



Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Commission

Date of Commission Meeting: 26th January 2023

Community Renewal Fund

Report of the Director of Tourism, Culture and Investment

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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Suggested content

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report updates on the £3m Community Renewal Fund (CRF) programme which has now completed. This has delivered five Leicester projects to help build skills, support local businesses and communities and provide employment support. At the commission meeting there will be a short presentation from two of the projects illustrating the impacts they have been able to make using CRF resources.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the contents and comment on this report.

3. Report

Background

- 3.1 The Community Renewal Fund is a short term, largely revenue programme which was described as a pre cursor to the UK Shared Prosperity fund that was expected to be the replacement for EU structural funds. Leicester was identified as one of the 100 priority areas for the fund and was invited to submit up to £3m worth of applications to government to deliver activities that invest in skills, local business, communities and place, and support people into employment.
- 3.2 Following a call by Leicester City Council, 29 applications were received in response to the opportunity. It must be stressed that the council was not able to issue any sort of local prospectus as this was a national programme. Of these, 5 projects were shortlisted for inclusion in Leicester's proposal, forming a £2.9m package, though each project was assessed separately by government. All of the projects put forward were awarded funding in November 2021.
- 3.3 It is notable that all of the approved projects have involved collaborative working with a series of partner organisations. None have been delivered solely by the lead organisation, so there has been considerable emphasis on joint working and shared responsibility. This is inevitable given the short time each project had to deliver a great deal of activity and has created some challenges regarding accountability and risk. An inherent difficulty for all projects was also the extremely short time allowed for activity which was little more than 6 months.

- 3.4 Details of the successful projects are as follows:
- 3.5 Positive Communities – a voluntary and community sector partnership of 12 local organisations led by the Highfields-based Bangladesh Youth and Cultural Shomiti, working to support people into employment and develop new skills. Awarded £584,230.
- 3.6 A community ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) scheme – aimed at improving language skills to help people into employment, led by Leicester-based Twin Employment and Training. Awarded £500,000.
- 3.7 The ‘She Inspired Business Playbox’ project – comprising five local voluntary and community sector organisations, which works to support women into employment and business. The project is led by Zinthiya Ganeshpanchan Trust, a local organisation helping women to escape from poverty and abuse. It was awarded £349,588.
- 3.8 Leicester Accelerator – a partnership of seven business support organisations led by East Midlands Chamber also successfully bid for £1million of CRF funds, to fund a range of support programmes including use of digital technology, mentoring for businesses and grants.
- 3.9 Leicester Textiles Renewal – an integrated support programme delivering garment skills/ training, support for innovation and encouraging best practice within the city’s textiles and garment industry. The bid, led by Leicester City Council, was awarded £500,000 of CRF funding.
- 3.10 Total funding of £2,933,818 was secured for the 5 projects, plus a management fee of £58,677, creating a total programme value of £2,992,495.

Project Delivery

- 3.11 The projects ran from 1st November 2021 to 30th September 2022. The programme had been due to end at 30 June 2022 but it was extended by government due to the delays with the contracts and approval from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 3.12 All projects have performed well and 99% of the total spend has been verified and achieved. The final claim has been submitted to government and the council is currently awaiting final payment of £1,142,638.22.

| Project Name | Area of activity | Contract Value | Achieved | % |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------|
| Leicester Community ESOL Project | Supporting people into employment | £500,000 | £494,127.52 | 98.82% |
| She Inspired Business Playbox | Supporting people into employment | £356,580 | £339,239.95 | 95.14% |
| East Midlands Accelerator - Leicester City | Investment for local business | £1,000,000 | £1,000,000 | 100% |
| Leicester Textiles Renewal | Investment in skills | £500,000 | £500,000 | 100% |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---------------|--------|
| Positive Communities | Supporting people into employment | £584,230 | £584,230 | 100% |
| Management Fee | | £58,677 | £58,677 | |
| Total | | £2,992,495 | £2,976,274.40 | 99.46% |

3.13 The total number of beneficiaries engaged were 1,786 individuals and 426 businesses. These are categorised as follows:

| Individuals | Target | Achieved |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Economically Inactive | 485 | 553 |
| Unemployed | 642 | 567 |
| Employed | 555 | 666 |
| Total Individuals | 1,682 | 1,786 |
| | | |
| Businesses | Target | Achieved |
| Small | 208 | 391 |
| Medium | 153 | 32 |
| Large | 0 | 3 |
| Total Businesses | 361 | 426 |

3.14 The total number of individuals and businesses engaged have been exceeded across the whole programme, though the type of individuals or business varied against the original expectations . This was down to:

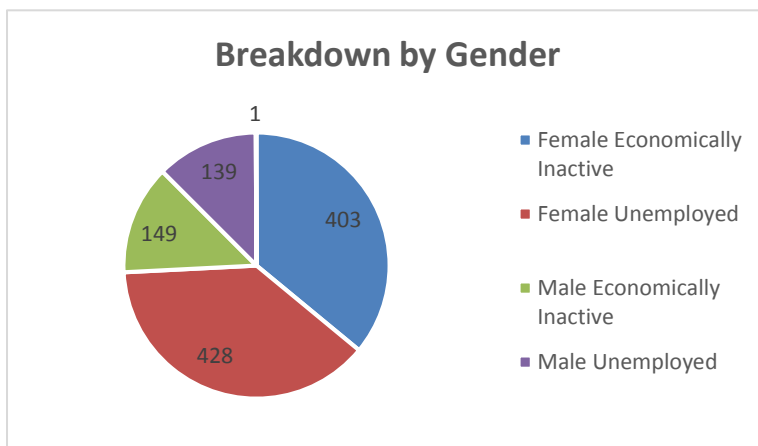
- More smaller businesses under 5 employees were seeking support but the offer was disseminated to all businesses
- There was a change to the definitions of how individuals were categorised: individuals were defined as employed *if they were working at all* even if they were claiming UC or other benefits.

3.15 The following outcomes have been achieved. The outcomes that were underachieved primarily related to individuals engaging with the benefits system. This was because i) many individuals engaged were already registered and ii) those that weren't linked it proved difficult to obtain the necessary evidence to show they were now registered with DWP and therefore they could not be counted. We suspect many more people were actually supported by the projects even though this could not easily be evidenced using the programme criteria.

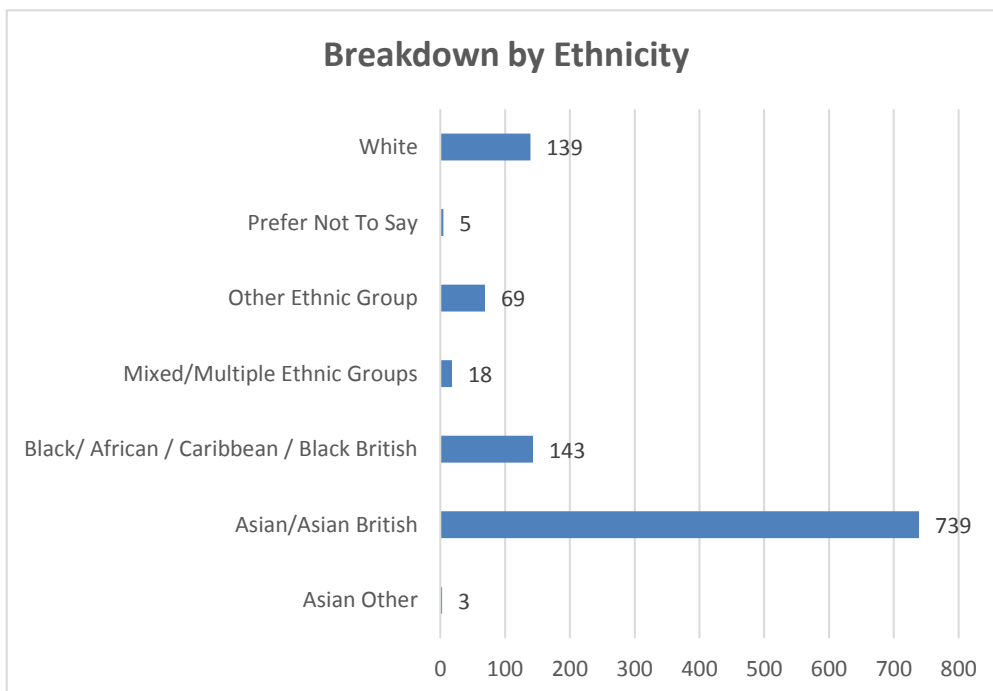
| Outcome | Target | Achieved |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| People engaged in job-searching | 311 | 204 |
| People engaged in life skills support | 357 | 533 |
| People gaining a qualification (maths, ESOL, textile etc) | 435 | 477 |
| People in education/training (moving into further esol or education) | 378 | 331 |
| People in employment, including self-employment | 139 | 64 |
| Economically inactive individuals engaging with benefits system | 147 | 10 |
| Businesses introducing new products to the firm | 8 | 36 |
| Businesses introducing new products to the market | 2 | 0 |
| Number of new businesses created | 20 | 13 |
| Employment increase in supported businesses | 40 | 80.3 |

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Jobs safeguarded | 280 | 199 |
| Decarbonisation plans developed | 40 | 52 |
| Feasibility studies developed | 1 | 1 |
| Innovation plans developed | 16 | 21 |
| Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity | 10 | 18 |

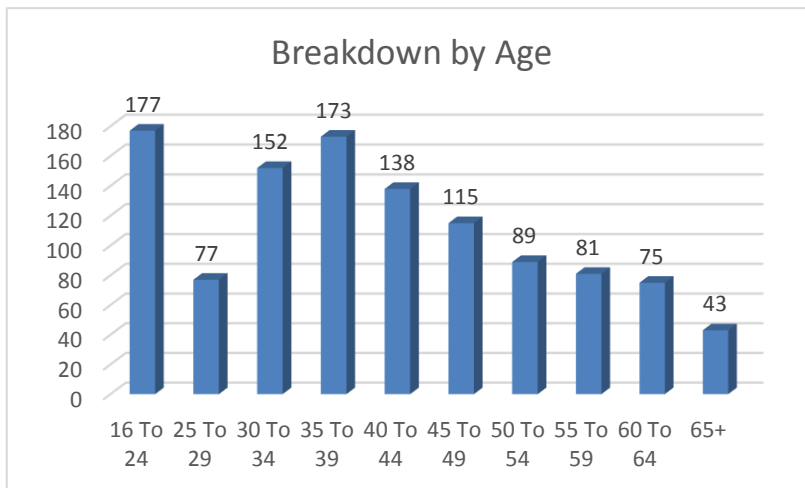
3.16 The breakdown of unemployed and economically inactive individuals supported is as follows. Note that the majority of unemployed or economic inactive individuals were female, with 403 being economically inactive and 428 being unemployed. Many projects were trying to engage the economically inactive population and since women are much more likely to be in this category than men, the gender imbalance of beneficiaries was anticipated.



3.17 Breakdown by ethnicity for unemployed and economic inactive individuals ethnicity shows a very large proportion of individuals supported were categorised as Asian/ Asian British. Given the nature of the projects and their target groups this was also anticipated.

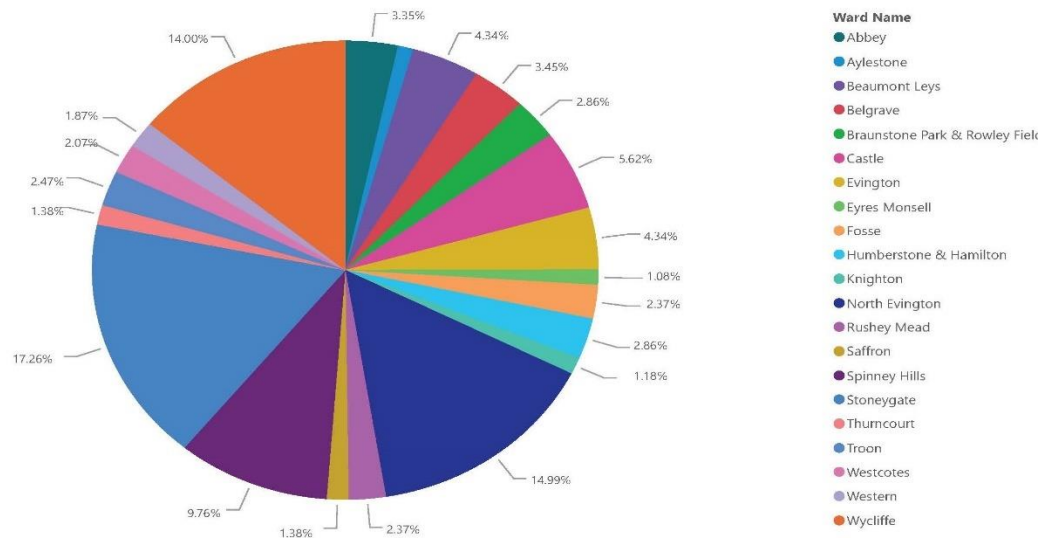


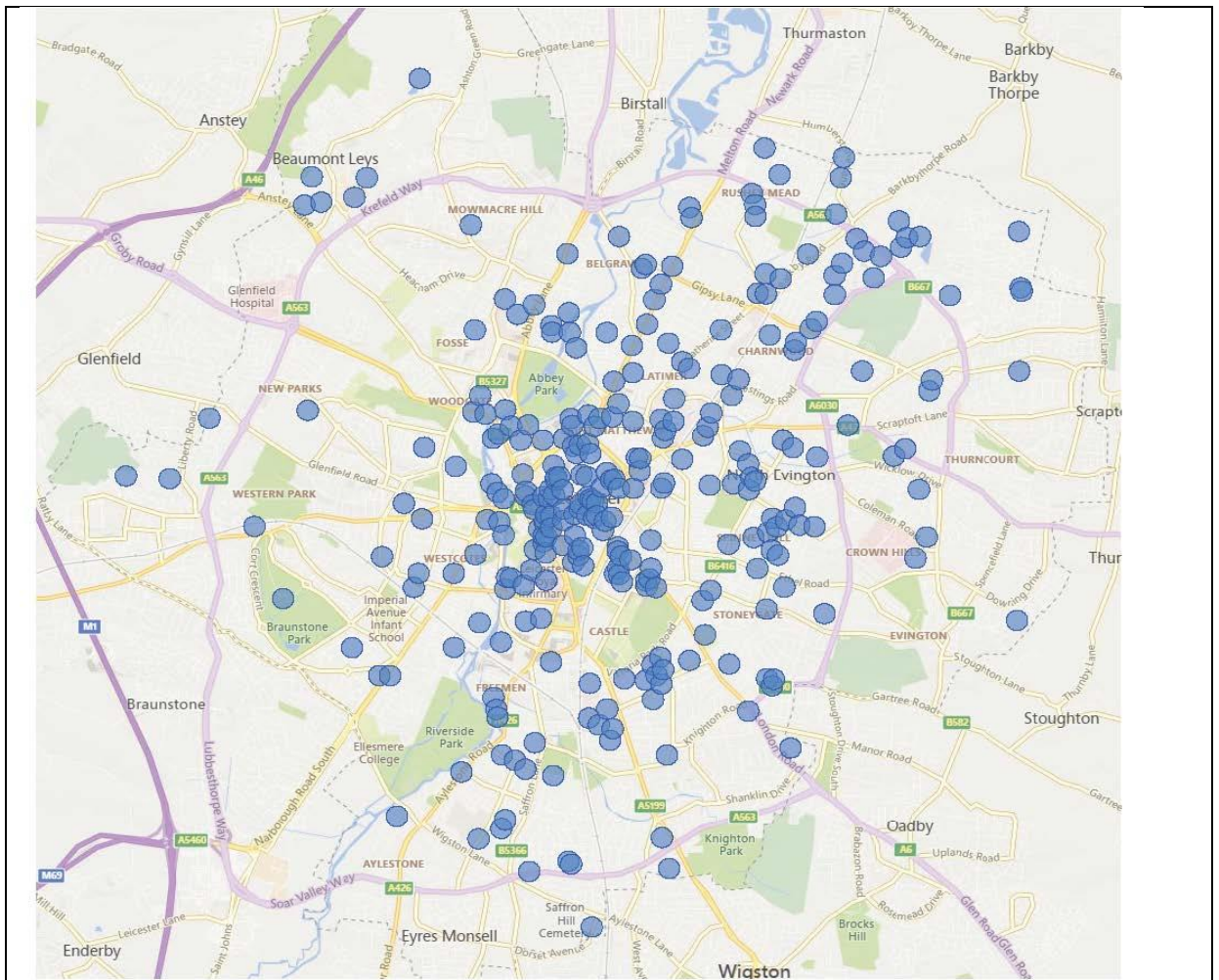
3.18 A broad range of ages were supported as shown below.



3.20 The following pie chart below tracks individuals supported by ward and shows that the greatest number of individuals were supported in Stoneygate, Spinney Hills, North Evington and Wycliffe wards. A good cross section of businesses were also supported across Leicester as shown in the map of the city.

Individuals Supported by CRF





3.21 Some lessons to be learnt that the projects found were:

- The projects did encounter some challenges during the delivery, which was expected due to the nature of the programme and the type of beneficiaries targeted. The partners together, through their proven track record were able to work dynamically to respond to these challenges and deliver the project.
- The delay with the original timescale of the project impacted certain elements of individual partner capacity and availability. This was mainly due to the start dates being amended following a delayed funding decision from government.
- Due to the nature of the new partnerships, individual partner expectations sometimes differed. Some partners felt that the overall engagement of participants and communication between partners could have been improved in certain areas.
- Dynamics of working as part of a new partnership over a very short period of time caused some issues. For some of the project partners this was the biggest project and partnership they had been involved with to date.
- A particular challenge was the need for ongoing engagement of participants after they had participated in the programme. Although some of the individuals

continued to communicate and interact, others had not seen the need so communication with them proved difficult.

- Detailed evaluations have been completed for each of the projects. This work is still being reviewed and will help inform future UKSPF priorities.

3.22 The following are examples of some of the comments received from individuals and businesses.

"I am now much more confident about speaking English and looking for employment. The course greatly helped my self-confidence and skills in this area."

"The outcome achieved from the support was that I successfully gained employment and found a secure job after being unemployed for months."

"I have gained confidence in myself which has contributed to a positive mind-set and self-belief which has helped improve my quality of life, and which I can now build on."

"Made job application on 29/06/2022 and with the support from adviser, I started my new job as of 02/07/2022. What a great result!"

"benefits of participating in the courses include improving their skills, new aspirations for working in textiles, new motivations gaining experience, gaining confidence, and improving their employability. Socially, the courses have learners more confidence as well as mixing with and respecting other cultures, enabling them to learn to adapt to different religions, creating an open community"

"The project had a demonstrable impact of learners' future entrepreneurship. 80% of learners said that their involvement with the project had improved their employability or job prospects, whilst 90% even said that the course had improved their likelihood that they will start their own business. 81% also that the courses at the Textile Technology Academy have improved their awareness of workers rights.

3.24 Alongside the core outcomes, the following additional benefits were reported by beneficiaries. This is particularly welcomed bearing in mind that support was delivered following Leicester coming out of covid.

| Non-core outcome achievements |
|---|
| Improved levels of mental health |
| Improved levels of physical health |
| Feeling less isolated |
| Feeling safer |
| Improved self-confidence |
| An improved sense of career progression |
| Feeling more motivated |

3.25 A celebration event is scheduled for 10th February 2023 where each project will be highlighting their achievements, showcasing project delivery and discussing any lessons learnt. This also provides an opportunity to celebrate the impact of the overall CRF programme.

5. Financial, legal, and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

As outlined in the report, the total grant funding approved was £2,992k. Of this, £500k was used by the Council to finance the Textile Sector Support project, with a further £59k to cover the cost of acting as accountable body for the four other organisations running projects.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance

5.2 Legal implications

The report is an update report on the projects which had been funded by the Authority using external Community Renewal Funding ('CRF').

Previous legal advice on subsidy and funding agreements had been provided and therefore there are no direct legal implications save for the Authority will need to continue to ensure that it complies with any obligations attached to the CRF by central government and continue to monitor progress/milestones etc under any funding agreements.

Mannah Begum, Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Contracts) ext 423

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

Businesses are responsible for around 34% of Leicester's carbon emissions, not including their share of transport emissions. Following the council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and its goal to achieve carbon neutrality within the city, tackling these emissions is vitally important. As noted within this report, one of the funded projects aimed address this through supporting 40 organisations to develop decarbonisation plans, and this target was exceeded, with 52 receiving this support. Where follow-up monitoring of project outcomes occurs, this could include a review of the impacts of this work, and potential lessons for future business support work.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

5.4 Equalities Implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. In doing so, the council must consider the possible impact on those who are likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The report provides an update on the 5 Community Renewal Fund (CRF) projects within the city of Leicester and highlights the groups that have benefitted from these including a range of protected characteristics. At the celebration event which is scheduled for 10 February 2023 it would be useful to look at the achievements of the projects and lessons learnt to see what equality considerations have been taken into account and if there are any issues that need to be addressed.

Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer, 0116 454 4175

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

Not applicable

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a “key decision”?

No

10. If a key decision please explain reason

N/A