

BASILDON BOROUGH UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) Investment Panel

Meeting #2 – Wednesday 29th June 2022

Minutes

<p>Present:</p> <p>Jim Sims – Basildon Council</p> <p>Cllr Bernard Foster – Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Parish Council</p> <p>Chris Murphy – Things Made Public</p> <p>Cllr Jim Devlin – Billericay Parish Council</p> <p>Andy Mead – Finishing Line</p> <p>Tomasz Kozlowski – Basildon Council</p> <p>Robert Bishop – Natural England</p> <p>Hephzi Angela – GHScientific</p> <p>Claire Lumby – representative for John Baron MP</p> <p>Jade Uko – FSB</p> <p>Russell Dolton – Essex County Council</p> <p>Paul Brace – Basildon Council</p> <p>Sandra Valentine – Job Centre Plus DWP</p> <p>Felix Achonu – Basildon Side by Side</p> <p>Cllr Tony Ball – Essex County Council</p> <p>Kevin Garrod – Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Cllr Anthony Hedley – Basildon Council</p> <p>Denise Brown – South Essex College</p> <p>Matthew King – Trustlinks</p> <p>Simon Johnson – Basildon, Billericay & Wickford CVS</p> <p>Jim Devlin - Billericay Parish Council</p> <p>Rosie Powley – Basildon Council (minutes)</p>	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Chris French – Essex County Council</p> <p>Louise Aiken - SELEP</p> <p>Has Ozbeyhun – DWP</p> <p>Sean McGinn – Clarion Futures</p> <p>Steve Parry – Essex Police</p> <p>Carey Jacobs – Palmers Solicitors</p> <p>David Barnes – Basildon Business Group & Bitsolve</p> <p>Louise Aitken – SELEP (Skills)</p> <p>Rebecca Jones – Essex County Council</p> <p>Benjamin Yates – John Baron’s Office</p>
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1. Welcome and Introductions

Jim welcomed the panel members to the meeting and set out the key purpose of the meeting - to provide an update to the group to date on the UKSPF and to agree a set of final priority interventions which will be developed further following the meeting. The key issues to address include:

1. Agree the final interventions, outputs & outcomes we want to prioritise to address the identified challenges we feel exist
 - Review discussions at UKSPF Panel Meeting #1 (and follow-up discussions)
 - Review analysis of current (and future potential) market gaps
 - Review discussions with other LA's about possible collaboration opportunities
 - Review evidence base of core challenges and opportunities the plan is seeking to address
2. Develop clear understanding of the bespoke interventions we want to propose
 - Agree aspiration to develop bespoke interventions
 - Agree proposed 'theory of change' underpinning the plan
3. Start to discuss some of the principles of funding defrayal
 - Discuss processes we propose for commissioning and selecting projects
 - Discuss how we will ensure compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
 - Discuss and agree potential high-level risks
 - Agree our proposals to support the ongoing delivery of UKSPF
 - Agree our approach to Administration and Overheads

The proposed budgets and budget allocations will be covered in the next UKSPF Meeting (19/07/22 9.00-11.00pm).

2. Review of Minutes

Members of the Panel agreed minutes from previous meeting.

Members of the Panel agreed for minutes to be published on The Basildon Council website for transparency.

3. Nomination of Chair & Vice Chair

Call to action for group members to email Jim Sims directly to volunteer for Chair and Vice Chair roles.

4. Feedback from recent consultations and 1:1 meetings

Jim Sims presented feedback from some of the discussions that were had at the first UKSPF panel meeting (27/05/2022) and the subsequent 1:1 meetings he had had with a range of relevant stakeholders which highlighted some of the key investment principles that were raised at the first UKSPF Panel Meeting, namely:

1. An aspiration for sustainability to be prioritised and built into funded activity to achieve outputs beyond funding lifetime
2. Enthusiasm for a 'seed funding' model which would enable UKSPF to lever in other, larger pots of funding where possible/feasible
3. A need to avoid duplication and invest in market gaps
4. The importance of working collaboratively
5. A need to consider how different interventions could be integrated to create more 'holistic' solutions

The Panel agreed with this feedback.

Key feedback from the results of a Slido poll that Panel members inputted into during the first UKSPF Panel Meeting were discussed first and highlighted the following priorities:

Under Communities and Place:

1. Greening town centres
2. Cultural events and programmes
3. Support to grow the cultural industries
4. Community Ownership of Regeneration (BIDs etc)

Under Supporting Local Businesses:

1. Dedicated business incubation service
2. Social enterprise support
3. General business support
4. Town Centre business support

Under Skills and People:

1. Digital skills for the unemployed
2. Green Skills for employed
3. 1:1 support and basic skills for unemployed
4. Digital skills for employed

Kevin Garrod highlighted that many of the priorities identified for skills had scored very close together and that often a blended approach to support is required for those who are a distance away from the labour market.

Matthew King agreed that some of the priorities could be joint together to achieve several outcomes, for example greening town centres could be linked with skill developments if planned correctly.

Cllr Bernard Foster raised that the transition from school into employment fits into almost all three UKSPF themes (Skills and People, Supporting Local Business and communities and Place) and feels this is an important point in a young person's journey and we need to ensure young people are prepared and focused on their future pathway.

Russell Dolton highlighted a possible opportunity to link the proposed Basildon levelling up Bid with UKSF to increase impact around greening town centres.

Jim Sims also mentioned that there could be a possibility to communicate to government that Basildon Council would like to put funding into certain priorities and would be particularly interested to do this around encouraging young people into technical and vocational routes (this is to be picked up again later in the meeting).

Action Jim Sims to meet with Paul Brace from Basildon Council, Trustlinks and Natural England to explore the opportunities and challenges around greening town centres.

Jim Sims then presented the Panel members with feedback from recent 1:1 consultation meetings with stakeholders, key findings included:

- Due to the difficulty of adding specific projects into the plan it was proposed that the group could focus on developing a call specification for projects between August and September 2022 ready for initial funding to be spent in October 2022 when it is hoped the Plan would be approved
- A real vulnerability exists within Basildon's Third Sector, which is further highlighted in Essex County Council research presented later in the meeting
- Whilst some panel members are interested in therapeutic gardening and green social prescribing, this may be a challenge as the UKSPF outputs are quite infrastructure focussed, rather than necessarily emphasising interactions with the natural environment
- There is evidence to suggest there is a lack of workforce skills to install green technologies locally and across Greater Essex
- There is an interest in increasing the number of bikes for employees to encourage active travel, however, this would be difficult to fit under any current UKSPF priority, unless linked to cycle path creation, which we do not have sufficient capital funding to support
- Small scale community led projects could be included in E2 'Community Infrastructure Projects', if prioritised and could also form part of E12 'Community Engagement in Local Regeneration'. However, the evidence base indicates fundamental weaknesses in the third sector in Basildon. Jim suggested that perhaps funding would be more effective being focused on supporting existing third sector organisations to grow and develop and stimulating new ones
- Natural England had expressed an interest in investing in Green 'Community Hubs', linked to other community facilities such as food banks, libraries, health care centres etc., in deprived neighbourhoods. Again Jim suggested that the limited amount of capital funding that we had might make this difficult, but perhaps we could support feasibility studies in this area
- Jim Sims indicated he had been approached by Young Enterprise, keen to increase their delivery in local schools
- Another idea that had been suggested was supporting the creation of multi-functional community hubs in Wickford, Laindon, Pitsea Town Centres (hosting Community Learning Facilities, Café, Hireable Workspace, Cultural Venue on an evening etc.)

Jim Sims highlighted that we will be unable to deliver all priorities due to funding restrictions and highlighted it would be possible to use UKSPF to develop feasibility studies that could in turn leverage-in additional funding for larger scale projects.

Jim Sims went on to highlight the feedback received from recent consultations with local MPs, which covered a range of possible investment areas, including:

- Strengthening careers information and guidance for young people and promoting technical and vocational pathways
- Increasing tree cover and greening our main urban centres
- Investment into a single initiative, rather than 'spreading the jam' too thinly
- Investing in higher-level skills, particularly technical, managerial and professional
- Strengthening and encouraging the night-time economy
- A marketing campaign to promote Basildon as an investment location – 'The Peterborough Effect'

Jim Sims provided some reflections on all the collective feedback received to date from all the stakeholder consultations undertaken:

- Sustainability – Delivering sustainable outcomes may be more possible through bundling together 'subsidised' services together with more commercial services. For example, offering subsidised incubation support services with 'commercial' office/ desk space rental might allow for the more commercial services to subsidise the incubation support services, in time
- Collaborative Opportunities - When looking to try and achieve sustainability locally embedded services might potentially be more sustainable than 'top down' pan-regionally delivered services

- Property Led Solutions - Given the time and funding restraints it is estimated that only approx. three property based solutions would be possible if we were to direct all of the funding towards this priority, and these would likely need to be in rented premises that require a limited amount of refurbishment and likely need to be operated by a third sector organisation (to mitigate business rates)
- Seed Funding - Feasibility studies could be an effective way to leverage additional funding and increase the impact of the UKSPF funding.

Jim Sims then outlined the potential to invest in feasibility studies & community ownership of regeneration schemes which would require a panel to be established which would select 'good quality and impactful' projects in the community.

Following the above feedback Jim suggested that the list of priorities be expanded to include the additional priorities highlighted in red:

Conclusions on Priorities after these discussions		
COMMUNITIES & PLACE	LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT	PEOPLE & SKILLS
E3: Greening town centres	E24: Dedicated business incubation service	E36: Digital skills for the unemployed
E6: Advisory Support for the Creative and Cultural Industries	E26: Social enterprise support	E39: Green Skills for employed
E12: Community Ownership of Regeneration (BIDs etc)	E23: General business support	E33: 1:1 support and basic skills for unemployed
E14: Feasibility Studies	E31: Feasibility Studies	E41: Digital skills for employed
		Bespoke Intervention: Strengthening careers information and guidance for young people and promoting entrepreneurial, technical and vocational pathways
		E38: Funding to Support Local Skills Needs

Panel members raised the following points/questions:

Whether UKSPF had been confirmed past the current proposed three year funding period? Jim Sims highlighted that it is not yet known the government had recently advised that all needed to end at the end of March 2025. However, there is probably an expectation in many quarters for the funding to continue beyond 2025, if it is intended to replace EU Funding.

Kevin Garrod agreed with the addition of E38 under People and Skills and highlighted that coordination of the careers landscape may be most needed and Essex County Council/SELEP were currently developing an Essex Skills Plan, which may help inform investment decisions.

Jim Devlin also agreed with the addition of E38 and indicated his support to prioritise a sustainable offer that grows and continues to make a difference without the need for continued funding. Jim Sims indicated that achieving genuine sustainability in the delivery of skills initiatives may be a real challenge.

Carey Jacobs asked if it would be possible to address some of the identified UKSPF priorities through social value and procurement commitments which would free up funding for projects that cannot be funded or addressed elsewhere. Jim Sims indicated that this was something he would be happy to look at when we get to commissioning projects.

The Panel identified that the biggest challenge to greening the town centres is the staff recourse. However there is an opportunity for community engagement to support this and community groups/initiatives are already well established in Basildon, Billericay and Wickford. Simon Johnson highlighted that the CVS receives requests from large corporates who would like to support large scale projects in the town however they struggle to find sufficient projects. An opportunity exists to identify projects and secure future volunteering resource locally. Paul Brace indicated that he is keen to utilise corporate support going forward. An additional challenge for greening the town centre is equipment. Mathew King added that the Volunteering Futures Project already exists and aims to encourage people to engage with volunteering and greening the local area in the three of the most deprived wards of Basildon.

Cllr Bernard Foster highlighted a possible opportunity to link SMEs and new business owners with local expertise from established companies such as Ford to support growth.


Paul Brace also raised that there is a barrier around the current skills needed around decarbonisation which has led to the council being unable to successfully use funding that had been secured to encourage residents to implement energy saving measures.

Also, it is worth noting that Basildon Borough Council has a target for the decarbonisation of all buildings by 2030.

5. Review of Potential Gaps in Funding/ Services Discussion

Following on from a request at the first UKSPF meeting Jim Sims presented an initial analysis of current gaps in funding, and some of the schemes that might potentially cease when EU Funding comes to an end. Jim Sims highlighted the difficulty in completing this analysis in an accurate manner, as there were no guarantees that other funds wouldn't come along, or other gaps would open up. However, following on from the analysis Jim Sims highlighted an increased number of priorities that UKSPF could support, again highlighted in red below:

Conclusions on priorities after this analysis (in order of panel priority)		
COMMUNITIES & PLACE	LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT	PEOPLE & SKILLS
E3: Greening town centres E6: Advisory Support for the Creative and Cultural Industries E12: Community Ownership of Regeneration (BIDs etc) E14: Feasibility Studies E5: CCTV/Streetlighting E2/E11: Grants for Community Orgs	E24: Dedicated Business Incubation Service E26: Social Enterprise Support E23: General Business Support E31: Feasibility Studies E16: Town Centre Business Support E19/E20: Sector Based Innovation Support E29: Low Carbon Business Support E18: Manufacturing Business Support E17: Tourism Business Support E28: DIT Internationalisation Support	E36: Digital skills for the unemployed E39: Green Skills for employed E33: 1:1 support and basic skills for unemployed E41: Digital skills for employed E38: Funding to Support Local Skills Needs Bespoke Intervention: Strengthening careers information and guidance for young people and promoting entrepreneurial, technical and vocational pathways E34: Basic Skills for Unemployed People E37: Basic Skills for Employed People E40: Retraining for people in High Carbon Sectors

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6. Opportunities for Regional/ Sub Regional Collaborations Discussion

Jim Sims provided an update on the work that has been undertaken to identify opportunities for collaboration across Greater Essex. Although three meetings have taken place between all Local Authorities a final confirmation on collaboration has not been fully agreed at the current time, although there appears to be some potential areas for future collaboration.

The reasons this process has not been fully conclusive is due to a number of reasons, including the desire for Local Authorities to want to listen to the views of their local panel members before formally confirming. In addition, Investment Plans only require Local Authorities to name the interventions that they would like to collaborate on, not necessarily provide any more details. However Local Authorities in Greater Essex appear to have identified that they may be willing to collaborate around Creative and Heritage Business Support (E6), a General Business Support Service (E23) and Skills (E39, E38 and E33) although there appeared to be less interest in collaboration for Employability Support in the neighbouring authorities around Basildon. More information on potential collaboration opportunities can be found on slide 17 of the PowerPoint presentation.

Sandra Valentine highlighted that the DWP would be open to feedback on what additional employment support they could add locally given that this hasn't been prioritised by the Basildon Panel and Jim Sims emphasised our need to rely on DWP support going forward.

Cllr Headley thanked Jim Sims for the work that has gone into the review and agrees with the above framework and highlighted the need to agree a final set of priorities to include in the plan today.

7. Evidence Base, Initial Opportunities Identified & Discussion (See appendices of this agenda for a concise summary of potential priorities for discussion)

Jim Sims provided an overview of research completed by Essex County Council Research and Citizen Insight Team and OSCI into Community Needs in Basildon. This work allows a comparison to be drawn between the communities across Essex, to assess local communities against national benchmarks and to explore some of the factors that drive different levels of community need in different parts of the county.

More information can be found here: <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/2yqdg/assessing-the-strength-of-communities-in-essex-the-essex-community-needs-index-2020>

Key findings from the research include:

- Research has consistently demonstrated that the availability of shared spaces (community centres, pubs or village halls) and connectivity (digital and physical) are necessary for the development of social networks and strong communities

- Shared space and connectivity in a region can lead to better social, economic and wellbeing outcomes for residents
- Active and engaged communities are also more likely to be equipped to affect meaningful change and address challenges
- The challenge is most acute in coastal areas - although many inland communities experience similarly significant levels of community need (Basildon is in the top percentile for community need)
- Basildon is ranked 4th for town centres with the highest level of community need in Essex, and – perhaps somewhat surprisingly - Billericay is ranked 6th
- The majority of districts in Essex lack civic assets
- Many districts also have below average levels of activity and engagement
- Many towns face challenges around average broadband speed, although Basildon scored quite well on this indicator
- Basildon and Castle Point perform particularly badly on measures relating to the availability of civic assets (see slide 13)
- Basildon has a shortage of community space for people to be active in

Jim Sims highlighted the final set of proposed priorities following the community need analysis detailed below:

Conclusions on priorities after this analysis (in order of panel priority)

COMMUNITIES & PLACE	LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT	PEOPLE & SKILLS
<p>E3: Greening town centres</p> <p>E6: Advisory Support for the Creative and Cultural Industries (Collaborative?)</p> <p>E12: Community Ownership of Regeneration (BIDs etc)</p> <p>E14: Feasibility Studies</p>	<p>E24: Dedicated Business Incubation Service</p> <p>E26: Social Enterprise Support</p> <p>E23: General Business Support (Collaborative?)</p> <p>E31: Feasibility Studies</p>	<p>E38: Funding to Support Local Skills Needs (Collaborative?)</p> <p>E39: Green Skills for employed (Collaborative?)</p> <p>Bespoke Intervention: Strengthening careers information and guidance for young people and promoting entrepreneurial, technical and vocational pathways</p>

The above interventions seek to prioritise a mix of the Panel's, MP's and neighbouring areas interests. They also seek to invest in 'seed funding' activities (Feasibility Studies and BIDs) and Support Services that could potentially draw additional funds into the area to address the challenges identified in the evidence base (but opportunities like BIDs will require strong local partnership working across public-private-voluntary sector and businesses voting for a rates uplift to invest in the area).

It also seeks to provide some specialist support services, to help stimulate key sectors of the economy which helps to improve pride of place (creative industries and social enterprise) and support the growth of the wider business sector.

As far as Skills & Employment is concerned, the above analysis is based on the concept that we might be able to collaborate with others on E38 and on E39: Green Skills for Employed. It also assumes collaboration on anything from E33- E36 will be a problem, because of the lack of neighbouring areas that want to collaborate on what is essentially a very locally delivered service.

Some members of the Panel were surprised by the evidence base for community need and Mathew King stated this highlighted the need to invest in voluntary sector. The Panel discussed the possibility of developing our existing third sector organisations to better enable organisations to secure funding and increase services in the community, this was the preferred model over utilising UKSPF to fund micro grants for the third sector.

Kevin Garrod added that there is a role for hospitals to engage with third sector organisations within their supply chains more often.

Paul Brace and Simon Johnson questioned whether some of the community data was accurate and undertook to look into the data further.

8. Approach to Bespoke Interventions

Jim Sims presented on the proposed approach for a 'Technical Skills Partnership', indicating that this would need to be a bespoke intervention which will try to influence young people and their parents into technical and vocational routes and careers. The types of activities could include supporting and facilitating STEM Festivals, Coding Clubs, Fab Labs, STEM activities and primary school focused work. Jim Sims also highlighted the UKSPF outputs in the short, medium and long term as well as impacts, in the intervention logic, or 'theory of change' he had developed to support our request for government to support his intervention.

Hepzhi Angela agreed with the approach and **an action was agreed for Hepzi and Jim to arrange a meeting to discuss in further detail.**

Denise Brown was also supportive of proposed bespoke intervention and would welcome a further discussion with Jim regarding the outcomes and activities and added the need for technology to be used more effectively to engage with people. **An action for Jim to meet with Denise Brown for a further discussion.**

Kevin Garrod further supported the approach and highlighted that there is a vast range of tech health care roles which will become a priority going forward.

Cllr Bernard Foster added the importance of building confidence and resilience in young people to enable them to combat against knock backs.

Cllr Tony Ball agreed strongly regarding engaging with primary schools before aspirations have formed.

Jim Sims concluded the discussion with the need to work closely with The Essex County Council Education Team on the Technical Skills Partnership Project.

9. Project Commissioning, Public Sector Equality Duty, Risks and Admin/Overheads

Jim Sims provided an overview around the logistics of the Fund.

- Project Commissioning – Jim Sims proposed the panel adopt a standard approach to project commissioning to use an open 'competitive' call for projects, with the grant funding being awarded to the successful bidder. This would necessitate the formation of an independent appraisal panel, which would be developed to assess and award the projects that delivered the best outcomes/outputs/impacts. Other options for commission include using in house council teams, or procurement, which will be adopted in exceptions where beneficial for the fund / required because of the nature of the investment (i.e., regulated services etc.).
- Public Sector Equality Duty – Jim Sims indicated a Service Impact Assessment Plan will be produced to ensure D&I issues are fully considered and embedded as a cross cutting theme. Discussions are also being held with the Community Diversity Council, to ascertain their views on how best to embed D&I as a cross cutting theme.
- Potential key risks identified at this stage included:
 - Risk that proposals coming forward for Feasibility Studies are weak and do not offer robust sustainability
 - Risk that political tensions emerge in the development of Business Improvement District proposals and risk that businesses (and others) are not comfortable/in sufficiently strong enough financial position to vote for a rates uplift
 - Risk that there is a lack of interest/commitment in co-commissioning business support/skills interventions
- Finance, Admin & Management – Jim Sims reported there was a need to undertake further sensitivity analysis to make sure all the proposed interventions were affordable, and that Basildon Council was not proposing to request more for Admin & Management (4%)

Jim asked the panel members present to confirm their support for the proposed set of interventions shown on Page 32 of the presentation (as illustrated on the previous page of these minutes).

The group supported these proposed priorities and Project Commissioning, Public Sector Equality Duty, Risks and Admin/Overheads arrangements described above.

10. Next Steps & date of June meeting (19/07/22 9.00-11.00pm)

Jim Sims thanked everyone for attending and their support to date and indicated that the next meeting would focus on signing off the final plan, finances and deliverables.

11. AOB

No other matters were raised, and the meeting closed.