**Warrington UKSPF Local Partnership**                    **7th Mar 2024**

**In Attendance:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Eleanor Blackburn (EB) | (Chair) Warrington Borough Council (Officer) |
| Rebecca Anderson-Moss (RAM) | Warrington and Vale Royal College |
| Lucy Gardner (LG) | Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust |
| Paul Chapman (PC) | Cheshire and Warrington Business Growth Hub |
| Andrea Morley (AM) | Warrington Business Improvement District (BID) |
| Susan Savage (SS) | Department for Work and Pensions |
| Kerry Hall (KH) | Warrington Borough Council |
| Tim Smith (TS) | Warrington Borough Council |
| Gail Thomas (GT) | Warrington Borough Council |
| Leah Biddle (LB) | Culture Warrington |
| Nichola Newton (NN) | Warrington and Vale Royal College |
| Naz Ghodrati (NG) | Warrington Voluntary Action |
| Aimee Ruddy (AR) | Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry |

**Apologies**

| | |
|---|---|
| Stephen Fitzsimons (SF) | Warrington Chamber of Commerce and Industry |
| Pat Jackson (PJ) | Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) |
| Alison Cullen (AC) | Warrington Voluntary Action |
| Dave Thompson (DT) | Warrington Disability Partnership |
| Derek Jones (DJ) | Warrington Disability Partnership |
| Martin Wood (MW) | Department of Business and Trade |
| Georgia Millership (GM) | Department of Business and Trade |
| Colin Billingsley (CB) | Department for Work and Pensions |

## 1      Welcome and Introductions

EB welcomed everybody to the meeting and members introduced themselves.

## 2      Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 1st February 2024, were accepted as a true record.

## 3      UKSPF Financial Breakdown (Feb 2024)

TS presented an updated spreadsheet showing budget allocations and projects approved so far. Revised and new proposals were to be discussed later in the meeting.

The programme looked close to being fully subscribed, but there was still room for more projects, with proposals expected for:
- improvements to community buildings
- improvements to Pyramid, Parr Hall
- business support to maximise procurement spend in local economy

## 4     UKSPF Updated Monitoring (Feb 2024)

TS and GT had been meeting with project leads to discuss their expected spend and achievement up to the end of the programme lifetime at March 2025. Although there is likely to be a significant underspend for where we should be at the end of March 2024, Government has confirmed that we can carry that forward and still have our full allocation for 2024/25 as expected.

Most projects were still predicting full spend and achievement at the lifetime end and have provided evidence of equipment purchased, new staff recruited, tender processes completed etc as reassurance. The total forecast spend at the moment was £5.2m out of a total allocation of £6.5m.

There would be a six-monthly report to Government covering the latest position to the end of March 2024. It was agreed that we should ask projects for updates on a monthly basis after that to allow as much time as possible for any recovery actions or to allocate spend elsewhere if needed.

## 5     Group discussion – digital inclusion, best approach, priorities etc

TS presented a proposal received from WBC Neighbourhoods, developed in consultation with various community groups, including older people, families and ESOL (English for Speaker of Other Languages) users.

The proposal comprises:
- upgrades to Whitecross, Orford, Culcheth, Greenwood community centres
- installation of AV equipment and/or smart screens at Culcheth, Greenwood, Fearnhead, Orford, Padgate, Whitecross
- a programme of digital learning sessions run regularly at Whitecross, Orford and Padgate, and occasionally at other venues
- expanding the programme of Techy Tea Parties ("Making Digital Fun")
- enhancing digital advertising on large screens and bus shelters

The Council's steering group had been supportive of the general principle of the proposal, but raised concerns around:
- the aim of re-establishing venues which might be thought of as old fashioned or no longer suitable
- can we think more creatively about using venues with known high footfall, e.g. Golden Square, Birchwood Shopping Centre, supermarkets, leisure centres etc?
- concern about buying new kit which could lead to ongoing liabilities, e.g. maintenance costs, after the end of the programme; could we focus more on helping people to use what they've already got, or get equipment from elsewhere?

- links to wider community strategy and what is already happening, e.g. with the third sector, NHS, volunteer champions etc

An updated proposal will be developed, and the Partnership were asked for their input.

RAM agreed with the need for investment in local facilities. W&VR College has a LEP funded project re digital inclusion including local delivery. Some providers are already in place, so the UKSPF proposal needs to have a coordinated range of training, joined up, not duplicated.

NG advised that the offer needs to be varied and flexible to take account of different inclusivity needs – age, ethnicity/language, dexterity, vision, language etc.

LG noted the potential for links with NHS provision, including supporting older people to use the NHS app and maybe running provision in GP practices, medical centres and outpatients' departments.

TS will pass on these suggestions to help inform a revised proposal.


## 6        Group discussion – communities and place, new projects, more outputs, best approach, priorities etc

TS presented a proposal to establish a grants programme which would fund voluntary, community and other organisations to deliver projects under the Communities and Place investment priority.

The advantages of a grants programme include:
- widening the opportunity to access UKSPF funding to many different and diverse organisations
- bringing forward ideas that might not have been known
- indirect benefit of capacity building for third sector organisations
- spreading the risk rather than reliance of just a few large scale projects
- can get to project delivery quicker than through procurement of each individual project

The grants programme would cover those areas of the Warrington UKSPF programme that need further investment in order to achieve our lifetime targets for spend and achievement. It would therefore be targeted at projects which would achieve spend and deliverables in the Environment and Transport and Digital Infrastructure activity themes, as those were the areas of the programme which currently have the most likely shortfall in spend and achievement.

The Council's steering group had not supported the proposal. Concerns had been raised around:
- potential duplication with the Community Investment Fund
- not enough budget left to make real improvements to green spaces, sports facilities etc
- possibility of being overwhelmed with lots of small, individual bids – need to drive the money to make the most impact, avoid risk of scattergun approach
- need to work proactively with Warrington Voluntary Action, Mersey Forest, Canals and Rivers Trust etc to bring ideas forward

Partners commented positively about the general principle of the proposal and suggested that a way of addressing the concern about being overwhelmed with lots of small, individual bids and a scattergun approach could be to engage a small number of "networked organisations" that would have a knowledge of key local priorities and potential projects. Offers of support included NG

(WVA), LG (NHS), AM (Warrington BID) and NN (W&VR College). A key issue will be to ensure that potential projects are clearly aligned to our UKSPF priorities.


## 7        Next Steps

Follow up actions on above project proposals.

Other potential projects
-    feasibility study for actions to improve local procurement, carbon footprint etc
-    Pyramid, Parr Hall improvements
-    Improvements to community buildings


## 8        Any Other Business

TS noted that there had been no mention of UKSPF in the Spring Budget 2024. The position at the moment therefore remains that the programme will finish at the end of March 2025.


## 9        Schedule of Future Meetings

Next meeting is 9.30am Thursday 4th April 2024, then recurring on the first Thursday of every month, unless agreed not required.