

## **CALL IN REQUEST - SHARED PROSPERITY FUNDING, TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS**

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That the Panel consider the call-in submission by Cllr Barry Dunning, Cllr Jack Davies and Cllr Colm McCarthy.

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 On 15 September 2023, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy, Cllr Derek Tipp, made a decision on how to distribute that element of the New Forest's UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies which would be targeted at town centre improvements. The towns included were Totton, Fordingbridge, New Milton, Ringwood, Hythe and Marchwood. The decision purely related to the town centre improvement project, which was one part of the Council's UKSPF submission agreed by Cabinet on 29 July 2022.
- 2.2 Following this Portfolio Holder decision, Cllr Barry Dunning gave formal notice to call-in the decision. He stated the following as the reason for the call in. "Owing to the omission of Lymington & Pennington in the list of Towns chosen to benefit from Shared Prosperity Funding, I am obliged to call this decision in. With a population of 15,832 I do feel that Lymington & Pennington is, once again, being overlooked." Additionally, Cllr Jack Davies also gave formal notice to call-in the decision. He stated the following as a reason for the call-in: "I wish to call in the decision because the proposal does not include the town of Lymington and Pennington within the list of allocations". Finally, Cllr Colm McCarthy also gave formal notice to call-in the decision. He stated the following as a reason for the call-in: "I would like to join my colleagues in calling in the portfolio holder decision to allocate the shared prosperity fund in the way that he did". Further clarification was received from Cllr McCarthy after the call-in period had closed in relation to his reasons as follows: "Lymington & Pennington deserve to be included in obtaining these funds that would be beneficial and used in areas throughout our neighbourhood. To be excluded, seems to be unfair to the residents that we support, and these funds could ideally help to generate a positive attitude especially at a time when there are so many retirement homes being allocated throughout our area."
- 2.3 In accordance with Council procedures, as three call-in notices have been received, the decision will be discussed at this meeting of the Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 2.4 As the decision is being reviewed by the Panel, the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder has been invited to attend. The Panel may also wish to call upon the appropriate officers to provide further information to the Panel in connection with the decision.
- 2.5 The panel will either accept the decision or request the decision-maker to reconsider the decision giving reasons for the request.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The full details of what led the Councillor to put forward the decision in relation to the allocation of town centre funding can be found in the report to the Portfolio Holder at appendix 1.

#### **4. EXCLUSION OF LYMINGTON AND PENNINGTON**

- 4.1 All of the call-in notices specifically relate to the exclusion of Lymington and Pennington from receiving an element of the town centre support fund. It is therefore appropriate to address that issue specifically.
- 4.2 It is worth underlining that this decision only related to that part of the UKSPF funding which is specifically geared towards supporting our town centres, one element of the district's SPF investment plan. As the decision notice points out, the allocation is based on those towns which are not at the heart of the district's tourism offer. The main focus of the funding is Totton which does not have a major role to play in the New Forest tourism offer. Whilst all of our other town and district centres arguably benefit to some degree from a degree of tourism, those larger towns excluded (notably Lymington, Beaulieu, Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst) are clearly at the very heart of our tourism offer and could not be said to meet the requirements of UKSPF as set out in the Cabinet report of 29 July 2022 – specifically that funding would be used to “restore a sense of pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost”.
- 4.3 Pennington falls within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and, as such, might be an appropriate focus for how UKSPF funds are distributed. However, this decision purely related to support for town centres and Pennington does not have a critical mass of town centre activity or focal point where an investment of town centre funds is likely to make a significant difference. Residents of Pennington also benefit from the close proximity of town centre provision at nearby Lymington.
- 4.4 There are several other initiatives which could benefit the businesses and communities of Lymington and Pennington. In particular, both of these areas fall within the geographic boundary of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) which is top up funding to the UKSPF, specifically geared towards rural areas. £540,000 of funding is being made available through this route and a bidding round is currently open should there be projects in Lymington and Pennington which would meet the criteria.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications are as set out in the Portfolio decision, attached as Appendix 1

#### **6. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The crime and disorder implications are as set out in the Portfolio decision, attached as Appendix 1

#### **For further information contact:**

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#### **Background Papers:**

Cabinet, 29 July 2022:  
Item 4, UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Cabinet, 1 March 2023:  
Item 7, Totton Community Engagement