

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 18 September 2023
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Economic Growth Strategy Development**

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Executive Councillor: Councillor Daniel Nelson, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Investment

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In the current economic context, locally, regionally, and nationally, it is important that Southend-on-Sea City Council has an up-to-date Economic Growth Strategy. Whilst any strategy must remain flexible and able to adjust to changing economic pressures, it is important that it can direct the efforts of the Council on all aspects of economic growth, in particular to secure good growth and inward investment, provision for skills development and new jobs, the of support business growth and guiding the work of the Economic Inclusion Service and its work with funders, businesses, partners, business networks government etc.
- 1.2. A well-grounded Economic Growth Strategy will also provide the opportunity to bring together the wider policy context relating to the economy of the area, building on the strengths, and identifying any gaps and areas that require updating.
- 1.3. Engagement with a range of stakeholders will be important throughout its development to ensure that any new Economic Growth Strategy is complementary to, and supportive of, the business community as well as the wider regional policy framework - serving to further good growth across the city and the region.
- 1.4. This report seeks to agree the principle of preparing an up-to-date Economic Growth Strategy. It sets out the likely timescales for creating such a document, touches on resourcing and, while the outcome of the engagement should not be pre-determined, it also proposes elements of the structure of the strategy.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1. Agree to the development of an Economic Growth Strategy.
- 2.2. Note that councillors and wider stakeholders will be engaged during the process and that a draft Economic Growth Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for adoption in due course.

3. Background

- 3.1. Southend's most recent Economic Growth Strategy¹ covered the period up to 2022. In the current economic context, locally, regionally and nationally, it is important that Southend-on-Sea City Council has an up-to-date Economic Growth Strategy reflecting the current ambitions for the City.
- 3.2. The updated strategy will need to be an adaptable document which can weather the changing economic context around it and will also need to incorporate an action plan setting out the short, medium and long-term outcomes, which will be determined through stakeholder engagement. It will help to focus and direct efforts to realise the council's, and the city's economic growth objectives while also recognising the financial framework within which it must now operate and the need to contribute to meeting climate change commitments which have been agreed.
- 3.3. Wide ranging engagement with stakeholders and a focused review of related policy, strategies and data which currently exist is key to developing a strategy which identifies and addresses the relevant issues and maximises the opportunities for Southend, its residents, businesses, investors, and the wider economic area. It will be equally important that the strategy is coherent and consistent with the council's wider agenda around other matters, for example climate change, transport, and community safety.
- 3.4. An indication of the likely steps involved in the preparation of the strategy is provided in **Appendix 1** of this report. Although the Economic Growth Strategy has a broader remit both geographically and in terms of the matters it is addressing, it will also build on the recently adopted Town Centre Strategy and Investment Plan.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. Supporting economic growth in the city is key to achieving a wide range of the council's objectives, as recognised in its current body of strategies. Delivering this through the development of an overarching, up to date strategy which can adapt to changing economic contexts is an effective way of progressing this both in terms of delivering positive outcomes and making best use of resources.

¹ [economic growth strategy 2017 – 2022](#)

- 4.2. Appropriate engagement with stakeholders at an early stage is key to informing the development of a strategy which addresses the relevant issues, maximises the benefits presented by opportunities and is deliverable.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. The council could choose to not develop an Economic Growth Strategy (there is no statutory requirement). However, it is considered that supporting economic growth in its widest sense is a key priority for the council, as reflected in the Corporate Plan and the council's wider suite of strategies.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There is no provision for this within the Economic Inclusion Service budget for 2023/24. The development of the new strategy will need to be resourced as far as possible within existing resources, noting that these are already stretched. It may be necessary to bring in external support around some elements of the development work. Any resources will be agreed with finance in advance of commitment.
- 6.2. While it is challenging to place figures on the anticipated financial impacts, the intention and purpose is that the Economic Growth Strategy would support the economic growth and skills base of the city. The resultant impacts would include elements such as inward investment, growth in business rate income and reduced dependence on the council's resources from businesses and residents. Such benefits suggest that the development of this strategy would be an appropriate use of Council resources and there is certainly a significant degree of value to be derived from the engagement work which would be a key part of the strategy development.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. There are no legal requirement to produce an Economic Growth Strategy. There are no significant anticipated legal implications arising from the development of an Economic Growth Strategy although it should be noted that this is not a statutory requirement and therefore the council has discretion with regard to this work and might appropriately decide that resources might be deployed differently – this will be a matter for Cabinet to consider in a wider context.
- 7.2. Procurement of any support on preparing the strategy would take place in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements and the council's constitution and procurement rules.

8. Policy Context

- 8.1. The preparation of an Economic Growth Strategy links into the objectives and outcomes sought from a wide range of policy documents including the council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 and any subsequent updates to this.
- 8.2. Other key Council documents include:

- Economic Growth Strategy 2017-2022
- Draft Southend Skills Strategy 2023-2028
- Tackling Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (2022)
- Southend Adult Community College Strategic Plan (expected 2023)
- Emerging updated Corporate Plan 2023-2026

8.3. Relevant wider partnership documents include:

- SELEP Economic Recovery and Renewal (2021) - [Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy - The South East Local Enterprise Partnership \(southeastlep.com\)](#)
- SELEP Skills Report and Evidence Base - [Resources and Support – South East Skills](#)
- Essex Chambers of Commerce’s Local Skills Improvement Plan (2022) - [Essex Chambers of Commerce and Industry Ltd – \(yet to be published July 23\)](#)
- Thames Estuary – The Green Blue Workplan (2021) - [The Thames estuary Growth Board](#)

9. Carbon Impact

9.1. In line with the council’s adopted policies the project will be progressed based on:

- Seeking to always minimise waste as far as possible.
- Minimising the use of printing, paper, and other consumables.
- Making use of online meetings where possible to reduce the need to travel.
- Promoting the use of public transport wherever possible.
- Always promoting reuse and recycling.

9.2. More broadly the strategy will subsequently seek to explore how economic growth can be promoted in ways which reduce carbon impact and address climate change. As an area of substantial economic growth in its own right the opportunities presented by expanding and enabling growth in green skills provision are likely to be a key area of focus in any strategy.

10. Equalities

10.1. The Economic Growth Strategy will be the subject of an Equalities Impact Assessment. In advance of this, the promotion of economic growth in a manner which promotes equalities, diversity and inclusion will be a key objective of the strategy.

11. Consultation

11.1. Following a review of the existing policies and strategies relevant to economic growth, the next step will be engagement with a range of stakeholders. This will include a range of council services, organisations within Southend and stakeholders outside the City.

12. Appendices and Background Papers

12.1. **Appendix 1:** Indicative stages for preparing Economic Growth Strategy

12.2. **Background Papers:**

[City Centre Strategy and Investment Plan 2022](#)

Economic Growth Strategy 2017-2022 - [economic-development-and-tourism-strategy-2017---22 \(southend.gov.uk\)](#)

Southend City Corporate Plan - [Introduction – Corporate Plan – Southend-on-Sea City Council](#)

Tackling Poverty Strategy 2022 - [Introduction – Tackling Poverty Strategy 2023 to 2026 – Southend-on-Sea City Council](#)