

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan 2025/26

Redditch Borough Council has been allocated £818,536 of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the period 2025/26. The funding will primarily be used to deliver missions in the local Labour manifesto which are informing the emerging Council Plan. The way in which the funding will be deployed to do this is detailed below.

Economy and Regeneration

The Council has an ambition to build a local economy fit for the future. To achieve this, we will support and encourage new businesses and support local independent businesses to grow and create employment.

Business start-up rates are higher in Redditch than the national, regional and county rates. The 3-year survival rate for new businesses also compares favourably with the regional and county rates but is slightly lower than the UK rate.¹ The current UKSPF funded start-up programme has experienced strong demand for pre-start support. Whilst this has not translated into new businesses starting up there is often a time lag between receiving support and starting a business. In the previous programme demand for support from early years businesses was low. Continuation of this programme will see it re-focused to respond to the needs of new entrepreneurs.

Demand for grants to help established businesses to grow has been high. This support is usually taken up by micro businesses looking to make various investments including new equipment, improvements to premises and marketing. The provision of grants encourages small businesses to invest in their growth and realise their potential.

Whilst demand for grants is high, business owners often find identifying suitable funding and the process of applying for a grant challenging. Take up of business support programmes is lower in Redditch than other districts in the county. To ensure equitable access to business advice and grants for businesses in the borough it is necessary to provide specialist help to identify and apply for support.

We will:

¹ Source: ONS - Business Demography 2023 [Business demography, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

- co-fund the delivery of the Enterprising Worcestershire start-up programme providing specialist support to help Redditch entrepreneurs to be enterprise ready. Match-funded grants will also be available to help businesses to start-up and become established.
- continue to offer match-funded grants to local, independent businesses to help them to invest in measures to help them to grow and create employment.
- continue to fund the Worcestershire Growth Hub to help businesses to identify, and apply for, national, regional and local programmes of support. Through the Growth Hub we will provide specialist advice and coaching on a range of key business topics to help businesses to grow and create employment.

One of the key objectives of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is to build pride in place. How people feel about where they live is often reflected in how they feel about their local town centre. Redditch town centre is the focus for retail and services for the whole of the borough. It is dominated by the Kingfisher Shopping Centre which serves as a draw for both residents and visitors from further afield. The Church Green, whilst in the heart of the town centre, is perceived as a secondary retail location. The conservation area, with its pleasant, outdoor environment, represents an opportunity to extend the town centre retail, hospitality and leisure offer and to enhance its appeal to residents and visitors alike.

We will:

- continue to improve the town centre public realm to create a welcoming environment.
- promote the town centre and its retail, hospitality and service offer.

One of the key regeneration projects is the development of an Innovation Centre. Productivity in Redditch, measured in GVA per hour, is lower than the UK average (£32.3 per hour compared to £39.7 per hour).² The figure has been stagnant over the past 6 years where the national average has been growing. The Council's commitment to build the centre is designed to address this

² Source: ONS Subregional Productivity June 2024 [Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district - Office for National Statistics](#)

issue and help to build a local economy fit for the future. The centre will be the focus of support to help businesses to adopt innovative processes to improve their productivity.

We will:

- procure an organisation to deliver an impactful business innovation programme offering advice and grants to help entrepreneurs and existing businesses to develop innovative products and services and to help established businesses to adopt new processes. This programme will be aligned with the development of the Innovation Centre and will create an opportunity to identify and engage with potential occupiers.

The Council's regeneration plans focus on creating opportunities for good local jobs and investing in skills, in order to have a thriving borough where businesses want to invest and residents can access well paid employment.

Redditch has a relatively high economic activity rate with 84.5% of residents in employment, self-employment or actively looking for work.³ This is higher than the rate for the West Midlands (79.5%) and the national rate (78.4%). Reasons for economic inactivity include being a student, early retirement, caring responsibilities, health conditions and people whose circumstances discourage them from working. The unemployment rate in Redditch in December 2024 was 4%.⁴ Whilst higher than the rate for the County (3.2%), it is lower than for the West Midlands (5.6%) and for England (4.3%). A growing economy creates employment and demand for a skilled, readily available workforce. With 4% of the population seeking employment and 15.5% of the working age population economically inactive, it is necessary to ensure that any barriers to employment that these groups are experiencing are addressed.

Whilst unemployment rates are low, young people are much more likely to be unemployed than the general population. The December 2024 unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds was 6.7% compared with 4% for all working age residents. The rate is also

³ Source: ONS Local Authority Profile [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

⁴ Source: Worcestershire County Economic Summary [Worcestershire County Economic Summary](#)

higher than the rate for Worcestershire (4.9%) and England (5.6%).⁵ Statistics for young care leavers are even more concerning. Around 50% of care leavers are NEET (not in employment, education or training).⁶

Redditch residents are reasonably well qualified with a higher proportion of the population having qualifications at every level than the West Midlands and national average. For example, 48.7% of residents are qualified to RQF Level 4⁷ and above compared to 42.5% of the West Midlands and 47.3% of Great Britain.⁸ Despite these levels of educational attainment, employers frequently cite a lack of a skilled workforce as a barrier to growth. Consultation that took place in the development of the Worcestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) identified a lack of common skills, ie transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and organisation; technical skills and knowledge such as AI, cyber security, data analytics, CNC programming; and leadership and management skills. As the local economy grows and develops, it is essential that all sections of the community have the necessary skills to take advantage of new opportunities.

We will:

- deliver a programme of support, via the Family Hubs, to help people caring for young children to develop employability skills in preparation for returning to the jobs market. The programme will also assist participants to access funded childcare provision to enable them to re-enter the jobs market.
- procure delivery of a targeted employability support programme designed to assist the economically inactive, to move closer to the jobs market. The programme will complement existing, national provision including recently announced programmes such as Connect to Work and WorkWell. The programme will support those that are not able to access mainstream support due to their complex barriers to employment.
- continue to fund the Redditch Youth Hub, providing support to young people aged 16 to 24 years old who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). This programme provides wrap around support for education and career choices

⁵ Source: Worcestershire County Economic Summary [Worcestershire County Economic Summary](#)

⁶ Source: Worcestershire County Council

⁷ Regulated Qualifications Framework Level 4 is equivalent to a Higher National Certificate (HNC)

⁸ Source: ONS Local Authority Profile [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

and engages with employers to open up opportunities to young people. In the first 6 months of delivery, the Youth Hub has supported 158 young people.

- provide opportunities for residents in employment to upskill through the provision of fully funded training or grants to fund specialist courses.

Voluntary & Community Sector

The voluntary and community sector plays a major role in supporting the people of the borough. The Council recognises the benefits of volunteering for both the volunteers and those that they help. Volunteering builds community connections and helps volunteers develop valuable, transferable skills for the workplace.

We will:

- provide grants to voluntary and community organisations to build capacity and support opportunities to volunteer.
- provide fully funded training to upskill the sector covering key topics such as leadership & management and bid writing.

Health & Wellbeing

The health and fitness of the borough is vitally important for residents to lead independent and fulfilling lives. A positive leisure and cultural offer provides opportunities for communities to enjoy being active and involved.

We will:

- deliver a programme of improvements to parks and green spaces to enhance opportunities for residents to be active and to enjoy the natural environment.

Green Redditch 2030

Redditch Borough Council is committed to a Green Redditch in 2030. They are encouraging green policies across the council and the borough. A key objective is to help residents to find affordable solutions and products to reduce energy bills and save the environment.

We will:

- fund Act on Energy caseworkers to provide intensive support to households to adopt energy efficiency measures. The support will be focussed on those that are vulnerable to fuel poverty and will help them to reduce fuel bills, keep warmer and reduce CO2 emissions.

Expenditure

Priority	Project	Deliverer	Capital	Revenue	Total
Economy & Regeneration	Enterprising Worcestershire Specialist advice for pre-start businesses	Worcestershire County Council		£25,000	£25,000
	Business Grants Grant funding for new and existing businesses to support them to start-up and grow.	RBC	£32,000	£44,931	£76,931
	Growth Hub Business signposting and account management service helping enterprises to access support. Delivery of the specialist advisor programme providing coaching and advice covering key business topics such as marketing, growth planning and financial management.	Worcestershire Growth Hub		£60,000	£60,000
	Town Centre Improvements	RBC	£20,000	£21,933	£41,933

	Improvements to the town centre public realm and promotion of the town centre and its services				
	Business Innovation & Productivity Programme Specialist programme of support to help new and existing businesses to development new to market products or services or for existing businesses to adopt new processes	To be procured	£20,000	£80,000	£100,000
	Employability Support in Family Hubs Support to economically inactive people with caring responsibilities to move towards employment through the development of employability skills, job search support and accessing help with childcare.	RBC		£20,000	£20,000
	Employability Skills Programme Support for economically inactive people to move towards employment through the development of employability skills.	To be procured		£56,000	£56,000
	Redditch Youth Hub Bespoke advice to young people 16 – 24, including those who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, to move into employment, education and training	Careers Worcestershire		£150,000	£150,000
	In-employment Training Provision of grants and fully funded training to upskill the workforce	To be procured		£35,931	£35,931
Voluntary & Community Sector	Voluntary & Community Sector Support	RBC		£90,000	£90,000

	Provision of grants and training to the voluntary sector to increase capacity and sustainability of organisations				
Health & Wellbeing	Parks & Green Spaces A programme of improvements to parks and green spaces	RBC	£80,000		£80,000
Green Redditch 2030	Community Caseworker Providing advice and support to households vulnerable to fuel poverty to take up energy efficiency measures	Act on Energy		£50,000	£50,000
	Management & Administration of UKSPF			£32,741	£32,741
Total			£152,000	£666,536	£818,536