

## Correspondence from the Finance and Public Administration Committee - Replacing EU Structural Funds in Scotland - Stirling Council Response

### Levelling Up Funding:

- the approach taken in relation to identifying areas of greater need or priority in round two

*In general, we welcome the commitment to funding following on from Round 1 and in anticipation of Round 3. Having priorities which include; boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standard and empowering local leaders, enabled us to fit ready projects seeking investment with LUF.*

- how successful you have been in securing round two Levelling Up Funding and how the process for bidding for Levelling Up Funding in round two compares with round one (where relevant)

*Stirling secured £19 million in Round 2 of the Levelling Up Fund. The funding will enable the transformation of the current MOD site at Forthside, a key area close to the city centre and major transport links. The investment will unlocking opportunities for local businesses and inward investment.*

*Regenerating this prime underutilised site is expected to create 1,000 additional jobs and deliver enhanced sustainable transport connections between the city centre, our communities and the wider region.*

*Stirling Council didn't submit a bid in Round 1 of the fund, therefore we are unable to compare the processes of the 2 funding rounds.*

- the extent to which any funding for successful bids in round one has been released, to what timescales (compared with any in your project bid) and how confident you remain that the project will be achieved within the agreed timescales

*None of the funding has yet been released for our Round 2 bid. However, we have received the official offer letter and an inception meeting with those managing the LUF is planned for early March 23. The timescales in the original bid submitted in June 2022 were based on expectation of announcement in autumn 2022, therefore timescales for some elements will need to be adjusted and agreed at the inception meeting.*

- the process for project evaluation, monitoring and subsequent reporting to the UK Government

*We are not in a position to comment this yet. We only received official notification that our Round 2 bid was successful in January 23 and our inception meeting will explain the project evaluation, monitoring and subsequent reporting to the UK Government.*

- what you consider should happen after the 2024-25 deadline for the current Levelling Up Fund.

*We would welcome a Round 3 of the LUF. Improving local infrastructure and connectivity is critical to economic recovery, growth and attracting private sector investment across our region.*

#### 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)

*This approach will have the potential to save time and money overall by avoiding the middle person approach from EU funding (Managing Authority). However, if the Local Authorities (LA's) are expected to act as links between third sector and UK government, it will create extra pressure to an already fragile budget. Although, as we understand it, LAs are paid up front so this will help with cash flow, providing performance is achieved.*

*Adding new priorities which are competing with previous European Social Fund (ESF)/European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) priorities do not present added value to the LAs. The short term is far from 'like for like' replacement, keeping in mind that the European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIFs) operate over a 7 year period. If there are delays with the launch of the fund (which happens), the funding period has historically been extended at the end. The new UKSPF does not seem to present this flexibility.*

*In addition, there seems to be more flexibility around ESIFs in terms of financial targets - any under spend is carried over to the next year (within reason). A longer programme term of funding is key to delivering successful multi programme and projects. This has been a very important aspect in the success of the ESF Programme in Stirling.*

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

*There have been delays of approximately 4-6 months when improving our investment plan. This has impacted on year 1 delivery (22-23), which has affected our ability to continue and implement new activities and subsequently placed pressure on delivery in years 2 and 3. Our experience with submitting applications for EU funding often experienced delays on original dates. However, this has not impacted the level of funding Stirling Council was allowed to access due to the flexibility mentioned above.*

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

*Without specific guidance on participants and national rules on eligible expenditure is difficult to determine how flexible these interventions are going to be. We*

*anticipate the specific guidance will be with us within the next few weeks.*

- the adequacy of the administrative expenditure provisions

*As above, we need to see national rules and also understand what requirement is needed for claim and funding work.*

## Multiply

- the approach to measuring progress through the Multiply success measures

*All elements of the Multiply programme will be subject to quarterly monitoring and review processes to support:*

- *the tracking of participant numbers against outputs and outcomes;*
  - *the support provided to targeted groups and communities;*
  - *participants progression through numeracy levels to qualification levels and numeracy for work;*
  - *qualifications achieved with impact statements from participants providing additional details about the difference the programme has made.*
- the flexibility of the funding given it is to supplement existing adult numeracy provision

*The funding extends our ability to offer a range of additional more focused intervention supporting priority groups across our communities. It offers greater opportunity to engage those less likely to participate. Partnership working with third sector will support the introduction of specific thematic based approaches to the delivery of numeracy in communities.*

## Community Renewal Fund

*Stirling Council has not accessed funding from the Community Renewal Fund.*