

Title: Draft South Warwickshire Economic Strategy  
Lead Officer: Philip Clarke (01926 456518), Martin O’Neill (01926 456064)  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Liam Bartlett  
Wards of the District directly affected: All

<b>Approvals required</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	17/1/23	Liam Bartlett
<b>Finance</b>	10/1/23	Andrew Rollins
<b>Legal Services</b>		
<b>Chief Executive</b>	10/1/23	Chris Elliott
<b>Head of Service(s)</b>	10/1/23	Philip Clarke
<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	10/1/23	Andrew Rollins
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	10/1/23	Andrew Jones
<b>Leadership Co-ordination Group</b>	23/1/23	
<b>Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?</b>	Yes Recommendation to: Cabinet	
<b>Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?</b>	No	
<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 1,276– scheduled for 9 <sup>th</sup> February 2023	
<b>Accessibility Checked?</b>	Yes/No	

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## Summary

This report presents a draft Economic Strategy for South Warwickshire to be approved for public consultation. This document has been prepared jointly by officers from Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils.

## Recommendations

- (1) That Cabinet notes the work that has been undertaken to date to prepare an economic strategy for South Warwickshire including the evidence base paper which is attached as appendix A to this report.**
  - (2) That Cabinet approves the draft South Warwickshire Economic Strategy attached as appendix B for public consultation, recognising that approval will also need to be given by Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet before any public consultation can take place.**
  - (3) That, subject to recommendation (2), authority be delegated to the Head of Place, Arts & Economy, in consultation with the Economy & Culture Portfolio Holder, to agree any minor further changes to the draft Economic Strategy as may be needed prior to the public consultation.**
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## 1 Reasons for the Recommendation

- 1.1 The purpose of an economic strategy, as prepared by a local council, is to give an overview of the economy of a local area and to provide an opportunity for the local council to set out priorities for how it wishes to support the economy. This support can include (a) deploying resources (including staff resources) most effectively, (b) working with local employers and education institutions and (c) linking with, and obtain support from, outside agencies including Government. Economic strategies can also allow councils to consider how to align economic objectives with other priorities such as responding to climate emergencies. Economic strategies are not land-use planning documents; however they can support the work of plan-making by helping to shape the local economic priorities which underpin allocations and policies within the Local Plan.
- 1.2 There is no legal requirement for local authorities to prepare economic strategies however many do so. Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils began to discuss last year producing a joint Economic Strategy, recognising the shared economic geography of the South Warwickshire area. There are several reasons why it is felt that a joint South Warwickshire Economic Strategy would be beneficial to both councils:-
  - The shared economic geography includes some shared challenges and shared opportunities. These are better addressed across the wider area of both councils, particularly where an issue within one council's area can better be addressed by the other authority.
  - The South Warwickshire Local Plan will include land-use policies to support economic development. A joint economic strategy will help to shape thinking about what priorities should shape these policies.
  - When engaging with Government and outside agencies (such as the West Midlands Combined Authority and CWLEP), the case for any support or inward investment is stronger when we can demonstrate clear and joined-up thinking about how to support our economies.

- As both councils have declared a climate emergency, a joint economic strategy may provide wider opportunities to deliver on climate pledges.
- 1.3 A draft Economic Strategy has been prepared and is attached as **appendix B** to this report. The document has been prepared by a team of officers from both councils working alongside portfolio holders (including the previous Place & Economy portfolio holders of both councils). The Councils have also sought external advice from an expert to ensure that the document is presented in a manner that can ensure that it has maximum impact, reach and effectiveness.
  - 1.4 Over the course of its preparation, the draft Economic Strategy has been considered twice by the relevant Programme Advisory Board (PAB). At the start of the preparation of the Economic Strategy officers also held a workshop for local stakeholders, including business representatives, to help shape the vision, themes and actions contained within the Plan.
  - 1.5 The draft Economic Strategy has been structured in three sections as follows:-
    - 1) South Warwickshire at a Glance** –presents key facts and figures about the South Warwickshire economy, and challenges and opportunities for the future
    - 2) An Economic Strategy for South Warwickshire** – sets out a Vision for economic growth across South Warwickshire, our mission and focus
    - 3) Delivering the Economic Strategy** – presents objectives to be achieved and actions to be delivered by 2028.
  - 1.6 Within the strategy itself, (part 2), the document starts with the **vision** and then articulates this across the three **themes of People, Productivity and Place**, before identifying eight **objectives** that the two Councils want the strategy to accomplish. Under these objectives are a series of **priority actions**. The Strategy also identifies a Core Opportunity Area and five Core Opportunity Sectors where the focus of significant growth and effort is likely to occur.
  - 1.7 Outside of this joint Economic Strategy will sit two action plans which will be prepared subsequently by each council to ensure that we work in conjunction with a wide range of key delivery partners, stakeholders, local businesses and the community to deliver on these economic priorities. There is a small officer resource in each council which can support the delivery of the Strategy and action plans will need to consider how best to deploy this resource to deliver on the key priorities.
  - 1.8 This Economic Strategy is currently in draft form only. It is proposed that, subject to approval from both councils, a public consultation is undertaken on it. This will commence in February. Please also note that the draft document is currently shown as a WORD document but its layout and design will be improved in line with other documents produced by the Council before the public consultation commences.
  - 1.9 Recommendation (3) above proposes that authority be delegated to the Head of Place, Arts & Economy, in consultation with the Economy & Culture Portfolio Holder, to agree any minor further changes to the draft Economic Strategy as may be needed prior to the public consultation. This is to allow for any further minor amendments or corrections as are identified and needed. Also, it reflects that fact that this document will need to be approved also by Stratford-on-Avon District Council’s Cabinet before consultation can begin. The meeting of the SDC Cabinet is taking place on 6<sup>th</sup> February and so it is possible that it may

wish to make some minor changes following its own discussions which we are not aware of at the present time.

- 1.10 Once the public consultation on the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy has been completed, comments made to it will be assessed and presented to both Cabinets along with a final draft of the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy for approval. This is likely to be in June/July after the elections and when the new Council is in place.

## **2 Alternative Options**

- 2.1 The following three options are available:

- (1) To approve the recommendations of this report;
- (2) To amend the recommendations of this report; or
- (3) Not to approve the recommendations of this report.

- 2.2 As outlined above, whilst there is no requirement for the Council to prepare an Economic Strategy, there are reasons why it is a good idea to do so. For this reason, option 3 is not supported. It should be noted that the Strategy is being presented in draft form only for public consultation. There will be opportunity for further scrutiny, and for changes to be made to the Strategy, before it is finalised.

- 2.3 One option under (3) would be to instruct officers to prepare an economic development strategy for Warwick District alone. For the reasons set out in paragraph 1.2 above, this option is not supported.

## **3 Legal Implications**

- 3.1 There are not considered to be any legal implications arising from this report. As noted elsewhere, there will be links between this Economic Strategy and the South Warwickshire Local Plan. That Plan is a Development Plan Document and as such, when adopted, will form part of the statutory Development Plan for both Districts. As such, its preparation has to comply with a number of statutory requirements including public consultation, regard to national policy, the achievement of sustainable development and fulfilment of the Duty to Co-operate. The Economic Strategy will, amongst other things, provide part of the evidence base to underpin the Local Plan.

## **4 Financial**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications of this piece of work. Any costs of production will be met from within existing budgets in both Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon Districts.

## **5 Business Strategy**

- 5.1 Warwick District Council has adopted a Business Strategy which sets out key areas for service delivery. Each proposed decision should set out how the report contributes to the delivery of these strategic aims. If it does not contribute to these aims or has a negative effect on them the report should explain why that is the case.
- 5.2 Health, Homes, Communities: The South Warwickshire Economic Strategy (SWES) will have a major impact on the Council's ability to support communities by supporting a thriving economy in the district.
- 5.3 Green, Clean, Safe: The SWES will have an impact on all the Council's "green,

clean and safe" aspirations. It will support the Council's ability to meet its climate change targets through considering how economic development can best support these.

- 5.4 Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment: The SWES (working alongside the South Warwickshire Local Plan) will have a major impact on the Council's ability to support the local economy through providing appropriate and affordable places of work in the right locations and by other policies to support the economy including within the district's town centres.
- 5.5 Effective Staff: The SWES will give staff clear work priorities to support the economic development of the district. Staff will need to be properly trained and supported to undertake these wider range of tasks.
- 5.6 Maintain or Improve Services: The SWES will enable staff to provide more focussed support to the local economy.
- 5.7 Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term: A strong economy will provide a firm business rates tax base to support the council's work

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

- 6.1 Delivering an economy that also addresses the declared climate emergencies of both councils is at the heart of the SWES. The vision and mission of draft SWES align directly with the Council's declared climate change ambition to reduce carbon emissions across South Warwickshire b5% by 2030. The draft SWES recognises that to do this, economic activity has to be supported in a way that encourages a greener economy that reduce carbon emissions.

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

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken on this Strategy following the public consultation and prior to the document being presented back to both Councils for approval.

## **8 Data Protection**

- 8.1 There are not considered to be any data protection issues arising from this report.

## **9 Health and Wellbeing**

- 9.1 There are not considered to be any direct health and wellbeing issues arising from this report. A strong, balanced and stable economy will support the health and wellbeing of communities.

## **10 Risk Assessment**

- 10.1 The risks in preparing an Economic Strategy are that in doing so, the council does not identify the correct priorities and therefore does not use resources most effectively to positively support the local economy. This risk is considered to be low for two reasons. Firstly, the council has already researched the issues affecting the local economy of South Warwickshire and has engaged with a range of stakeholders and with councillors to review and test these. Secondly, this SWES is being prepared in draft form only with a recommendation that public consultation is now undertaken on it. This will give an opportunity to further engage with stakeholders.
- 10.2 Conversely, the risk of not producing an Economic Strategy is that there is no effective basis on which the two councils can direct their resources to support the local economy. Furthermore, there would be no Economic Strategy which

could provide an evidence base and priorities for developing land use policies in the South Warwickshire Local Plan or to support bids where appropriate.

## **11 Consultation**

11.1 As noted above, this document has been prepared in consultation with relevant portfolio holders and has been considered on two occasions by the relevant PAB. Furthermore, a workshop for local stakeholders including business representatives has also been held.

11.2 The Economy and Arts Programme Advisory Board met on 12<sup>th</sup> January ahead of this Cabinet meeting to consider the draft Economic Strategy and made the following comments. The PAB:-

- commended the work that officers and consultants have undertaken in creating an accessible economic strategy document that will ultimately support and promote investment opportunities in South Warwickshire over the next five years and beyond;
- recognised the identified business sectors of automotive, EV batteries, Bioscience, Hydrogen and Digital Creativity as key areas for growth across South Warwickshire but stated that the consultation process should provide space for other areas to emerge/be considered;
- acknowledged that areas such as retail, tourism and the arts are also important sectors for South Warwickshire and that they need continued promotion/support through relevant mechanisms/schemes;
- accepted that this is a high-level strategy document focussed on benefits to the wider South Warwickshire area but that during implementation the needs of individual towns should be taken into account (where possible) to ensure a 'levelling across' effect;
- supported an annual review of the strategy to take into consideration changing economic, sociological, technological, political and environmental factors;
- appreciated the challenges of working across two districts to find synergies but also identifying individual areas of benefit for Warwick District. Procedures should be in place to support officers to manage the relationship, resource-wise and politically;
- recommended that upon adoption of the strategy, officers are supported to maximise the reach of the document amongst partners, stakeholders, and potential investors.

11.3 The Leaders of both councils have been kept informed throughout and have supported the principle of preparing a joint Economic Strategy.

### **Background papers:**

None.

### **Supporting documents:**

An evidence base has been prepared to inform the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy. This is attached as appendix A to this report.

There are a number of supporting documents referred to within the text of the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy. These are referred to in appendix B.

The South Warwickshire Local Plan is also a supporting document to elements of the Economic Strategy.