

OFFICER DECISION RECORD (ODR2)

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Date of Decision	12.08.2025
Decision Taker (including Job Title)	Phil Cresswell, Executive Director of Place
Specific Delegation	<p>Cheshire East Council Constitution Chapter 3 – Part 3 (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules: Supplementary Estimates) The relevant member of CLT may accept and approve successful grant application and the supplementary estimate to incur spending up to and including £250,000.</p> <p>Chapter 3, Part 4 (Finance Procedure Rules) 6.23 Bidding for Grant Funding. In the event that a grant application is successful, the decision-making process will follow that set out in Section 2 of the Finance Procedure Rules (Financial Management).</p>
Brief Description of Decision	<p>Accept the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) allocation for Cheshire East Council and approve a Supplementary Capital Estimate of up to £248,242.</p> <p>Delegate decisions to the Director of Growth and Enterprise to manage the Cheshire East REPF 2025-26 programme, taking all necessary actions in the interests of maximising the impacts of the fund aligned to the fund parameters and local priorities and aligned to the core UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.</p> <p>Approve the allocation of funding for the transition year 2025/26 to meet the REPF investment priorities of 'support for business', thriving places' and 'healthy, safe and inclusive communities' and the priorities of the Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022-2026 aligned to the following REPF</p>

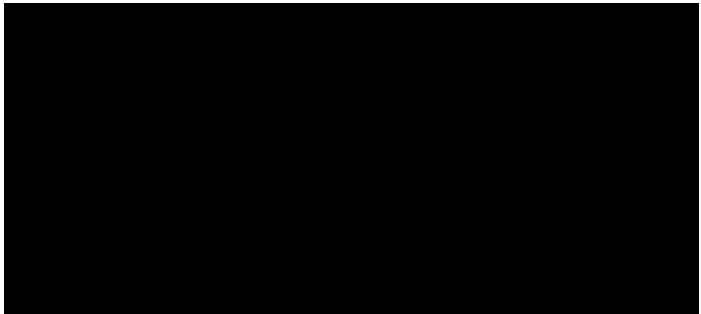
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	<p>interventions: small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas; the development and promotion of the visitor economy; investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups; investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.</p> <p>These interventions are detailed in the skeleton programme attached in Appendix A attached, which will be used as the basis of the forecast delivery tranche for the transition year 2025/26.</p> <p>Authorise the Head of Rural and Cultural Economy to agree and launch the grant scheme, noting that decisions to award individual grant applications will be made by the Visitor Economy, People and Communities and Economic Development teams aligned to the grant allocations set out in Appendix A and approval levels set out in Chapter 3 – Part 4: Section 4 of the Constitution, and that the launch will be publicised on the UKSPF web page of the Council’s website, notified to all UKSPF Local Partnership Group Members and Cheshire East members of the sub-regional Rural Strategy Group.</p>
Reasons for the Decision and alternatives considered	<p>The REPF is a rural top up to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), providing allocations for eligible local authorities in England to help address the additional needs and challenges facing rural areas. <u>Rural England Prosperity Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK</u></p> <p>The REPF supports the aims of the government’s Missions and Farming and Countryside Programme. It funds capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.</p> <p>The Rural Fund is integrated into the core UKSPF fund which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. The UKSPF has mapped interventions into mission-led themes across priority areas.</p>

	<p>The REPF will support 2 of the 3 UKSPF investment priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communities and place • supporting local business <p>For eligible local authorities, the Rural Fund is a rural top-up to UKSPF allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF.</p> <p>The Council is lead authority for the Cheshire East UKSPF transition year allocation and has been granted an amount of £248,242 REPF funding which is available for capital projects from April 2025 to March 2026.</p> <p>This funding should not replace funding plans for rural areas under the UKSPF. It is a top-up to help address the extra needs and challenges facing rural areas.</p> <p>Appendix A details the skeleton REPF programme for Cheshire East to meet the REPF investment priorities and interventions along with specific needs of the Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022-2026. This will be used as the basis of the forecast delivery tranche for the transition year 2025/26.</p> <p>Do Nothing – this option was thought inappropriate as funding for the transition year has already been released by MHCLG and allocated to Cheshire East REPF programme.</p> <p>An alternative approach would be to identify a single project to utilise the full funding allocation. However, it is important that a transparent, responsive and broad approach is taken to enable the REPF intervention priorities and specific needs in the Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022-2026 are met and aligned to deliver a balance of activities across rural Cheshire East.</p>
Member consultation and interests declared	<p>A report requesting acceptance of the UKSPF grant and providing detail on the CE UKSPF allocation went to Corporate Policy Committee on 6 February 2025 seeking delegated authority for Director of Growth and Enterprise to manage the Cheshire East UKSPF programme, taking all necessary actions in the interests of maximising the impacts of</p>

	<p>the fund aligned to the fund parameters and local priorities, including but not limited to allocation of remaining funds to specific interventions, and reallocation of funds and movement of revenue funds to capital if required. It was then taken to Full Council on 26 February 2025.</p>
Significant Decision	YES
Legal Implications	<p>The decision and delegations made by Corporate Policy Committee include authority for the Director of Growth & Enterprise to manage the UKSPF funding. This is a wide delegation and the proposed decisions with regard to the REPF fall within the remit of the delegation. It is noted that the utilisation of the REPF is being done in accordance with the Cheshire East Rural Action Plan 2022-2026. With regard to the proposed grants, Legal will support as required in the review and advising on the terms of the relevant grant documentation.</p> <p>Adrian Leslie - Lawyer Contracts & Procurement Team</p> <p>adrian.Leslie@cheshireeast.gov.uk</p> <p>9 July 2025</p>
Financial Implications	<p>The funding has been received and will be allocated to CAP-10491 and CAP-10492, existing codes within the capital programme.</p> <p>The funding is all capital and needs to be utilised in 2025/26 with delivery completed by 31 March 2026.</p> <p>The rules for spending the funds are less prescribed than the previous Rural SPF fund. Therefore, the service has some flexibility as to how they choose to allocate and spend it.</p> <p>As the funding is capital there is no ability to recover management and administration costs through it. Instead, some allowance will need to be made in the main UK SPF funding to cover for these costs. 4% would equate to approximately £10K.</p>

	Staffing costs can be recovered where they are material and integral to the delivery of the intervention that the funding is being used to support. Aaron Lecroy, Principal Accountant, 10 July 2025
Confidential/Exempt Information	N/A
Background Papers	See attached Appendix A: Cheshire East Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) 2025-2026 Grant Scheme

Signed 

Dated12.08.2025.....