

Report of The Head of Planning and Local Development

Reviewing the Economic Strategy for Wellingborough

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To obtain the Committee's approval for the economic development strategy to proceed to consultation amongst key stakeholders and economic partners.
- 1.2 The strategy and its associated implementation plan will guide the future economic development resources of the council to deliver real economic benefits for the borough through a network of partners.

2 Executive summary

- 2.1 An ambitious programme of work is underway to ensure that Wellingborough realises its economic growth aspirations. It is important that the council works with others to ensure that effort is focused on the areas that will deliver the greatest benefits and that our local businesses, who will help to drive the economy forward, understand the support available to them and how to access it.

3 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Economic evidence base
- Appendix 2 – 2014 business survey results
- Appendix 3 – Consultation Questions
- Appendix 4 – An Economic Strategy for Wellingborough 2015
- Appendix 5 – Economic Strategy Implementation Plan

4 Proposed action:

- 4.1 **The Committee is invited to resolve that the appended Economic Evidence Base, Strategy, Implementation Plan and Questions be approved for consultation purposes.**

5 Background

- 5.1 The June 2011 Economic Strategy brought together the existing plans and research and outlined the key actions the council and partners would need to focus their resources upon in order to deliver growth in the following years.
- 5.2 In an ever-evolving policy and political environment, the evidence base and strategic priorities need to be reviewed by officers, councillors and key local stakeholders to ensure that they reflect the current situation and resource levels.
- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework states that, " In drawing up Local

Plans, local planning authorities should:

- set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;
- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area...”

5.4 The Economic Strategy is therefore being reviewed to co-incide with the development of the emerging plan for the borough of Wellingborough to ensure that the two are in accordance.

6 Discussion

6.1 Economic prosperity and improved skills and employment opportunities are at the heart of a strong community where people feel valued, contribute to and benefit from the borough’s improved economy.

6.2 In its role as a community leader, the council is well-placed to work with its partners in the public, private and voluntary sector to recognise the key role that we all have in shaping the future economic prosperity of the area.

6.3 NEP is one of the council’s key economic partners and has a clear objective – “to increase the prosperity of Northamptonshire’s businesses by supporting the creation of better quality private sector jobs”

6.4 In order to achieve this, NEP has produced its Strategic Economic Plan, which sets out its priorities and key areas of activity, many of which reflect Wellingborough’s ambitions.

6.5 The refreshed strategy for Wellingborough sets out the priorities, proposed areas of activity and seeks feedback and comments as to whether all of the key challenges and opportunities have been identified.

6.6 The Implementation Plan invites suggestions from partners on activities which address the priorities and how their success can be measured.

6.7 Some consultation questions are attached at Appendix 3, but all feedback and comments will be welcomed and considered to shape the final strategy.

7 Legal powers

7.1 Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the council the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the borough.

8 Financial and value for money implications

- 8.1 Currently there are no requirements for further funding in the revenue budget proposals for 2015/2016. Any funding requirements not already within existing budgets will be highlighted in due course and, if approved, relevant reports will be developed to bid for these additional resources.
- 8.2 It is important to note that much of the future funding from central government will be aligned to an area's ability to grow its economy and enterprise.

9 Risk analysis

Nature of risk	Consequences if realised	Likelihood of occurrence	Control measures
Without an up to date economic strategy, there is a risk that economic development decisions will be made in an ad-hoc way without an overall context and direction that may not provide best value.	The borough could fall behind other districts in the county, region and country in terms of economic prosperity and long term sustainability	Medium	Work with partners to maximise resources and address the borough's key economic priorities

Implications for resources

- 9.1 The strategy will help focus future resources but importantly influence the council's future plans for the economic development service.
- 9.2 In addition to the council's resources, the strategy is aimed at influencing the work and budgets of other stakeholder organisations involved in the economic prosperity of the borough but there may be a need to invest resources (human and financial) in some of the recommendations coming out of the associated action plan.

10 Implications for stronger and safer communities

- 11.1 The development of a robust economy will have benefits for stronger and safer communities as economic growth is fundamental to the sustainability and success of our communities.

11 Implications for equalities

- 12.1 In line with the council's duty to design its services around the needs of local people, and to evaluate the impact of its services, policies and activities on different groups in society to eliminate discrimination, an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening will be completed as part of the consultation process.

12 Author and contact officer

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13 Consultees

Julie Thomas – Head of Planning Policy and Local Development

Bridget Lawrence – Head of Resources

Liz Elliott – Head of Finance

Victoria Phillipson – Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager

Maxine Simmons - Principal Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager

Sue Bateman, Senior Planning Policy Officer

Justice Nyakatawa, Senior Planning Policy Officer

Tracey Cave – Service Accountant

14 Background papers

A Local Economic Assessment for Northamptonshire - March 2015

Northamptonshire Enterprise Strategic Economic Plan (2014)

An Economic Strategy for Wellingborough (2011)