ 108,506

The Council is currently allowed to use 4% of the overall allocation towards administering the delivery of the fund. As part of the process to complete the SPF investment plan, the Council was allowed to make a proposal for more money if a case could be made. A strong case was proposed for the admin fee to be raised to 5.5% for Tamworth. The Council will not know the outcome of this decision until sometime in October.

The top slice for administering the fund will look as following, dependent upon what is agreed by government.

- 4% topslice (current government guidelines) = £93,129.76
- 5.5% topslice (proposed amount by TBC) = £128,053.42

If the Council only receives a topslice of 4%, then the role will be advertised at 4 days a week. This will reduce the total officer salary and on costs to approximately £86,804, leaving a balance of c £6325 to cover any other expenses.

If the Council is able to recruit someone who is able to start slightly earlier than the estimated start date of 1st December, there is enough budget available, in both top slice scenarios to fund this change.

As the role is only up to March 2025 there is a potential liability for redundancy if the role is not extended at the end of the contract. This is estimated to cost a c. £2000, dependent upon on the age of the individual appointed. Costs can be met from both top slice scenarios.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

There are the following risks to the proposal:

1. The council only receives the statutory top slice of 4% for administration fees.

In this case, the role will only be advertised for 4 days a week, to ensure costs meet proposed budgets.

2. A suitable candidate is not recruited in the required time period.

Due to the timescales of the fund, immediate spend is required by the end of March 2023, as such an officer is required as soon as possible from October to support day to day delivery. It is proposed that the recruitment process will be started at risk before Government approval of the investment plan, sometime in October, with official appointment only after notification has been received. The Council knows it will receive at least 4% top slice, so risk is limited on this basis.

If this process is not successful, approval will be sought to appoint an interim officer through an agency to meet immediate need for the first 12 months, then review resource requirements for future delivery.

Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications arising from the addition of this new role.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising from the addition of this new role.

Background Information

None – see executive summary and appendices.

Report Author

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List of Background Papers

None – see appendices

Appendices

Appendix One – Shared Prosperity Officer Job Profile

Appendix Two - UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Cabinet July 21st 2022.