

Report title	Shared Prosperity Fund Update
Report author	Paul Hadfield, Economic Development Manager
Department	Planning, Economy, and Built Environment
Exempt?	No

Purpose of report:

To resolve and for information.

Synopsis of report:

- 1. To provide an update on the development of the Runnymede Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Investment Plan.**
- 2. To seek approval for amendments to one project area to provide wider public realm benefits for a wider range of areas as set out in section 2 of this report.**

Recommendation(s):

- To note the progress on the delivery of the SPF Investment plan as detailed in section 2 and 3 of the report**
- To review and approve the projects to refocus an element of the money previously allocated to improve the public realm in Guildford Street in Chertsey to provide wider public realm benefits. The proposed alternate projects are detailed in the table in section 2 of this report.**
- To provide the ACE (Place) with delegated authority to make adjustments as necessary to amounts allocated to projects (set out in section 2 of this report) to ensure that money is effectively utilised by the cutoff date. Such delegated authority to be exercised in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of CMC.**

1. Context and background of report

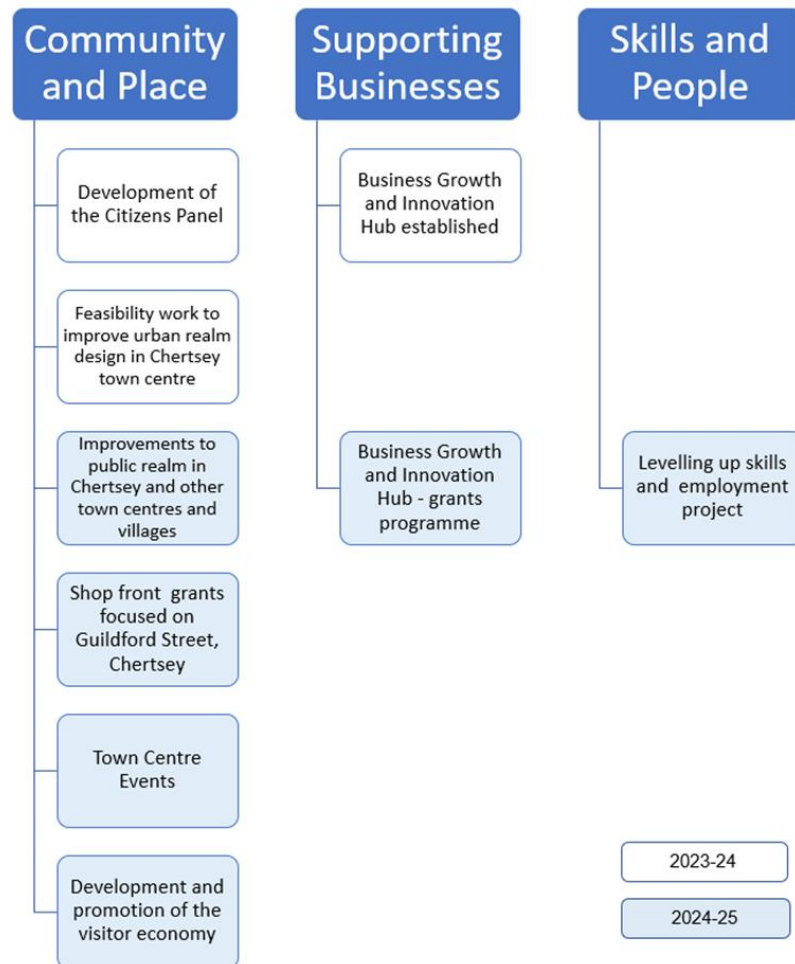
- 1.1 The Council's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Investment Plan was approved by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 11 January 2023.
- 1.2 An MOU between DLUHC and Runnymede Borough Council sets out the terms of the agreement for the delivery of the SPF programme in the borough. It states that SPF funding should be used to deliver the interventions, outputs and outcomes detailed in the Investment Plan.
- 1.3 The SPF is the key Government funding stream which supports levelling up. The primary goal of the SPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. There are three UKSPF investment priorities:
 - Communities and place.

- Supporting local business.
- People and skills.

1.4 The £1M budget for the investment plan is spread between April 2023 and March 2025. Over £916,000 (91%) of funding is allocated to 2024/25.

	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Revenue	£73,756	£732,950	£806,706
Capital	10,057	183,237	193,294
Total	£83,813	£916,187	£1,000,000

1.5 The following provides a summary of the objectives and scheduling of activity over the two years for each of the three SPF priorities in the Runnymede Investment Plan.



2 Amended use of part of funding

2.1 The Council is approaching March 2025 which is the cutoff date that the SPF funding must be spent by, as such if any proposals are no longer deliverable or no longer appear a sound investment then the Council should act swiftly to ensure that alternate schemes can be brought forward to minimise the risk that the funding is lost and to maximise the opportunity to improve our public realm.

- 2.2 A currently included project that has raised such concerns is the proposed new seating/planter scheme on Guildford Street. The concerns with regards this item relate to revenue cost, maintenance and climate change impacts.
- 2.3 With regards ongoing revenue costs for the currently approved scheme, these are estimated to be between £6,000 and £10,000 per annum for watering and maintenance, over 15-20 years this adds up to a significant sum and there is always the risk of inflation of these maintenance costs over time. In light of the wider financial climate this is not considered to be a particularly good use of revenue at this time, and that the costs would outweigh the benefits of the scheme. It is also considered that future increased maintenance costs could threaten the future attractiveness of the scheme if the Council is unable to prioritise maintenance spending in the future, which could leave the scheme looking worse in the future than the current streetscene if it is not able to be properly maintained. Additionally, whether or not the Council wishes to deliver a scheme that will involve a programme of transporting water to the site by motor vehicle, is a further concern as this is not particularly sustainable and conflicts with the Council’s Climate Change objectives.
- 2.4 As a result of the climate change and budgetary concerns, it is recommended that alternative projects be considered which would also deliver public realm benefits. This investment would focus primarily on improvements to the Chertsey, Egham and Addlestone town centres and would deliver items which required a minimum amount of maintenance costs but enhance the quality of place. These projects accord with the original objectives of this money in that they deliver public realm improvements and better places.
- 2.5 The proposed amendments set out below will provide improvement to more areas of the borough than previously approved. Guildford Street will still benefit from improvement via these amendments as some of its street furniture will be replaced, and it should be noted that Guildford Street has already received significant investment through another part of the SPF Programme. One of the main fund areas is for the improvement of shopfronts on Guildford Street, which should significantly improve the character of the area and the conservation area.
- 2.6 The total grant funding available for these alternative projects is between £205,000 - £231,000. The following projects which officers recommend could be developed as part of Runnymede’s SPF Priority 1 Communities and Place. The grant funding needs to be defrayed by the end of March 2025. The following table RAG rates the plausibility of delivering the projects within this tight timetable.
- 2.7 The grant funder has indicated that the proposed changes would be acceptable. However, they would require formal approval from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.
- 2.8 A report was submitted to DLUHC on 1 May on progress on the delivery of Runnymede’s SPF Investment Plan. All delivery outputs, outcomes and financial targets for 2023/24 were met.

Town Centre Projects	Details	Cost	Plausibility
Bins*	Replacement bins in the main town centres. In the region of 46 in total.	£40,000	

New benches in the 3 town centres*	In the region of 34 new/replacement benches in total (25 Egham, 6 Chertsey, 3 Addlestone). NB we would not be replacing the stainless-steel benches in Addlestone. In Egham the project would deliver the recommendations from an audit of bench usage undertaken in the town centre in summer 2024. The benches and bins will be black in line with the unification of street furniture across the borough.	£74,000	
Egham Statue & Magna Carta Shield	Cleaning of the Statue in Egham and painting of Magna Carta Shields in the footway.	£2,000	
Restoring flower beds/ planters*	800 sqm of flower beds/ planters in the 3 town centres will be restored. Addlestone 200sqm, Egham 300sqm, Chertsey 300sqm. The project would utilise low maintenance perennials which will have a 2/3 year life span. Will need to check ownership if flower beds / planters are on RBC or Surrey owned land. Some ongoing maintenance costs.	Any remaining not spent on the other projects amount up to £40,000	
Play Areas			
Pooley Green* Recreation Ground	Replacement of Junior Play Area at Pooley Green Recreation Ground. The existing wooden posts are rotting, and the play area needs to be replaced. Consequently, this is the priority project for investing in play areas.	£75,000	
Total Cost		£231,000	

2.9 Project costs can be reduced or increased according to the scale of activity and quotes provided in order to secure best value. Delegations to the ACE (Place) are recommended so that the Council can react to circumstances as required, limiting the risk of losing this funding and get the best value for the investment.

3 Update on the rest of the SPF programme

3.1 An update on the development of the SPF programme was last provided to CMC in April 2024.

3.2 A report was submitted to DLUHC on 1 May on progress on the delivery of Runnymede's SPF Investment Plan. All delivery outputs, outcomes and financial targets for 2023/24 were met.

3.3 The Council received the full allocation for 2024/25 of £916,187 on 17 May 2024.

3.4 The following provides an update on progress up to 1 September 2024 for the three investment priorities.

Priority 1 Communities and place

3.5 The objectives for the Communities and Place priority are to level up Runnymede residents' pride in their places through improvements to the urban environment, a stronger social fabric and better life chances. Building on our £160 million investment into Addlestone and Egham town centres, our next place shaping objective is to deliver improvements to Chertsey Town Centre – our third major town. Chertsey has therefore been the main focus for the SPF investment in Community and Place. This funding will enable the council to take some initial steps to improve the town centre environment. At this stage, however there can be no further commitment for regeneration in Chertsey until we are clearer on the council's capital position.

Priority 1 Communities and place		
Project	Progress to date	Budget
<p>Citizens Panel Set up a Citizens' Panel, made up of representatives from across our resident and business communities to enable Runnymede Borough Council to conduct both qualitative and quantitative market research and to reach all segments of the community, combining social media with face-to-face panels or paper-based questionnaires.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMC approval of approach for the in-house delivery of the project. July 2024 • Recruitment of residents to the Panel. January 2025 • Consultations underway on i) How residents want to engage and communicate with Runnymede Borough Council ii) What residents consider to be key priorities March 2025 	£10,000
<p>Levelling Up town centres and villages through retail and tourism Deliver improvements which will build pride in Chertsey Town Centre's heritage and identity and improve the vibrancy and vitality of the town. We will transform Guildford Street into a central community, social, cultural and entertainment hub, encouraging pedestrians, improving safety, air quality, health, and wellbeing to increase footfall and dwell time through investment in the historic environment and urban realm. The Communities and Place SPF programme will include the following:</p>	<p>Improvements to Wayfinding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on improvements to Wayfinding for the 3 town centres completed. April 2024 • Presentation to Chertsey ward councillors and stakeholders on final design plans for wayfinding and interpretation boards in Chertsey. July 2024 • Design, build and installation of new wayfinding and interpretation boards March 2025 	£119,000

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved wayfinding and interpretation, planting, new street furniture. • improved accessibility through installation of bollards to enable pedestrianisation, and active travel improvements. • investment in the improvement of shop fronts • the establishment and development of innovative markets and arts, heritage and cultural events. 		
	<p>Investment in the improvement of shop fronts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide for improving shop fronts on Guildford Street completed. March 2024 • Launch of Shop Front Grant scheme. Businesses apply for grants of up to £20,000. April 2024 • 11 grant offer agreements signed with businesses for £113,000. August 2024 • All works to be completed by 1st January 2025. 	£165,000
	<p>Town Centre public realm maintenance and repairs in Chertsey and Egham (£80,300)</p> <p>Painting and repairs of bollards, railing etc. Works completed March 2025</p> <p>Improvements to Guildford Street (£290,700) Feasibility study for improvement of public realm, including public consultation on design concepts with businesses, councillors, stakeholders and residents completed March 2024</p>	£371,000

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of design and concepts July 2024 • Build and installation of planters/seating by March 2025 <p><i>The above element of this work are the projects discussed in section 2 of this report that are to be refocused. It is proposed to replace this element with wider more sustainable public realm improvements as detailed in section 2. These will benefit Chertsey, Addlestone and Egham.</i></p> <p><i>Other work for the benefit of Chertsey such as the wayfinding project and shop front improvements are to go ahead as originally planned.</i></p>	
	<p>Support to develop the tourism and visitor economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the size and characteristics of the visitor economy completed. March 2024 • Engagement with businesses and stakeholders and establishment of tourism and visitor economy stakeholder working group January 2025. 	£15,000
	<p>Town Centre Events. A calendar of events in the three main Town Centres are being developed for 2024/25. £10,000 is allocated per town. The following events and activities are being developed with town centre businesses</p>	£30,000

	<p>through the meetings with businesses and stakeholders.</p> <p>Addlestone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Fun Day-Victory Park (summer) (£7,000) • Christmas Market & entertainment (£3,000) <p>Chertsey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisan Market and support for the Goose Fayre (£5,000) • May Day Event (£5,000) <p>Egham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food festivals & events in the town centre • Attracting visitors to the town by improving and beautifying the town and its heritage assets. 	
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Priority 2 Supporting Business

- 3.6 The Runnymede Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026 identified an opportunity to accelerate business growth by focusing support to help scale up new, small and micro businesses, increase innovation, and support growth clusters in the tech sector, ie Cyber Security and Createch.
- 3.7 Runnymede Business Boost was launched on 1st November 2023. It targets small and micro businesses based in Runnymede, which have been trading for one year, or have become incorporated. The service is delivered by Coast to Capital who provide business coaching, peer to peer support and access to small grants which unlock growth potential.
- 3.8 The service is not aimed at businesses which are lifestyle businesses and that do not have potential to grow, or businesses which are struggling and are at risk of closing. These businesses will be signposted to other advice and information services.

Priority 2 Supporting Business		
Project	Progress to date	Budget
A Business Growth and Innovation Hub will be established to help entrepreneurs, business start-ups and small micro businesses to scale up. The hub will provide specialist advice, coaching and mentoring particularly for cybersecurity, creative/immersive technologies, and low carbon	<p>Runnymede Business Boost has made established in Royal Holloway University of London`s Enterprise Hub. Since 1st November 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 203 businesses have received advice 	£202,000

<p>businesses. It will assist businesses with expert development of growth plans.</p> <p>A grants programme will provide grants of up to £15,000 to business to support innovation and growth. Grants will be targeted at small and micro businesses based in Runnymede, which have been trading for one year, or have become incorporated. The grants programme will incorporate business support which will ensure that businesses are viable and have business growth plans in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 businesses have received in depth mentoring and coaching, • 4 peer to peer networking events have been completed. • Grant funding of £22,319 has been awarded to support the growth of 6 businesses. • 43 full grant applications (62% of expressions of interest) have been received for round 2 of the grants programme totalling £367,122 in grant funding. The Grants Panel will meet in October to assess grant applications. A total of £99,681 of grant funding is available. • A series of 3 workshops with Royal Holloway University of London will begin in September 2024 focusing on supporting innovation and growth. 	
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Priority 3: People and Skills

3.9 The Runnymede Economic Development Strategy 2022 to 2026 includes the priority to ensure that residents have the appropriate qualifications and skills to access local employment opportunities. The objectives for the SPF investment in People and Skills is to upskill residents in the local areas of greatest deprivation, levelling up opportunities towards entering work, mitigating the current mismatch between skills and vacancies in the borough and supporting growth of the local economy.

A total of £88,000 has been commissioned to deliver four projects (detailed below).

Priority 3: People and Skills		
Project	Progress to date	Budget

<p>We will deliver employment support to hard-to-reach groups. This will include employability skills, job search skills, understanding your skills and motivation, confidence building, presentation skills, interview techniques, networking skills, understanding self-employment, volunteering, and work experience. We will work with partners to provide specialist support with financial management, and support with housing and mental health and other barriers which prevent people from deprived communities progressing into employment. We will increase the number of local businesses investing in skills and employment and providing employer talks and visits to workplaces, work placements and apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Strengthening pathways to employment</p> <p>The Opening Doors project (£14,000) is delivered by Surrey Careers Hub and is supporting work experience, apprenticeships and employment for young people. 8 local employers supporting the scheme 10 visits of 10-15 young people to local employers will take place in November 2024.</p> <p>Career development support for people aged 45 plus (£24,000) Room for work delivered the first of three 12-week career development programmes between January and April 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 residents supported to improve careers and job search skills • 3 secured employed after completing the course. <p>The 2nd course will start on 19 September and the 3rd in January 2025</p> <p>Brooklands College are delivering support to improve basic skills of residents (£26,000) Support is being delivered in community settings. 53 residents have commenced accredited training in literacy, numeracy, business administration, digital skills and employment skills. A total of 150 residents will receive support by end of March 2025.</p> <p>Tech to Community Connect project (£24,000). The project is delivered by the Surrey Coalition of Disabled</p>	<p>£88,000</p>
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	<p>People. Support is targeted at residents with disabilities and those living with a long-term health condition. A total of 40 people will receive up to 6 one to one sessions from a tech angel. 15 residents have received one to one support.</p>	
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4 Policy framework implications

4.1 The aim of the SPF is that ‘By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.’

4.2 The SPF Investment Plan supports the council’s Economic Development Strategy 2022 -2026, which aims *‘to build on the Borough’s economic strengths to support a resilient, productive, low carbon and high-value economy. The Council wants to ensure that Runnymede continues to be a leading economy, in Surrey, the wider sub-region, and the UK’.*

4.3 The SPF investment strategy will support the following priorities

- Priority 2: Maintaining competitive advantage through business engagement, strengthening business networking.
- Priority 3: Developing the vitality and vibrancy of our town centres and growing the tourism and leisure economy
- Priority 4: A dynamic workforce for a high-tech, creative economy

4.4 The SPF Investment Plan supports the following Corporate Strategies:

- **The Empowering Communities Strategy 2022** , by improving engagement with residents through the development of the Citizens Panel.
- **The Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030** by supporting businesses to become more sustainable, supporting the development of businesses working in the green economy and by raising awareness amongst residents of skills and employment in the green economy.,
- **The Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026**, by supporting residents with health issues and poor mental health back into employment.

5 Resource implications

5.1 2023/24 expenditure forecasts were met. The Council received in May £916,187. This is the full allocation of Runnymede’s SPF for 2024/25.

- 5.2 The criteria for the grant is that expenditure has to be defrayed within the financial year. It is therefore critical that full expenditure is met by the end of March 2025.
- 5.3 The criteria does allow the council to reallocate funding across the programme, provided there is not a significant change in the investment plan. It is therefore proposed that any underspend in 2024/25 will be reallocated to business grants. A total of £367,122 of funding has been applied for as part of the 2nd round of the grants for growth programme. This exceeds the total available, which is £99,681.
- 5.4 The recommended reallocated resource is set out in section 2 of this report which includes estimates of the total costs of delivering these improvements. Given the short period of time to the end of March and the need to react quickly to quotes, matters arising and stick to the SPF project timetable, it is recommended that the ACE (Place) be given delegated authority to amend the amounts within each budget set out in section 2 with a view to ensuring that the money is most effectively spent on improving facilities and public realm.
- 5.5 4% (£40,000) of the grant allocation can be used to support the management and administration of the SPF. £40,000 will be allocated to cover the council's staff costs. This amount is currently included in the project costs detailed in section 3 above.

6 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Committee has the power to make this decision. The amendments will need to be agreed with the grant funder.

7 Equality implications

- 7.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:
- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics.
- 7.2 An equalities impact assessment was completed for the Economic Development Strategy in April 2022. This included an assessment of the work covered by the SPF Investment Plan.

8 Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 8.1 The SPF Investment Plan will support Runnymede's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, by supporting businesses to become more sustainable, supporting the development of businesses working in the green economy and by raising awareness amongst residents of skills and employment in the green economy.
- 8.2 In line with some of the key corporate objectives, the feasibility study aims to unlock the potential for a greener environment and encourage a circular economy and vibrant places.
- 8.3 The feasibility study aims to facilitate changes to Chertsey Town Centre which would encourage localised events that people can cycle or walk to. This is in line with the

20-minute neighborhood concept which is supported by the Council's Climate Change Strategy, by bringing essential services within easy reach of local communities by walking, cycling and public transport.

9. Background papers

None

10. Appendices

N/A