

Background

1. In April 2022, the Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to support its Levelling Up agenda. The primary goal of the UKSPF is to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.
2. This aligns with the Levelling Up White Paper missions, particularly: 'By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.'

Scheme purpose

3. West Suffolk Council has created a Town Centre fund, using UKSPF funding under intervention 'E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs' and under the 'Communities and Place' investment priority.
4. West Suffolk Council has secured £38,109 of UKSPF funding for the Town Centre Fund in 2023/24, with further funding (£192,662) available in 2024/25. £7,156 of the 2023/24 funding is revenue and £30,953 is capital.
5. The "Communities and Place" investment priority has a focus on strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.
6. This fund will aim to build resilient and safe neighbourhoods, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.
7. This Fund will aim to support the key town centres across West Suffolk to make investments that improve on the provision of quality spaces to visit and improve sustainability of the places that West Suffolk residents use to live, shop, work and play.
8. West Suffolk's investment through intervention E1 must result in:
 - increased footfall
 - increased visitor numbers
 - reduced town centre premises vacancy rates
 - rehabilitated premises
 - public realm improvements
 - creation of more wheelchair accessible/step free space in town centres

Further information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, including case studies of the type of projects the Government wishes to see supported is available in the [prospectus](#).

Priorities of the Fund

The following priorities have been identified by West Suffolk Council for the Town Centre Fund and all applicants must ensure that their application demonstrates a good fit with one or more of the following:

1. visual improvements to town centres and high streets,
2. support to bring empty premises back into use,
3. public realm improvements including litter, waste and graffiti reduction,
4. cultural/visitor economy interventions,
5. projects to prevent and reduce antisocial behaviour,
6. capital funding to improve neighbourhoods or community projects and initiatives, and
7. creation of more wheelchair accessible/step free space in town centres

The Fund will offer grants of up to £10,000 per town and will require new match funding from the applicant at a rate of 40 per cent. We may not be able to allocate your full requested amount depending on the demand.

Who can apply?

- The scheme is open to town councils and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the West Suffolk district and the funding must be spent within the town centre of the respective organisation. Where there is both a Business Improvement District and town council representing your area, we would ask that you coordinate one bid for your activities.
- Before making the payment, WSC requires written confirmation under s37 (2) of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 that receipt of the payment will not exceed beneficiaries' Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) threshold of £315,000 cumulated over this and the previous two financial years, as specified in section 36 (1) of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. [Statutory guidance on the Subsidy Control Act 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-guidance-on-the-subsidy-control-act-2022)

Fund Requirements

- Plans for funded projects need to be for the town centre area specifically. Examples are given in appendix 1.
- They must relate to supporting the town centre by encouraging pride in place
- The plans must be likely to attract a broad base of support from across the local business community and residents.
- Applicants need to be able to deliver the elements bid for before the end of March 2024.
- The funding cannot wholly or partially replace funding that has already been allocated/budgeted for (including paying for staff time).

- The funding cannot be used to reimburse applicant organisations for income usually received, for example covering market stall pitch costs instead of directly funding the market trader or for paying West Suffolk Council in a similar way – for example paying the council to not charge car parking fees.
- Where a service is being procured, this must be done in line with the organisation’s procurement policy to ensure best value is achieved; and
- Information must be included about what each proposed activity or asset will do for the area. It will not be possible to fund all bids and so they will be assessed by which activities will create the biggest impact.
- Where bids are successful, monitoring information on the outputs and outcomes achieved will be required by West Suffolk Council, in order to meet Government monitoring requirements.
- Successful bidders will be asked to liaise with West Suffolk Council over communication and publicity of the funded projects, and to use UKSPF branding where required by Government.

How to apply

Early engagement with the Council is a requirement in order to ensure that these align with UKSPF and Council priorities.

An application form will be made available on [UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2022 – 2023 Application Form \(smartsurvey.co.uk\)](https://smartsurvey.co.uk) from 21 March 2023 and the funding allocation for 23/24 will be awarded as soon as possible after receipt of funding by West Suffolk Council from DLUHC early in spring/summer 2023.

Appendix 1

Scheme Priority	Example(s)
visual improvements to town centres and high streets,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpretation boards • streetscape improvements
support to bring empty premises back into use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop front improvements
public realm improvements including litter, waste and graffiti reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced street cleansing • Landscape improvements
cultural/visitor economy interventions,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town trails • Wayfinding signage
projects to prevent and reduce antisocial behaviour,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public messaging campaign
capital funding to improve neighbourhoods or community projects and initiatives,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape improvements • Promotional campaigns
creation of more wheelchair accessible space in town centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access improvements • Wheelchair/access ramps