

SSDC Economic Development Strategy 2019 – 2028

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Purpose of the Report

1. This report presents the Council's Economic Development Strategy to Full Council for approval.
2. **Due to the size of the document, it will be published in electronic format** as a supplement to this Agenda. Printed copies will also be available in the Members' Room.

Forward Plan

3. This report appears on the Forward Plan scheduled for February 2019.

Public Interest

4. The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) 2019-28 sets out the vision, key outcomes, priority themes and action plan to deliver economic development over the next ten years.

Recommendations

5. That Council:
 - i) Approve the Economic Development Strategy 2019 – 2028.
 - ii) Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Economic Development and Transformation to make any necessary final amendments to the EDS in association with the appropriate Director/s and the Lead Specialist Economy.

Background

6. National and local economies are experiencing times of continued uncertainty. A local economy does not operate in isolation of national and regional economies and thus our strategy is carefully aligned with wider economic strategies that will impact on South Somerset. The Draft Strategy is already underpinning our involvement with economic development work-streams including the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Productivity Strategy Delivery Plans and the Future High Streets Fund.
7. In order to prioritise our work for the local economy we have undertaken an extensive analysis of the available local economic data and trends. We have taken account of what the businesses of South Somerset tell us about the economy and have established what is currently working well for them whilst paying careful attention to what the current and future difficulties might be. We have also taken note of the aspirations aims and goals of our partner bodies who help define and shape the economy of South Somerset, so that we can work with them and help achieve our goals.

8. A good economic development strategy recognises that it is not possible to tackle all economic issues but helps us to prioritise our areas of work. This will help us to direct our resources into economic development activities where we can make a genuine and positive difference.
9. As its title implies, an Economic Development Strategy provides high-level strategic direction to our areas of work. It is not intended that the document provides a lengthy or exhaustive list of all our future activities. The strategy will help us to decide what our areas of work should be and to help ensure that our activities do align with our overall plan. Of equal importance will be the Delivery Plans that sit beneath this Strategy. These Plans are currently being developed and were discussed at Strategic Development Board in January 2019. These will naturally evolve and be flexible in nature to respond to changing economic needs and circumstances, whilst indicating the timescales and outcomes required to deliver the individual tasks. Furthermore, they will be supported by the EDS Delivery Budget approved by District Executive in February 2019.
10. The Strategy has been underpinned by thorough research of the relevant databases and policy documents. The latest available data was used to help develop an assessment of the local economy including skills provision. This enabled a District economic summary assessment to be prepared. This analysis revealed the key characteristics and performance of South Somerset in terms of population, employment structure, business demography, productivity and pay, skills and training, housing profile, place making and infrastructure, plus health and prosperity measures. The key data sources and the rationale for using them are set out in the appendices of the Strategy.
11. We have also ensured that the Economic Development Strategy is soundly aligned to other SSDC Policy Documents. This ensures close synergy with our Council Plan including Priority Projects and Area Chapters and the Local Plan.
12. To provide a wider context for the current economic situation and likely projected growth, the EDS draws on the Heart of the South West LEP (HotSW) Strategic Economic Plan 2014-30; HotSW Productivity Plan 2018-36 and the Somerset Growth Plan. The EDS is also informed by central government strategies for industry and productivity. All of this helps to ensure that we work in a common strategic direction, it also helps us to make the most of partnership working and creates the best opportunities to attract external funding for economic projects.
13. Four Area based workshops were conducted for SSDC Members. These were held either before or after the Area Committees to ensure the best opportunity for members to attend.
14. A question and answer session was held with Scrutiny Committee with pre-prepared questions and answers plus additional questioning. This session was in addition to the normal cycle of reports that are taken to Scrutiny Committee before the District Executive Committee.
15. The priorities in the EDS are derived from the identification of 'Golden Opportunities' for the District. These reflect our analysis of quantitative economic data and are critically informed by stakeholder engagement. Our review and analysis also enabled us to determine that the emerging priorities were in-line with wider good practice, policies and thinking. The Strategy then develops the six Priority Themes within which individual primary actions/projects and year one delivery milestones are identified. The purpose of the Strategy is not to provide a lengthy or exhaustive list of all our future activities, but to provide a framework that guides and prioritises our delivery plans.
16. The EDS makes an important distinction between projects in which we will be the lead partner and those where we will assist other partners in the lead role. It is important that the EDS recognises what can be realistically achieved whilst ensuring that the Council does not duplicate the efforts and resources of other partners. Sound partnership working will ensure that the resources of all partners are deployed to best effect.

17. Public consultation of the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) 2019 – 2028, commenced on 6th December 2018 following agreement by District Executive and remained open until 1st February 2019. Consultation activity included directly engaging 40 businesses and stakeholders, resulting in 25 responses. Overall these are supportive of the Strategy, including its Vision, Priority Themes and Action Plan, plus Key Outcomes. However, as a result of the feedback received several of the Primary Actions/Projects including Year One (19/20) Milestones have been amended to provide better clarity and focus. This public consultation feedback is summarised in Appendix A (attached) and is in addition to the earlier robust business engagement activity undertaken during formulation of the draft Strategy last year.

Monitoring and Management

18. The EDS sets out key outcomes and identifies success measures under each priority theme. Initial project milestones are also set out and will be refined as each action/project moves forward to delivery. Delivery Plans will set out more detail and the appropriate performance monitoring and review mechanisms, which will be aligned to our Council Plan and any other relevant reporting cycles.
19. EDS delivery progress will be monitored by the Area Committees and the Strategic Development Board. This protocol was agreed by Full Council in May 2018. Financial updates on the EDS Delivery Budget will be provided regularly to the District Executive Committee, as part of the routine reporting procedure.

Published Format of the Strategy

20. The final document will be available on-line. We do not intend to undertake a major print run of the document and will encourage the use of online or electronic versions of the document. Copies of the Strategy can be printed if required.

Financial Implications

21. The EDS Delivery Budget (£200,000 over 2 years for 19/20 and 20/21) was approved by District Executive in February 2019.

Council Plan Implications

22. The Economic Development Strategy will be a key policy document for the Council. It will help to deliver 5 of the 8 Priority Projects listed in the Council Plan (2018/19) and contribute to all 6 Key Performance Indicators (2016 -21) used by Council to measure the local economy. It also aligns with the draft Council Plan for 2019/20, including the Priority Projects and Area Chapters.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

23. There are no implications at Strategic Level associated with this report. However, implications will be assessed for all projects included in the delivery plan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

24. Targeted consultation with groups representing protected characteristics was undertaken as part of the public consultation.

Privacy Impact Assessment

25. The economic data used in the preparation of this Strategy is sourced from documents that are already in the public domain.
26. Where information has been obtained through consultation with individuals or organisations we have:
 - only collected the data necessary for the production of the EDS
 - secured permission to use the information and opinions
 - acted in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018

Background Papers

- SSDC Economic Development Strategy for Approval document
- Appendix A- Economic Development Strategy Consultation Comments Report