

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND PROSPECTUS

STOKE-ON-TRENT



UK Government

POWERED BY
**LEVELLING
— UP —**



City of
Stoke-on-Trent



INTRODUCTION



Councillor Abi Brown
Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Pride in Stoke-on-Trent is really strong across its communities, local organisations and businesses.

It's incredible what can be achieved by working together with a shared ambition to improve lives and opportunities.

In the past few years, the city has experienced unrivalled economic and inclusive growth and has recently been recognized nationally as the second fastest growing economy post-recession. This reflects our bold ambition, already being demonstrated by successes such as the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone and the development of Smithfield, the city's Business District, soon to be home to 500 Home Office staff.

The government's Levelling Up funding has accelerated transformational regeneration schemes across the city and we are now delivering on these, creating local employment, apprenticeships and skills throughout the construction and on completion. We are also creating attractive places to live, work and enjoy.

Against this backdrop, local people must be front and centre. We need to ensure that as we create economic opportunities that our communities are ready to benefit from them. That means enhancing neighbourhoods and housing, good local infrastructure, opportunities for businesses to grow and providing support to get people into work.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is an opportunity to support community and business-based initiatives which address key issues faced by our City. This prospectus is intended to invite and guide interest for initiatives that will make a difference to places, productivity and life chances. Grants will be available under the themes of **communities and place**; **supporting local business**; and **people and skills** and we encourage joined-up approaches and collaboration.

I look forward to receiving your ambitious proposals and working with you to achieve future prosperity for this great city.

BACKGROUND

The UK Government recently announced the launch of the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the domestic successor to the European Structural Investment Funds.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has been assigned the role of 'Lead Authority' in coordinating the allocation of UKSPF and has already established a local Investment Board made up a wide range of partners from across the City. The Board has, as its initial duty, submitted its Investment Plan for the City which identifies the likely activities where investment and interventions are encouraged to take place.

The Government have identified three priorities eligible for Shared Prosperity Funding, these being:-

Communities and Place

The communities and place investment priority covers a wide range of local interventions, including public realm projects, community-led initiatives, and cultural and heritage projects.

Objectives

- To strengthen our social fabric and build on local pride through investment activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and access to amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green spaces.
- Building resilience through healthy and safe neighbourhoods, improvements to the built and natural environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

Supporting Local Business

The supporting local business investment priority will enable places to fund interventions that support local businesses to thrive, innovate and grow.

Objectives

- Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion
- Promoting business networking, stimulating innovation and growth
- Targeted support for SME's promoting innovation, productivity, energy efficiency and exporting.

People and Skills

This investment priority has two primary elements, employment support for economically inactive people and funding skills provision to provide people with the skills needed to progress in life and work, including supporting local areas to fund local skills needs. (The numeracy element of upskilling will be addressed via the associated Multiply Programme being rolled out in parallel to UKSPF)

Objectives

- Reducing levels of economic activity through tailored employment support, improving outcomes for people who face barriers in gaining employment
- Supporting individuals furthest from the labour market to overcome barriers to work, including access to basic skills
- Addressing gaps in local skills provision.



For each of the themes identified above there is a clear cross reference to the Levelling Up Missions, this 'linkage' is identified within the [City Council's UKSPF Investment Plan \(external link\)](#). Any proposed interventions will also need to consider the overarching Net Zero and Environmental ambitions of the Government and align, where relevant, to the Levelling Up Fund.

Under the Government's three investment themes the scope for potential projects is extremely broad and it is considered that there is a need to provide more focused guidance for prospective applicants in terms of where the City views its priorities to be. The identification of these local priorities is the core function of this prospectus and potential applicants are asked to consider whether or not their proposals align against these local priorities when they are deciding whether to apply into the fund.

As Lead Authority the City Council, through the City's UKSPF Investment Board, is charged with delivering the UKSPF programme, giving priority to those projects which best align to the local priorities as identified within this prospectus.

ALLOCATING THE CITY'S SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The UKSPF Programme is currently planned as a three-year programme with 2022/23 being year one. As can be seen from the table below the funding allocations increase over this three-year period, with year one's allocation being relatively small.

Funding Splits	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Stoke-on-Trent	£1,146,580	£2,293,160	£6,008,080	£9,447,820
Available amount – open round*	£1,046,903	£746,122	£4,642,897	£6,435,922

*Some of the above fund will be directly allocated to City Council priority projects.

The increase in funding over this three-year period takes into account the closure of the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund programmes which conclude in December 2023. **To avoid duplication during this period the Government have confirmed that the People and Skills priority only becomes eligible for spend within the 2024/25 financial Year.**

The exception being where third sector organisations have delivered either European Social Fund or Community Renewal Fund and could potentially suffer financially by not delivering a continuous employment and skills activity. Such organisations could therefore apply for funding under the skills and employment theme for the 2023/24 financial year.

Stoke on Trent City Council have submitted their Investment Plan to Government and received outline approval in early December. It is proposed that in order to provide a wide range of support to our residents this prospectus is launched and an Open Call for projects is initiated.

- Launch of Local Prospectus & Open Call – 14 February 2023
- Application Submission Deadline - 6 April 2023
- Submission Clarification – 10 April to 14 April 2023
- Applicants notified – 28 April 2023
- Anticipated project start date - 1 May 2023

In addition to addressing the priorities contained within this Stoke-on-Trent Prospectus, prospective applicants should ensure that their proposals are eligible with the criteria set out in the UKSPF prospectus and associated guidance. These can be found at [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK \(external link\)](#)



In addition, applicants are asked to take account of the following guiding principles:

- Project proposals should demonstrate alignment to the City Council's Powering Up Prospectus, as well as other strategic plans and policies.
- There are advantages if bids are 'scalable', primarily to ensure that the City Council maximizes the investment opportunity
- Applicants are encouraged to maximise impact and deliverability through financially larger projects where this is possible.
- Bids which respond holistically to issues or challenges, are encouraged.
- Bids need to evidence that the project complements existing activity where applicable and does not conflict with UK government policy.
- Bids must be able to evidence impact for multiple individuals, businesses or other organisations.
- The funding available is predominantly revenue however capital funding is eligible.
- Projects should demonstrate the extent of contribution to net zero objectives or wider environmental considerations
- Project applicants should consider equalities impacts.
- Projects must deliver in accordance with branding requirements set out in Fund Eligibility Rules and Guidance.
- Projects should meet the expectations for monitoring and evaluation.
- All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as per UK government guidance – as well as all other relevant legal obligations such as procurement.
- Interventions must be financially completed (i.e. all delivery activity concluded) by 31 March 2025.

SELECTION CRITERIA

As the Lead Authority, Stoke-on-Trent City Council will appraise all the applications in order to produce a summary of each scheme, these will then be forwarded to the City's UKSPF Investment Board, who will select the successful projects

The City Council's assessment will clearly have to take the Government eligibility guidance into account, however there will be a focus on the following;

Strategic fit

- Whether the proposal addresses the Priority Investment Themes as outlined within this local Stoke-on-Trent prospectus
- How the proposal aligns with local strategy, in particular addressing the issues raised within the [**Powering Up Prospectus \(external site\)**](#)
- How the project works alongside, supplementing existing provision.
- Providing good value for money in terms of outcomes against investment
- The extent to which the project demonstrates innovation in service delivery, through:
 - introducing new delivery approaches
 - integrated approaches across policy themes or
 - collaboration between partner organisations

Deliverability, effectiveness, and efficiency

- Confirmation that projects can be established, delivered and completed by the end of the programme.
- Project risks have been identified and are adequately mitigated
- The applicant sets out an efficient mode of delivery including an assessment of value for money taking account of the level of contribution to programme outputs for funding sought

LOCAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Gateway Checklist

The Government have established a set of criteria which has to be satisfied in order for projects to be considered, it is therefore prudent that this be applied at the local level.

Projects are therefore asked to ensure that:-

1. Project proposals will be delivered and all expenditure incurred by the end of programme date
2. Projects do not duplicate other national or local provision.
3. The project responds to the themes and needs identified in the Governments UKSPF Prospectus.
4. Projects will be delivered by a legally constituted organisation able to receive public monies.
5. Projects will be delivered in line with all subsidy control requirements
6. Projects will be delivered in accordance with the Governments branding guidelines.

Failure to satisfy this checklist is likely to prevent applications progressing.

Projects that are able to confirm that the above criteria can be met will then be considered at the local level. The Lead Authority will establish a specific appraisal panel to undertake the task of shortlisting applications, as noted above this will then be reported to the Investment Board.

Submissions to Stoke-on-Trent City Council will be scored at equal ratios on the following criteria.

Strategic Fit	Evidence (example)
How the project contributes to addressing the City's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Priorities.	Applicants are encouraged to utilise data which demonstrates how the issue being addressed will be impacted. How will the proposal address issues identified within the City Council's Powering Up Prospectus?
Deliverability	Evidence (example)
Clarification that all delivery can take place by programme end date Risks have been identified and addressed/mitigated.	Robust and realistic delivery milestones. Confirmation of recruitment and procurement activity. Risk assessment, with particular focus on delivery.
Value for Money	Evidence (example)
The City Council support the approach in encouraging larger scale projects which demonstrate real impact	The volume and quality of outcomes and outputs in comparison to the size of the funding being requested Projects are encouraged to convey the anticipated impact that their proposals will have within the City, including wider benefits and outcomes. The UKSPF fund is limited in terms of the activities it is designed to address, as a result, although not a requirement, any match funding will be viewed in a positive light.

STOKE-ON-TRENT'S PRIORITIES

This is a key section of the prospectus, it sets out, under each of the priority themes both the Government's priorities followed by what are considered to be key local priorities for the City of Stoke-on-Trent. Whilst applicants are able to submit applications which meet the Government's Guidance, applicants are encouraged to consider how their proposal can address the local priorities identified within both the Stoke-on-Trent Powering Up Prospectus and the priorities listed below. Ensuring that these local needs are met will clearly have some bearing on whether or not proposals make the shortlist of schemes that will eventually be put forward to UKSPF Investment Board.

Investment Priorities - Business Support

Government are interested in proposals for innovative projects that address local business and innovation needs. Bids may include, but are not limited to, interventions that address:

- **Supporting entrepreneurs and helping businesses with potential to create more job opportunities for current employees or take on new employees** – for example enabling access to specialist support, such as investor readiness schemes
- **Encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential** – for example facilitating small businesses to grow and to develop new and improved products and services by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing
- **Supporting decarbonisation measures** – for example encouraging local businesses and organisations to reduce greenhouse gases through investment in new technology or energy efficiency measures.



Stoke-on-Trent Priorities - Business Support

Applicants can apply for a single standalone project or a project that encompasses multiple elements

Supporting Businesses to Develop and Grow

Projects that assist both established SME's, Social Enterprise with a purpose and potential start-ups within Stoke on Trent to develop and grow their business. Examples could be workshops/ networking that will allow companies to improve governance and build resilience and to share knowledge, advice and guidance for both general and specific topics such as marketing, finance, skills and how to become a responsible business. To aid start-ups with a small grant/loan to aid the business launching along with a mentoring programme.

Supporting Businesses with Exporting

Projects that provide financial support and/or mentoring to SME's within Stoke on Trent to grow their business through exporting and networking with like-minded businesses. This could include but is not limited to grants/loans to assist attendance at International Trade Fairs, expertise to assist companies in completing export paperwork and mentoring to assist companies to be in a place where exporting can be realised, in addition to the current support provided by the Department of International Trade

Access to Finance

A project that will provide both financial support and guidance to SME's within Stoke on Trent to navigate and access financial assistance in order to grow their company. For example, Investor Readiness grants/loans that will provide funding towards investment plans that can be submitted to access investment support schemes such as Midlands Engine and the British Business Bank and training in finance and basic book keeping for smaller companies. Provide advice and guidance to assist companies to navigate the financial support packages available.

Support to Assist Businesses with Innovation

A project that will provide both financial support and mentoring to assist SME's within Stoke on Trent to encourage and promote innovation. Such as IPR strategy, proof of concept, product design and development, testing and a market strategy for new products and process and service. Promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing through examples such as networking groups and workshops This may include nurturing further join up between higher education institutions and small businesses

Supplier Development

Projects that will assist SME's within Stoke on Trent to grow their business through access to supply chain networks. For example, training courses that cover different procurement guidelines such as public sector, getting tender ready. Strengthening local supply chain networks through meet the buyer events.



Investment Priorities - Communities and Place

Government are interested in proposals for innovative pilots and projects that address community needs and support local places. Bids may include, but are not limited to, interventions that address:

- **Feasibility studies for delivering net-zero and local energy projects** – for example assessing opportunity and viability of green projects that contribute towards our green agenda or net-zero objectives
- **Exploring opportunity for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development** – for example investing in culture focused feasibility studies and community facilities to attract people to places
- **Improving green spaces and preserving important local assets** – for example enhancing natural assets, including green spaces in neighborhoods and housing estates, to enhance quality of life to attract and retain talent, and attract tourism.

Stoke-on-Trent Priorities - Communities and Place

Community Investment

Projects that aid the development of community cohesion, particularly where a focus for community engagement is lacking, stronger projects will deliver a range of outcomes which deliver benefits at the local level, particularly around health and well-being and skills.

Supporting Culture

Although the City has a wealth of cultural activity, finance to support this sector over recent years has been lacking. Cultural projects which deliver young people/community engagement, animate indoor and outdoor spaces and assist the City Council's current cultural provision are encouraged

Our Towns

High Streets have been under threat for a number of years yet remain a focus for community identity and the provision of services. Projects that support the transition of our town centres, creating safe and clean environments, or re-purposing existing assets that benefit our communities. This could be linked to the enhancement of a green space or community facility. Projects that celebrate the heritage of the city promoting identity and cohesion and those that support community life, promote inclusion through volunteering opportunities and support family development.

Encouraging visitors

The City has a varied range of tourist destinations within the City. Projects that will encompass campaigns to encourage visitors to explore the local area are encouraged.





Investment Priorities - Employment and Skills

Government are interested in proposals for innovative pilots and projects that focus on delivering bespoke programmes, utilising a needs-based approach to support individuals to overcome their multiple or complex barriers which inhibit their ability to gain employment.

- **Supporting people to engage with local services which support them on their journey towards employment** – such as bringing together multi-agency teams to join up a variety of services around an individual to address the variety of barriers to employment they may face.
- **Identifying and addressing any potential barriers these individuals may face in gaining employment or moving closer to the labour market** – such as the use of key-worker support to work with beneficiaries to identify barriers to employment.
- **Raising aspirations, supporting individuals to access Plan for Jobs employment support, jobs and find sustainable employment** – such as providing holistic support to address the long-term barriers to employment .
- **Supporting people to gain the basic skills they need to develop their potential for sustainable work** – such as English, Maths, Digital and English for Speakers of Other Languages skills and training courses.
- **Testing what works in helping people move towards work** – such as testing new initiatives which support people along the employment journey.
- **Work-based training** – for example addressing specific local need from local employers for on-the-job training to support local growth
- **Retraining, upskilling or reskilling members of the workforce** – for example support for relevant training where the local workforce may require new skills to meet the needs of a local employer or sector and support local economic transitions.
- **Promoting the advancement of digital skills and inclusion** – for example supporting the development of digital skills for digitally excluded individuals

Stoke-on-Trent Priorities - Employment and Skills

We are looking for projects that support the City Council's 14-25 strategy and the delivery of this

Supporting employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups

Projects that support care leavers and other disadvantaged groups such as ex-offenders, veterans and individuals with additional needs to move closer to the labour market by providing wrap around support to address the multiple barriers they face. This should include the opportunity to gain basic skills, employability support and pastoral support to address other barriers such as health, finance and housing barriers.

Youth Employment

Projects that support our young residents aged 16-24 with access to training and targeted employability support to assist them into employment. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected our younger residents and more support is needed for those residents who are aged 19+ and looking for employment.

Digital Inclusion

Projects that support digital inclusion in the city to support residents to improve their digital capability which will in turn improve their access to health and support services. There are individuals and families across the city that do not have access to a digital device and the internet. A particular focus on projects that can provide devices to individuals and families and provide basic digital skills training that will improve digital inclusion.

Apprenticeships

Projects that promote apprenticeships to businesses in Stoke-on-Trent and bring together all levy paying employers in the city to promote levy sharing to other businesses in the local area. This will provide one central hub where businesses can go to receive funding and co-ordinate the apprenticeship provision in the city.

Supporting those with long-term health problems into employment

Projects that support those with long-term health problems including mental health and those with additional needs into employment, including work readiness, development of personal character and resilience.

Sector-based academies

A project to encourage residents to skill, re-skill and up-skill in key growth sectors in the city. With a focus on short courses, CV workshops and interview techniques with guaranteed interviews with local employers to encourage residents into these roles. This will also support COVID-19 recovery, helping those who have lost their jobs or at risk of redundancy to find employment in other key sectors.

TO MAKE AN APPLICATION

A deadline of midnight on **6 April 2023** has been set for completed application forms to be returned back to the City Council, these need to be submitted to the following address ukspf@stoke.gov.uk

Due to the Government's tight deadline please ensure that all sections of the application form have been completed as there will be little opportunity for clarification.

Once the shortlisting exercise has been completed applicants will be informed as to whether or not their submissions have made the City Council's shortlist.

Officers within the City Council can be contacted to discuss applications and address any specific issues. A prospectus has been drafted by Government, a copy of which will be hosted on the City Council's website

UK Shared Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Please contact either mark.connell@stoke.gov.uk or angela.halls@stoke.gov.uk

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