

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

Roger Gough, Leader of the Council

**DECISION NO:**

21/00042

**For publication**

**Key decision: YES**

**Subject Matter / Title of Decision**

UK Community Renewal Fund - Bid submission

**Decision:**

As Leader of Kent County Council, I agree :

- to finalise and submit to the Government one shortlist of UK Community Renewal Fund bids per district.
- that KCC will act as the accountable body for projects within Kent's geographical boundaries that are selected by the Government to receive UK Community Renewal Fund
- Delegate the authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to sign on KCC's behalf a grant offer letter or equivalent, where this is required to draw down funds following the award of funding by the UK Government.
- Delegate the authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to approve the transfer of funding to third-party project promoters, whose bids are successfully awarded funding by the UK Government.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The decision is required to enable bids to be submitted to Government, so that funding may be secured from the new UK Community Renewal Fund.

**Background: The UK Community Renewal Fund (UK CRF)**

The Chancellor announced the creation of a new Fund, called the UK Community Renewal Fund, in his budget statement in early March 2021.

The UK Community Renewal Fund, which will run in 21/22 only, is a UK Government (MHCLG) programme worth £220m. This new fund aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches to prepare for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

By 18 June 2021, the Government is seeking project proposals from any legally constituted organisation (be they from the public, private, voluntary or community sector) that will:

- Invest in skills
- Invest for local businesses

- Invest in communities and place, and/or
- Support people into employment.

Projects should also contribute towards the Government's net-zero carbon objectives, and demonstrate that they are innovative pilot projects that will help shape, mould, and influence the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is expected to be rolled-out from 2022 onwards, and will replace EU funding streams.

The UK Government has included the four districts of Canterbury, Gravesham, Swale and Thanet within its 100 priority places for the deployment of this Fund across the UK – yet the Fund's prospectus makes clear that bids could be accepted from every single district within the UK, and that multi-district bids are also eligible to apply. However, it will be more difficult for projects predominantly operating in districts not on the priority list, to secure funding when the Government assesses the projects and makes its final funding award decision.

Full details about the fund are available at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus> and
- [www.kent.gov.uk/ukcommunityrenewalfund](http://www.kent.gov.uk/ukcommunityrenewalfund)

### **Kent County Council's role**

The Government has designated County Councils (such as KCC) and Unitary Authorities as the lead authorities for administering the call for UK CRF projects on its behalf.

The UK Government has instructed lead authorities to undertake these tasks:

- Invite bids from a range of Project Applicants, including but not limited to universities, voluntary and community sector organisations, and umbrella business groups.
- Undertake constructive engagement with local partners, including but not limited to lower tier local authorities and elected representatives, and other public, private and third sector organisations.
- Collaborate with other Lead Authorities or partners across the UK where relevant – for example to promote cross-border project opportunities that address needs in common or achieve efficient delivery scale.
- Appraise and prioritise a shortlist of projects up to a maximum of £3m per place (i.e. per district).
- Submit a shortlist to UK Government (by no later than 18 June) who will assess the proposals and select projects based on the criteria set out in the UK Community Fund Prospectus.
- Enter into a funding agreement with UK Government to deliver any successful bids.
- Issue agreements to successful bidders once funding has been agreed by the UK Government, and then undertake monitoring and assurance activity.

### **Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

#### **Consultation:**

- Information about the fund has been published on [www.kent.gov.uk/ukcommunityrenewalfund](http://www.kent.gov.uk/ukcommunityrenewalfund) for prospective applicants to see.
- A KCC press release was issued, alongside social media activity.
- Nineteen workshops and meetings were held with prospective applicants. The workshops and meetings were open to all interested parties. Email enquiries were also responded to.
- A presentation about the opportunity was given to the Kent & Medway Business Advisory Board.
- Information about the opportunity was circulated publicly and disseminated through existing email networks. Local partners were asked to disseminate the call for projects as widely as possible during the pre-election period, and include details in their press releases and newsletters. Specifically, local partners included local authorities (district council leaders,

CEOs, and economic development officers and officers with contacts to the voluntary and community sector), business membership organisations (e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors), and skills forums (e.g. the Employment Taskforce, and the Kent Association of Training Organisations).

- As part of the assessment process, constructive engagement took place with local partners. A local stakeholder evaluation panel was held in every district between 10<sup>th</sup> May and 21<sup>st</sup> May, with the respective Member(s) of Parliament, the District Council Leader, the District Council Chief Executive, a Further Education Sector Representative, a Kent & Medway Growth Hub Representative, a Kent & Medway Economic Partnership business representative, a Voluntary and Community Sector representative, and a Kent Environment Board representative invited to attend. The local stakeholder panels are being consulted on the strategic fit of the projects, specifically whether the project aligns with local need, has evidence of local support, and addresses the investment priority within their geography. The views of the local stakeholders, coupled with the independent assessment of the project's deliverability, effectiveness and efficiency by a consultancy, helped inform the shortlisting decision.

**Cabinet Committee Consultation:**

Full details on the fund were published by the UK Government on 16<sup>th</sup> March, as Kent County Council entered into the pre-election period. As a result of this, the views of local members could not be sought before the election, nor were there any Cabinet Committee meetings scheduled between mid-March and the election, where details could be shared about the new Fund.

An update will be given at the next Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee meeting

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

The options available to Kent County Council were:

- Do nothing, or
- To advertise the fund, invite applications, shortlist the bids by district, and submit these shortlists to the Government for their consideration.

The 'do nothing' option was discarded, as the prospective investment of UK Government funding would benefit for Kent's communities, business and residents.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

None



10 June 2021

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signed

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date