

**Decision type:** Decision Specifically Delegated to Officers

**Decision date:** 09 July 2025

**Decision maker:** Tom Bridgman, Deputy Chief Executive - Place

**Decision title:** Award of Grant for Social Economy Business Support Programme

Summary	
<b>Decision being taken:</b>	To award grant funding of £20,000 to OSEP CIC to deliver the Social Economy Business Support Programme, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Source of delegation:</b>	Cabinet Meeting, October 19 <sup>th</sup> 2022  Delegated authority given to the Executive Director (Development) (now Deputy Chief Executive - Place) to take the necessary decisions and actions required to oversee the UKSPF investment plan, including implementing and administering the scheme and the resulting projects in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the prospectus and fund.  Link to minutes <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Strong, fair economy, Thriving communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None

The Deputy Chief Executive - Place decides as follows:

1. **To award** £20,000 revenue grant funding to OSEP CIC to work with local partners on the delivery of the Social Economy Business Support Programme.

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	EqIA – Grant Award OSEP	No

## **Introduction and background**

1. Oxford City Council received an allocation of £1 million in 2022 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver a programme driving economic growth across the City.
2. This programme ran to March 2025 but was subsequently extended for another year with Oxford City Council receiving a further £327,146 to support projects addressing economic and social challenges within the City, to be completed by the end of March 2026.
3. The Social Economy Business Support Programme was delivered as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2023-24 where OSEP CIC received £35,100 of grant funding given the organisation's strong record of delivery of support to the social economy.
4. In March 2025, Development Board and Development Review Group approved the approach to allocate a further £20,000 to OSEP CIC to deliver a similar programme supporting the social economy in Oxford.
5. It is proposed that the programme will provide support through the following:
  - a. Small group training sessions on topics including CIC registration, legal structures, marketing, finance, IT skills and business development.
  - b. 1:1 support through sessions for early-stage entrepreneurs.
  - c. Facilitated peer networks to include five sessions focusing on food, sustainability and creative enterprises.
  - d. Dedicated support for business growth for existing CICs.

## **Reasons for the decision**

6. The project has already been delivered and saw considerable positive outcomes for the City's wider economy and social enterprise network.
7. OSEP CIC has demonstrated its strong anchoring in Oxford's social enterprise landscape and is best placed to utilise its network of businesses to deliver a project of equal impact.
8. The Council has committed, under its Economy Strategy, to support social enterprise, co-op businesses and civil society sectors, and pursue a more prominent role for them in the city's economy. This includes through the continuation of work with OSEP.
9. This approach has already been endorsed through the agreement of the Council's UKSPF programme for 2025-26.

## **Alternative Options Considered**

10. Open tender – as the grant funding is under the £20,000 procurement threshold, a full open tender would lead to delays in starting the programme, which needs to be completed by the end of March 2026.
11. Alternative supplier – OSEP CIC has committed to sub-contracting other social enterprise partners based in the City. It is therefore felt that these organisations are best placed within the City to deliver the programme together.

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## Equalities Impact

12. Equalities Impact Assessment attached.
13. This grant funding will deliver a business support programme for purposeful businesses. Sub-contractors delivering aspects of the programme are community organisations representing diverse groups across Oxford. The involvement of these organisations and businesses will lead to a more diverse business environment in the City.

## Risks

14. Direct award without tender – there is a risk of directly awarding to an individual organisation however OSEP CIC is a trusted partner and has demonstrated its ability to deliver a programme in partnership with the Council previously.
15. Value for money – the programme has been clearly costed by the proposed supplier and demonstrates clear value for money for the Council.

## Carbon and Environmental Considerations

16. This is not applicable as this is not a key decision.

## Implications of making the decision

<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>This grant allocation is to be fully funded from the UKSPF grant award. We have also received confirmation that under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 the total amount of grant awarded to OSEP CIC for the year will not exceed the £315,000 threshold.</p> <p>As such, there is no financial impact on the Council's General Fund.</p>	<p><b>Completed by:</b> Jason Jones Finance Business Partner</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 7 July 2025</p>
<b>Legal implications</b>	<p>Before the Council is able to award the grant funding as set out in this Decision, it needs to satisfy itself that the proposed award is compliant with its internal decision making processes and the relevant law.</p> <p>In accordance with rule 4.5 of the Constitution, all grants (except for small grants and other grants referred to therein) must be agreed by the Cabinet. It is understood that the Cabinet has approved the overarching scheme in 2022 and delegated the authority to the Executive Director (Development) (now Deputy Chief Executive - Place) to take the</p>	<p><b>Completed by:</b> Justin Zizys</p> <p><b>Date:</b> 4 July 2025</p>

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	<p>necessary decisions and actions required to oversee the UKSPF investment plan, including implementing and administering the scheme and <b>the resulting projects</b> in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the prospectus and fund.</p> <p>The decision maker needs to be satisfied that the proposed grant funding falls within the meaning of “the resulting projects” and, in turn, has the necessary authority to award the grant funds to void the accusations of <i>ultra vires</i>.</p> <p>The proposed award of granting funding is a “subsidy” for the purposes of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Before the Council awards the funding, it needs to be satisfied that it is compliant with the aforementioned Act.</p> <p>The subsidy control requirements do not apply to minimal financial assistance given to an enterprise if the total amount of minimal financial assistance given to the enterprise within the applicable period does not exceed £315,000. The Council has received confirmation from the recipient from that the total amount of £315,000 within the applicable period will not be exceeded by the recipient receiving the proposed grant funding. As a result, the Council will be relying on the minimal financial assistance exemption to award these funds.</p> <p>The award of funds will be governed by the necessary legal agreement which will contain the provision necessary to protect the Council and the funding.</p>	
<b>Other implications</b>	No further implications.	<b>N/A</b>


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<b>Member declared interests</b>	N/A	N/A
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<b>Background Documents</b>
N/A

<b>Report author</b>	Matt Broadbent
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Service area or department	Economy, Regeneration & Sustainability
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### Consultee checklist

<b>Consultees</b>	<b>Name and job title</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Senior officer</b> e.g. the relevant service manager / Director where the decision maker is the Chief Executive or a Deputy Chief Executive.		
<b>Group Finance Director</b> Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	 Nigel Kennedy Group Finance Director	7 July 2025
<b>Director of Law, Governance and Strategy</b> Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Emma Jackman Director of Law, Governance & Strategy	7 July 2025
<b>Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Susan Brown Cabinet Member for Partnership and Inclusive Economic Growth	7 July 2025

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Where required by the conditions of the delegation		
<b>Ward Members</b> Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Not applicable	

### Decision Maker Approval

<i><b>Name and job title</b></i>	<i><b>Date</b></i>
 TOM BRIDGMAN – Deputy Chief Executive, Place	9 July 2025

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