GLASGOW CITY REGION RESPONSE

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

• the approach of using lead local authorities to secure funding, the appropriateness of the three key investment priorities the UKSPF will support, and the timescale over which it currently operates (2022-2025)

In February 2022 the Glasgow City Region (GCR) Cabinet approved the development and submission a regional Investment Plan to UK Government (UKG) for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). GCR is the only regional Investment Plan amongst Scottish Local Authorities.

Glasgow City Region structures are reasonably mature with the ongoing development and delivery of the £1.13Bn City Deal programme over the past 8 years. The GCR Cabinet believed a regional Investment Plan for UKSPF was the best way to help achieve the aspirations within the Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

A Head of GCR UKSPF has been appointed to both lead the development of the Investment Plan, co-ordinate delivery across the city region and liaison with UKG.

The expectation is the experience of managing and delivering the UKSPF across the GCR will help continue to develop a collaborative approach across the city region to maximise outcomes and efficiencies.

The three priorities within UKSPF provide sufficient flexibility for local government to deliver the interventions they require to match local priorities. In the case of GCR – the delivery of the RES.

It should be noted, while there is agreement with the principles of the Leveling Up White paper, the number of funding streams, competitive bidding processes, the ability of local government to maximise the outcomes of the investment and ability to align budgets is challenging.

While the additional flexibility of the UKSPF priorities is welcomed, the limited programme timescale prohibits long-term planning and delivery. Previous EU Funding programmes were 7 years, providing sufficient time to deliver interventions of scale. It should also be noted, the annual budget allocation prevents the GCR from managing the fund as a programme effectively across the region.

• the process of agreeing and submitting your investment plan and the extent to which any funding has been released

The timescale for developing the UKSPF Investment Plan were very short, especially to co-ordinate information from 8 individual Member Authorities. This for further complicated by requiring the approval of the GCR Cabinet in advance of submission.

The Investment Plan was approved 5 December 2022 and the Year 1 tranche of funding was released 30 December. The main issue with the release of the funding is the lack of flexibility for GCR to manage as a programme over the period – as with City Deal.

• the appropriateness of and flexibility provided by the UKSPF Interventions, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs relevant for Scotland

As noted, the 51 Interventions within the UKSPF prospectus provide sufficient flexibility for local government to delivery against their aspirations. The prospectus also provided the opportunity to develop bespoke interventions as required.

• the adequacy of the administrative expenditure provisions

The 4% Administration Fee is considered adequate, however until clarification is provided on the parameters for programme evaluation this can’t be confirmed.

Multiply

• the approach to measuring progress through the Multiply success measures

Outputs:
Number of adult numeracy courses run in a local area through Multiply (numerical value)
Number of people participating in Multiply funded courses (numerical value)
Number of people achieving a qualification (numerical value)
Number of courses developed in collaboration with employers (numerical value)
Number of people referred from partners onto upskill courses (numerical value)
Number of different cohorts participating in numeracy courses (e.g. learners in prison, parents etc) (numerical value)
Courses set up to increase confidence/ number of people engaged in courses

Outcomes:
Number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2 equivalent (numerical value)
Number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2 equivalent (numerical value)

Noted above are the outputs and outcomes to be reported to UKG against the Multiply investment. These success measures appear relevant. Over and above these specific measures of success, UKG make significant reference to the evaluation of UKSPF and within this Multiply. The challenge will be when undertaking a summative evaluation to determine the overall success / impact of Multiply, beyond the direct increase in individuals with a qualification. This would require a longitudinal study and may also be challenging to attribute purely to the Multiply intervention.

• the flexibility of the funding given it is to supplement existing adult numeracy provision

While the budget for MULTIPLY is welcomed, a question remains regarding the level of investment in this intervention, as a percentage of the overall UKSPF programme (more than 15%). While the volume of residents in the GCR without a formal qualification has been well documented, there are no statistics as to how much of this is numeracy. The GCR Intelligence Hub has been unable to find any information relating solely to numeracy. GCR asked the UKG about the ability to broaden the investment into skills in general, however this was not approved.

It would have been helpful for the flexibility applied to the rest of the UKSPF to be mirrored with Multiply, therefore enabling it to be tailored to local need.

More generally we would welcome any views on the extent to which the UK Government's policy approach provided through the Levelling Up Fund, UKSPF and Multiply complements the Scottish Government's priorities and policy approach including the national outcomes in the National Performance Framework.

While the GCR welcome the UKG investment through Levelling Up, the nature of the approach to funding is not conducive to maximising impact. Having a number of various funding streams, some challenge, some allocated makes it very difficult for partners to be strategic in their approach to investment.

Challenge Fund programmes also result in a significant amount of resource internally and externally amongst partners being wasted, as a limited number of project business cases are approved. For example, for the Community Renewal Fund in Glasgow, more than 50 projects applications were submitted and evaluated, with only two being approved by UKG.

The recent experience of the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 resulted in the investment of significant time and resource by Local Authorities and partners in bids that were never going to be considered / successful due to last minute changes in funding criteria.

The approach detailed in the Levelling Up White Paper and the aspirations of NSET indicate the desire from central government to devolve budgets and decision making directly to regions and this is welcomed.