



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 1 November 2022

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rhona Holloway, Economic Development & Visitors

Director Lead: Matt Lamb, Director – Planning & Growth

Lead Officer: Neil Cuttell, Business Manager - Economic Growth & Visitor Economy, Ext. 5853

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report, Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan - Annual Update 2022
Purpose of Report	To provide an annual update to Members on the progress of the interventions and activities identified in the Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026. Further to identify changes, including new actions for the next 12 months in delivery of key priorities.
Recommendations	That Cabinet note and support the updates provided, the progress achieved and the direction of travel for 2023 in delivering the Economic Growth Strategy for the District's Businesses and Residents.
Alternative Options Considered	<p>The Council has a number of options for delivery of economic growth, these include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Not undertaking a local economic growth strategy; this has been discounted as NSDC has identified the need to support the economy through the resident survey and Community Plan. 2) To provide a reduced, modified or outsourced service for economic growth; This has been discounted as the level of investment is yielding results and comparably more successful to other local authorities in delivering projects and activities, securing external funding, and having a positive impact on the local business community.
Reason for Recommendations	The delivery of economic growth is a central priority to the Newark & Sherwood Community Plan. To ensure the delivery of the Community Plan and Economic Growth Strategy, it is key an action plan on 'how' the Council seeks to implement the Strategies is created, structured, delivered, and monitored and evaluated.

1.0 **Background**

1.1 In October 2019, Members of the Council identified a need to develop a new Economic Growth Strategy for the District that provided the priorities for growth and the interventions that the Council would undertake to deliver. The 2020 Global Pandemic provided a challenge to national, regional and local economic development that would have implications on what was needed, and how growth would be delivered.

In November 2020, Members of the Economic Development Committee agreed a new [Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026](#) that identified the following five priorities:

1. A focus on digital connectivity and infrastructure to areas across the District with poorest connectivity or potential for impactful growth with the local economy.
2. Accelerating economic growth and resilience across the District in manufacturing, construction, accommodation, food, retail, health and social care.
3. Accelerating the upskilling and reskilling of people across the District into education, employment or apprenticeships with a focus on young people and older workers.
4. Diversifying Town Centres to have increased residential, higher footfall and an increased diversity of offer including culture, leisure and health.
5. A prioritisation of work activity on Newark as the main town and centre for the district and a focus on key areas of deprivation.

1.2 This second annual review provides an opportunity to reflect upon these priorities, external changes and factors in the national and regional economy, local strategy development, and community and stakeholder responses to the changing climate and associated challenges. In doing so the Business Manager (Economic Growth & Visitor Economy) would recommend changes to the priorities of the strategy, which are:

1. A focus on infrastructure and accessibility to areas across the District with poorest connectivity and or potential for impactful growth with the local economy. This follows the resident survey and consultation on the Sherwood LUF bid where access and infrastructure were identified as poor.
2. Accelerating economic growth and resilience across the District in manufacturing, construction, accommodation, hospitality, food, retail, health and social care.
3. Accelerating the upskilling and reskilling of people across the District into education, employment or apprenticeships with a focus on young people and older workers.
4. Diversifying Town Centres to have increased residential, higher footfall, dwell time and an increased diversity of offer including culture, leisure and health.
5. A prioritisation of work activity initially on Newark, Ollerton & Edwinstowe in 2023 for the district with a focus on key areas of deprivation. This follows the resident survey where these areas communities deemed town centre regeneration as a priority.

1.3 The last 12 months have been challenging for the local and UK economy, the Council, and importantly many residents and businesses within the District. The reopening of the economy, war in Ukraine and subsequent energy issues have developed into a cost of living crisis nationally which in turn has had a negative effect on local economies and communities. However, the Council has led and continued to strive for its community to deliver improved economic growth and there are notable successes, including:

- Delivery of a High Street Diversification Fund that supported over 130 independent retailers to diversify and digitise their offer
- Provision of 'staycation' and 'door steps days out' campaigns to support our visitor economy strategy.
- Creation of a Business Growth & Resilience Programme that will deliver support and growth to over 50 businesses in 2021 and 2022
- A series of business support events on procurement, business growth, intellectual property, and investment. Further support with information, advice and guidance including seeking grant funds to over 200 businesses locally.
- Developing the 2nd Floor of the Newark Buttermarket and securing a new tenant, Inspire, to deliver adult education programmes.
- Completion of the former Robin Hood Hotel development and associated opening of the 66 bed Travelodge and availability of 3 no, ground floor commercial units.
- Working with the YMCA to complete the new Newark Community Activity Village in July 2022 through securing Town Fund Grant.
- The establishment of the Construction College which has started its second cohort year supporting over 100 people into training as bricklayers, electricians and gas engineers.
- The Air & Space Institute has also started its second cohort year with people undertaking training to become pilots, engineers and ground crew. The current facility is operating from Newark College before the move to the new facility in late 2023. This is supporting over 50 students into new career pathways.
- Developing an Outline Business Case for the Newark Cultural Heart Town Fund Project that doubled the level of investment with Newark Town Council for events in the Town and saw the delivery of a successful Newark Beach Event and enhanced Newark Festival.
- The progression of the Stodman Street Scheme (former Marks & Spencer store), Securing planning consent and a development contractor for the Stodman Street Development.
- Newark Beacon is 95% occupied where the commercial property team provide a venue for growing business and the economic growth team provide support through advice, guidance, grants and brokerage.

1.4 There has also been progress on larger infrastructure programmes and projects including:

- Securing the £20m Newark Levelling Up Fund Round 1 Bid for the Southern Link Road. This will secure improved infrastructure and accessibility for Newark as a growing town.
- Influencing and engaging on the ongoing development of the A46 Newark Northern Bypass with National Highways on behalf of the Department for Transport
- Supporting NCC colleagues in the development and securing of the Non Strategic Roads Network funds for the A614/617 works, including at Ollerton Roundabout

1.5 Officers have also undertaken significant work on policy, evidence, bidding, commissioning and preparation work including:

- Securing £3.28m of Shared Prosperity Fund for 2022-2025 through the development of the Newark & Sherwood Investment Plan.

- Rural Prosperity Fund – delivery of a new fund focused on rural areas of District with an allocation from Government of £820k
- Creation of a business newsletter that communicates directly to businesses the services provided news, events and support on offer.
- The creation of a comprehensive database of large businesses in Newark & Sherwood.
- The support to retailer and business groups provided through representation, information and guidance.
- The creation and facilitation of a local Employment & Skills Board (ESB) with improved co-ordination in the design and delivery of new skills programmes.
- The facilitation, organisation, governance and assurance in the creation of the Newark Town Board, Sherwood Board, and Newark & Sherwood Place Board. Further the administration and programme management of the Town Funds and commissioning of Full Business Cases for priority projects.
- Improved and strengthened relationships with key businesses in the District with an enhanced Key Account Management role.
- The creation of a commercial property database, hosting site visits, supporting inward investment and creation of the ‘invest in Newark & Sherwood’ campaign
- Monitoring and evaluation of data including collation, understanding and analysis, presentation of metrics on economic recovery, economic growth, tourism and regeneration.

1.6 There have been other work programmes and challenges that have required Officer time and capacity on in the delivery of economic growth that were unknown or not stated in the report of September 2021, these include:

- Levelling Up Funds (LUF) Round 2; A comprehensive bid for up to £20m for the Sherwood area (outcome pending) which includes facilitation, organisation, governance and management of a ‘Sherwood Board’
- The creation of a Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan
- The organisation and roll out of the Welcome Back Fund, including Service Level Agreements to Town and Parish Councils providing funding to reopen the high streets.

1.7 As the Council starts to deliver into the 3rd year of the Economic Growth Strategy there are identified actions that will be undertaken by Officers in 2022/23. There are also likely to be emerging opportunities and threats that need to be considered, principally amongst this will be the requirement for officer to consider the future LUF funds offer to Sherwood, the implications and offer that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) may provide, and the potential state of the economy as energy costs change, the value of currency fluctuates and inflation rises.

1.8 There is still work to deliver through to 2026 that Officers are working on which includes the continuation of the Town Fund Programme including the delivery of the Gateway Site, Castle Gatehouse, Newark Heart, Stodman Street and the Air & Space Technology Centre. Further the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund Newark Project in the Southern Link Road and Levelling Up Fund Sherwood Programme at Ollerton & Clipstone. The Economic Growth team will also continue to develop the Town Centres Programme with the High Street Task Force in Edwinstowe and Ollerton, and supporting the other Town Centres to flourish.

1.9 The Action Plan will be continually reviewed and new activities identified will be informed to members. It is therefore proposed that the Business Manager (Economic Growth & Visitor Economy) continue to provide bi-monthly updates to the Portfolio Holder and the next annual report be prepared for November 2023.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

2.1 The Business Manager (Economic Growth & Visitor Economy) has considered other options, which include:

A) Not undertaking a local economic growth strategy; this has been discounted as NSDC has identified the need to support the economy through the resident survey and Community Strategy

B) To provide a reduce, modified or outsourced service for economic growth; This has been discounted as the level of investment is yielding results and comparably to other Local Authorities is more successful in delivering projects and activities, securing external funding, and has a positive impact on the local business community.

2.2 The delivery of economic growth is a central priority to the Newark & Sherwood Community Plan. To ensure the delivery of the Community Plan, and Economic Growth Strategy, it is key an action plan on 'how' the Council seeks to implement the Strategies is created, structured, delivered, and monitored and evaluated. This course of action is the only approach to achieve these objectives

3.0 Implications

3.1 In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.2 The Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026 has an Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment undertaken in 2021. This is reviewed annually by the Economic Growth & Visitor Economy Team.

Financial Implications – (FIN22-23/3646)

3.3 This report has no direct financial implications.

3.4 The activities identified in the Economic Growth Strategy 2021-2026 have been budgeted for within the Economic Growth & Visitor Economy Business Unit.

3.5 If new activities are identified the financial implications related to these will be included in future reports.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Economic Development Growth Strategy 2021 – 2026, Economic Development Committee, November 2020

Economic Growth Action Plan Review 2022, Economic Development Committee, September 2021