

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

1 December 2022

COUNCILLOR GRAHAM MIDDLETON - DEPUTY LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE.

For the period October to December 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Rural England Prosperity Funding Addendum Update, November 2022

The Borough Council is working to submit an application to secure Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF) of £1,496,455 to invest across **rural** West Norfolk over the period April 2023 – March 2025. This funding is a top up to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to help address the extra needs and challenges facing rural areas only and is intended for significant investment into lasting assets, such as buildings or equipment, which will support rural communities and businesses and will be used for at least one year. The Rural Fund provides **capital funding** to:

- support **new and existing rural businesses** to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams; and
- support **new and improved community infrastructure**, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy.

The indicative amount of £1,496,455 is the largest allocation in Norfolk and is a funding replacement for the previous ERDF LEADER programme.

The West Norfolk Investment Plan (WNIP) was submitted to UK Government to secure UKSPF funding in August 2022. To secure the additional Rural England Prosperity Funding the Borough Council will submit an addendum to the WNIP, to outline and justify how the Rural Fund allocation will be invested locally, by 30th November 2022.

Local analysis has been undertaken to inform the development of the addendum. A two week online survey was conducted in October 2022. The survey responses were considered in detail by the Regeneration Team and reviewed against the investment priorities for REPF. The findings were presented to an online stakeholder group meeting held on 11th November 2022. Stakeholders were in support of the priorities outlined and added comments on specific areas of need which will help inform funding

delivery.

Investment priorities for **rural businesses**:

- Small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas.
- Grants for the development and promotion of the visitor economy.

Investment priorities for **rural communities**:

- Active travel enhancements in the local rural area.
- Capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.
- Supporting impactful volunteering and social action projects.

Following submission of the addendum it is anticipated that a funding decision will be confirmed by Rural England in January 2023. In the interim the Borough Council will be establishing a programme foundation to ensure that delivery can commence at the start of the 23-24 financial year

2 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Public meetings attended

Various meetings with officers and stakeholders