

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	6 May 2025
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Jason McLellan, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Growth and Tackling Deprivation Tony Ward, Corporate Director: Environment and Economy
Head of Service	Emlyn Jones (Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside), Helen Vaughan-Evans (Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital & Assets), Liz Grieve (Head of Housing and Community)
Report author	Robyn Lovelock – Insight, Strategy & Delivery Manager
Title	Positioning Denbighshire Council for success in securing high-value post-Brexit funding

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The report is about how Denbighshire can position itself to access high-value post-Brexit funding streams, considering current processes and future needs.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To summarise lessons learned from delivering Levelling Up and Shared Prosperity Fund projects to assist in positioning Denbighshire Council well for any future high-value funding that becomes available.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. To note the success to date in securing funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund, and to commend all teams and individuals across the organisation for their delivery to a high standard of projects delivered so far, noting in

particular the work of the Matrix Team for their coordination of delivery and support of governance amid tight timelines.

- 3.2. To feedback on lessons learned that have been identified (Appendix B) and the themes pertinent for positioning us well for the future (Appendix C).

4. Report details

Approach taken to date

- 4.1. It is important to note that approach and timescales for programme and project design, applications and implementation were wholly dictated by UK and Welsh Government.
- 4.2. Appendix A sets out – as a case study example – the approach taken to date to prepare and apply for, deliver and report on the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). It includes information on what steps were taken, who was involved and some reflections which have been fed into a wider Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis which also includes consideration of programmes delivered with Levelling Up Funds (Appendix B).
- 4.3. The response to the Levelling Up Funding (LUF) opportunity was led by the Economic and Business Development team in terms of submission of an application. The response to the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Plan for Neighbourhoods programme, (formerly called the Long-term Plan for Towns), was led collaboratively by Housing and Communities and Corporate Support Service - Performance Digital and Assets (CSS-PDA).
- 4.4. The delivery phase once in receipt of grant award letter has been led by the “Matrix Team” set up within CSS-PDA to deliver both the LUF and SPF programmes. While the team sits within CSS-PDA, it is fully funded by the external grant funding and reports day-to-day via a matrix management arrangement to Emlyn Jones, Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside, for LUF and to Liz Grieve, Head of Housing and Communities, for SPF.
- 4.5. Including the application stage and delivery stage, the draw on capacity across the organisation has been significant. A representative from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was required to lead each programme as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) with significant time commitments and complexity, on top of already high

workloads for those individuals. Calls on institutional capacity varied in terms of time and resource depending on the programme development phase, project aims and complexity.

4.6. Elected member and community involvement in the selection of SPF and LUF projects is summarised below:

- SPF projects derived from corporate plan which had recently been approved following extensive public and member engagement
- Details of governance arrangements for both funds shared with all councillors
- Local Core Partnership Board established for SPF - creation and board membership endorsed by Cabinet in 2023
- Communication plans shared with members as developed (strengthened after LUF round 1)
- Member Area Group regularly updated on individual projects and on progress with their deliverability
- Officer teams liaised with local members prior to relevant delegated decisions
- Final list of LUF projects endorsed by Cabinet.

4.7. It is an important point, that requirements and thus the ability to communicate and engage around these funds was governed in large part by information and timelines shared by UK/Welsh Government. Officers have reported that these communications were initially low on substance, then late compared with other funds, and that funder expectations evolved significantly after launch.

Lessons learned from approach to date

4.8. The full SWOT analysis is attached as Appendix B which considers the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats across the key steps of application to delivery of Post Brexit Funding Programmes namely:

1. Horizon scanning and donor relations
2. Project scoping & funding applications
3. Governance & community engagement
4. Funding award, inception and delivery
5. Monitoring, evaluation and learning.

- 4.9 After the SWOT for each of the 5 steps, a summary analysis is provided (Appendix B) and key themes to consider for the future (Appendix C). These themes are areas that the Council has an opportunity to improve on or/and present opportunities for the Council to maximise or/ and threats for the Council to be alive to.
- 4.10 The track record to date for LUF and SPF paints a very positive picture and reflects the effectiveness of the One-Council approach to working, notably:
- DCC's successful track record obtaining and delivering LUF and SPF funding
 - DCC's reputation regionally as a robust delivery partner
 - DCC's compliance with funding requirements and absence of any clawback.

Looking ahead

- 4.11 There remains significant uncertainty around the future funding landscape beyond delivery of SPF (confirmed to March 2026) and LUF 3 (confirmed to March 2028). Appendix C provides detail on themes that will be pertinent for the Council to position itself well for the future.

5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1 Post-Brexit funding has been used across the organisation to fund multiple activities that help delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027. In the case of SPF, funding application was purposefully mapped against Corporate Plan Themes and Pledges so that delivery was compatible and complementary with the Council's five-year plan.
- 5.2 While some funded activities have contributed directly to the Council aims of becoming Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030, others will have increased carbon emissions and biodiversity impacts, mostly through construction. It will be important to further consider opportunities to reduce carbon and improve biodiversity outcomes of projects moving forward. Projects will also need to consider how they support communities to adapt to and be resilient in the face of increased flooding, storms and heat.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 As set out in the report and action plan, there are opportunities across the organisation to help improve processes – including implications for procurement, legal, marketing and communications, climate and nature.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 This lessons learned document identifies issues and proposes improvements, which does not impact adversely on any of the well-being goals. However, new processes confirmed from this review may need an impact assessment.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1 This document was developed with input from Emlyn Jones - Head of Planning, Public Protection and Countryside Service; Liz Grieve - Head of Housing & Communities Service; Helen Vaughan-Evans: Head of Corporate Support Service: Performance, Digital & Assets; and their senior managers. It has been discussed at CET.
- 8.2 The intention is for this paper and feedback from Performance Scrutiny Committee to go to the Cabinet Briefing for discussion.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from reviewing post-Brexit funding processes.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- 10.1 Failure to review our processes could risk funding opportunities being missed, or conversely to for external grants inappropriately taken on by the council increasing corporate and service-level risks.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.