

BASILDON BOROUGH UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) Investment Panel

Meeting #1 - Friday 27th May – 9.00 - 11.00am

Present:

Jim Sims – Basildon Council	Sean McGinn – Clarion Futures
Cllr Andrew Baggott – Basildon Council	Robert Bishop – Natural England
Cllr Anthony Hedley – Basildon Council	Steve Parry – Essex Police
Paul Brace – Basildon Council	Carey Jacobs – Palmers Solicitors
Cllr Tony Ball – Essex County Council	Andy Mead – Finishing Line
Jade Uko - FSB	David Barnes – Basildon Business Group & Bitsolve
Chris Murphy – Things Made Public	Louise Aitken – SELEP (Skills)
Kevin Garrod – Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust	Felix Achonu – Basildon Side by Side
Simon Johnson – Basildon, Billericay & Wickford CVS	Rebecca Jones – Essex County Council
Matthew King – Trustlinks	Russell Dalton – Essex County Council Localities Lead
Cllr Jim Devlin – Billericay Parish Council	Denise Brown – South Essex College
Has Ozbeyhun – DWP	Benjamin Yates – John Baron’s Office
Cllr Bernard Foster – Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Council	

Action Notes:

- **Jim Sims – Introduction & Scene Setting:**

Jim set out the principle of the context of UKSPF and the principle of the meeting. The primary focus of this meeting is to develop and oversee the Basildon Borough UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, and discuss what we need to fund to address the key challenges which we have identified. The Governments submission deadline is 1st August, and the target for agreeing the plan is mid-July. There is a layered sign off process, requiring agreement from the local MP, Leader of the Council and panel itself.

One of the key principles is to publish the details and outcomes of these meetings on the Basildon Council website, so our discussions have full transparency. **The Group was in agreement with this proposal.**

Action 1: JD to come back at next meeting to present update

- **Short list of interventions and discussion of possible priorities:**

Basildon has been allocated £1.2million of UKSPF funding over 3 years. This equated to roughly £400k per pillar and, divided over 3 years, £130k per pillar, per year. The funding is equivalent to EU Funding, and Jim asked the group to think about how this could be used to either re-commission the services that are needed (a local business growth hub service), or re-shape where these services aren’t performing well.

The preference appears to be for fewer, larger projects, with the majority of the funding being allocated for revenue activity, and only a small amount available for capital. The People & Skills intervention would not be funded until 2024/25, although a case could be made for early intervention, though that would need to be through the voluntary community sector, employability support model rather than the in workforce model.

RD raised information about the additional funding pot called Multiply, which was a fund being delivered by Essex County Council, worth £7.9 million over 3 years with an aim to improve basic numeracy skills across the county.

SM suggested there was crossover with all 3 areas, and suggested looking at projects that could combine all 3. JS noted that this may come down to the compatibility of some of the outputs, **Jim suggested the discussion around outputs was pushed to the next meeting.**

DB asked whether health outcomes were included. JS the health framework is largely covered off in the interventions around participation in sport. JD referred to the Place and Communities theme, and stressed that Basildon have three towns, and that many people don't recognise Basildon (as a borough) as being an entity in its own right, there is a lot of local pride around places like Billericay and Wikford for example.

RB raised the importance of retaining green jobs and green skills, which could potentially link with all three. MK asked, as we had a limited pot, how this could be cross referenced with other funding, e.g. LDP, DWP. Andrew Baggott stressed the need to leave a legacy through this funding, and ensure we take the public with us on the journey.

ACTION 2: Louise Aitken to share (via Jim) the list of current EU funded projects with the group, focussing on skills. Jim would then add BBO and National Lottery funded projects to this list.

BF stated there are lots of rural areas in the borough, and some of the children in these rural areas may be somewhat disadvantaged as they don't have a local school, and some interventions should be aimed at the school aged. JS responded that this was disappointing within the prospectus, that it did not touch on inspiring young people into future careers, which would have filled a gap left by ESF funding which stated monies couldn't be used to fund interventions for under fourteens.

- **Process for Collaboration:**

JS we are required to set out our process for collaboration, both as an investment panel, but also with other local authorities, within the investment plan.

JU strongly favoured co-commissioning within the business space.

ACTION 3: Jim to look into the existing business support programmes, and how they are funded, and report back to the group.

ACTION 4: Jim to report back on how the process would work around collaboration with other investment panels, once provided by Government.

Paul Brace gave the LDP as an example of successful collaboration in the region, with various agencies. There is clear evidence to show health outcomes have improved in Basildon as a result of the LDP, unlike lots of areas of Essex. Paul added that given the short timescales for the UKSPF funding, that consideration could be given to boosting existing, grassroots projects that are performing well, such as those linked to LDP. Jim agreed and responded that we will likely have to submit the plan based on a number of outputs and interventions that we think we want to deliver, rather than get into detailed conversations with aspirant sponsors around individual interventions.

Cllr Ball noted North Essex Economic Partnership was a board that we could potentially bring in, when thinking of collaborations with other parts of Essex. He added that MP's are expected to get their constituents support for allocation of the funding, and this may prove challenging with an Essex wide project.

Cllr Baggott and Simon Johnson spoke about a TED (aspirational talks and motivational speakers) bid linked to the CVS that recently failed. Cllr Baggott was very keen on the idea of TED, and wanted to see something that was similar to this type of intervention, badged as Basildon. Jim responded that the Youth Card, that has been recently launched in Basildon may be a way of delivering a TED-like offering to residents, this could be built on.

- **Timetable:**

Jim set out the timetable up until the July submission date. There would be three virtual meetings between now and July with Jim, and other members of the panel, doing some work in between to try and bring forward proposals for consideration. There is some work going on across South Essex, and a Task and Finish Group is taking place on 7th June, and 28th June to explore those ideas further. Jim is working in the background with the Basildon Chief Exec, Scott Logan, to bring together the project ideas and coalesce, using the framework set out.

The target submission date was 25th July, after MP's approval, but Jim was open to organising additional meetings in July, if there was a need.

ACTION 5: Jim to provide detail to set out the group will be involved in the commissioning and overseeing the delivery

The Terms of Reference were circulated to the group, and there were no objections with the contents of the ToR. Jim asked anyone with any comments or suggestions to follow up with him after the meeting. **There was agreement from the group for the Terms of Reference, along with the membership details and meeting notes, to be published on the Basildon Council website.**

Chair and Vice Chair- Jim would seek to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair following the meeting, through discussion and collaboration. They would be in place before the next meeting.

- **Priorities discussion:**

In displaying the list of possible interventions within each priority area, there were 41 potential interventions, for £1.2 million, so Jim had analysed the feasibility of each intervention, in an effort to cut them down. The thinking around each priority was as follows:

Communities & Place

The core challenge would be around funding for capital infrastructure and physical regeneration improvements, which we were severely limited by funding (£200k). There was a need to strengthen social fabric, foster a sense of pride, and build resilient self and happy, healthy neighbourhoods. The greatest potential may be around supporting existing community-focussed programmes and projects, for example the CPP programme looking at supporting the local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

Communities & Place – Possible shortlist of interventions (2)

Thrust	Possible Interventions	Implied Outputs/Outcomes		Comments
		Capital	Revenue	
VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS	E2: Funding for new, or improvements to existing, community and neighbourhood infrastructure projects including those that increase communities' resilience to natural hazards, such as flooding. This could cover capital spend and running costs.	√	√	Insufficient capital funding allocation to be able to improve/create new facilities (alone or in collaboration). May be an option to support vol/comm sector organisations with grants for events and activities.
	E9: Funding for impactful volunteering and/or social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places.		√	Understand there are lots of volunteering schemes currently being supported. Is there a market gap?
	E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.	√	√	Revenue and micro grant emphasis might allow for a wide range of organisations to be supported. Could also potentially support infrastructure organisations.
COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING FOR REGENERATION	E12: Investment in community engagement schemes to support community involvement in decision making in local regeneration.		√	Revenue funding to build the capacity of local communities to get involved in local regen schemes (i.e., BIDs, Community Ownership Fund etc.). Could be a route for developing larger funding applications.
PROMOTION OF COST SAVING MEASURES	E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.		√	Outputs imply revenue (promotion only). No funding to subsidise capital costs. Do the poorest in society really have the funds to invest?
FEASIBILITY STUDIES	E14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.		√	Significant current funding gap to enable the development of larger scale bids (Levelling Up Funding, Cultural Development Fund etc.)
COMMUNITY BROADBAND GRANTS	E15: Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.	√	√	Insufficient capital funding to deliver large scale infrastructure investment (alone or in collaboration). Voucher based broadband voucher scheme is a possibility.

Diversity and inclusion should be prioritised. There are recent reports showing an areas Growth is directly correlated to increases in diversity in the borough.

It may be challenging to deliver large scale interventions, active travel enhancements for the area talks about the meters of cycle paths and pathways created well with £200,000. In addition it may be difficult to fund local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues again really challenging capital for sports facilities. But the output around tournaments, teams and leagues, support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions, we could potentially deliver.

There is a need to support new and emerging creative and cultural industries, but any enterprise start-up intervention would need to sit under the 'Supporting Local Businesses' theme.

RJ found the RAG rating useful, but said we should be asking what are the Basildon priorities. Secondly, which of these will give us the greatest impact vs the amount of investment we are putting into them.

JD noted that some of the town councils are interested in BIDs (Business Improvement Districts), namely Wickford and Billericay. There is a heritage angle to build on, both with Billericay (Mayflower), but also Laindon (Saint Nicolas Church), and Pitsea. There could be the potential to pull all of these pieces together to create the 'sense of place'.

Cllr Baggott asked whether projects that could generate revenue funding could be permitted, and then seconded the importance to building up the heritage and sense of place point.

CM raised a point around community ownership models, which could be around talent supporting town centre businesses to work together in order to kind of have partnerships that gives greater ownership over high streets, similar to BID structures. TK added that we should look to make the most of the creative assets that we have, even around the New Town there is a story that can be told through workshops etc, working with stakeholders.

RB green social prescribing in terms of health and wellbeing, looking at making use of existing green spaces but kind of getting people out and connecting those people with nature. These interventions can generally be done at low cost.

Cllr Baggott a point he often hears from local businesses is the struggle around workforce, and the engagement between young people and business specifically. He notices a failing in the support mechanism of how young people transition from college or sixth form into the working environment. There's a lack of confidence in youth. They don't often get signposted. One solution may be to create a Youtube channel, or way of engaging with the young people in a more accessible way.

KG mentioned a new, unpublished report they received about the lived experiences of staff that work and live in Basildon Hospital. There was an overriding concern about safety of the surrounding areas including the Town Centre at night time, specifically issues around lighting.

ACTION 6: Kevin to share report with Jim

Interactive Poll 1- Top 3 Priorities for Communities & Place theme

The results of the poll were:...

Supporting Local Business

A strong economy is vital to the wealth of the borough and creating employment. Jim set out the broad range of business challenges currently being faced. There are large scale economic challenges within businesses, not just in Basildon but across the UK (high levels of debt, rising costs post COVID, inflationary pressures etc). *People are saying they're really struggling to find good people. CVLS and insolvencies are increasing change consumer behaviours are impacting on some key sectors on our town centres, we've got low level of independent retail, particularly Basildon Town centre. 41% of independent retail higher in Billericay and in Wickford.*

AM the biggest challenge he is seeing is with people, and specifically linked to wage inflation at the moment. He fears this is not sustainable for supply chain and customers. Finishing Line have been trying to give people another reason to come into work and looking to raise aspirations.

Cllr Ball noted that because of the emphasis on revenue, we would not be able to build buildings, but we could look to map empty spaces in and around our town centres which could be used for business incubation, voluntary services and similar.

Jim noted the [Meanwhile Basildon](#) website had been set up to try and help facilitate this.

BF spoke of the high cost of solar panels in relation to energy efficiency, which could put some businesses off investing. "If we could encourage or assist people to actually develop the products and then the actual allow people to do fit the do the basic fittings themselves".

SJ there needs to be a stronger connection between business and voluntary sector. There are lots of employment related schemes but it can be challenging to navigate. Could we fund an organisation that could connect business and voluntary sector with these schemes?

Interactive Poll 2- Top 3 Priorities for Supporting Local Business

The results of the poll were:...

People and Skills

All of the proposed interventions in this theme were potentially doable, as they weren't dependant on capital.

People and Skills - Possible shortlist of interventions (1)

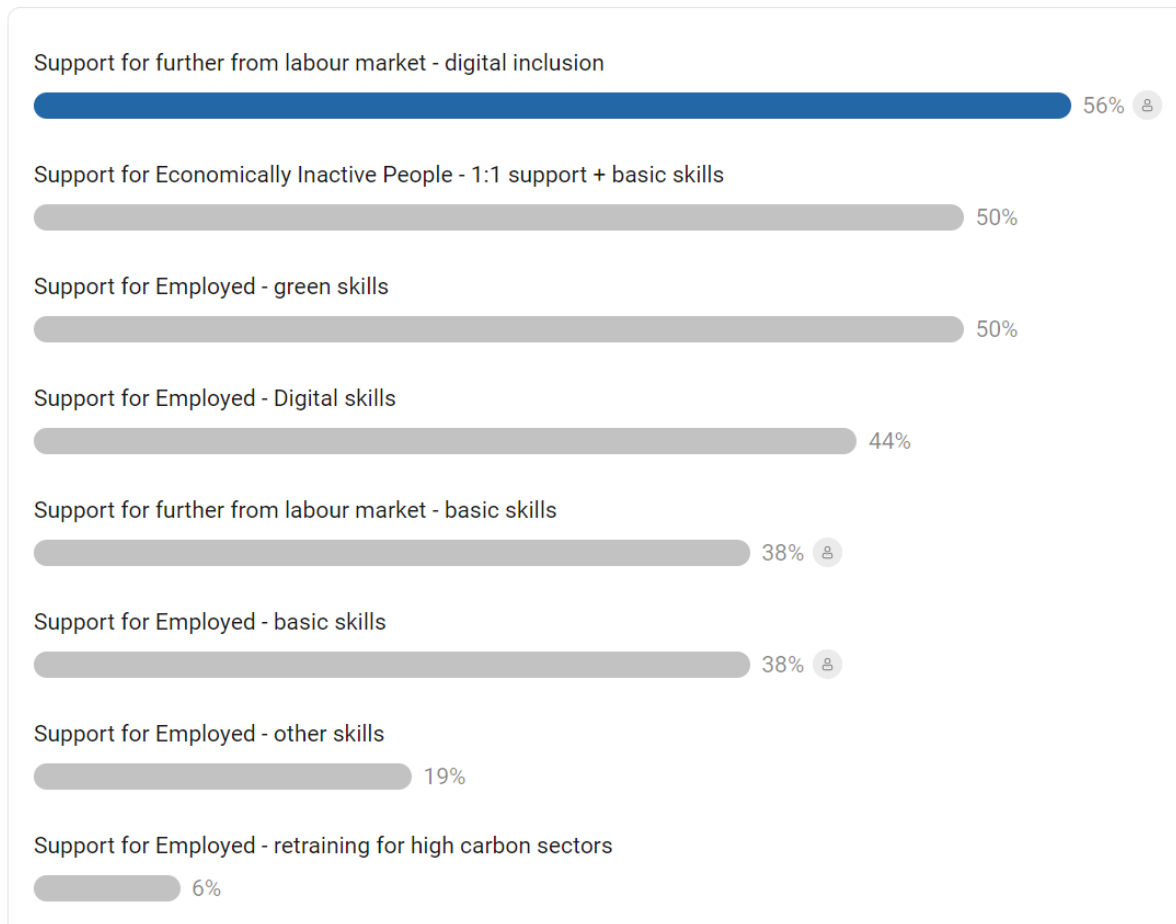
Thrust	Possible Interventions	Implied Outputs/Outcomes		Comments
		Capital	Revenue	
SUPPORTING ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE PEOPLE TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO WORK THROUGH TAILORED 1:1 SUPPORT & BASIC SKILLS	E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-to-one support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps. This provision can include project promoting the importance of work to help people to live healthier and more independent lives, alongside building future financial resilience and wellbeing. Expected cohorts include, but are not limited to people aged over 50, people with a disability and health condition, women, people from an ethnic minority, young people not in education, employment or training and people with multiple complex needs (homeless, care leavers, ex/offenders, people with substance abuse problems and victims of domestic violence)	√	√	There will always be a requirement to provide employability support for economically inactive people. These types of services are likely to be delivered by the voluntary/community sector and be relevant for early intervention.
	E34: Courses including basic skills (digital, English and ESOL), and life skills and career skills* provision for people who are unable to access training through the adult education budget or wrap around support detailed above. Supplemented by financial support for learners to enrol onto courses and complete qualifications. Beyond that, this intervention will also contribute to building community cohesion and facilitate greater shared civil pride, leading to better integration for those benefitting from ESOL support. *where not being met by DWP	√	√	There will always be a requirement to deliver basic skills provision. Evidence suggests ESOL, digital and English likely to be in demand (Maths resolved through Multiply)
SUPPORTING PEOPLE FURTHEST FROM THE LABOUR MARKET THROUGH ACCESS TO BASIC SKILLS	E35: Activities such as enrichment and volunteering to improve opportunities and promote wellbeing.	√	√	An already busy market place. Plenty of provision already available?
	E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.	√	√	There will always likely be a requirement for digital skills for inclusion.
	E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses	√	√	Emphasis appears to be on basic skills for employed people. Likely again to emphasise ESOL, English & Digital
SKILLS TO PROGRESS IN WORK AND TO FUND LOCAL SKILLS NEEDS	E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to level 2 and training for vocational licences relevant to local area needs and high value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that cannot be met through mainstream funding	√	√	Could possibly modules or part courses, orientated towards the needs of the local labour market.
	E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.	√	√	Could be skills for emerging technologies - hydrogen, retrofit installation etc, although need to be aware of current standards.
	E40: Retraining support for those in high carbon sectors.	√	√	Could be skills provision to manage transition to net-zero technologies.
	E41: Funding to support local digital skills.	√	√	Digital skills for employed people to progress.

KG raised a point that the mindset among some around it being better off to claim benefits that work, changing because of the current economic crisis. "But also I think we need to be mindful that the downside of what's going on now is even further downside might be a significant recession with growing unemployment".

DB one of the biggest challenges will be to get people who are already in work to upskill. "To get a higher level job, I think there were plenty of minimum wage jobs around and there are lots of vacancies at higher skill levels as well. So I think it's about how do we get people to continue training once they've started work so that the economy can grow and we have been significant difficulties engaging people with that higher level skills training. So we'd really love to work with initiatives such as this to get local people to continue their training and stay in learning". Denise added there has recently been a positive change in the Government changing rules to allow organisations (like SEC) to deliver work based training to retain people.

ACTION 7: Denise to share further details with Jim on this funding, for him to circulate with the group

Clr Hedley added that we need to talk to schools and academies around raising aspirations, and the willingness to work. "We need to get 14 and 15 year olds involved in what the opportunities are for employment in the borough and the type of jobs and apprenticeships that are available.



Chat comments:

Louise Aitken - SELEP Skills Lead: Most ESF continues to the end of this year / early 2023 so there may be a gap in provision after that

Collaboration in skills would be welcomed - north Essex districts utilised the SELEP/ ECC framework for CV19 Skills funds and this has proved effective. I am sure providers would welcome this also

Simon Johnson (Relating to TED conference): We recently applied and was unfortunately rejected. We are keen to reapply which can be achieved independently. Its quite low cost. Their terms are quite vague and challenging though. I'm keen to discuss outside of this meeting. chiefofficer@bbwcvcs.org.uk

Jade Uko: In terms of business advice support services and skills there is going to be little difference in terms of need specification at place. That is why collaboration makes sense to maximise support, pool resource but crucially also to strategise.

Rebecca Jones: There's something for me about collaboration, that doesn't necessarily mean joint commissioning of services. But as some others have alluded to, how we integrate the aspiration of this work with existing programmes of work and how this could either compliment or enhance

David Barnes: would be good to try and seed some BID's across the district as these would multiply the funding, should deliver pride of place and increase the net worth of the area.

(comment on TOR) Business support providers: ?are we not including the current delivery partner (BEST growth hub). whilst they may be withering and may die. they may help us prioritise and or could be a simple delivery partner to achieve goals for us

Matthew King: E3: You could fund revenue for staff to support community gardens and development of green spaces - does not necessarily rely on lots of capital

E9: I understand there is a bit of a shortfall in the Volunteering Futures project. Would be worth talking to Ruth Heritage about this (guess Chris Murphy may know)

Louise Aitken - SELEP Skills Lead: There's an existing ESF Community Grants programme (up to £20k) which currently has low take up so be great to raise awareness to 'test the market' for this - <https://www.londonlc.org.uk/community-grants/south-east-lep/>

Robert Bishop: Small pots of "seedcorn funding" can be really effective for getting community-based projects up and running. Could a small project fund be considered to support community led nature-based projects in Basildon?

Matthew King: Could the funding be used to help broker a larger bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund?

David Barnes response: would love to see a larger project with Lottery & arts council to bring an Art and Technology museum into the town centre. It HAS to be big enough to achieve critical mass and has to be central to the transport link. Would look to see linkup with the science museum local global innovators etc..BAT - Basildon Art & Technology museum

Chris Murphy response: The long game of this would be to work towards a Cultural Development Fund application, working towards feasibility of something like this

ACTION: Chris to have offline conversation with David about this

Simon Johnson: We have a big gap for Micro Volunteering. Simple opportunities where people can easily contribute. We need to improve relations between the business and voluntary sector with better Employer related volunteering opportunities - sharing skills and resources - upskilling people. There is very little in these areas.

Denise Brown: I was a member of the Stoke on Trent Opportunity Board and a real winner for that Board was to combine community based small grants so that every local area felt some impact alongside investment in a couple of big sustainable activities that supported Stoke on Trent macro ambitions.

Rebecca Jones: There is a physical activity social prescribing manager in Essex, that we could encourage to link into any green space initiative. But I would certainly agree and encourage green space development, for health both mental and physical (air quality)

Louise Aitken: Creating a tangible link between jobs on offer locally and skills needed is vital - and making training easy to access/ utilising what's already there

David Barnes: I have some detailed ideas on basic skills training for SME and larger that are CBT delivered and are enablers to the business to achieve more

Andrew Baggott: Not being critical, but last survey seemed to omit support/training for vocational or those wanting to be self employed and skills for existing self employed/entrepreneurs