**District Dispatch**

We are currently encouraging businesses and community organisations in the district to apply for funding to deliver projects that will support the local economy, businesses and community infrastructure**.**

Following a successful bid to the government in 2022, I’m pleased to let you know that we have secured a further £215,508 from the government’s Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) for projects delivered between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

The REPF provides funding for projects that help new and existing rural businesses to develop products and facilities that offer wider benefits to the local economy — this includes farm businesses looking to diversify. The scheme is also intended to support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses.

Because the REPF fund is designed to address challenges faced by rural areas, one of the requirements is that projects must benefit our rural communities, and so there are certain parts of the district that aren’t eligible — Chichester City, Southbourne and Westbourne. The scheme can provide capital funding of up to £25,000, which must be used to purchase lasting assets, such as building and equipment, and the applicant must match-fund at least 20% of the overall cost. The funding cannot be used to support projects that have already received funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

To assist applicants, the council has funding advisors who should be contacted in the first instance to discuss a potential application. They are able to support those who are interested and will make sure their project meets all of the scheme requirements. They can be contacted by filling in an expression of interest form online: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/rural-england-prosperity-fund**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/rural-england-prosperity-fund). Also on this page, interested businesses and community organisations will be able to find everything they need to submit their application, including the full eligibility criteria and grant scheme requirements. The REPF is a UK Government scheme, and so the government has set out specific criteria that we, as a council, must follow when assessing and awarding funding.

We have also secured an additional allocation of funding from the government’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund for 2025 to 2026. This is being used to support projects across the district that invest in communities and place, local businesses, and people and skills. This includes supporting events that encourage footfall and boost the local economy; delivering public realm improvements; and allocating sustainability grant funding to help businesses reduce their carbon footprint — for example through the installation of renewable energy technology, such as solar panels.

Over the past few years, we’ve used funding from both the UKSPF and REPF grant schemes to help deliver more than 80 different projects, which have supported economic growth and improved quality of life across the Chichester District. These varied and exciting projects have made a huge difference to our businesses and community groups, helping them to expand their customer offer and allowing them more flexibility. Some of the businesses have also been able to keep jobs in our district and increase staff posts, supporting our local economy and ensuring that our communities continue to thrive. We will be telling you more about this in our summer issue of our ‘initiatives’ magazine. The new allocation of REPF is another exciting opportunity for our local communities and we’re really looking forward to helping make many of these projects a reality.

If you believe that your community organisation or business could benefit from this funding, please get in touch with us as soon as you can. Applications for the REPF grant scheme are open until midnight on **Monday 9 June** 2025. To find out more about the fund and to make contact with one of our funding advisors please visit:[**www.chichester.gov.uk/rural-england-prosperity-fund**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/rural-england-prosperity-fund)

Best Wishes

Cllr John Cross

Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport and Place at Chichester District Council.

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