

Title: South Warwickshire Economic Strategy  
Lead Officer: Philip Clarke  
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ella Billiald  
Wards of the District directly affected: All

<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	07/11/23	Cllr Ella Billiald
<b>Finance</b>	07/11/23	Andrew Rollins
<b>Legal Services</b>		n/a
<b>Chief Executive</b>	07/11/23	Chris Elliott
<b>Director of Climate Change</b>	07/11/23	Dave Barber
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	07/11/23	Philip Clarke
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	07/11/23	Darren Knight
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	07/11/23	Graham Leach
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>	07/11/23	LCG
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?</b>	Yes Recommendation to Council	
<b>Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?</b>	Yes	
<b>Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?</b>	No	
<b>Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?</b>	Yes, Forward Plan item – scheduled for December 2023	
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>	Yes	

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## Summary

An Economic Strategy is a document that sets out the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an area. The South Warwickshire Economic Strategy (SWES) has been developed in partnership with Stratford District Council to sit alongside the South Warwickshire Local Plan which is currently being developed. The purpose of this report is to approve the SWES and the action plan for 2024-2025, recognising that the action plan will be reviewed and updated yearly based on national and sub-regional socio-economic developments and publication of other sub-regional strategies.

## Recommendation(s)

- (1) That the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy and action plan for 2024-2025 should be adopted for implementation starting effectively from 1st April 2024.
  - (2) Subject to Recommendation (1), that Authority be delegated to The Head of Place, Arts and Economy, in consultation with the Arts and Economy Portfolio Holder, to make any minor changes prior to its publication and to oversee the annual refresh of the action plan and monitor its implementation.
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## 1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 The SWES was published for consultation in March 2023. Since then, the economic development team has analysed the results of the consultation feedback with Stratford District Council and has updated the final strategy, taking into account the most significant of the responses.
- 1.2 The key changes have been discussed with the senior executive of both Warwick and Stratford District Councils as well as the respective Portfolio Holders. This has resulted in the SWES document and supporting action plan being brought forward for approval by the WDC/SDC respective cabinets and to take effect from the new financial year, namely from 1st April 2024.
- 1.3 It is important to support the publication of the strategy and action plan as it is an important policy informing the Local Plan as well as supporting the direction of travel and performance of the corporate plan. Without it, the Council would have less influence over specific issues relating to the South Warwickshire economy and ensuring that these are recognised and addressed at the County level, providing more impact at the local level than otherwise might have been achieved in the absence of such a strategy and express needs and interventions required.
- 1.4 The strategy will also be a key document in attracting investment into the area particularly at a time when investment will be actively sought to support initiatives such as the West Midlands Investment Zone, that would encompass the Giga Park and the Giga Factory within Warwick District, for which the Government has announced the go-ahead in its Autumn Statement in November 2023.

### Background/ Information

- 1.5 As a reminder, it is a joint South Warwickshire economic strategy which is beneficial to both Councils in the following ways:

- 1.6 The shared economic geography includes some shared challenges, particularly around infrastructure and shared opportunities especially around developing a high growth knowledge-based economy.
- 1.7 The South Warwickshire Local Plan which will contain land-use policies to support economic development.
- 1.8 When engaging with Government and outside agencies (such as West Midlands Connect and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)), the case for support and inward investment is stronger when there is joined up thinking and the synergistic strengths of both Districts as well as better opportunities to respond collectively to Climate change challenges.
- 1.9 At the same time, the County Council and the Coventry and Warwickshire strategies are being progressed, the former of which has had input from all Districts already during August and September 2023. It is expected that their strategy will be published in December 2023, followed on in due course by their action plan in early 2024, before the next financial year.
- 1.10 It is recognised that neither Warwick nor Stratford District Councils work alone in isolation but work in partnership with other stakeholders and delivery partners. The strategy therefore sets out the strategic themes which are important for the next 5 years and the supporting action plan proposes the type of role the economic development team will play alongside others, which ranges from influencing, lobbying and shaping strategies as well as more direct intervention at the local level including catalysing and joint commissioning of activity. The economic development strategy will support the work of place-making by helping to shape the local economic priorities which underpin employment land allocations and associated economic policies within the South Warwickshire Local Plan.
- 1.11 The thematic priorities of People, Places and Productivity have been used to develop a concise set of relevant programmes. The programmes will be reviewed at the end of each year and refreshed in light of national and sub-regional socio-economic changes and changes in policy direction, as they are meant to be responsive to new opportunities and agile enough to respond to external changes in the market or Government policy as well as a change of Government during 2024. The action plan will take account of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes and objectives.
- 1.12 The key objectives of People, Place and Productivity are as follows:
  - People – improve inclusivity and career paths and progression, facilitating social mobility through the provision of better job opportunities, upskilling the existing workforce and attracting inward investment in highly skilled jobs.
  - Productivity – the aim is to build thriving business communities with inclusive growth and shared prosperity, supporting new and existing businesses start up and survive, job creation, innovation and attracting inward investment and increased exports.
  - Place – this includes taking forward regeneration, infrastructure and development opportunities including The Future High Streets Fund project in the regeneration of Leamington Spa’s Creative Quarter and other projects and sites; future strategic employment sites allocations; re-vitalising and enhancing town centres and the public realm and revitalising the evening economies. This aims to support rural market towns across the District and address some of the opportunities and

threats within the Local Neighbourhood plans and local council priorities to support the prioritisation of investment in sustainable infrastructure and communities to build thriving communities.

- 1.13 All of the above is framed against the backdrop of recognising that the need to consider the environmental issues and climate change and recognising that growth and prosperity at any cost is not a viable option. There is a strong 'green' thread throughout the SWES, with sustainability at the heart. It aims to actively attract the right 'green' industries to the District and to support businesses to become more sustainable in their operations for the benefit of local people, communities and the environment through maximising social value and the development of the circular economy and working in partnership locally, regionally and nationally to increase sustainability and biodiversity. The recent confirmation of the West Midlands Investment Zone (WMIZ) will bring billions of pounds worth of investment to the region, and directly to the WDC area, with the development of the Giga Park and the Gigafactory. The WMIZ will bring tax incentives, infrastructure investment and other support and offers an opportunity to transition to a green economy protecting against unsuitable development and to deliver for biodiversity, sustainable transport and job creation.
- 1.14 The SWES and Action Plan are attached in Appendix 1 and are structured around the key themes mentioned above with three key sections as follows:
- South Warwickshire at a Glance – presents facts and figures about the South Warwickshire economy and challenges and opportunities for the future.
  - An economic strategy for South Warwickshire – sets out a Vision for economic growth across South Warwickshire, our mission and focus.
  - Delivering the Economic Strategy – presents the objectives to be achieved and some actions to be delivered during 2024-2025 to be revisited annually against the overarching programme themes until 2028.

## **2 Alternative Options**

- 2.1 If the SWES and Action Plan are not adopted at this time it could be delayed and reviewed in February or March 2024, when it is expected that the County economic development action plan will be published. However, time would be lost in the implementation of our plan at a critical time in the delivery of regeneration projects, UKSPF and funding opportunities such as the Innovate UK Immersive and Creative Launchpad.

## **3 Legal Implications**

- 3.1 There are not considered to be any legal implications arising from this report. There will be links between the economic development strategy and the South Warwickshire Local Plan, in so far as it will provide part of the evidence base to underpin the Local Plan. The strategy also adopts a totally inclusive economic development approach in support of both residents and businesses within the Stratford and Warwick District Council areas and through its programme of interventions and support.

## **4 Financial Services**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications of this strategy and action plan other than through the normal core services budget allocation processes of the Council. The economic development team forms part of the Place, Arts and Economy Service, reporting to the Head of Place, Arts and Economy.
- 4.2 It is intended that through joint partnership working with the County and other Districts and delivery partners, collectively there will be the opportunity to bid for future government funding streams to enable the programmes and interventions to be delivered through leverage of external and other stakeholder/partner sources of funding.
- 4.3 A key purpose of the publication of both the Strategy and accompanying action plan is to act as a prospectus to external funding bids and to demonstrate how any bid for funds aligns with the adopted strategy and its proposed implementation of the programmes of support.

## **5 Corporate Strategy**

- 6.1 The SWES is integral to delivery of the economic development aspects of the newly adopted Corporate Strategy and the existing Business Strategy which sets out clearly our intentions to transition to a more 'green' economy and to encourage the development of a circular economy and to attract more 'green' industries to the District. It responds directly to the three strategic priorities of the Corporate Strategy, namely:
  - 6.2 **Delivering valued, sustainable services** -The SWES will aim to maximise social value, to support the circular economy and through place making initiatives and investments will aim to recycle the Warwick District pound.
  - 6.3 **Low cost, low carbon energy across the district** -The SWES will work with businesses across the district to enable them to implement strategies and best practice to reduce energy consumption and energy bills and to increase biodiversity and sustainable practices.
  - 6.4 **Creating vibrant, safe and healthy communities of the future** -The SWES will work with businesses to thrive in a sustainable and safe way. Working with partners in place making initiatives to ensure our town centres are vibrant and welcoming, encouraging active travel and to support the local day and nighttime economy through events to attract visitors and increase footfall to the towns.
- 6.5 The three core themes of the SWES of People, Productivity and Place have synergy with the Corporate Strategy's priorities in its aim to benefit residents, local communities, and businesses. The SWES aims to achieve this through upskilling local people and creating opportunities; investing in the local area to attract the right business and to support exiting business and to encourage sustainable practices to enhance the environment. Thereby, ensuring Warwick District remains and continues to grow as the place to live, work and visit.
- 6.6 The SWES will work alongside other strategies such as the Corporate Strategy, the Business Strategy and the Net Zero Carbon DPD and the economic development team will work with colleagues and stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally to achieve the SWES and its action plan.

## **6 Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

- 6.1 Delivering a sustainable economy, communities and infrastructure is at the heart of the economic development strategy with specific programmes targeted

at supporting the de-carbonisation of business and helping businesses respond to the new economic, innovation and technological opportunities this allows for future knowledge-based industries and sectors.

- 6.2 Economic Development will work closely with the Climate Change team particularly in view of the proposed Net Zero Carbon DPD to achieve joint aims in working with business to encourage more sustainable practices, to reduce energy needs and bills, to increase social value , biodiversity and to enhance the local environment.

## **7 Analysis of the effects on Equality**

- 7.1 The Council has a duty to consider equality impact implications in relation to projects such as this and at every stage this duty has been considered. Access to the building benefits the whole community as well as local businesses, entrepreneurs and hybrid workers.

## **8 Data Protection**

- 8.1 There are not considered to be any data protection issues arising from this report. Where we work in partnership with other stakeholders, data sharing agreements and protocols will be put in place and contractually agreed upfront.

## **9 Health and Wellbeing**

- 9.1 A strong, balanced and inclusive economic development strategy will help support the development of positive communities, residents and businesses in helping those most remote from employment back into work and to receive the necessary training, mentoring and support to secure employment and make the most of life's opportunities.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 The risks are considered low as the issues have been well evidenced and researched and they do align with the sub-regional strategies to ensure that WDC/SDC work in partnership with County, local town councils, the BIDS, the Chambers, the local Universities and other stakeholder groups to bid for and leverage other Governmental sources of funds to enact change and investment in the local economy.
- 10.2 Given the limited economic development resources available to it in terms of headcount and budget, the strategy sets out the variety of convening, facilitating, and supporting roles we will play which are to some extent dependent upon the priorities of our other stakeholders and partners in terms of how quickly programmes of intervention are progressed. The risks have been mitigated by sharing the strategy and action plan with partners and integrating their ideas, thoughts and potential resources for joint working to deliver against the actions proposed.
- 10.3 It does require sustainable commitment from the Council in terms of existing economic development team staff resources to be able to maintain the current experience and skills base to be able to continue to participate at both the strategic and operational levels to deliver the strategy and actions over the next 5 years, requiring strategic leadership skills and experience and insight within the team as well as operational capacity and to be able to contribute effectively to the realisation of the economic development aspects of the Local Plan.

## **11 Consultation**

- 11.1 Consultation was undertaken with businesses and stakeholders in the

development of the strategy no further consultation is necessary.

**Background papers:**

None.

**Supporting documents:**

**None.**