

UK Shared Prosperity Fund & Rural England Prosperity Fund

Town Centre Action Grants

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Using money allocated from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) this funding is focused on supporting programmes of activity to improve our town centres and grants will be available to support stakeholders to develop plans and support activity that contributes to this. The scheme will be focused on the three principal town centres of **Faversham, Sittingbourne and Sheerness** but will also support activity in the smaller historic centres of **Queenborough** and **Milton Regis**.
- 1.2 Town centre stakeholders are encouraged to come together to develop co-ordinated action plans and projects that come forward as part of such will be given priority. The scheme will also prioritise projects that are focused on the following, :-
- Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative events and activities in and around the town centres that create interest and promote footfall and usage
 - Promotional campaigns to encourage visits and people to explore the town centres, increasing interest and footfall
 - Projects that enhance the existing cultural, historic & heritage offer, helping re-enforce a sense of place and encourage visitors
- 1.3 It is intended that this scheme will operate in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years. Full eligibility criteria and grant funding levels for this scheme are detailed below. It should be noted that this is a **discretionary** grant scheme and all decisions are based on Swale Borough Council's assessment of applications, to determine if the required criteria is met.
- 1.4 *If you would like further advice on this scheme and how it will be applied, please contact us at prosperityfund@swale.gov.uk*

2. **Who and what will be eligible for the grants?**

- 2.1 This Grant scheme is open to stakeholders in town centres, including commercial, not-for-profit and public sector organisations. Proposals linked to co-ordinated town-based action plans will be prioritised.
- 2.2 Applications from individual businesses will not normally be considered, unless the project is linked to a stakeholder led action plan and/or has a wider community focus.
- 2.3 Unincorporated groups can apply if they have:
- A governing document that has as a minimum the name, aim/purpose, objectives, a dissolution clause for the organisation, a list of committee members and committee member signatures. Please contact us on prosperityfund@swale.gov.uk if you are unsure;
 - A bank or building society account in the organisation's name;
 - Up-to-date annual accounts (for groups over 12 months old), or a 12 month cash-flow forecast for newer organisations.
- 2.4 Applicants will generally only be awarded one grant within each financial year, except where there is clear link to a stakeholder backed town action plan or when there is an identified potential underspend for the funding allocation for a particular year.
- 2.5 Grants should not support political or directly religious activity. For the avoidance of doubt, organisations that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made, are not eligible for funding under this scheme.

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- 2.6 Projects that will be supported must not have already commenced (generally defined as having purchased or contracted for goods or services) at the point the grant is awarded. Applicants should clearly demonstrate the grant allows the project to proceed and the contribution delivery would make to meeting the overarching objectives of the scheme **(as set out at 1.1 and 1.2)**.
- 2.7 Any funding sought should be for projects within and/or directly for the benefit of the town centres identified at 1.1. The level of funding available for projects at Faversham, Sittingbourne & Milton Regis and Sheerness and Queenborough in each year the scheme operates has been set. Applications will be considered within these geographical funding limits, unless there is an identified potential underspend for the funding allocation for a particular year.
- 2.8 In addition to defining the nature of the project, applicants will be asked to set out what outputs/outcomes are expected from the project supported by the grant and how these will be measured over time. The outputs and outcomes adopted as measures for this grant programme include:-
- increased footfall in the towns
 - increased number of visitors to a facility
 - the number of people reached through a promotional campaign
 - the % increase in engagement through an activity or services.
- 2.9 Whilst not mandatory, projects should also consider what contribution the activity is making to net zero targets.
- 2.10 Projects that are seeking funding from more than one source must declare other funding being sought for the project and demonstrate that the elements of the project being funded through this scheme are not 'double funded'.

Compliance

- 2.11 Applicants/applications will be subject to due diligence checks including legal entity checks, bank account verification, the financial viability of the organisation and compliance with subsidy control regulations. It is therefore important to respond to the information requested in the application form and any further requests arising from an application made.
- 2.12 Projects that are funded will need to comply with the rules of the scheme. These will be set out in a sealed grant agreement and failure to comply may lead to any funding issued becoming subject to claw back.

Procurement

- 2.13 In order to ensure that value for money has been obtained in the procurement of goods funded by the Grant, Government rules requires the following minimum procedures for recipients. To optimise local benefit we would also encourage the use of local suppliers.

Value of Contract	Minimum procedure required
£0-£24,999	A minimum of 1 quote. Further quotes may be requested when your application is assessed to ensure value for money.
£25,000-£99,999	Please discuss with the team by emailing prosperityfund@swale.gov.uk .

Branding & Publicity

- 2.14 Grant recipients will need to comply with Government requirements for branding and publicity, which can be found [here](#). This covers both press activity and printed and online materials and activity. Examples of how this has been followed will be collected by Swale Borough Council as part of its evidence to demonstrate compliance.

Planning and Other Permissions:

- 2.15 Where an applicant requires planning, building regulations or any other approvals to deliver their proposal, but has not yet secured it, any award from this scheme will be 'subject to securing the necessary permissions'. In short, failure to demonstrate that the necessary permissions have been secured within an agreed timescale (set out in the grant agreement) will mean any grant offer may be withheld or withdrawn and any grant paid be potentially repayable to Swale Borough Council.

3. Funding Levels and expenditure timeframe

- 3.1 Grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 will be awarded to successful applicants. Where other funding is secured for the same project this should be declared. Match funding secured may enhance the value for money assessment made against applications.
- 3.2 If an organisation is VAT registered, the scheme will not consider VAT when calculating the grant offer.
- 3.3 Recipients of grants received in any financial year will normally be expected to complete spend of the grant on the intended investment/project within the same financial year as the award has been made.

Please note, Swale Borough Council has a fixed amount of funds available for this grant scheme. If the number of eligible applications exceeds the funds available, we reserve the right to close the scheme and/or alter these funding levels accordingly.

4. How do I apply?

- 4.1 Applications can be made using the attached form or via an online form available [here](#). If you require assistance in completing the form or need to make an application through an alternative format, please contact the grants team on 01795 417398.
- 4.2 **All applications for this funding should be received by no later than the published date for each funding round. This will be publicised and published on Swale Borough Councils website.** If the fund is substantially over-subscribed, the Council reserves the right to close the scheme prior to this date. Subject to the availability of further funds and the number of applications received, further funding rounds may be held, but this is not guaranteed.
- 4.3 You may be contacted by a member of the grants team who will advise if any further information is required after your application has been reviewed and what the next steps will be. This may include a virtual or in person appointment with a Council officer or an appointed expert contractor to discuss the proposal. **This may be a necessary step for the application to proceed**

and is intended to both help assess the suitability of the proposal on behalf of the Council, and also provide any further guidance or advice required by the applicant organisation.

- 4.4 Eligibility checks will also be carried out including an independent security and fraud check by an external company as required by Government. If an application is received from an organisation that does not meet all the required criteria, they will be informed as soon as possible of this and the reason(s) they are not eligible.
- 4.5 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Any organisation or individual caught falsifying their records to gain grant money may face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back.
- 4.6 Depending on the proposal, payment schedules will be agreed with successful applicants. It is anticipated initial payments to successful organisations will be made as soon as is reasonably practical after a decision has been made and the relevant grant agreement has been returned. The nature and scale of the project and the applicant will determine whether payment will be made in full, in advance or in stages.
- 4.7 No grants will be awarded without an application being made and considered.

5. Decision Making and Appeals

- 5.1 Individual applications will be assessed for grant funding by Council officers against the following parameters:-
 - The impact in relation to the Council's strategy framework and priorities.
 - The impact in relation to the outputs and outcomes adopted as measures for this grant programme, as set out at 2.7. Applicants should also detail how this information will be collected and what additional benefits a project will deliver, if any.
 - Deliverability – clear demonstration that the proposals can be delivered within the necessary time frame and the availability of any match funding required.
 - Value for Money, in terms of grant value sought against outputs/outcomes, other funding levered into the project and clear demonstration that the procurement of goods and services will meet the minimum requirements set by government.
 - Grant applications will require applicants to detail the need for the grant, including a clear rationale as to why other funding would not be available for that part of the project for which a grant is being sought.
- 5.2 A recommendation of award will be made to the responsible officer at Swale Borough Council for approval.
- 5.3 The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for a review of its decision. All review requests must be made in writing to the Council within 14 days of the Council's decision and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New Information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal.
- 5.4 The application will be reconsidered by a senior officer of the Council, as soon as practicable and the applicant will be informed in writing or by email of the decision. As a discretionary scheme, any decision made will be final.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 6.1 Successful applicants will be expected to comply with monitoring requests for the project's delivery and any evaluation of outputs and outcomes required. This will include evidence of spend and compliance with the terms of the grant. It will also mean that data will need to be collected, before, during and after the project has been delivered. Failure to comply with this may result in the Council seeking to recover some or all of the grant that has been paid.