



<b>Date</b>	15 February 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Business Support in the West Midlands
<b>Portfolio lead</b>	Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of City of Wolverhampton Council  WMCA portfolio lead for Economy and Innovation
<b>Accountable Chief Executive</b>	Laura Shoaf - Chief Executive, WMCA  Email: <a href="mailto:laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk">laura.shoaf@wmca.org.uk</a>
<b>Accountable Employee</b>	Dr Julie Nugent, Executive Director - Economic Delivery, Skills and Communities  Email: <a href="mailto:julie.nugent@wmca.org.uk">julie.nugent@wmca.org.uk</a>
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Directors of Economic Development

## Recommendations

Economic Growth Board is recommended to:

- Note progress of task and finish working group, since December Economic Growth Board in mobilising UKSPF funded business support activity from April 2023.
- Note agreed regional framework, ways of working between locally-embedded and regional activity and commissioning of region-wide programmes for activity to commence in April 2023.

### 1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Economic Growth Board (EGB) on progress in delivery of business support locally, utilising UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and West Midlands-wide commissioned activity.

### 2 Background

- 2.1 Following approval of WMCA Board of the UKSPF allocation, officers from the seven Local Authorities and WMCA have been working to develop a coherent West Midlands approach to business support, with an initial focus on UKSPF, and designing it in such a way that it enables engagement across a wide range of business support services in both the public and private sector, including Innovation Accelerator, publicly funded national programmes and private sector offerings.
- 2.2 This work has been led by a task and finish working group comprising WMCA officers and officers from all seven Local Authorities.
- 2.3 The Director of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Growth Hub, on secondment to the WMCA for two days a week, is working closely with all officers to offer his advice and expertise as to what works currently, best practice and how services can best be



maintained through this change process. Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub are also providing their expertise in designing the future service.

2.4 Seven separate workstreams have been developed, each led by a Local Authority officer, focused on:

- Reviewing and presenting options with recommendations for locally-embedded advisers and account managers within wider ecosystem
- Reviewing and carrying out options appraisal for future CRM & digital systems
- Reviewing and carrying out options appraisal and recommendations for central co-ordination team
- Reviewing and recommending delivery options for specialist programmes – decarbonisation
- Reviewing and recommending delivery options for specialist programmes – investor readiness
- Reviewing and recommending delivery options for specialist programmes – SME competitiveness and productivity grants
- Gap analysis and preparedness for non-UKSPF activity

2.5 Each of these workstreams, along with the overall collective piece of work, are aimed at developing a coherent business support ecosystem across the West Midlands, building on what already works well across the region, for delivery from 1 April 2023.

### **3 Principles of UKSPF – business support**

3.1 The working group is following the principles, as recommended by the previously endorsed business support review of:

- A high-quality, consistent core offer across the region
- Fully integrated business support ecosystem
- Premium products targeted at regional priorities
- Campaign to drive take-up

3.2 In addition, the working group have focused on the principles of:

- Building on what works but not being beholden to it
- Focusing on the needs of West Midlands businesses and not driven by the needs of providers, which includes:
  - providing access to advice and specialist services
  - targeting firms with potential to improve growth and productivity
  - integrating support with recruitment and skills
- Focusing on delivering real-world outcomes rather than meeting bureaucratically-imposed targets
- Providing a consistency of service to West Midlands businesses no matter where they are based in the region



#### 4. Double-devolved Business Support under a Regional Framework

4.1 WMCA Board approved that £20.2 million of UKSPF business support be allocated to Local Authorities directly to deliver priorities for locally-based businesses. Since the last Economic Growth Board, individual Local Authorities have been working on those priorities with a focus on providing a combination of locally-based advisors and account managers; commissioned services and grants to businesses.

4.2 In addition, there has been agreement from all local authorities in ways of working between localities and the regional hub, including core responsibilities that sit with WMCA and those that sit with local authorities.

4.3 These agreed principles cover:

- **marketing and events provision** with a framework to be worked up with localities as to the mix between regional and local marketing and events activity, with the balance of activity likely to be focused locally

- **quality assurance and management** including regional responsibility for:

- BEIS and DLUHC reporting & liaison (national, cluster networks, BEIS audit, BEIS evaluation)
- Quality assurance, client satisfaction and standards monitoring
- Business development (partnerships, projects, programmes and revenue)
- Regional operations e.g. telephony and IT systems, referral and customer journey processes
- Team management and training (training, regional team meetings, diagnostic support)
- Integration of national programmes (e.g. Help to Grow) and support (e.g. National Helpline) existing and new
- Partner and stakeholder management, particularly LAs, universities, private sector and other providers
- Accountability for regional service, including budget and governance

- **CRM & Data** management including regional responsibility for:

- Collection of regional data; support for local data collection
- CRM development
- Contract & relationship management CRM provider
- Training, access and guidance for users
- GDPR and permissions (clients and users)
- Data analysis and presentation
- Communications and events support from CRM system
- Troubleshooting
- Systems linkages (i.e. with other local/regional CRMs)
- Data integrity & consistency

4.4 As part of this agreement, the seven Local Authorities are committed to delivering activity as part of a wider ecosystem with localities responsible for:



- Delivery of advisory service (universal but targeted, for businesses and entrepreneurs: enquiry handling, triage, assessment\*, brokerage, referrals, follow up and account management)
- \*Diagnostic delivery and access to specialist programmes (including grants)
- Management and co-ordination of local providers
- Collection of local data
- Reporting of local data
- Line management, including local target-setting and performance mgt, HR processes and recruitment of advisers
- Maintenance and linkage of local systems with regional systems
- Accountability for service standards at local level

4.5 In addition, and supported by Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub, the officers group have agreed a consistent customer journey for businesses through the business support ecosystem with a focus on light-touch support for the majority of businesses and in-depth support for those with the most growth potential. An outline of this customer journey is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.

## **5. Commissioned Programmes**

5.1 Since last Economic Growth Board, commissioning has commenced on an investor readiness programme and a decarbonisation programme with the intent that these are contracted in March 2023 for delivery from April 2023 onwards.

5.2 Economic Growth Board is reminded that whilst the year one allocation of UKSPF is confirmed, years 2 and 3 are 'indicative' allocations only, which subsequently introduces some risk into the business support programme. The risk is twofold in that moving funds from 24/25 into 23/24 to produce a 'smoothed' profile as previously recommended by Economic Growth Board may not be approved by government and the final allocation could be lower than previously indicated, as future year allocations will be subject to performance in year.

5.3 WMCA will continue to seek flexibilities through engagement with DLUHC. In the meantime, the task and finish working group will work to mitigate the risk, this includes assembling programmes that match (as closely as possible) the funding profile. Region-wide programmes will be commissioned and contracted on that basis. Local Authorities will also receive back-to-back agreements that reflect 36% of funding to be received in 23/24 with 64% received in 24/25, subject to confirmation of funding from DLUHC.

## **6 Financial Implications**

6.1 WMCA will continue to seek flexibilities through engagement with DLUHC. In the meantime, the task and finish working group will work to mitigate the risk, by ensuring any procurement is in principle only without entering contracts until the funding and approvals are in place.

## **7 Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no immediate legal implications as a direct result of this report. Legal will continue to advise on the preparation of the wider UKSPF investment plan and any agreements entered into as a result of any funding being awarded.



**8 Equalities Implications**

8.1 There are no direct equalities implications.

**9 Inclusive Growth Implications**

9.1 We have sought to utilise UKSPF to ensure a minimum level of investment in business support services in all areas and maximising the use of other funds and ensuring these are targeted on areas of most need.

**10 Geographical Area of Report's Implications**

10.1 The report covers the 7 West Midlands Combined Authority metropolitan areas



# Customer Journey

