

Minutes



Cabinet

Date: 10 May 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

Present: Councillors J Mudd (Chair), D Davies, D Batrouni, J Clarke, Y Forsey, D Harvey, J Hughes, L Lacey and S Marshall

1 Apologies for Absence

None.

2 Declarations of Interest

None.

3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes from 12 April were accepted as a true record.

4 Shared Prosperity Fund

The Leader introduced the first agenda report on the Shared Prosperity Fund.

In April 2022, the UK Government published details of the new £2.6bn Shared Prosperity Fund which sought to support the Government's Levelling Up objectives.

These objectives aimed to:

Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector

Create opportunities and improve public services

Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, and

Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

To achieve this, the Shared Prosperity Fund focussed on three investment priorities, namely:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business; and
- People and Skills
- There was also a fund called Multiply, which focused on improving adult numeracy skills.

The Shared Prosperity Funding was allocated across the UK on a needs-assessed basis and the 10 Local Authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region received a combined allocation of over £230m, and a further £48m for Multiply. Newport was allocated just over £27m for core spend and a further £5.6m for Multiply, for the period April 2022 until the end of March 2025.

To draw down this funding, all local authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region were required to develop a single collaborative regional investment plan. At July's Cabinet in 2022, Cabinet agreed to endorse the submission of the regional investment plan by the Lead Authority.

Whilst the decision was taken in July last year, there were significant delays from UK Government in the approval of the regional investment plans and the development of formal agreements for governance arrangements.

The Leader reported that these issues had been resolved, but some 10 months of delivery from Year 1 of the programme has been lost. Nonetheless, there had been some SPF spend in 2022/23. The report noted that nearly £700,000 was being claimed for Year 1 for several projects and Cabinet were asked to endorse this spend.

Whilst it was noted that the significant delays experienced to date meant the spend was below the total Year 1 allocation, UK Government had recognised this and confirmed that underspend would be carried over into Year 2. The Lead Authority is required to submit a credible plan which demonstrates how the rolled over funding will be spent in the current financial year. Further details of this are contained within the report.

A significant amount of work has gone into ensuring that the fund was managed and monitored in an appropriate way through robust internal governance arrangements,

Given the need to proceed at pace with the delivery of the Local Investment Plan, Cabinet was asked to agree a range of delegated functions to specific Officers and the creation of an internal board which comprised relevant senior officers from across the Council. Agreement relating to specific projects would be undertaken in consultation with the Leader, as the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Strategic Investment and respective Cabinet Members would be kept up to date through briefings with relevant Service Area leads.

The Leader drew colleagues attention to the proposed Local Investment Plan contained in Appendix 1. This plan lists the projects under each priority which will deliver the objectives outlined by UK Government. SPF Funding is mainly for revenue funding with capital spend limited to a maximum of 44% of the total allocation. Newport's local investment plan does not currently propose more than 40% spend on capital projects.

Alongside a number of projects being delivered at the local level, the UK Government prospectus also encouraged collaboration with external partners for both local and regional projects. The Local Investment Plan includes projects which will be delivered by external partners, as well as an allocation to projects which will be delivered at a regional level. This included regional employability commissioning and business innovation, Research and Development Growth, and tourism.

Cabinet has listened to the views of residents and stakeholders and acknowledged that people wish to see investment in communities and places. The Local Investment Plan proposes investment in spaces such as Tredegar Park and the Monmouthshire Brecon Canal, as well as support for partners wanting to invest in improvements to some important sports facilities, including Rodney Parade and the Newport County Cricket ground. Significant investment is also proposed in People and Skills to support young people, help residents into employment and upskill the existing workforce to ensure that residents have access to good quality jobs and businesses have access to a suitably skilled and resilient workforce.

Supporting Local Businesses is a separate priority with a proposal to expand and build upon the support offered by the City of Newport Business Development Grants. Additionally, supporting businesses with embedding circular economy principles, and bolstering the retrofit supply chains supports the Council to deliver on climate change commitments.

Colleagues noted the significant outcomes which were expected to be derived from the various projects. These included planting 750 new trees planted, creating 66 new jobs in the arts/culture/heritage sector, creating 50 new businesses, and supporting at least 400 existing businesses. Other examples commented upon included supporting over 950 people into employment and supporting over 1000 people in gaining qualifications, licences, and skills. Cabinet commented that these are incredible numbers and remarked that this funding has the potential to make a significant difference to the places residents live in, the resilience of businesses and the lives of residents. There are also a number of funding pots which would empower local groups to host events and expand their activities.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies considered that it was excellent news that the funding was going to be invested in the city and consultation with residents was being undertaken to see what they wanted rather than making assumptions. Councillor Davis stated that Newport's wellbeing objectives prioritised the economy, wellbeing, jobs, education and sustainability. The Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years went on to remark that it was great to see that these objectives could be delivered with an investment in green spaces, local businesses and jobs.
- Councillor Harvey mentioned that the local investment plan currently had 47 projects, not including those under Multiply, which is raising maths grades through 900 interventions. Councillor Harvey reflected that this was what residents had asked for and the SPF covered so many different aspects from a pop-up park to a feasibility study on where to house the Newport Ship. Communities would see £30M of investment over the next three years, which Cabinet was grateful to receive.
- Councillor Hughes felt that it was important that the funding was aligned to the Newport Local Investment Plan, and this was informed by local residents and stake holders. Councillor Hughes perceived that this is reflected in the variety of projects supported that strengthen communities in Newport. Councillor Hughes highlighted the support given to local businesses was also important. Councillor Hughes also noted that this would have a positive impact by enabling the Council to improve its facilities and the general environment of the city, supporting the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Cabinet Member for Social Services therefore fully endorsed the report.
- Councillor Forsey also supported the SPF allocation. Councillor Forsey considered that these are great projects that demonstrated what the council could do, given the investment. Councillor Forsey went on to say that the development of work on the Mon and Brecon Canal, including measures to improve the water supply, the biodiversity, disabled access and upgrading of the visitor centre would be appreciated by the residents of Rogerstone. Councillor Forsey went on to state that there were many projects that were pleasing, including the development at Tredegar Park which will make a big difference for those residents who visited and used the park. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity therefore supported all the projects and welcomed the report.
- Councillor Marshall added that the report was positive and was happy to see it going forward. Councillor Marshall considered that it showed what could be done with the right investment. Councillor Marshall noted that the plans boosted the number of jobs in the city and helped incomes which would be especially helpful given the cost-of-living crisis, and 400 existing businesses would benefit from the SPF. Councillor Marshall considered that the big focus here was listening to residents, who would now see the difference that these additions would bring to the city, including the Youth Academy, Tredegar Park and furthering the culture of the city, including the Newport Ship and tourism.

- The Leader thanked colleagues for their comments whilst noting that the scale of the challenge and the need to deliver at pace could not be underestimated and remarked that there were potential on-going revenue implications once the SPF funding ended. As already mentioned, robust governance and administration arrangements are required to ensure funding is properly managed and monitored and that ongoing risks are identified and mitigated.

Alternatively, it could be decided that the scale of this challenge is too great and agree not to deliver any of the projects listed in the Local Investment Plan. However, this would be a lost opportunity for investment in local areas, local communities, and local businesses.

The Leader therefore proposed that Cabinet endorsed the recommendations of the report and asked officers to press on with the delivery of the proposed Local Investment Plan without further delay.

Decision

Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the delivery to date in the first year of SPF solely relating to 2022/2023,
2. Approved the proposed administration and governance arrangements.
3. Endorsed the proposed Newport Local Investment Plan comprising a comprehensive range of SPF-funded projects for years 2 and 3; Noting expected outputs and outcomes for the City and authorising the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development and Head of Finance to claim relevant funding from the Lead Authority.
4. Delegated authority to the internal SPF Board, chaired by the Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Strategic Investment, to agree specific projects under each of the three SPF priorities and multiply, recalibrate and realign as necessary in order to achieve outputs and outcomes against SPF interventions.
5. Delegated authority to the Head of Law and Standards to prepare, complete and execute the required legal documentation to enable third party suppliers/providers to be appointed for internal and externally commissioned projects, and to provide grants to third party applicants.
6. Authorised the SPF Board to operate within the suggested financial framework in order to manage the financial risk associated with the SPF programme.

5 Pillgwenlly Master Plan

The Leader turned to the next report on the agenda, the Pill Master Plan. The cover report and link to the Master Planning document were included in the agenda pack.

One Newport, with the support of Welsh Government, commissioned an urban design and master planning organisation called The Urbanists to work with partners, businesses, and the community, in order to develop a challenging and aspirational Master Plan for Pill.

This followed concerns raised by Pill residents regarding a number of issues within the Ward.

A social enterprise called MELA Cymru were also involved in the work and undertook an in-depth community engagement exercise within the area.

The plan focused on a series of Community Ambitions and also recognised work already underway within the area.

Cabinet was asked to approve the strategic intentions, developed following extensive engagement with Pill residents, businesses, and partners, of the Master Plan.

Work began on the Master Plan in November 2021 and included a significant amount of community engagement, with 51 one to one interviews with key community stakeholders, 14 engagement events with targeted groups, 2650 individuals reached through social media and Pill Connects, and views gathered from 605 people from diverse backgrounds.

Following analysis of the geographic space, retail and service provision, green space, and community safety indicators, three Community Ambitions aligned to the community and business feedback were formed:

- Improved green and public spaces
- Better business and shopping offer and environment
- Mix of community and youth facilities

The report also recognised work already underway, which evolved over the course of the work. This included Safer Pill, which reprioritised work following the results of the community engagement undertaken and continued to be jointly led by Newport City Council and Gwent Police.

The Master Plan also included work to improve communications, tackle fly-tipping and refuse, improve housing, provide better support and engagement for businesses, and improve the physical environment and green spaces.

The Master Plan was agreed by One Newport and must now be adopted by each partner.

The Leader felt it was important to reiterate, that Cabinet was agreeing to the strategic intentions of the Master Plan and to align decision making to the aspirations of the community, as detailed within the Master Plan.

The Leader added that Cabinet must ensure that it continued to work together as partners to identify and attract external funding to help support the delivery of key projects identified within the Master Plan. This is a long-term commitment and Cabinet must ensure that it continues to engage with the community to develop planning and achieve change.

Crucially, Cabinet will not over promise and under deliver for residents.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Davies agreed that this is vital work to improve Pill and make it a prosperous place in which to live. Councillor Davies remarked that it was great to see the community ambitions realised with a key focus on quality of life for both children and adults. Councillor Davies welcomed this, including prioritising play and youth community facilities as well as prioritising jobs, and opportunities being created for local people. Councillor Davies concluded that this is an aspirational project, and it is exciting to be part of the journey.
- Councillor Harvey referred to the terminology used, 'strong not wrong' which she felt was a breath of fresh air, considering the negative comments usually directed at Pill. Councillor Harvey reflected that her family lived there, and it had always been a vibrant place. The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing considered that this was a wonderful idea for Pill and fully supported the report going forward.
- From personal experience, Councillor Hughes agreed that Pill was one of the most exciting and diverse places to live in Newport, including the food, music and people. Councillor Hughes recognised that there were huge challenges, but it gave an opportunity for the people of Pill to empower themselves and reach their full potential.

- Councillor Clarke referred to the tough economic circumstances, and considered the positive knock-on effect the master plan would have in Newport. Councillor Clarke was pleased to see that community engagement was at the forefront of the plan and remarked on the honesty of the document. The Cabinet Member commented that he was at a meeting earlier in the day, talking to one of the partners involved with this project who welcomed the opportunity to put their views forward and felt it was good that the council was listening.
- The Leader mentioned that this was not a commitment to financial investment, but a commitment that asked partners to align their decision-making regarding services and/or developments within the Pill area with the aspirations and ambitions of the Master Plan. The Plan asked partners to remain committed to utilising resources in Pill in a way that best supported these ambitions, and to identify ways to tackle the challenges faced by the community. The Leader stated that Officers are tasked to continue to work with partners to identify and access external funding to deliver on the aims of Master Plan.

The Leader also felt it would be remiss not to acknowledge the support from Welsh Government in developing the master plan including funding.

Decision

Cabinet agreed to adopt the Master Plan as the key, strategic driver for decision making and service delivery within the Pillgwenlly Ward and tasked Officers to continue to work with Partners to identify and access external funding to deliver on the Master Plan.

6 NCC External Pressures - Cost of Living

The Leader presented the latest update on the main external pressures facing the council, businesses, residents, and communities to Cabinet.

The cost-of-living crisis continues, with a report from the Office of National Statistics released last week stating 95% of 450 food items in the consumer prices inflation basket increased in price in the past year, some by close to 50%.

In addition, the base rate remained higher than last year's average.

In the context of areas noted in the report, collaborative working with partners across the city remained a priority. The multi-agency cost-of-living event in the Riverfront on the 26 April attracted approximately 180 of residents who were able to access advice and guidance on managing finances, income maximisation and support with household expenses.

The Leader urged residents experiencing difficulties to contact the council for information and signposting on the advice and support available; in person, by phone or by visiting the support and advice pages on the Council website.

As Members would see in the report, a recent survey of the Involve Citizen's Panel found approximately three quarters of the people who responded (164) said they were very or a little worried or anxious about the cost-of-living crisis.

Newport schools continued to support the most vulnerable children and young people and were planning ways of supporting families during the May half-term holiday and bank holidays. Schools would also be facilitating the dissemination of seven days' worth of food vouchers to those families entitled to free school meals.

The Leader added that it was a privilege to visit St Julian's Primary School where they had the Big Bocs Boyd in place which helped support those families in need at the school and the community. This initiative was educating young people, not only on food waste but also

social responsibility and developing numeracy skills. The Leader reflected that this was a fantastic initiative and was delighted to see that other primary schools in Newport would also be implementing this initiative. The Leader had recently visited Maindee Primary School and they were almost ready to open their shop. At every level, Newport City Council was supporting and doing everything they could to help people. If there was anyone facing any challenges, the Leader urged them to come forward as the help would be in place for them.

Comments of Cabinet Members:

- Councillor Harvey mentioned the stark reality that 77% of residents were concerned about the cost of living and reiterated that residents must reach out for help from the Council. The Cabinet Member thanked the Leader for acknowledging the work taking place in her portfolio, and also wanted to acknowledge the support from staff who went above and beyond, looking after everyone in Newport. Residents could telephone 01633 656656 or contact their ward councillor to reach out for help and support to make life a little less stressful.
- Councillor Davies thanked the Leader for mentioning St Julian's School, the Cabinet Member was a governor there since 2002 and Chair since 2007 and was immensely proud, as well as being involved in the Big Bocs Boyd. The community support was being seen across the city with many schools supporting families, and taking on the mantle of community hub, with food provision, clothing and advice. The Cabinet Member was pleased to add that Welsh Government are providing food vouchers over the May bank holiday. Free School Meals are available for foundation phase which will ramp up and move to KS2 in September, however parents needed to apply to receive allocation of the vouchers. Hopefully, WG will listen to the needs of residents and continue to make this provision available for the summer holiday. The Cabinet Member is lobbying the Education Minister (MS) for extra provision.
- Councillor Forsey commented on the Ukraine refugees and mentioned that payments to host families had gone up to £500 per month, which was a considerable help and if anyone felt they were in the position to support families, they could contact the Council for more information.

Decision

Cabinet considered the contents of the report on the Council's activity to respond to the external factors on Newport's communities, businesses, and council services.

7 Work Programme - 2023/24

This was the regular monthly report on the work programme.

Decision:

Cabinet agreed the Work Programme.