



## WMCA Local UK Shared Prosperity Fund Group

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 2.00pm

### Minutes

#### In attendance

Councillor Ian Brookfield (Chair), Dr Julie Nugent, Dr Fiona Aldridge, Jonathan Skinner, Alex Cole, Simon Down, Professor Jackie Dunne, Henrietta Breukelaar, Rob Johnstone, Mike Hopkins, Andrew Smith, Amrick Singh, Martin Sutherland, Joe Reeves, Delia Garratt, Lloyd Broad, Kelly Thomas, Rachel Egan, David Hope, Ian Darch, Philippa Venables, Heather Clark, Lisa Hamilton

#### Substitutes

Ken Young for Dr. Clive Hickman  
Corin Crane/Raj Kandola for Henrietta Brealey  
Pauline Jones for Richard Smith  
Laura Sadler for Paul Mountford

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies received: Dr Clive Hickman, Henrietta Brealey, Richard Smith, Kevin Rodgers, Paul Mountford, Clare Hatton

The Chair welcomed the group to the second meeting of the WMCA UKSPF Local Partnership Group.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

Resolved: No Declarations of Interest raised.

#### 3. Draft notes of WMCA UKSPF Local Partnership Group 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Resolved: the group approved the draft notes of the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022 meeting.

#### 4. Update on WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan

Dr Fiona Aldridge provided a presentation to the group on activity being progressed to further develop the UKSPF Investment Plan with local authority partners since the last meeting. This included information on the role of the WMCA as the lead/accountable body, local allocations and regional approach across the 3 investment priorities.

Dr Aldridge further noted ongoing engagement with central government in respect of how funding is used locally to create the best outcomes for the region and local discussions in relation to maximising other funding streams such as the recently launched Multiply – Adult Numeracy Programme and the WMCA Adult Education Budget (AEB).

Resolved: Slides from Dr Fiona Aldridge to be shared.

#### 5. Update on Proposals for Local Allocations

Local Authority partners provided an overview/update on local thinking in respect of priorities and deployment of locally allocated Community and Place SPF funding, as follows:

**Birmingham:** outlined core principles being adopted, including a place driven approach, the need for flexibility, a co-designed process with communities and local engagement including VCS organisations, funding support being considered for high streets, towns and community facilities and assets.

**Coventry:** advised that community and place funded activity is being designed to align with year 3 people and skills funding and lessons learnt from ESF projects. Consideration being given to employment support, inclusion support, focus on inner city centre, deprived areas and job shop, ICT and digital support, wrap around support for those hardest to reach. Advised they are engaging with the VCS sector in further developing the detail and noted the sector will have a key role in delivery.

**Dudley:** outlined current priorities for community and place funding inc. vibrant town centre, way finding and public realm. Also looking at visitor activity including promotional campaigns and delivery of cultural strategy. Keen to strengthen social fabric including community grant funding, feasibility studies, digital activity, community centres, wraparound support, employment training and VCS support.

**Sandwell:** summarised current thinking around local community and place funding to include some capital spends on infrastructure, pride in place, repurpose land, community spaces, along with early years and family support, social action projects and activity to prepare for year 3 skills funding by utilising the community and place funding as part of this journey.

**Solihull:** advised currently looking at existing priorities, building community infrastructure, community capacity, high streets and local centres, events and also looking at support to VCS including building on current contracted activity with VCS and LA.

**Walsall:** outlined current proposals includes community activity/capacity, assets, VCS activity including barriers to social exclusion, a potential programme for financial literacy and digital inclusion, town centre improvements, play and park and greening town centre, VCS grants, arts, culture, promoting Walsall heritage including opportunities and events, feasibility studies, energy efficiency, CCTV and lighting.

**Wolverhampton:** summarised 3 key interventions: community, vibrant high streets and small green projects. Noting work with VCS to design activity inc. financial literacy, digital, employment and skills and using year 1 funding to build capacity including warm spaces and public wi-fi. Looking at culture as part of high streets including events to attract people to town centre and opportunities to leverage other funding.

## 6. Q&A on Community and Place Proposals

*Q1. Clarification was sought on the approach to be taken to 'at risk VCS activity' and the VCS EOI/Business Cases submitted?*

*Response to Q1.* The group were advised that this will be for local decision as supported through community and place funding, as outlined above local authority partners are all considering VCS activity and support and are proactively engaging with VCS organisations locally. Noting that LA's have all allocated an amount of local Community and Place funding to VCS activity and the EOI's submitted are being used to shape these local proposals.

*Q2. PCC noted that proposals have been developed on an ex-offender offer which they are keen to engage with Local Authorities on.*

*Response to Q2.* Proposals were welcomed and it was agreed the PCC lead would engage directly with LA leads who were representatives on the partnership group.

## 7. SPF – Supporting Local Businesses

Jonathan Skinner summarised the approach to activity around supporting local businesses through UKSPF funding.

Jonathan outlined the 2021 regional business support review which was approved by WMCA Board and which forms the basis of the proposals for UKSPF business activity. He also summarised the wider regional economic context and medium/long term growth plans and immediate challenges and needs.

He further noted that the majority of existing business support activity is currently funded through ERDF or other sources, with much of this funded to the end of this financial year. Therefore, the decision has been taken to focus SPF Local Business funds on 2023/24 and 2024/25 activity.

Jonathan advised that consideration is also being given to ongoing discussions around our further devolution deal negotiations and opportunities for greater regional impact in areas such as maximising Midlands Engine Investment Fund 2 (MEIF2), and programmes such as investor readiness or stronger relationships to co-design national programmes.

Jonathan summarised current proposals and thinking for supporting local business funding around a two-part structure:

1. Core System – SME advisors/account managers working with businesses on the ground through LA's.
2. Strengthening Strategic Relations – relationship management activity/capacity.

In addition to this, proposals are being considered for specific business support programmes including grants, decarbonisation/net zero programmes, investment readiness, SME competitiveness, innovation and productivity.

In terms of next steps for development of the Supporting Local Business priorities, the group were advised that the following actions were being progressed:

- Regional Growth Hubs and Local Authority partners are now meeting on a regular basis over the next 4 weeks in order to further develop the hub/spoke model.
- Activity to develop specifications for commissioning programmes is also underway, reviewing best practice from ERDF projects.

It is anticipated that the outcomes from the above actions will be developed for review by the Economic Growth Board and WMCA Board in December. Subject to approval, activity will then commence to begin procurement for commissioned programmes in the new year.

## **8. Summary and Next Steps**

The Chair thanked all those who had attended and presented at today's meeting. Noting that there was more work to be done and opportunities for off-line meetings to follow up on actions discussed today.

In relation to next steps the group were advised that following the ongoing work as outlined the UKSPF Investment Plan would be taken to the following meetings for review and approval prior to re-submission to central government:

Mayor and Met Leaders – 14<sup>th</sup> October

WMCA Board - 28<sup>th</sup> October

Submission to Government (following standstill period) early November

A stakeholder webinar will also be arranged to provide more detail on 'how to access funding' in collaboration with LA partners, following approval of the WMCA Investment Plan by Government. Further details on this will be shared with the group.

A further meeting of the WMCA UKSPF Partnership Group will be arranged for early 2023, to consider year 1 progress and year 2 proposals.

## **9. Any Other Business**

None Raised.

Meeting Ends.

DRAFT