

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

DECISION NO:

24/00103

For publication**Key decision: YES****Subject Matter / Title of Decision:** Governance Arrangements for Growing Places Funding

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Economic Development I agree to:

- LAUNCH a new round of the Growing Places Fund (GPF) capital loan-based funding programme for Kent;
- APPROVE the new governance arrangements for managing the GPF programme;
- ACT as the accountable body for projects within Kent’s geographical boundaries that are to receive GPF loan funding; and
- DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take relevant actions including but not limited to entering contracts and/or other legal agreements as necessary to implement the decision

Reason(s) for decision:

The Growing Places Fund was established by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport in 2011 to unlock economic growth, create jobs and build houses and help ‘kick start’ development at stalled sites. GPF was distributed to Local Enterprise Partnerships, with the mandate to use their local knowledge to use the funding to grow the local economies. For Kent and Medway this was the South East LEP (SELEP). In August 2023, the Government confirmed that it had decided that all functions of LEPs were to be transferred back to local authorities from April 2024. The dissolution of SELEP means that new governance arrangements for GPF in Kent must be agreed prior to launching a new funding round.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision was considered and endorsed by the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 22 January 2025.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Returning the funding to central government and not running a new GPF scheme. This was discounted as it would miss a significant opportunity to allocated recycled loan funding to new schemes in Kent in support of economic growth.

Retaining the funding for KCC to use for economic growth programmes (such as No Use Empty commercial) rather than enabling external organisations to apply for funding. This option was discounted as KCC-run schemes and programmes can still apply for the new round of GPF (and will be encouraged to do so) but other strategically important projects promoted by partners and stakeholders will also be able to apply for funding to propose projects that contribute to the priorities of the Kent & Medway Economic Framework. All the GPF projects (both internal and external) will have the same ambition, which is to boost economic growth through the realisation of new jobs, learners, houses, or commercial floorspace.

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

None

DP Murphy

23 January 2025

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signed

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date