

## Delegated authority officer decision notice

<b>Decision made by</b>	Andrew Busby, Head of Development and Corporate Landlord.
<b>Lead officer contact details</b>	Nick King, Economic Development Manager <a href="mailto:Nick.king@southandvale.gov.uk">Nick.king@southandvale.gov.uk</a>
<b>Decision</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To award Rural England Prosperity Funding (REPF) grants totalling £431,450.</li> <li>2. To approve individual grant awards of over £25,000.</li> <li>3. To award these grants subject to the conditions laid out in appendices three and four.</li> <li>4. To agree an amendment to the grant policy to award applications scoring six points or more.</li> <li>5. To support rejection of applications scoring 5 or less points.</li> <li>6. To approve transfer of capital budgets between REPF cost centres to ensure allocations can be optimally utilised.</li> </ol>
<b>Key decision?</b>	Yes
<b>If key decision, has call-in been waived by the Scrutiny Committee chair(s)?</b>	No
<b>Confidential decision, and if so under which exempt category?</b>	No
<b>Delegated authority reference from the constitution</b>	<p><a href="#">ICMD Decision Notice 24 July 2023</a> – Delegated Authority to Head of Corporate Landlord to take necessary decisions and actions to oversee the UKSPF investment plan, including implementing and administering the schemes and the resulting projects.</p> <p>Delegations are in the Constitution:</p> <p><b>DELEGATIONS TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVES AND HEADS OF SERVICE</b></p> <p><b>1.0 FINANCIAL</b></p>

	<p>1.1 To incur expenditure within approved capital and revenue budgets.</p> <p>Schedule 1: Delegations to the head of development and corporate landlord</p> <p><b>2.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <p>2.1 To award capital grants for economic development projects for which there is an approved budget.</p>
<p><b>Risks</b></p>	<p><b>Project deadlines, viability and delivery:</b> Projects funded via REPF must be practically complete by 31 March 2025 (deadline set by HM Government). Failure to defray the current year's allocation to applicants by mid-September will increase the challenges faced in realising projects.</p> <p>Completion dates will be reiterated as a condition within the award offer letter and certified through a monitoring process. This may mean that in the event of non-completion, clawback of funds is required, (enabled by scheme terms and conditions).</p> <p><b>Fraud and assurance:</b> Funding for external organisations carries a risk of fraud. Assurance processes, including proof of identity checks, and wider due diligence checks (via the FAME database), have been undertaken at the application assessment stage. Appropriate assurance conditions will also be built into award offer letters.</p> <p><b>Reputational risk:</b> The fund is high profile within rural communities and representative groups, there is a risk to our reputation if funds are not paid out to support rural projects.</p> <p><b>Challenge and appeals:</b> No official appeals process is in place for REPF, and applicants would be directed to the council's standard complaints procedure if necessary. To mitigate the risk of challenges, the decision rationale is recorded through the council's Flexigrant system, with clear notes providing an audit trail for decisions made in line with the grant policy.</p> <p><b>Payment in advance:</b> It is higher risk to give funding in full for a project on receipt of the offer letter, than to pay this once the project being funded is completed. Clawback can be difficult and could result in the councils not recovering this. However, this is necessary to defray funding within the available timeframe, and in some cases, to allow for sufficient cash flow for projects to begin.</p>
<p><b>Reasons for decision</b></p>	<p>The recommended awards utilise the councils 2024/25 allocation</p>

under REPF. The recommended awards are summarised in appendix one.

Recommended awards comply with the conditions outlined in the Vale REPF Grant Policy, (with the recommended amendment to minimum scores outlined in decision four).

The grant scheme opened for applications in May 2024 and closed on 1 July 2024. Of the 22 submitted applications, 21 moved forward to the scoring stage and one did not meet the eligibility criteria.

At the REPF Grant Panel meeting (13 August 2024), Officers and REPF Grant Panel members used the agreed criteria in the policy to discuss the eligible applications to identify the highest scoring projects for funding.

The Panel subsequently recommended that all applications scoring six or above received funding for the full amount requested, with applications scoring a five or below not recommended for any funding. This is a divergence from the grant policy, that has previously stated that applications scoring zero to six points would not be recommended for funding.

This change is recommended as applications scoring a six were considered by the panel to support the rural economy and communities and contributed to the council's objectives. All projects concerned were viewed by the panel as consistently providing acceptable evidence. Sufficient budget is available to award the projects scoring six points during this round.


Applications that passed eligibility checks but did not score more than five points were also considered by the panel but were not subsequently recommended for funding. Further details can be found in the following appendices:

- Recommended Awards are detailed in Appendix One - Vale Round Two Panel scoring.
- Appendix Two details Vale's REPF Grants Policy October 2023.
- Terms and conditions for the scheme can be found in appendix three.
- Appendix four details additional conditions recommended for specific applications.
- Detailed board papers that provide more project details can be found in appendix five. Please note these board papers are split by the three intervention areas, and show the original versions as presented to the grant panel (so may not reflect the final scores detailed in appendix two).

Re: decision six: To approve transfer of capital budgets between REPF cost centres to ensure allocation can be optimally utilised. Cost centres were set up to reflect the initial budget plans

	<p>included within Vale’s REPF investment plan. The final allocations did not tally with the amounts originally identified within the council’s forecasts, and it is proposed that the allocations are combined where necessary to address overspends in specific intervention areas.</p>
<p><b>Alternative options rejected</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not make recommended awards. Rejected on the basis that all awards can be demonstrated as compliant with appropriate policy and terms and are supported by Officer and Grant Panel reviews.</li> <li>• Choose to award funds to projects scoring seven points or more. This would lead to a larger underspend.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Legal implications</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The REPF scheme is governed by an MoU. Funding can only be used in line with this MoU, the scheme prospectus, and the council’s previously agreed REPF investment plan addendum.</li> <li>• The grant policy and terms and conditions were previously agreed via delegated authority decision by the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord.</li> <li>• To accept the grant offer, applicants will need to sign an official offer letter, that details the terms and conditions of the grant, including subsidy controls.</li> <li>• Awards will be made as Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA), provided applicants can confirm that they have not received more than £315,000 in MFA in this financial year and/or in the previous two financial years. The organisation is to provide relevant evidence if a subsidy/ Minimal Financial Assistance has been received. (Our grant terms and conditions allow for clawback in the event MFA or subsidy rules are breached in acceptance of an award).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Financial implications</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding is drawn from the council’s REPF allocation that was included within the council’s capital budget for 2024/25.</li> <li>• The recommended awards total less than Vale’s total allocation for 2024/25 of £396,024 when combined with the underspend from our 2023/24 allocation that totalled £57,238. Assuming all awards are made and accepted, an underspend of £21,812 would be recorded. It is proposed that the funding is held as a contingency fund, that could be used to support inflationary increases in project costs, and to support any potential successful appeals. Alternative options for managing underspend will be compiled following the offer and acceptance process.</li> <li>• As recommended awards do not wholly tally with the council’s anticipated budget areas, it is recommended that funding is combined to optimally utilised available funding to support local projects. This will require a budget transfer from cost centres YE06 and YE07 to the more popular YE05 to utilise underspends.</li> <li>• A full breakdown can be found in row 38 of Appendix One -</li> </ul>

	<p>Vale Round Two Panel scoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final transfer amounts would be confirmed once offers have been processed.</li> </ul>			
<b>Climate implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A member of the climate team joined the grant panel and applications were assessed against criteria to support climate action. Projects supported make positive steps against the councils' climate objectives, including installation of renewable energy and energy saving technologies as well as energy efficient building design.</li> </ul>			
<b>Equalities implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential applicants were advised that they could speak with the economic development team for support in applying if required and several outreach sessions took place based in accessible locations (such as Cornerstone Arts Centre).</li> <li>The scheme was advertised in a variety of formats and locations.</li> <li>Applications were assessed for their social benefit, with applicants providing evidence of need and community benefit.</li> </ul>			
<b>Other implications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None identified.</li> </ul>			
<b>Background papers considered</b>	<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appendix One - Vale Round Two Panel scoring</li> <li>Appendix Two Vale REPF Grants Policy October 2023</li> <li>Appendix Three Vale Standard conditions REPF Sept 2023</li> <li>Appendix Four Vale Recommended Additional Award Conditions</li> <li>Appendix Five Vale Micro Small Board Paper R2</li> <li>Appendix Five Vale Local Social Economy Board Paper R2</li> <li>Appendix Five Vale Civil Society Board Paper R2</li> <li><a href="#">REPF Prospectus</a></li> </ul>			
<b>Declarations/ conflict of interest?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None identified.</li> </ul>			
<b>Consultees</b>		<b>Name</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Legal <a href="mailto:legal@southandvale.gov.uk">legal@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Gillian Mason	Approved with comments adopted in final version	21/08/24
	Finance <a href="mailto:Finance@southandvale.gov.uk">Finance@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Anna Winship	Approved	28/8/24
	Climate and biodiversity <a href="mailto:climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk">climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Heather Saunders	Agreed (changes incorporated within version)	20/08/24
	Equality and diversity	Ruth Lewin-	Support the decisions	21/08/24

	<a href="mailto:equalities@southandvale.gov.uk">equalities@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Leigh		
	Procurement <a href="mailto:Procurement@southandvale.gov.uk">Procurement@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	N/A	No procurement implications.	N/A
	HR <a href="mailto:hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk">hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	N/A	No HR implications	N/A
	Risk and insurance <a href="mailto:risk@southandvale.gov.uk">risk@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	N/A	No comments received	N/A
	Strategic property <a href="mailto:property@southandvale.gov.uk">property@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Karen Lister	No comments to add	27/08/24
	Communications <a href="mailto:communications@southandvale.gov.uk">communications@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Peter Truman Vic Nickless	Noted for promotion and comms	22/08/24
	Vale Cabinet Portfolio Holder	Cllr Neil Fawcett	Agreed	06/09/24
<b>Decision maker's signature</b> To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	<p style="text-align: center;">   Signature: _____  Date: 06.09.2024 </p>			