

Cabinet

13 January 2026

Pride In Place Impact Fund

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Harinder Mahil, Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment

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Summary

Medway Council has been allocated £1.5 million capital grant funding from the Pride in Place Impact Fund (PIPIF). Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has set out three main priorities for the fund which include improvements to community spaces, public spaces, and high streets and town centres.

Funding must be fully committed by deadline 31 March 2027. This allows 14 months for delivery from January, if approved by Cabinet. This report seeks approval of the PIPIF delivery programme and requests delegated authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment accordingly.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. The Cabinet is asked to approve delivery of the £1.5m Pride in Place Impact Fund (PIPIF) capital grant programme to March 2027, in line with Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government timescales.
- 1.2. The Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic and Social Regeneration and Inward Investment, to deliver the Pride in Place Impact Fund programme.

2. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 2.1. Approval of the PIPIF programme will enable delivery, benefitting Medway's residents, communities and businesses, in line with the Council's overarching Regeneration priorities.

2.2. Any uncommitted spend by March 2027 will need to be returned to MHCLG, and the Council would lose the PIPIF opportunity to invest in improvements to our high streets, town centres, community and public spaces.

3. Budget and policy framework

3.1. Delivery of the PIPIF programme is in line with the One Medway Council Plan priorities, particularly supporting clean, green, safe and connected communities, a growing economy and improving wellbeing for all.

3.2. Delivery of the PIPIF programme is in line with the Council's Town Centre Strategy and emerging Regeneration Strategy, Medway 2041.

3.3. Medway 2041 embeds the Council's ethos to eliminate unlawful discrimination, actively promote equality, growth for all, and foster good relations between communities, through improving quality of life and opportunities for everyone. Diversity Impact Assessments are incorporated at key junctures to ensure all requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 are satisfied.

4. Background

4.1. PIPIF was launched as part of Government's Pride in Place Strategy initiatives. Medway did not receive the additional £20m granted to pre-determined deprived neighbourhoods. The overarching aim of PIPIF is rebuilding community pride in local areas and creating thriving places. Three main priority areas for the fund include improvements to community spaces, public spaces, and high streets and town centres.

4.2. The fund requires regular monitoring with the first reporting submission in February 2026. Measured outputs include:

- number of facilities & premises created/improved;
- amount of commercial space created/improved sqm;
- amount of community/culture/sports/heritage space created/ improved sqm;
- amount of green/blue space created/improved sqm;
- amount of public realm created/improved sqm; and
- number of green retrofits to non-residential buildings/ facilities.

4.3. PIPIF encourages local authorities to leverage additional funding where possible including any other Government or private sector funding.

4.4. There is no revenue or capacity funding available, the fund is 100% capital. Scoping and administering the PIPIF will be resource intensive for the Council, as the programme will predominantly be delivered internally from

existing staff resource. Delivery of the scheme will require and embrace multidisciplinary working internally, as well as support from corporate services who have already been engaged including legal, comms, digital, finance, audit, and procurement. Delivery of the programme also requires significant engagement and partnership working with external stakeholders and local communities to ensure a co-creation approach.

- 4.5. Given the short timescale for delivery the programme needed to be curated at pace. To ensure high impact, maximum visibility and pragmatic approach to delivery, Medway Council's Pre-Cabinet members have prioritised the following three workstreams for the PIPF.

4.5.1. Shopfront Grant Scheme

4.5.1.1. The Shopfront Grant Scheme aims to enhance the visual appeal of key commercial areas across Medway, supporting local businesses and encouraging economic growth. The £300,000 allocation for this scheme will run Medway wide and include parades of local shops, as well as across town centres.

4.5.1.2. Two levels of grant are currently proposed. A smaller grant may be available for up to £2,500 for cosmetic improvements such as repairs, repainting, signage, and lighting. Alongside this, potentially up to £5,000 available for structural works, including accessibility enhancements.

4.5.1.3. The scheme application process will be as streamlined as possible. Scoping of the scheme builds on experience of the Shared Prosperity Fund, as an existing grants scheme offered by the Council. The Council's Communications Team have been engaged to support with promotion. Town Centre, Economic Development and Shared Prosperity Fund teams will be commencing networking and engagement with local businesses to encourage uptake. Legal have drafted a grant fund agreement.

4.5.2. Public Realm Improvements Scheme

4.5.2.1. A town centre public realm improvement package of £800,000. This scheme will be Co-created with internal officers and key external stakeholders, using an urban room approach.

4.5.2.2. An engagement workshop was held 2 December 2025, facilitated by consultants BPTW, who were commissioned to build upon their previous work on the community co-created Gillingham Vision & Action Plan. The workshop held across two sessions, focused on public realm interventions. It brought together 35 Council officers including service managers across departments, external partners, Councillors and community representatives to collaboratively transform the Vision & Action

Plan into a prioritised list of projects that could be realistically delivered by this fund's time and budget constraints.

- 4.5.2.3. A programme of public realm improvements for Chatham is also being co-created for implementation early 2026. Delivery will include support from Medway Development Company and aims to engage with University of Kent Architecture students who are focusing on the area in their studies.

4.5.3. Partners in Investment scheme

- 4.5.3.1. This scheme aims to leverage significant private sector investment, potentially millions, to refurbish, convert and bring back into use an empty property in a town centre location, through supporting viability. The PIPF £400,000 grant funding would not be able to create this level of impact alone but alongside the private sector, this will enable significant regeneration into our high streets.

- 4.5.3.2. Early conversations with MHCLG have shown interest in this as a pilot scheme. Delivery of this pilot will be with a view to gain further funding to expand.

- 4.5.3.3. Work is ongoing with Planning to identify a number of potential properties. The scheme builds on a proven 'No Use Empty' approach.

- 4.5.3.4. Legal have begun work on the grant funding agreement to ensure necessary protections for the Council including clawback, compliance with subsidy control regulations and appropriate procurement.

4.6. Work on all three schemes is underway. The projects are being scoped ready to launch early 2026 and delivered by March 2027 in line with MHCLG timescales. An overarching high-level programme plan and team resource plan has been developed to deliver the PIPF programme. Additional resource may be required, and other external funds have been identified for resource, if necessary. This will have no impact on the Council budget. The Council's Head of Communications and team have been briefed and will be supporting delivery through creation and implementation of a robust communication plan, which will ensure positive messaging to external stakeholders and capitalise on progress and successes, whilst managing any negative perceptions and minimising risk. The Council's Audit and Counter Fraud and Category Management Teams have been consulted and provided advice on the schemes.

4.7. MPs have had early engagement, a briefing presentation was delivered on 28 October, all workstreams received positive feedback and offer of ongoing support to promote the schemes.

5. Options

- 5.1. To approve delivery of PIPIF workstreams as set out in the report.
- 5.2. To reject delivery of the PIPIF workstreams as set out in the report.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. Approval of the PIPIF workstreams is recommended. In order to meet the deadline of fully committed spend by March 2027, work must begin at pace. Scoping across the workstreams has already commenced. A consultation and engagement event has been held and feedback has been positive. To remain on programme to launch grants in early 2026, Cabinet would need to approve the workstreams and delegate authority to approve spend of the £1.5m capital fund.
- 6.2. If approval is not granted, the programme would be delayed and risks not meeting the delivery timescale. Any uncommitted spend by March 2027 would need to be returned to MHCLG. This would be a significant loss to our residents, communities, businesses and town centres.

7. Risk management

- 7.1. A risk register for the programme across the workstreams is in development and will be monitored regularly throughout delivery. Overarching risks are set out below.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
PIPIF funding is not spent effectively.	The PIPIF allocation for Medway is relatively small; all PIPIF funded interventions need to ensure that the benefits of the funding are maximised.	Consult key stakeholders and ensure that all proposed PIPIF interventions are in line with engagement feedback and Council priorities.	CII
Negative publicity.	Expectations for PIPIF funding are high, due to the broad funding aims to support high streets, town centres, public spaces and community spaces.	To ensure engagement and clear communication with residents, businesses and stakeholders on the PIPIF programme.	CIII
Lack of resource required to deliver and	The workstreams will be impactful but are heavily resource intensive. Multiple	Ensure resource is identified to meet workstreams and fund requirements. Identify	CII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
administer the PIPIF workstreams.	workstreams delivering interventions, grants will all require engagement, funding agreements and management of funding, as well as reporting to MHCLG. This puts significant additional pressure on Town Centre, ED and SPF teams.	additional external funding for resource, if needed.	
Successful projects do not deliver intended outputs / outcomes.	Projects cannot deliver their intended outputs within budget and / or to schedule, leading to a reduced opportunity to deliver the extent of identified schemes. This could lead to reputational damage.	Effective programme partnership management will be key to the successful delivery of PIPIF interventions. Resource working across PIPIF are experienced in delivering grants, managing multiple projects, working with local businesses and funders.	CII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

8. Consultation

- 8.1. Members have been involved in development of the schemes, Pre-Cabinet had early engagement and were supportive of the PIPIF workstreams. All three Members of Parliament have been engaged and are also supportive.
- 8.2. A consultation and engagement event was held in Gillingham on 2 December 2025 which invited Service Managers and officers across departments to put forward project ideas for the public realm town centre interventions. The afternoon session of the workshop was for external stakeholders, the 33 attendees included community group representatives, Historic England, Southeastern Railway, Royal Engineers, Nucleus Arts, Medway Development Company (MDC), Universities, Mid Kent College and more. Facilitators BTPW have consolidated the project ideas from the sessions. Once developed

further, these will go to a decision panel of representatives for approval in January 2026.

9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. In line with the Council's target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050, climate change will be considered through delivery of each of the capital schemes as appropriate.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed by the S151 Officer and returned to MHCLG to accept the grant funding. MHCLG release 50% of the funding will be released this financial year 2025/26 and reporting will be signed off by S151 and submitted to MHCLG in February 2026 with a progress update and spend profile. The remainder will be released in 2026/27, when majority of programme spend is planned once projects are developed and grants are launched.
- 10.2. If Cabinet approve the PIPIF programme as proposed, £1.5m PIPIF grant will be added to the Capital Programme in line with the S151 Officer's delegation as per 6.24 of the Employee delegation scheme to approve in-year additions to the capital programme and revenue budget in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, subject to: (i) funding coming from external sources; (ii) no financial contribution being required from the Council; (iii) funding being ring fenced for specific purposes.
- 10.3. The PIPIF is external grant funding from MHCLG. If additional revenue to support the capital scheme is required, it will be identified from other external sources including legacy SELEP funding streams. The funding will be ring fenced following the workstreams above. Flexibility of funding allocations between the workstreams is required to ensure maximum impact is achieved across the programme. All employee delegation conditions are met.
- 10.4. Spend of the £1.5m grant will commence if Cabinet approve the PIPIF delivery programme.

11. Legal implications

- 11.1 The Council's Legal team have been engaged and are supporting across the PIPIF workstreams. Various grant funding agreements are required, as funding is proposed to be released to partners and agreements are being drafted. These agreements will ensure the Council has the necessary protections in place including clawback provisions and compliance with subsidy control and procurement regulations. Legal advice will be incorporated within the set up and operational management and delivery of the scheme.
- 11.2 The Council has an MOU in place with MHCLG, signed by our S151 Officer for release of the £1.5m Section 50 non-ringfenced grant funding. The PIPIF will be delivered in line with the conditions as set out in the MOU.

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Appendices

None.

Background papers

[MHCLG Pride in Place Impact Fund Prospectus](#)

[MHCLG Pride in Place Strategy](#)