

Finance and Public Administration Committee

Replacing EU Structural Funds in Scotland

Written Submission from Stirling Council

The approach taken to identifying areas of greater need or priority

Officers were unclear on how exactly this was assessed and on what indicators were used. A challenge for Stirling is that often our averages are positive but we have significant polarity of wealth, amongst the greatest polarity in the UK, and we are unsure whether this was taken into account. A few very deprived areas in Scotland are not in the priority places for the Community Renewal fund even though they have higher levels of deprivation than some of those that are on the list. As an example Argyll & Bute and Dumfries & Galloway are on the list but these areas do not have higher levels of deprivation than Dundee and Clackmannshire, which are not on the list.

Similarly, the list of Local Authorities by priority category for the Levelling Up Fund is not fully clear either. For instance, both Stirling and Clackmannanshire appear to be in category 2, Dundee appears for Category 1 and so does Dumfries & Galloway, but Argyll and Bute moves up to category 2.

It would be positive to fully understand the process behind the categorisation of areas for these funds.

The process of bidding for funding including the types of projects you sought funding for

Given that Stirling was not listed as a priority area we did not make any bids this time around due to competing resource pressures. Officers considered the fairly tight timescales for both bid and delivery and the likelihood of a successful outcome given the expected demand from those areas that were considered a priority when making our decision.

How successful you have been in securing funding

N/A for all except the Community Ownership Fund in which Callander was successful in securing some funding but this bid was community led rather than Stirling Council led.

The appropriateness of any timescales and criteria which determine when, how and on what funding must be spent

The timescales for both submission of bids and for completion of spend if successful were felt to be very challenging for officers.

What has worked well and what needs to be improved in terms of future funding approaches; including the extent to which the new and emerging, (multi government) landscape of economic development will enable effective use of public funds

Both the Levelling up and the Community Renewal fund are competitive funds and whilst a competitive model might be more flexible, it is however based on the perceived merit of an individual project rather than on general needs of areas, potentially leading to less developed areas losing out on funding.

Competitive models are also extremely resource intensive for the applicant, which can be disadvantageous for smaller authorities like Stirling.

A clearer set of criteria on which decisions will be based and more time to submit applications would be welcomed along with an open system which removes priority areas but which clearly sets the priorities of the scheme(s).

The sustainability of funding for the longer term operation of projects or capital investment delivered under these funds

Surety on duration and availability of these funding programmes, and the others in development, would significantly help the strategic planning around how these funds can have the most impact on our local economy and communities.

The evaluation and accountability mechanisms in place or proposed to assess the effectiveness of any funding provided

N/A as we did not make any applications this time around.