

UKSPF Partnership Group

18 November 2pm- 3.45am

Mid Ulster Council offices Magherafelt

Members attending

Name	Organisation	Sector
John Osborne (chair)	MHCLG	UK government
James Dillon (representing Prof Sir Ian Greer)	Queen's University Belfast	Higher education/skills
Valerie McConville (remotely)	CO3	Voluntary & community
Adrian McCreesh	SOLACE (Mid Ulster District)	Local government
Celine McStravick	NICVA	Voluntary & community
Phil Murray (representing Suzanne Wylie)	NI Chamber of Commerce	Business
Lisa Toland (representing John Walsh)	SOLACE (Belfast City Council)	Local government
Gabrielle Wickham (remotely)	NIO	UK government
Luke Sunerton (remotely)	NIO	UK government

Secretariat

The meeting was supported by MHCLG staff – Chris Taylor, Chris Moore, Benjamin Ekpenyong (Remotely), Christine Robinson.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Sir Ian Greer (Queens University Belfast – represented by James Dillon), John Walsh (represented by Lisa Toland) and Suzanne Wylie (NI Chamber of Commerce represented by Phil Murray)

1. Chair's welcome

The Chair welcomed members and nominees to the twelfth UKSPF Northern Ireland Partnership Group meeting and thanked Adrian McCreesh for kindly hosting us in the Mid Ulster Council offices.

2. UKSPF Update

MHCLG officials provided an update on activities undertaken since the last meeting, including, the review of monitoring reports, assurance work that has been carried out, evaluation process and project visits completed.

Officials also provided a programme update following the sixth month reports, including spend to date and forecast and the attainment of outputs and outcomes, as well as areas of underperformance, including geographical spread.

3. Budget Update

The chair took the partnership group through the Autumn Spending Review including the implications for Northern Ireland, the UK budget and the proposed management of the fund during 25-26.

4. 25-26 Considerations

MHCLG officials took the Partnership Group through the factors to be considered when allocating 25-26 funding, including ministerial priorities, the NI Executive policy context, external funding availability and the changes to UKSPF allocations.

Officials and members discussed the delivery model for 25-26 and the need for expediency to provide clarity for projects, officials highlighted that key barometer in making effective decisions will include reviewing project progress to date including, value for money and delivery performance in attaining their agreed outputs and outcomes.

With a reduced budget, officials informed members that it may mean some projects requiring adjustment or stopping, primarily projects that are duplicative of other funded activity whether funded by UKSPF or NIE departments

5. Indicative Timeline for 25-26

MHCLG officials took the Partnership Group through the indicative timeline for 25-26 delivery, officials stressed that this is subject to change until confirmation on the budget allocations have been received but will move at a pace to provide clarity and certainty to projects.

6. 2025-26 Allocation

Partnership Group members provided some feedback on how funding should be allocated during the transition period, members recognised the need to provide certainty and clarity quickly for projects but acknowledged that this could not be provided until budget allocations had been provided by ministers.

Members felt that MHCLG officials should explore the prioritisation of supporting economic inactivity projects along with Go Succeed, there was also a discussion around the potential for funding duplication for 25-26, with members and officials mindful of a reduced budget, and the importance to maximise budgets during the transitional year.

Members and officials acknowledge that once the allocation was confirmed that they would move quickly to support projects to provide certainty.

7. 2024-25 Underspend

A number of options were presented by the MHCLG officials for consideration by the partnership group on how the 24-25 budget underspend would be utilised, it was agreed that officials should explore further increasing funding into economic activity projects that are ahead of delivery and require additional funding, into council areas that are over delivering and require additional Go Succeed funding and working with Labour Market Partnerships.

8. AOB

None.

9. Date of next meeting

Members agreed that the next meeting will be scheduled in January in the NICVA offices (time and date tbc).