

REPORT TO CABINET

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|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| Open | | Would any decisions proposed : | | | |
| Any especially affected Wards | Mandatory/ | Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide | | YES/NO | |
| | Discretionary / | Need to be recommendations to Council | | YES/NO | |
| | Operational | Is it a Key Decision | | YES/NO | |
| Lead Member: Cllr Terry Parish E-mail: cldr.terry.parish@west-norfolk.gov.uk | | | Other Cabinet Members consulted: CPP Panel | | |
| | | | Other Members consulted: Cllr Beales, Cllr Rust | | |
| Lead Officer: Duncan Hall E-mail: Duncan.hall@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: | | | Other Officers consulted: Lorraine Gore, Becky Box | | |
| Financial Implications YES/NO | Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/NO | Statutory Implications YES/NO | Equal Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre- screening/ Full Assessment | Risk Management Implications YES/NO | Environmental Considerations YES/NO |

Date of meeting: 31 October 2023

UKSPF 2024/25: CONTINUATION AND EXPANSION OF BOOST PROJECT AND WEST NORFOLK TRAINING GRANTS

Summary

The Council was allocated £1.8m from UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) for the period 2022-2025 across 3 investment themes. In February 2023, the Council approved the programme for 2022-24 for two investment priorities: Communities & Place and Local Businesses. This report details the proposal to continue funding support for the Boost project and West Norfolk Training Grants (WNTG) initiatives under the Borough Council's UKSPF allocation for 2024/25 until a longer-term sustainable funding solution is determined for these vital projects for residents and businesses in West Norfolk.

This report is being taken forward ahead of a full UKSPF 2024/25 programme report to Cabinet due in January 2024, for projects to be delivered in 2024/25 under the investment priorities Local Businesses and People and Skills to ensure smooth transition and continuation of existing projects which currently only have funding approved until March 2024.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the continuation and expansion of the BOOST project for young people across West Norfolk as per section 6, table 2, option 2
2. Approve the allocation of UKSPF 'People & Skills' funding for the Boost project for 2024/25 as set out in section 7, table 3 of the report.
3. Endorse the continuation and expansion of the West Norfolk Training Grant into 2024/25 as per section 13, table 6, option 3
4. Approve the allocation of UKSPF funding for the West Norfolk Training Grant project for 2024/25 as set out in section 12 Table 5.
5. Approve the delegated authority to the Assistant Director for Regeneration, Housing & Place in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Business to agree delivery arrangements and any changes to ensure the efficient delivery of the Boost and West Norfolk Training Grant projects for 2024/25.

6. Officers to provide an annual report on the progress and performance of the projects to the Corporate Performance Panel.

Reason for Decision

To ensure smooth delivery of two projects in line with West Norfolk Investment Plan and Corporate Business Plan objectives. Approval of 2024/25 UKSPF investment for these projects will ensure continued delivery of packages of support which can maximise their reach to benefit residents across the Borough. Both projects will contribute towards the West Norfolk achievement of UKSPF objectives to build pride in place, facilitate high quality skills training, supporting pay, employment, productivity growth and increasing life chances.

1 Background

- 1.1 Boost is a project developed and delivered initially through the Town Investment Plan and funded by the Town Deal for King's Lynn for the period 2022-24 at a cost of £480k, £442,000 of which is funded by the Town Deal with £38k match funding from Norfolk County Council. The project is delivered by Norfolk County Council on behalf of the Borough Council as the accountable body for the Town Deal.

- 1.2 In April 2022, the Government announced the UK Shared Prosperity Prospectus, which is a long-term funding stream to replace the EU structural funds following the UK's exit of the EU. The allocation of £1,836,407 UKSPF for investment in King's Lynn and West Norfolk across the period of 2022-25 was confirmed in December 2022 following government approval of the West Norfolk Investment Plan (WNIP).

A cabinet report in February 2023 set out the investment priorities for UKSPF and approval was agreed for a framework of project delivery for 2022-24. A further cabinet report is scheduled for January 2024 to set out the full UKSPF Programme priorities for 2024/25. The Boost project approval request for 2024/25 has been expedited ahead of this to ensure a seamless continuation and subsequent expansion of the currently successful scheme to maximise project benefits.

- 1.3 The aim of UKSPF is to support the government's commitment to levelling up all parts of the UK through the following objectives:

- Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging.
- Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in places where they are weakest.
- Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost.
- Empower local leaders and communities.

- 1.4 These objectives are intended to be achieved through the three SPF Investment Priorities:

- Communities and Place.
- Supporting Local Business.
- People and Skills.

- 1.5 The Boost Project delivers within the People and Skills investment priority and will support the programme of increasing shared prosperity across the borough by providing cohesive, locally tailored support to address barriers to employment and reduce skills gaps.
- 1.6 The delivery to date of the 2 year funded Boost project has clearly evidenced the need for this service in King's Lynn (see section 2 & 3 for further detail). The Corporate Performance Panel received an update on the project delivery to date at its meeting on 21 July 2023 which can be viewed [here](#).
- 1.7 Boost has been developed to provide a coordinating function, working closely with a range of skills stakeholders, the employer base and targeted beneficiaries to provide a bespoke service for young people which sign posts/refers to existing providers/support and provide tailored support in accessing and engaging with training.
- 1.8 The project provides important support to the skills-infrastructure of the area, identifying and establishing referral routes for the cohorts into available training, employment and support services. In addition to direct project activity, the project reinforces the objective to Level-Up skill levels in and across the current delivery area – establishing a legacy of higher resident skills, a system of local collaboration and increased opportunities for young people to reach their potential.
- 1.9 In addition to Boost, the Borough Council has recently launched a West Norfolk Training Grants as part of the approved UKSPF programme for 2023/24. [West Norfolk Training Grants](#) (previously called Employer Training Grants in the February 23 Cabinet report) builds upon the successes of the Norfolk County Council Strategic Fund (Covid-19response) funded Employer Training Incentive Programme, for which there has been high demand, and provides a sector wide West Norfolk grant scheme to which businesses can apply to part fund external training courses to increase their employees' skill levels to improve productivity, growth or efficiency. The grant scheme is being delivered through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, as part of the wider UKSPF Growth Hub project. It is recognised that an approval of 2024/25 funding at this stage would enable seamless delivery of a 19-month project which builds in flexibility for applicants thereby enabling employers to consider the best quality training options for their employers.

2. Boost – Delivery to Date

- 2.1 The 2 year town deal funded project has delivered successfully across the wide range of projected Towns Fund outcomes to date. In assuring performance, project updates have been provided to the Town Deal Board, Skills Working Group and Corporate Performance Panel. These groups have all recognised the project is providing excellent value for money and benefit-cost ratio on the initial Town Fund investment.
- 2.2 It is having an important impact for residents within the identified cohorts. In increasing this impact, it is now recognised that this project is able to broaden its reach geographically and offers support across the whole of West Norfolk. This would incorporate targeted employability support alongside training and skills, that was not available to the project under Town Deal funding.
- 2.3 Fundamental to the project's success to date, has been its partnership working. It is engaged with over 80 organisations supporting young people locally. However, it's most effective partnerships are with the College of West Anglia (who is a project partner) and the Department of Work & Pensions

(DWP). The project team work from these localities, collaborating closely with college and JCP staff to produce joined up and tailored solutions to individuals' skills challenges.

- 2.4 In this approach, the project has established itself as a focal point for skills support for the town and is already achieving its ambition to become a 'Skills Office' for King's Lynn – a repository for project and services available, in addition to actively supporting referral routes to other existing services for cohorts.
- 2.5 As of September 2023, the project has engaged 367 young people with the project with 7 months left to run to achieve the 400-person target. 260 of these are already engaging in a skills activity, with a significant pipeline of 77 individual referrals waiting for scheduled activity to commence in October. Based on the current level of activity and demand, an anticipated 84 of referred young people are expected to be supported during the first project quarter (April – June 2024).
- 2.7 In addition to the current Kings Lynn delivery, the project is proposed to increase geographical coverage across the West Norfolk area. This will offer the provision to residents across the locality in its entirety, increasing access and anticipated referral levels. The project anticipates the focus delivery on the market towns across West Norfolk, in addition to the key employment areas.
- 2.8 Additional to the strong project achievements to date, several areas of key learning have been realised, supporting the case for continued delivery in King's Lynn and the projects wider expansion across the West Norfolk geography.

These include:

- There has been a significant demand for project support from outside of the Towns Fund catchment area. Due to this restriction, large numbers of young people have been designated ineligible for support from the project.

In UKSPF proposal and with West Norfolk catchment indicated, the project seeks to expand and in the provision of employment & skills support, Borough-wide. This will include a focus on key employment opportunity areas such as the market and coastal towns.

- Levels of young people's engagement from Job Centre Plus (JCP) have been high.

The project has located an Activity Coordinator in-situ, working closely with JCP staff to support access to the project and wider services.

- A large cohort of young people with additional and complex needs have been identified. These face complex challenges in finding supported work placements and employment or engaging with employability activities.

The project seeks to place and increased focus on employer engagement and in developing work opportunities for these young people, as well as building the confidence of those young people. This will be reinforced by a further focus on employability support and localised work-readiness programmes for the cohorts.

- The Mental Health & Wellbeing needs amongst the cohorts has been much higher than anticipated. This has included 50+ specific wellbeing referrals from the College of West Anglia. The project has responded in the delivery of specific wellbeing/confidence building provision, in the addition to signposting young people to further specialist support.

The project has responded with the provision of a Student Mental Health Practitioner in post at College of West Anglia, with the aim to continue mental health support for young people throughout UKSPF delivery.

- Establishing connections with local schools, despite historical challenges has been considered successful. The project is working collaboratively and in referral arrangements with the King Edward VII and Springwood for example.

The project seeks to build upon this success, ensuring signposting to support for young people at risk of NEET status and facing additional challenges is clearly in place.

3 The Boost Project – Strategic Case for Continuation with UKSPF investment

3.1 Skills, educational attainment and unemployment are significant economic and social issues for young people in King's Lynn. The number of young people who are either low skilled, or are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) within King's Lynn is historically high, and in some statistical cases is entrenched. Indicators for skills and attainment levels have remained comparatively low in the area for several years, factoring in the assessment of key measures such as GCSE achievement, transition to employment (participation) and the levels of training activity amongst the young adult workforce. This is supported by the following statistical evidence gathered through the developed of the West Norfolk Investment Plan;

- economic inactivity is higher than average at 22.9% compared with 21.3% nationally and has been rising since the pandemic (ONS, APS 2021). A high proportion of currently inactive people want to work (29.1% compared with 18.6% nationally), but have greater constraints that will require flexibility in employment (26.6% compared with 19.2% nationally are currently inactive due to caring responsibilities, and 36.9% compared with 24.6% nationally are currently inactive due to long-term sickness). Unemployment has been similar to nationally but rising, and Universal Credit claimant counts are currently at 2.6% compared with 3.8% nationally (ONS APS, 2021) but both increased during Covid and haven't returned to pre-pandemic lows.
- People in work in the Borough face a low wage economy, with median earnings around £3,000 lower than the national average, with a widening earnings gap through slower growth than nationally, reflected in our occupational makeup that skews towards lower skilled jobs. The percentage of jobs earning below the real living wage has been falling faster than average but remains higher at 19.6% compared with 17% nationally (ONS ASHE, 2021).
- Skills in the adult population are lower than average, and attainment at schools has fallen. The proportion of people with NVQ4+ qualifications is low in King's Lynn and West Norfolk at 30% compared to the national average of 43%. Despite a fall in the percentage of people with no qualifications of -5.4% in the last five

years, this remains higher than the national average (ONS APS, 2021). Employees in King's Lynn and West Norfolk are more likely to report receiving on-the-job training at 53% compared with 49% nationally (DfE, 2019), implying that employers see skills lacking in their workforce.

- Average attainment 8 score at GCSE is lower than the national average and have fallen against a national increase (DfE, 2021), suggesting that school leavers here will be falling behind their peers and miss opportunities for further skills attainment.
- 3.2 Young people's work readiness is also a persistent theme when consulting on youth employment and in consideration of future projects to be developed within the town and across the wider borough catchment.
 - 3.3 There is forecast to be little or no growth in the historically strong sectors like retail with higher technical skills demanded for, with entry and progression in growth sectors such as manufacturing, digital/creative media, healthcare and Agri-tech lower than need suggests – these sectors are identified as key contributors to the King's Lynn economy and future employment routes. In this context, transition into work for young people, particularly non-graduates, needs to be in a strong focus.
 - 3.4 Work inspiration and work readiness in its broadest sense is one of the key elements in successful transitions and will be a key element of the project, with an increased engagement with employers in developing education links and the prominent role in raising skills amongst their young adult workforce (aged 18-30).
 - 3.5 There is an increasing economic case for businesses to create more entry points and progression routes for young people and for local approach in supporting them to engage more fully, raising the profile of their organisation and higher skills in the workforce to drive innovation & growth. The project will take an active role in supporting businesses to build into business planning some form of commitment to support young people into and within work – from offering apprenticeships to providing quality work-based experience and upskilling opportunities for staff through.

4 Proposed Continuation of Boost

- 4.1 Cabinet are requested to approve the continuation and expansion of the Boost project west Norfolk wide utilising the year 3 UKSPF People & Skills allocation with match funding from Norfolk County Council for the period 2024/25.

4.2 Project Participants

The beneficiaries of the project will be young people living in West Norfolk aged 16-30 years.

Aligned to West Norfolk investment plan priorities the project will support three cohorts:

- 1. Young Adults (aged 18-30) who are employed without training –** These participants will be employed and/or residents within the BCKLWN area.

Participants from this cohort will typically be employed in low-skilled positions, they will be supported to access training and upskilling opportunities and progress into higher earning / higher skilled roles.

2. Young people (aged 18-30) who are unemployed (*increased from age 18-24*) – These participants will be residents in the BCKLWN area, economically active and unemployed.

Participants from this cohort will be unemployed and receiving a form of employment benefit or support. Individuals will be economically active (able to work) and supported to increase their employability, practical work readiness and entry into suitable employment.

3. Young People (Aged 16-18) in full-time education with focus on those who NEET, or at risk of NEET – Young people either resident and/or receiving education in the BCKLWN area.

Participants from this cohort will be engaged by the project and utilising the projects' delivery networks, signposted to enter life skills, basic skills or fuller training opportunities. Individuals will be introduced to locally available youth support services.

4.3 The project will engage and support 200+ young people (up to age 30) in activity and deliver the following UKSPF outputs and outcomes.

Table 1: Boost and UKSPF target outputs and outcomes 2024/25

| UKSPF Intervention Reference | UKSPF OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS | Boost Forecast 2024-25 |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| OUTPUTS – Total number registered to project | | |
| E33 | Number of socially excluded people accessing support | 135 |
| E33 | Number of people supported to access basic skills. | 20 |
| E33 | Number of people supported to engage in job searching. | 75 |
| E34 | Number of people supported to engage in life skills. | 75 |
| E37 | Number of people supported to participate in education. | 20 |
| E37 | Number of people in employment engaging with the skills system | 25 |
| OUTCOMES | | |
| E33 | Number of people engaged in job searching following support. | 60 |
| E33 | Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support | 30 |
| E34 | Number of people in education/training | 20 |
| E37 | Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and | 15 |

| | | |
|--|--------|--|
| | skills | |
|--|--------|--|

*The project anticipates working collaboratively with West Norfolk Training Grants (WNTG) in the achievement of funded training outcomes.

- 4.4 The interventions and support being delivered under Boost will have long term benefits to the economic and social mobility of young people, beyond the term of the funding being provided and associated reporting to funders. The original [Business Case](#) for the Boost project was prepared to secure the Town Deal funding for the project during 2021. The Economic Case set out the longer term direct and indirect benefits of the project over 30 years against HM Treasury Green Book guidance. The Boost project team will provide a report of final outcomes and results as part of an impact report at the end of the 12 months of UKSPF funding to provide recommendations for future programmes/next steps. This will be based on an evaluation of feedback, project data, lessons learned and defrayed costs. This report will also incorporate preceding data from the Town Deal funded project to provide a long-term impact review. This information will be made available to the Borough Council to inform future investment decisions. Continuation of this analysis will be subject to the achievement of future project funding.
- 4.5 There is an existing Funding Agreement with Norfolk County Council for the delivery of the Boost project on behalf of BCKLWN as the accountable body for the Town Deal. The same contractual arrangement will be in place under the UKSPF. This includes quarterly monitoring and evaluation of project outputs and outcomes to ensure achievement of the targets are on track and funding paid retrospectively.

5 UK Shared Prosperity Funding and Boost

- 5.1 The UKSPF People and Skills investment priority includes specific objectives to reduce levels of economic inactivity by enabling local authorities to invest in: bespoke life and employment support tailored to local need; enabling the joining up of mainstream provision and local services through the use of keyworker support; and improving economic outcomes for specific cohorts who face labour market barriers. Additionally, the priority identifies opportunities for local areas to fund gaps in local skills provision, both qualification and non-qualification based, to support progression in work.
- 5.2 These objectives support achievement of national targets to improve employment and productivity, improve well-being and increase the number of people successfully completing high quality skills training.
- 5.3 Across King's Lynn and West Norfolk investment of UKSPF into the People and Skills will complement mainstream provision, without duplication, to ensure that the local offer is comprehensive and widely accessible.
- 5.4 The Boost project will meet the objectives across the following UKSPF Intervention areas within the People and Skills Investment Priority, which were highlighted as areas requiring local support within the WNIP:
- E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional

and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English, maths (via Multiply) and ESOL), and life skills and career skills provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications.

E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses.

6. Boost Options Considered

Table 2: Boost Options

| Option 1 | Considerations |
|--|--|
| <p>Do nothing and allow project to close in March 2024</p> | <p>Support for the young people in the current cohort will cease.</p> <p>The project was identified with the capacity to address the longer-term entrenched skills challenges across the area. On closure the project will be without legacy and unable to provide ongoing outcomes for participants and stakeholders.</p> <p>The project has developed important relationships with key skills and employment stakeholders in the area, this has established referral routes for young people into local services and training opportunities. In the event of no further funding, working arrangements with organisations such as College of West Anglia and Job Centre+ services, in addition to these referral routes will cease.</p> |
| Option 2 | |
| <p>To fund the project including staff costs and activity costs.</p> <p>This includes the provision of Norfolk County Council match funding.</p> | <p>Recommended</p> <p>Continued delivery of project for a further year, mitigating the above considerations and enabling successful delivery of the service and outcomes.</p> <p>This will minimise the risk of the project failing due to a funding and staff shortfall, with delivery partners unable to commit to the cost.</p> <p>During this time a longer-term delivery plan will be developed, to ensure the project is continued and participants continue to be supported in BCKLWN UKSPF legacy.</p> |

7. Boost Financial Implications

- 7.1 The costs and funding arrangements for continuing the recommended option (option 2) for 2024/25 are as follows.

Table 3: Boost Budget 2024/25

| Salaries | £ |
|---|-------------------|
| Skills Partnership Project Manager | 51,900.72 |
| Project Activity Co-ordinator 1fte | 45,124.11 |
| Project Activity Co-ordinator 1fte | 45,124.11 |
| Management oversight 0.2fte | 13,513.60 |
| | 155,662.54 |
| | |
| Project Delivery | |
| Course and activity costs | 57,900.00 |
| Marketing materials | 1,000.00 |
| Legal Costs | 1,000.00 |
| | 59,900.00 |
| | |
| Total Project Cost | 215,562.54 |
| | |
| Match Funding from NCC for Management Oversight | (13,513.60) |
| Additional Match from NCC | (55,000.00) |
| | |
| Total ask from UKSPF | 147,048.94 |

- 7.2 The West Norfolk Investment Plan secured an allocation of £354,237.52 for the for People and Skills priority for 2024/25 comprising £91,948.96 capital and £262,288.56 revenue. The funding request for the Boost project will sit within the revenue budget of this investment priority.
- 7.3 Funding post 2025 is being sought to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the Boost project. In recognition of the historical challenge of increasing skills and employment levels for young people in West Norfolk, stakeholders are committed to the longer-term delivery and associated outcomes produced

through the project, ensuring legacy and the continued statistical shift in these levels across the Borough.

A range of funding sources are identified as in scope from 2025, these include the Norfolk Investment Fund, Pooled business rates, National Youth Employment Initiative, DWP Flexible fund and potential future UKSPF funding within BCKLWN or NCC administration. UKSPF allocation for 2024/25 allows time for longer term financial sustainability to be established.

8. West Norfolk Training Grants (WNTG) Background

- 8.1 West Norfolk Training Grants (WNTG) builds upon the successes of the Employer Training Initiatives Programme, which was funded and delivered by Norfolk County Council (NCC). The scheme provides a West Norfolk focused grant opportunity for which businesses can apply to part fund external training courses to increase their employees' skill levels thereby improving productivity, growth or efficiency. WNTG (named Employer Training Incentive Programme in Feb23 cabinet report) has been progressed in liaison with New Anglia LEP and will be delivered through the UKSPF funded New Anglia Growth Hub as an additional programme of support for West Norfolk businesses. The scheme will provide cross sector grant opportunities for businesses to apply for a 75% grant towards non statutory employee training up to a value of £3,000 per business.
- 8.2 Investing in staff training will increase employee engagement, staff retention and improve productivity. Staff that receive quality training will feel more independent, resilient and improve the workplace morale and culture. Courses can be modular to work around the business.

9. Justification for continuing ETIP priorities for WNTG

- 9.1 Through the Employer Training Initiative Programme (ETIP) between March 2021 – June 2022 45 businesses were awarded ETIP grants across West Norfolk totalling £39,163 against training costs of £56,183, with an average grant award of £879 across the borough and 281 training interventions delivered. The ETIP scheme attracted applications from all sectors with Construction, Tourism and Leisure and Personal Services receiving the most applications. In terms of the training courses chosen, Health & Safety, Leadership/Management/Mentoring, Digital Skills and Engineering were the most popular. Applicant evaluations included comments that the fund provided the opportunity to secure training that businesses would otherwise could not have afforded to access, and that training helped to achieved hoped for outcomes. At the close of ETIP in June 2022 there was a Norfolk wide waiting list demonstrating a need for fund continuation and Norfolk County Council referred as many of these as possible to other funding streams so that they could access alternative forms of funding. As this was a successful award-winning project, NCC had a clear ambition to continue ETIP delivery across Norfolk however they were unable to secure funding to do so. WNTG has therefore been established to ensure that delivery can still be undertaken across West Norfolk to continue to benefit local businesses.

10. UKSPF Outputs and Outcomes: West Norfolk Training Grants

- 10.1 WNTG will achieve the UKSPF measurable outputs and outcomes during 2024/25 programme delivery as set out in table 4.

Table 4: WNTG and UKSPF target outputs and outcomes 2024/25

| UKSPF Intervention Reference | UKSPF OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS | WNTG Target Total |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| | OUTPUTS | |
| E37 | Number of people in employment engaging with the skills system | 147 |
| | OUTCOMES | |
| E30 | Increased number of businesses supported | 33 |
| E37 | Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills | 147 |

11 UK Shared Prosperity Funding and WNTG

- 11.1 For King's Lynn and West Norfolk, establishing business support measures to drive employment growth and improve business sustainability is a key UKSPF investment priority. The West Norfolk Training Grant scheme directly responds to this priority by providing funded opportunities to improve access to work related training.
- 11.2 This grant scheme meets the 'Supporting Local Business' investment priority of the UKSPF by increasing private sector investment in growth-enhancing activities, through targeted support for self-employed, micro, small and medium-sized businesses. It also meets the 'People & Skills' investment priority by upskilling the working population, yielding personal and societal economic impact by supporting employment and local growth.

12 WNTG Timescales and Funding

- 12.1 The scheme launched at the start of September 2023 with a budget of £77,006 revenue for until March 2024. This comprises £27,466 originally detailed within the February cabinet report for 2022/23, but deferred to 2023/24 due to funding approval delays, and £50,000 for 2024/25 with a small adjustment made to balance overall Local Business programme costs against available budget.
- 12.2 Due to the proven success of the Employer Training Incentive Programme, it is anticipated that West Norfolk Training Grants, which is based upon the key principles of ETIP, including lessons learned, will be well received and subscribed to. The current March 2024 end date provides only 7 months of delivery, and it is recommended that a second year funding commitment would facilitate seamless delivery until the end of the UKSPF 2022-25 programme. A scheme which spans the two financial years would allow funding of training that may extend beyond the original deadline and fits better with academic timescales.
- 12.3 It is proposed that an additional £22,994 is committed to 2024/25 delivery of the West Norfolk Training Grant scheme providing a total budget of £100,000 revenue. At a maximum grant rate this could fund training for 33 businesses and this number will increase if lower grant totals are applied for and approved.

Table 5: West Norfolk Training Grants Budget 2023-2025

| West Norfolk Training Grants – Revenue Budget | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | TOTAL |
|---|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Local Businesses E30 : Business support measures to drive employment growth / People & Skills E37 : Tailored support for the employed to access courses | £77,006 | £22,994 | £100,000 |

12.4 Committing funding to the project in 2024/25 will ensure that applications and awards can be continued over the threshold between the two financial years.

12.5 As part of the reporting process for UK Shared Prosperity Funding, any in year underspends must be reported as part of an end of financial year 'credible plan' to DLUHC. This is to ensure that local UKSPF investment is well planned and secure. It is anticipated that by creating a two year WNTG programme that the Council will be able to secure the carry forward of any unspent WNTG budget from the first year into 2024/25 by setting out clear intentions for a two year programme. This is important due to the later start of the programme.

13 West Norfolk Training Grants Options Considered

Table 6: WNTG Options

| | |
|--|---|
| Option 1: Do nothing | By separating out the two years of funding employers would need to ensure that training is delivered, and claims are made within the boundaries of each financial year. This would mean that training courses that span the two years may be ineligible for funding and that training providers may not be able to meet in year demand. This would minimise opportunities for employee development and could cause reduced take up of the grant scheme due to lack of flexibility. A rolling grant scheme which spans both the financial and academic years will also enable businesses to access training which fits internal schedules to limit any negative impact on business productivity. |
| Option 2: Defer decision until January 2024 | Delaying approval for Year 2 funding introduces a level of doubt within the WNTG programme which will hinder establishment of fast and effective promotion of the project at its early stages. With early confirmation of 2024/25 funding, the Growth Hub and local training providers will be able to actively promote the scheme with the knowledge that future or extended training opportunities can be accommodated. This will ensure that employers can access the best training courses for their employees and their |

| | |
|--|--|
| | business. |
| Option 3: Approve a two year allocation in October 2023 | RECOMMENDED A rolling grant scheme which spans both the financial and academic years will provide sector wide opportunities by enabling businesses to access training at the right time for them with no negative impact on productivity or limitations on training options that might be imposed by a shorter deadline. |

14 Policy Implications

14.1 The Boost project aligns with the King's Lynn Town Investment Plan (2021) priority to provide new opportunities for skills and jobs for young people. The development of the Boost project (formally Youth & Retraining Pledge) directly responded to the evidence and need around skills levels and attainment identified in the TIP.

14.2 Metro Dynamics was appointed in 2022 to support the development of the West Norfolk Investment Plan required to secure the UKSPF allocation. Evidence and analysis of the opportunities and challenges were collated, and stakeholder engagement was undertaken to guide identification of priority themes for West Norfolk. The agreed priorities, approved by Cabinet on 21 July 2022, for West Norfolk included:

Supporting people to access opportunities.

- Creating better quality, higher skilled jobs across sectors
- Supporting people into employment and volunteering opportunities
- Improving skills that employers need

The two projects outlined within this report meet the agreed priorities above.

14.3 The WNIP prioritises supporting People and Skills interventions in 2024/25 through a framework of provision which will help people further from the labour market overcome barriers to access training and support into employment opportunities.

14.4 The West Norfolk Investment Plan identifies that employees in King's Lynn and West Norfolk are more likely to report receiving on-the-job training at 53% compared with 49% nationally (DfE, 2019), implying that employers see skills lacking in their workforce. WNIP identified a need to work with employers and build on our supporting Local Business interventions to enable more high-quality jobs creation and business growth and ensure that people are accessing the skills support and connection into new jobs that they and employers need with access to qualifications for adults at Level 3 and progressing into Level 4+. The West Norfolk Training Grant scheme responds directly to these locally identified needs and opportunities and works towards the achievement of the identified outcomes.

15. Personnel Implications

15.1 The proposal for Boost includes funding for staff posts to be employed by Norfolk County Council. One of the primary reasons for bringing this report forward

ahead of the overall UKSPF programme overview in early 2024 is that there are existing staff employed in delivery of the Boost project and an early decision on the continuation funding will ensure the staff contracts can be extended to ensure a smooth continuation of project delivery.

15.2 The proposed continuation of the West Norfolk Training Grants project will continue to be delivered through the partnership arrangement established between the Borough Council, New Anglia LEP and New Anglia Growth Hub. This partnership working arrangement is also in place through the UKSPF investment in continued New Anglia Growth Hub delivery for West Norfolk and the Rural England Prosperity Funded West Norfolk Rural Business Capital Grants delivery.

16. Environmental Considerations

16.1 The SPF framework specifically includes interventions which supports the government's clean growth policies.

17. Statutory Considerations

N/A

18. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

See pre-screening report template.

19. Risk Management Implications

| Risk | Risk Implications and Mitigation | Level of Risk |
|---------------------|--|---------------|
| Investment Delivery | <p>Risk The Council must commit to spend the allocation in accordance with the spending profile set out by government with a deadline of March 2025.</p> <p>Consequences Insufficient resources and support to implement and deliver individual projects in full leads to an inability to spend the allocation and the funding is clawed back.</p> <p>Mitigation Credible project planning is essential to set out clear local intentions for investment and protect funding from potential claw back. Projects must be well resourced with built in forward planning to ensure successful delivery. Use of experienced third-party providers and expanding on proven successes and existing networks to deliver grant programmes and specialist support will expediate delivery.</p> | Low |
| Stakeholder Support | <p>Risk Stakeholders do not support the project.</p> <p>Consequences Projects does not reflect the needs of the local area and deliver the required outputs/outcomes or meet the</p> | Low |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| | <p>objectives of the SPF due to lack of stakeholder support.</p> <p>Mitigation Development of the initiatives has involved extensive engagement and partnership working with stakeholders, including local organisations, other government bodies, educational institutions and the Town Deal Board. The reported projects respond directly to local needs gaps identified within the WNIP and supported by stakeholders.</p> | |
| Staff delivery | <p>Risk Fully trained staff are not in post to ensure timely project delivery.</p> <p>Consequences Delays in project start through under resourced personnel would impact on the credibility of project delivery and could result in funding being clawed back and outputs not achieved.</p> <p>Mitigation Both projects are currently active and existing personnel are in post and fully trained to deliver project outcomes. Early approval of continuation funding for 2024/25 will minimise the risk of employee attrition and ensure streamlined service delivery.</p> | Low |
| UKSPF Outputs and Outcomes not delivered or measured | <p>Risk Non delivery of UKSPF Outputs and Outcomes</p> <p>Consequences The West Norfolk Investment Plan sets out intentions for achievement of UKSPF outputs and outcomes through local investment of the UKSPF Programme. Non achievement of these would de value local UKSPF investment impact.</p> <p>Mitigation The establishment of credible projects with proven previous success matched with existing local need identified through the WNIP ensures that outputs and outcomes can be confidently forecast and measured. Regular project monitoring processes are established to provide quarterly returns to DLUHC including qualitative and quantitative analysis of spend against budget and the achievement of outcomes and outputs through the delivery of SPF investment, compared with the targets set out in the approved WNIP.</p> | Low |

20. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

N/A

21. Background Papers

(Definition : Unpublished work relied on to a material extent in preparing the report that disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based. A copy of all background papers must be supplied to Democratic Services with the report for publishing with the agenda)

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
King's Lynn & West Norfolk



| | | | | | |
|---|--|----------|----------|---------|--------|
| Name of policy/service/function | BOOST & WNTG | | | | |
| Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? | Existing | | | | |
| <p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations</p> | <p>The project delivers a package of support in youth skills, youth employment and young adult workforce development – addressing the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the longer-term labour market challenges of the locality.</p> <p>It has been developed specifically to bring further coherence to current provision and maximise engagement and access to learning for residents.</p> | | | | |
| Question | Answer | | | | |
| <p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p> | | Positive | Negative | Neutral | Unsure |
| | Age | ✓ | | | |
| | Disability | ✓ | | | |
| | Gender | | | ✓ | |
| | Gender Re-assignment | | | ✓ | |
| | Marriage/civil partnership | | | ✓ | |
| | Pregnancy & maternity | | | ✓ | |
| | Race | | | ✓ | |
| | Religion or belief | | | ✓ | |
| | Sexual orientation | | | ✓ | |
| | Other (eg low income) | ✓ | | | |

| Question | Answer | Comments |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| <p>2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?</p> | No | |
| <p>3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?</p> | No | As a result of the proposal there will be a further mechanism to support the development and take up of learning opportunities across the delivery area (West Norfolk locality). |
| <p>4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</p> | Yes | The scheme will support NEET individuals. |
| <p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions?</p> <p>If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p> | No | <p>Actions:</p> |
| | | <p>Actions agreed by EWG member:</p> <p>.....</p> |
| <p>If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:</p> <p>Decision agreed by EWG member:</p> | | |
| <p>Assessment completed by:</p> <p>Name</p> | Tom Humphries | |
| <p>Job title</p> | Skills Policy Manager | |
| <p>Date</p> | 5 th September 2023 | |