

Council – 14 July 2025

Report of Cabinet – [7 May 2025](#)

Part I – Items Resolved by Cabinet

1. Rural England Prosperity Fund allocation for 2025/26

Portfolio – Planning and Economy

Cabinet Resolution:

That Cabinet

1. Approved the addition of £162,005 to the Council's Capital Programme for 2025/26, noting the spend is fully financed through Government grant (being the Rural England Prosperity Fund);
2. Approved the proposed allocation of £162,005 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund for the financial year 2025-2026 towards the specific projects set out in this report; and
3. Delegated authority for future decision making associated with the finalisation of the project programme for 25/26 Rural England Prosperity spend to the Strategic Director for Place Operations and Sustainability, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy.

Cabinet Discussion:

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy introduced the item raised the following, main points:

- The Council were pleased to be able to support the PEDALL scheme and assist individuals with disabilities to enjoy outdoor activities through cycling in the New Forest through allocated funding.
- Part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) would also be allocated in grants to micro and small local producers to assist them in developing and growing their business.
- Furthermore, the REPF would provide funding to complement the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocated to the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) Support Programme.

The Assistant Director of Place Development explained that the total fund allocation was £162,000 and that Cabinet were being asked to

authorise delegation to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise the programme with draft thresholds, timescales and criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

A non-executive member made comments referring to paragraph 27 of the report, equalities implications, regarding the removal of barriers for disabled people within the District. It was heard that rural communities were more likely to be disadvantaged, as the 2021 Census showed, 16.3% of NFDC residents in rural communities were disabled and 14,000 individuals were economically inactive. The Assistant Director of Place Development explained that the business grants scheme and community grants scheme were both two channels that Council funding can reach those that are disadvantaged could bid for grants from these schemes.

Another non-executive member raised the matter of Hampshire County Council (HCC) stopping the use of disabled bus services before 9am and how the New Forest Disability Forum had raised this matter. It was asked whether this fund allocation could assist those individuals affected by this change. The Portfolio Holder for Finance & Corporate acknowledged how there are challenges facing those members of the District who are disabled and praised the Government for providing this funding and referenced the other funding allocations that could be applied for by communities in the District.

The Leader reminded members that the REPF was solely for capital funding but stated that she would contact the Leader of HCC to discuss the matter of disabled bus passes to ask HCC to reconsider their decision.