

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

14 March 2023

Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Shaun Garrett – Economic Development & Transformation
Head of Service: Martin Breeden – Head of Investment & Development
Report Author: Joe Walsh – Economic Development Manager
Key Decision: Yes
Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report : 20 02 2023
Wards Affected: All

Summary and purpose

- 1) This report presents the Council's Economic Development Strategy (2023 – 2028)
- 2) The report is seeking approval from Executive to agree and adopt the Economic Development Strategy (2023 -2028)
- 3) Due to the size of the document, it will be published in electronic format only as a supplement to this agenda. If you require a paper copy please contact Democratic Services

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028, as set out at Annex 1 to this report, be agreed; and
- (ii) authority be delegated to the Head of Investment and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development & Transformation to make minor amendments to the strategy should it be required.

1. Background and Supporting Information

1.1 In 2021, SHBC approved the Council's Five Year Strategy. Included within this is a requirement to deliver a robust Economic Development Strategy supporting economic recovery and sustainable growth in the borough.

1.2 In December 2022, the Council appointed an economic growth agency to support SHBC officers to produce the strategy. This approach has been advantageous and allowed the council to combine national best practice with local insight to benefit the strategy production. Work has also been

undertaken to ensure that the strategy complements and informs the emerging Local Plan.

- 1.3 The Economic Development Strategy 2023-28 replaces previous versions of the strategy and sets out a rationale for the economic development aims, objectives and activities of the Council in the years ahead.
- 1.4 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 Surrey Heath 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 Surrey Heath, so that we can work with them and help achieve our goals.
- 1.5 The Council has a newly appointed Economic Development Team, consisting of two people, and the strategy recognises that it is not possible to tackle all economic issues but the strategy helps us to prioritise our areas of work. This will enable us to direct our resources into economic development activities where we can make a genuine and positive difference.
- 1.6 The full strategy is available in the background papers of the report however it is important to note the strategic priorities:
 - a) To fully exploit Surrey Heath's key economic growth opportunities and emerging growth clusters across rural and urban areas.
 - b) To accelerate gigabit connectivity across the borough.
 - c) To raise the productivity and performance of the borough's SMEs and their workforces.
 - d) To optimise responses to inward investment prospects by addressing shortages of commercial space and encouraging the upgrading of outdated commercial property.
 - e) To create the required economic conditions for accelerated achievement of net zero carbon emissions.
 - f) To enhance Camberley town centre's appeal as a thriving and attractive urban hub.
 - g) To secure investment in transport infrastructure to reduce car usage, improve links from the villages to the town centre and enable comprehensive active travel.

- h) To advance the employment prospects disadvantaged residents and those living in the borough's most remote locations.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 At the time of writing, 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 and Government initiatives that will impact Surrey Heath. This strategy will enable businesses and residents to benefit from a structured programme of economic development activity.
- 2.2 The Annual Plan has a target to deliver a robust economic development strategy supporting economic recovery and sustainable growth in the borough, and taking into account the 2022 Levelling Up White Paper.

3. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 3.1 Executive have the opportunity to comment on the strategy and amendments will be made where appropriate.

4. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy

- 4.1 The Council's Five Year Strategy identifies supporting the economy as a priority. This includes investing in our towns, villages and communities, supporting our existing businesses and attracting new ones. As well as promoting the unique identity for our whole borough and its places and work with partners to improve to the borough's infrastructure including transport infrastructure.
- 4.2 Additionally, the Council's Five Year Strategy includes an objective to deliver a robust economic development strategy supporting economic recovery and sustainable growth in the borough including the key business hubs.
- 4.3 The Economic Development Strategy also aligns and informs the emerging Local Plan.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

- 6.1 No matters arising from the Section 151 Officer.

7. Legal and Governance Issues

- 7.1 There are no legal and governance issues associated with this report.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

8.1 No matters arising for the Monitoring Officer

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

9.1 The Economic Development Strategy has been produced to compliment and add benefit to existing climate change work outlined within the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Equalities and Human Rights

9.2 The projects are designed to support all parts of the Surrey Heath economy and community.

9.3 The Strategy also aligns with the principles of fair trade and with the Council's aspiration to become a Fairtrade Borough.

Risk Management

9.4 A structured approach to economic development will reduce the level of risk to the authority.

Community Engagement

9.5 The Economic Development Strategy aligns with the Council Plan objectives and therefore benefits from the significant consultation that was undertaken in 2021. Specifically, the Economy section including:

9.5.1 Investment in urban and rural areas

9.5.2 Improve transport infrastructure

9.5.3 Deliver a new Local Plan for Surrey Heath

9.5.4 Investment in infrastructure

9.5.5 Supporting businesses and attracting inward investment

9.6 The appointed consultant has undertaken some consultation with local businesses including in depth discussions with local commercial agents.

9.7 Although the strategy objectives will remain the same, the Economic Development Team will be able to flex their action plan to be responsive to ongoing discussions with businesses and prevailing economic conditions.

Annexes

- Annex 1 - Surrey Heath Economic Development Strategy
- Annex 2 - Surrey Heath Economic Development Strategy Evidence Base
- Annex 3 - Surrey Heath Economic Development Strategy Strategic Alignment

Background Papers

- Surrey Heath Borough Council Five Year Strategy:
<https://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Final.%205YS%20website%20updated%20logo.pdf>