

**Report to:** Lead Member for Economy

**Date of meeting:** 20 July 2022

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Multiply programme – East Sussex County Council Investment Plan submission

**Purpose:** To seek approval on the County Council’s Investment Plan submission to the Department for Education for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Multiply programme.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Consider and approve the proposed County Council Investment Plan bid (Appendix 1) for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Multiply programme which was submitted by the deadline of 30 June 2022; and**
- (2) Delegate responsibility to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport for overseeing the Multiply programme in line with the Investment Plan (Appendix 1) and financial spend proposal (Appendix 1 of an exempt report detailed in a later agenda item) as necessary to ensure the County Council’s roles and responsibilities as local lead Authority for the UKSPF Multiply programme are met.**

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## 1. Background Information

1.1 Alongside the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation to District and Borough Councils, the UK Government has committed £559 million of the UKSPF via the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver a national programme called Multiply aimed at improving the functional numeracy skills of adults aged 19+ who do not have a current Level 2 maths qualification.

1.2 The programme supports the Government’s Levelling Up White Paper and Skills for Jobs White Paper anticipating that by investing in formal and informal numeracy provision, people’s ability to use maths in their daily life, at home and work, will enable them to access employment, higher wages and higher-level training.

1.3 Upper Tier, Unitary and Combined Authorities have been invited to develop an Investment Plan (IP) for Multiply against a national menu of interventions to be delivered over three years from 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2025. The IP must be submitted by 30th June 2022. The UK Government will approve IPs from September 2022, when grant agreements will be put in place and payments made to Local Authorities.

1.4 East Sussex County Council can bid for up to a provisional maximum allocation of £2,523,000. No match funding is required. The Council can use up to 10% of the full allocation to cover administration of the programme over three years. The allocation is as follows:

|                        |          |
|------------------------|----------|
| April 2022-March 2023  | £763,000 |
| April 2023-March 2024  | £880,000 |
| April 2024- March 2025 | £880,000 |

1.5 The Council will be expected to deliver and commission projects to meet the following outcomes:

- More adults achieving maths qualifications (up to Level 2) and an increase in participation in numeracy courses.
- Improved labour market outcomes – fewer numeracy skills gaps reported by employers and an increase in the proportion of adults that progress into sustained employment and/or education.
- Increased adult numeracy across the population.

1.6 The UKSPF Multiply investment themes support all four of the County Council's core priority outcomes (i) driving sustainable economic growth; (ii) keeping vulnerable people safe; (iii) helping people to help themselves; and (iv) making best use of resources in the short and long-term and securing external funding as well as the Skills East Sussex priorities - Priority 4: Upskilling our workforce to increase regional productivity and Priority 5: Supporting the unemployed and unqualified.

## **2. Supporting Information**

### Mapping provision

2.1 The Employability and Skills Team have engaged with officers and external stakeholders to participate in a mapping exercise of current provision to identify the best options for using the funding in a targeted way to meet need. Feedback has been used to identify which of the ten interventions advocated in the Multiply Technical guidance, could be best applied locally.

2.2 All ESCC Departments will be actively involved in delivering the Multiply programme, to our own staff through internal training where maths needs are identified, as well as to our residents via our schools, libraries and community learning, and through support to families, care leavers and housed adults.

2.3 We have liaised with our Adult Education Budget (AEB) providers to ensure that any provision via Multiply would not duplicate their fully funded Level 2 maths offers.

2.4 District and Borough Councils have been consulted to ensure that the East Sussex Multiply Investment Plan is aligned with their Investment Plans for UKSPF, in particular with the People and Skills strand of the programme.

2.5 We have worked with our West Sussex and Brighton and Hove colleagues to ensure synergy with their proposed provision.

2.6 The DfE will be launching a national digital numeracy platform in autumn 2022 to provide adults with free online tutorials. Although the detail of the digital platform is unknown, the proposed IP aims to avoid duplication of the anticipated digital offer and once launched, we will ensure that the digital platform is integrated into local provision.

### Investment plan proposal

2.7 The Multiply IP (Appendix 1) sets out the provision that the County Council will seek to deliver both internally and by commissioning external partners to be 'project sponsors' through the creation of a Framework and tendering process. To summarise, the proposal will aim to deliver:

- Short employability skills programmes with embedded maths for the unemployed
- Taster learning modules with embedded maths for the unemployed in areas such as horticulture, catering, leisure to support our priority sectors
- Money management and budgeting provision, for those who need support – especially at the current time of inflation and economic hardship
- Certificated short courses that enable quick access to work with embedded maths – such as Construction Site cards, food hygiene, Care Certificate.
- Maths for parents – to enable them to upskill to be able to support their child's learning.
- Work based maths – offering bespoke packages of embedded maths to improve workforce numeracy, e.g., maths for safeguarding in care settings, quantity calculating in construction, digital/spreadsheet/understanding data maths, budgeting/financial maths for small-to-medium enterprise (SMEs).

2.8 All provision will be made available to Care Leavers, adults in supported housing, families supported by ESCC and ESCC staff will also be able to access free learning delivered internally. The number of participants supported will be determined at the start of each delivery year. An estimate has been provided in the Investment Plan.

#### Due diligence, grant agreements and monitoring

2.9 On receiving DfE approval of the IP in the Autumn of 2022, the Employability and Skills Team will establish an internal officer steering group including finance, legal and procurement to support the commissioning and delivery of the programme.

2.10 The following services will be required to support programme set up:

- Procurement – to support the establishment of a Framework and tendering process over the summer period, with the procurement process undertaken after the DfE approves the grant letter and issues the contract to ESCC.
- Legal – Review and signing of Grant Determination letter between DfE and ESCC, and in the preparation of Grant or Contract agreements with projects sponsors commissioned to undertake the delivery.
- Finance – to support the Multiply project management team with reviewing quarterly narrative monitoring reports against agreed outcomes as per the grant determination letter, before they are submitted to the DfE, and supporting the S151 validated spend reports and forecasts at mid-year in years 2 and 3 that will demonstrate how money has been spent in line with Multiply's aims.
- The Multiply Investment Plan includes 10% of the total allocation for project management and administration of the programme. This will enable the Employability and Skills Team to recruit a Project Manager and Project Officer to ensure successful implementation of the programme by internal delivery partners and commissioned service providers.

#### Risk/liability for ESCC

2.11 The delivery of the programme is based on performance against an agreed profile of expenditure and performance delivery in each given year. The full year one funding allocation is not likely to be spent as the Treasury has ruled that it has to be spent in year. Even if the IP is approved and the grant funding letter is received in September, ESCC will need to undertake a procurement process to determine which local stakeholders will deliver the interventions, and consequently delivery is unlikely to start before December 2022. This does not allow time to spend £763,000. Local stakeholders are likely to comprise Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE), Independent Training Providers and community organisations).

2.12 The DfE has clarified that underspend in year one will not be penalised as the DfE recognises that the timescales dictated by the Treasury are not realistic. A request has been made for them to reflect this in their grant letter.

2.13 In year two, underperformance could result in a reduced budget for year three. Therefore, careful management by the appointed Programme Manager, and a Framework approach to procurement, to enable additional delivery partners to be procured as required, will be important to mitigate risk. We anticipate that the framework will include a range of providers (FE, Independent Training Providers and grass root community organisations). This approach will enable us to commission additional delivery, should we identify potential underspend.

2.14 The Programme Manager will be responsible for identifying and completing a risk register and reporting on this to the steering group to ensure any risks to underperformance are responded to appropriately.

### **3. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The County Council has undertaken work to develop its Multiply Investment Plan to outline how it will deliver interventions to improve the numeracy of the county's adult residents.

3.2 It is recommended that the Lead Member for Economy approves and endorses the submission of the Multiply Investment Plan which includes the proposed management framework for the project (paragraph 2.7) and furthermore delegate responsibility for programme oversight to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to ensure the County Council's roles and responsibilities as local Lead Authority for UKSPF Multiply are met.

**RUPERT CLUBB**

**Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All members

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None