



Date: Thursday, 18 July 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Contact: Julie Fildes, Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257723
Email: julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk

PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

8 Review of Signs, Boards and Banners Policy (Pages 1 - 10)

To consider a report of the Traffic Manager, Highways and Transport on Signs, Boards and Banners Policy.

Contact: Gary Parton Tel 01743258786

9 Support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Pages 11 - 34)

To receive a report from the Head of Economic Growth setting out how the Local Authority aligns its services to support small and medium enterprises intending to establish or relocate to Shropshire.

Contact: Gemma Davies tel.01743 258985

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Committee and Date

Item

Public

Review of Signs, Boards and Banners Policy

Responsible officer

Gary Parton
gary.parton@shropshire.gov.uk
01743 258786

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on work being carried out to review Shropshire Council's policies with regard to A boards, signs, banners and bunting.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 To review the draft policies, and to make any recommendations as necessary.

3.0 Opportunities and risks

3.1 These reviews provide an opportunity to balance the varied and sometimes conflicting needs of businesses and people.

4.0 Financial assessment

4.1 There are no direct financial implications with reviewing these policies. Any new policies, if presented to Cabinet, will require a financial assessment.

5.0 Report

5.1 In December 2018, the Place Overview Committee received a report that looked at current policy with regard to banners, bunting, signs and A boards. The committee asked officers to review existing policies, to consult on those proposed policies, and to provide an update on these reviews.

5.2 An update to the Place Overview Committee regarding progress of the review of current policy and processes for banners, bunting and christmas lighting is attached as Appendix 1.

5.3 An update to the Place Overview Committee regarding progress of the review of current policy and processes for A boards (advertisement boards situated on the public highway) is attached as Appendix 2.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulatory Services

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix 1: Update to the Place Overview Committee regarding progress of the review of current policy and processes for banners, bunting and christmas lighting

Appendix 2: Update to the Place Overview Committee regarding progress of the review of current policy and processes for A boards (advertisement boards situated on the public highway)

Appendix 1

Update to Place Overview Committee regarding progress of review/stakeholder engagement of current policy and processes for Banners, Bunting and Christmas Lighting.

Gary Parton, Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager.

Following the recommendation from Committee in December 2018 an initial “Engagement/ briefing note” outlining the issues, background, considerations and recommendations has been issued to all Town and Parish Councils (via Shropshire Association of Local Councils) and to relevant Business Improvement Districts (BIDS).

This is with a request that responses, feedback, views and advice on forming a practical, effective and agreed way forward which fully takes into consideration stated issues and all those affected be received by 30th September 2019.

Councils and identified stakeholders have been asked for their views and ideas on the main recommendation which was that policy, process, enforcement and “day to day” management of this function be devolved to applicable Town and Parish Councils.

Please see below engagement note issued:

ENGAGEMENT NOTE RE. REVIEW OF CURRENT “BANNERS, BUNTING AND CHRISTMAS LIGHTING POLICY AND PROCESS.

Introduction

The current process of the erection of Banners, Bunting and Christmas lighting over or on the public highway within Shropshire requires an application to the “Street Works” team for approval. The “Street Works” team overriding remit is to carry out the “Network Management Duty” (Traffic Management Act 2004) of the authority, primarily via the operation of the “West and Shires Permit Scheme”.

The team underwent a full restructure in 2012/13 prior to the introduction of the scheme with the emphasis on ensuring “Street Works” (primarily works proposed and undertaken by Public Utility companies and other Statutory Undertakers) and “Road Works” (those works undertaken by the Highway Authority as “works for road purposes”) are planned and executed timely and appropriately whilst endeavouring to minimise disruption to the highway network.

A recent internal review of tasks undertaken by the team highlighted a number of legacy “licences and approvals” which required further review and consideration into whether they are both commensurate to the teams remit and/or whether a further review would benefit in ensuring “best practice” and an appropriate/practical policy and process is applied. The current process for “Banners, Bunting and Christmas lighting” falls into this category – mainly due to the activity itself needing minimal “Highway Conditions” applied (considerations may/would include the possible use of temporary traffic management to erect and remove only - as all other conditions such as allowable height are set and, when erected, there should be no effect on the passage of vehicles or pedestrians)

A current consideration of each applicant is of the load- bearing tolerances of “fixing points”. Council owned locations should be tested annually and this information should be made available upon request, private properties are responsible for the maintenance and suitability of their fixing points. In this respect there exists some inconsistency in county-wide process. For example, Shrewsbury has specific, historic and approved fixing locations that are regularly tested by the Town Council - whilst other Towns and villages do not.

Background

Many feel that banners (sporting, recreational, charity & cultural only), bunting and Christmas lighting all add to the community experience within an area and can enhance event and general visitor attendance numbers significantly proving a valuable tool for the local economy, however they require approval under the Highways Act 1980 section 115

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/115E> to confirm they fall within guidelines and policies of safety and do not hinder the aesthetics of the surrounding environment.

Current Process : <https://shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/application-forms-and-charges/banners-bunting-or-christmas-lights-on-the-highway>

The current application and approval process is handled by the Street works team who look to ensure banner content is community based and not for general business advertising and also that the positions of said items cause no potential hazard or hindrance to highway users. An application is made containing details of the required banner, bunting or lighting type, the location and confirmation of sufficient public liability insurance (£5m) to protect the council in the event of any possible incidences resulting from the placement of said items on the highway. Items which are placed on or over the highway that are fixed to a non-council owned property, fence or railing require permission from the owner. The application is then assessed and given approval, requested amendment or refusal.

As part of this there are county-wide “conditions” which state that the banner, bunting or illumination must not obscure any traffic

signs or signals, interfere with illumination from a street light or restrict motorists visibility; banners shall not be erected or removed between the hours of 8.00am and 6.00pm Monday to Saturday inclusive and can only be permitted for approximately one week before the event/for the duration of the event only.

Considerations

The current application and approval process would benefit from local knowledge and input to identify the suitability of the requested items and locations within the local environment both technically and in regards to the ambiance of the local area. The current suggestion is towards an approval process managed by local Parish/Town councils who retain this level of local knowledge and, it's advocated, would be better suited and more equipped to make localised approval decisions with applicable "highways" guidance and conditions supplied via the Street works, Street Lighting and Highways Teams. Localised council involvement would allow the day-to-day monitoring of the placement of said items to ensure conditions and criteria are adhered to using powers of enforcement as stated within the Highways Act 1980.

Conclusion

The current position is that views and feedback are being sought from all affected/interested parties in the form of an initial response to this engagement and taking into account the issues, consideration and background supplied.

The deadline for responses to be received and considered is 31st August 2019 and the address for responses is:

aboardreview@shropshire.gov.uk

During this period I am happy to discuss further or engage to suit at planned meetings where this issue can be tabled.

Recommendation

That engagement takes place with identified stakeholders on the basis of views being sought both on “best practice” in regard to any amended policy/process for “Banners, bunting and Christmas lighting Policy and Process” and on the draft recommendation of devolvement of process and enforcement to relevant / applicable Town and Parish Councils. This information will form a subsequent report to be considered at the “Place Overview Committee” for a recommendation to Cabinet.

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Appendix 2

Update to Place Overview Committee regarding progress of review/stakeholder engagement of current policies and processes for 'A' boards (advertisement boards situated on the public highway).

Gary Parton, Network Co-ordination and Compliance Manager.

'A' Board Policy and Process review.

Following the recommendation from Committee in December 2018 an initial "Engagement/briefing note" outlining the issues, background, considerations and recommendations was issued to all Town and Parish Councils via SALC (Shropshire Association of Local Councils).

This was issued on 18/04/2019 with a request that responses, feedback, views and advice on forming a practical, effective and agreed way forward which fully takes into consideration stated issues and all those affected be received by 31/05/2019.

Councils were asked for their views and ideas on the main recommendation which was that policy, process, enforcement and "day to day" management be devolved to applicable Town and Parish Councils.

Written responses were received from Shrewsbury Town Council; Oswestry Town Council; Wem Town Council; Shawbury and Myddle and Broughton Parish Councils.

Summary of responses per council:

Shrewsbury:

Members felt that the current policy has led to a proliferation of 'A' boards and that some historic areas are in danger of losing their historic ambiance. There is a recommendation to include other information facilities such as the "Wayfinding Scheme" in the review and that opportunities should be made available to work alongside the Business Improvement District to develop an "A' board policy bespoke for Shrewsbury".

Oswestry:

The feasibility of devolved responsibility was well received by elected members, however there were questions as to how, practically any enforcement would be carried out and requests for more information on the consent process and health and safety / liability issues. The council are interested in further dialogue.

Wem:

Would welcome discussions with Shropshire Council over the delegation of authority to the Town Council for the management of A Boards in the town.

Myddle and Broughton

Not an issue with this Council.

Shawbury

Not seen as an issue with this Council.

Due to a limited initial response, and in-order to gain as broad a representation from all Shropshire Town and Parish Councils as possible, the briefing/engagement note was re-issued on 1st July requesting further responses be received by 15th August this year.

In addition to the engagement note issued to Town and Parish Councils a similar note was issued on 08/07/2019 (with a stated response end date of 31st August to representative disability/mobility/visually impaired groups across Shropshire with a view to gaining valuable feedback and views on a revised policy and process for the placement of 'A' boards across the County.

The information received from both engagements will assist in forming a subsequent report back to scrutiny and overview for final recommendation.



<u>Officer and Date</u>
Place Overview Committee
18th July 2019

<u>Item</u>

SME SUPPORT IN SHROPSHIRE

Responsible Officer Matthew Potts, Business Growth & Investment Manager
e-mail: matt.potts@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 07458 010201

1. Summary

1.1 This report identifies and advises Place Overview Committee of the activity undertaken by the Business and Investment Team, that are part of the Council's Economic Growth service, in support of SMEs based across Shropshire.

1.2 A business is deemed to be a SME if it has fewer than 250 employees and generates a turnover of less than €50 million.

Given its rurality 99.2% of the county's businesses are deemed to be SMEs, and only 35 of the county's 15,650 businesses employ over 250 people (2017). It is also worthy of note that seven is the average number of employees within a Shropshire business and over 90.4% of all companies employ less than 10 people.

There are 3 categories of SMEs and they are classified as follows:

- Medium-sized business – fewer than 250 employees and a turnover less than €50 million
- Small-sized business – fewer than 50 employees and a turnover less than €10 million
- Micro-sized business – under 10 employees and a turnover less than €2 million

1.3 The support to SMEs is split across two distinct areas within the Business Growth & Investment Team which are staffed accordingly but work closely together.

There is a Growth Hub concentrating on support to new, fledgling and smaller and micro-sized businesses (predominately under 10 employees) and a Key Account Management (KAM) function that supports those companies nearer 50 employees and who tend to be more established within Shropshire.

Section 5 of the report provides more detail on the services provided by the two areas, and also demonstrates the support given to new SMEs considering investing

(and relocating) to Shropshire. Section 6 illustrates the next steps of the work being undertaken.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Place Overview Committee continue to champion and support the Business & Investment Team within Shropshire Council as a key provider of support and signposting services to SMEs across Shropshire and acknowledge the role those services perform as part of the overall Economic Growth function, managed by Gemma Davies.
- 2.2 Place Overview Committee agree to the approach going forward that is being adopted by both areas in support of Shropshire's SME businesses.

REPORT

3. Opportunities and Risks

- 3.1 As part of the Growth Hub governance, there is a monthly operational meeting where Managers of the Growth Hub provisions across The Marches meet regularly to report on their progress and provide benchmarking and peer support.

This is accompanied by a quarterly Steering Group made up of LEP and Local Authority Managers, University and Business Representatives and is Chaired by an Independent Business Representative. This ensures that there is additional (non-Council) 3rd party intervention that drives appropriate activity for Shropshire's SME with services that best meet their needs.

- 3.2 Department of International Trade (DIT) are involved with a number of SMEs across Shropshire who are deemed to be foreign-owned, and in key sectors that they support. These supported companies are termed to be Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and whilst some are SMEs, most are larger than that and fall within the 35 larger businesses – such as Müller, Caterpillar Defence and Arla.

This relationship between KAM and DIT ensures that both parties are made aware of investments (or dis-investments) being made in those businesses. DIT will also be in discussion with the Holding Group / Global Owner in-country and the key account managers will in turn have a local /on the ground relationship with the company – so it provides a two-way information exchange in support of economic growth in Shropshire.

This relationship with DIT also ensures Shropshire Council receives inward investment opportunities from non-UK companies who use the services of DIT to broker a landing into the UK and create a business presence.

4. Financial Assessment for the Support of SMEs in Shropshire

- 4.1 The Growth Hub is part-funded by the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and administrated by the Marches LEP, who contribute to all three

of the business support functions in their Local Authority areas. This revenue funding stream is provided on a 12 month rolling basis so does not underwrite staff costs – these are funded from the core service budget. This additional funding source does ensure financial responsibility for supporting SMEs does not lie solely with Shropshire Council.

- 4.2 The Key Account Management (KAM) programme is provided through core staff costs and has been historically set up to ensure that the larger companies in the County are engaged and ensures that the Local Authority is aware of their plans for the future. A new, formalised approach to KAM is being developed and details of this are provided in Section 6 – Next steps.

5. SUPPORT FOR SHROPSHIRE'S SMEs

5.1 THE GROWTH HUB

There are a number of areas of support that are provided by the Growth Hub, which operates virtually via www.marchesgrowthhub.co.uk and the provision of a face to face service through a physical hub based within the Shropshire Food Enterprise Centre in Battlefield, in north Shrewsbury.

A large number of businesses have been supported by the Growth Hub who are able to offer business start-up programmes, events and learning opportunities alongside access to grant support for eligible SMEs.

The Business Activity and Interventions from 1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019 are provided below:

E-mail enquiries	275
Telephone enquiries	178
Face to Face interventions	527
Number of startups supported	336
% of start-ups to overall business supported	34.3%
Number of businesses supported	980
Number of GHUB events	120
Businesses attending events	2085
Referrals to other organisations/funded programmes	1022
Total number of businesses supported including events	3065

In addition, the Growth Hub reach out to 4,387 registered companies through Gov Delivery showcasing grant, funding and business support and activities they could be eligible for.

A lot of work in support of SMEs is done in partnership, and the Growth Hub works with Shropshire Chamber, Oswestry BID, Buy-from Shropshire among others and is partnering with Tech Severn in support of SMEs as well as working with private sector partners to provide bespoke events and opportunities for businesses.

During the last four months the Market Drayton Grant Scheme, which is now administered by the Growth Hub has approved a total of £338,756.07 of grant funding to four local businesses. Match £338,756.07 along with further private funds being leveraged in for commercial mortgages. This is generating 25 jobs over the next two years and has safeguarded 91 jobs. Also, one business has relocated from Wrexham.

It is also important to highlight that the delivery model for the Growth Hub in Shropshire differs from that of Marches partners, with a focus away from a physical asset to being more about delivering support and services in local business communities outside of Shrewsbury. This has supported to gain further traction for the Growth Hub with outreach programmes allowing businesses to gain access to the Growth Hub without having to commit vast amounts of time away from their businesses, something that may have deterred engagement in the past.

5.2 KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

The main purpose of this activity is to build and nurture good working relationships with the key businesses that operate within Shropshire, for the benefit of economic growth.

Key businesses can often be described as companies that employ large numbers of staff, have high turnovers, are experiencing rapid growth and have a positive impact on the economic growth of the county through their productivity (and subsequent GVA contribution).

This can also include companies with smaller staff numbers but those employed are highly qualified and knowledgeable staff in priority, high-value sectors for Shropshire – such as Agri-Tech, Food & Drink processing, environmental sciences and advanced manufacturing and technology.

It enables these businesses to have a single point of contact into all of the business services offered by Shropshire Council, that themselves can operate across a number of service areas and directorates and can prove difficult for a private company to navigate. This Key Account Management (KAM) role makes it easier for these companies to enter into dialogue with Shropshire Council quickly and easily, in support of their business growth.

The Key Account Manager requirement for each business can be bespoke, and dependant on their individual demands so KAM's need to be able to operate flexibly and creatively as conduits into both the Council and the business requiring support.

The main areas of activity include:

- Supporting companies, through face to face engagement, looking to expand and / or develop new sites, often bringing together key areas across the Council (with the appropriate expertise) to meet with the key business and seek to find collaborative solutions.
- Making companies aware of new opportunities in new markets or within supply chains, and grant support if they are eligible.
- Utilising & collating the valuable information and knowledge shared by the companies alongside their demand requirements to feedback into the Council and inform policy; such as business demand for new premises and land in support of The Local Plan and steering interventions to certain areas of the county or towards certain sectors that are experience growth.
- It also serves as an Investment Service to companies looking to relocate from outside of the area. This movement of companies into the county is termed inward investment, and those companies who relocate or open additional operations in the UK are foreign-direct investment (FDI). This activity usually involves the creation of propositions under the 'Invest in Shropshire' brand, providing detailed information on site availability (land or premises), available labour & skills and incentives on offer.

6. Next Steps and Programme Moving Forward

- 6.1 The Growth Hub has secured some operational (revenue) funding from the Marches Growth Hub and is involved in the delivery of a number of regional support programmes, mostly ERDF funded, that offer grants and business support to eligible SMEs. These programmes provide a small amount of 'draw down' that is matched against core staff salaries that can be utilised in support of some revenue requirements.
- 6.2 The key activities going forward for the Growth Hub included:
- More outreach programmes targeting market towns under the campaign of "let's do business in..."
 - An evolving 2019/2020 events programme looking for new partnerships and different workshops for delivery. Client feedback indicates that digital and selling workshop provide the best value.
 - More high-profile events such as the Summer Funding Summit which is on 18 July at the Shrewsbury Town Football Club, with 36 exhibitors covering three zones – ERDF funded programmes, alternative lenders & Banks.
 - Working with Remote Media (a local-based company) developing a Start Up and Growth Accelerator Programme for Shropshire as well as working with sponsors who can provide support to local SMEs through their activity.
 - Continuing delivery of ERDF-funded programmes of business support for as long as they remain available, currently indicated at 2021/22.
- 6.3 The Key Account Management (KAM) programme is re-assessing and further identifying companies it should be engaging in support of economic growth in Shropshire and compiling a master list. Given the size profile of companies across

Shropshire, statistical information has identified just over 250 businesses who employ over 50 people.

Given the provision offered by the Growth Hub this is deemed an appropriate level to warrant an interaction.

This 'One – List' will also include a number of companies who are foreign-owned with high turnover but smaller staff numbers and some companies that employ less than 50 people but are pivotal to the economic prosperity of the market town or immediate area in which they operate.

In addition, the Top 25 fastest growing companies in Shropshire have been identified by BDO, in a recently published Shropshire Growth Report that Shropshire Council has contributed to (available as an Appendices), and these have been added to target too.

- 6.4 The 'One List' of these circa 250 companies can then be better utilised across the Local Authority in support of economic growth and business engagement, and to further breakdown 'silo' working across Shropshire Council.

This list can then be dissected to demonstrate a low, medium and high intervention rate. The larger companies, who by their nature have a higher impact (or negative impact dependant on their operating situation) on the Shropshire economy will continue to require high intervention and engagement.

We will look to provide a medium involvement which could be single of point of contact into Shropshire Council, and annual visit and lower engagement would give invitation to our Business Events, and the option to meet with a member of the Business Growth & Investment Team if they are looking to undertake an investment programme.

- 6.5 There are currently four FTE's working across these two areas alongside a Service Manager, and if more resource was employed in these activities it is anticipated that a greater intervention rate with Shropshire companies could be achieved, for the benefit of identifying increased economic growth and prosperity and responding to opportunities that could further benefit the county.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy 2017-2021 has three key objectives of supporting and growing new and existing businesses, attracting inward investment and developing and retaining talent and skills. The work undertaken by the Business Growth & Investment services in support of SMEs is invaluable to delivering these objectives and the priority of enabling businesses to grow and succeed.
- 7.2 Shropshire Council's Corporate Plan identifies its vision as 'Innovate to thrive' with identified priorities of a being a good place to do business & sustainable places and communities. Being able to offer this level of business support to SMEs in Shropshire ensures the Business and Investment team are contributing to making Shropshire a great place in which to live, work and visit.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

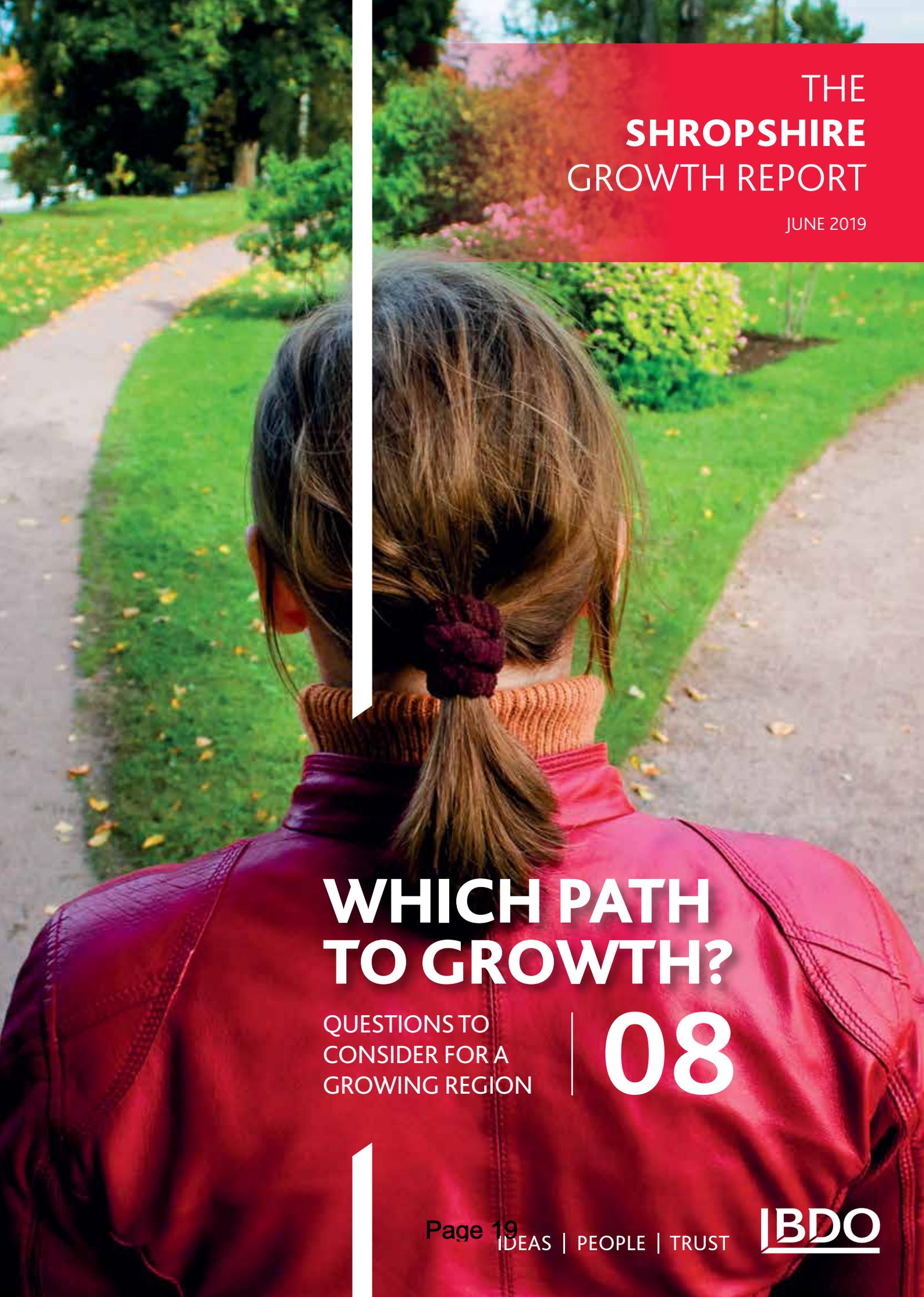
Cllr Steve Charmley – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth

Local Members

Appendices

PDF copy of the BDO report entitled: The Shropshire Growth Report – June 2019 – Which path to grow? Questions to consider for a growing region.

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THE
SHROPSHIRE
GROWTH REPORT

JUNE 2019

WHICH PATH TO GROWTH?

QUESTIONS TO
CONSIDER FOR A
GROWING REGION

08

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A ROBUST ECOSYSTEM

In nature, diversity is a sign of strength. When many species coexist, it makes the entire ecosystem stronger and better able to adapt.

Hence, it's good to see that in Shropshire, where natural beauty is so evident, there is also a diverse and healthy business environment.

Our second Shropshire Growth Report confirms that the county's fastest-growing businesses hail from a wide range of sectors, lending strength to the local economy and creating a promising picture for the future.

Furthermore, as our report on p10 shows, Shropshire Council is determined to build on this strength with ambitious development plans that will make the economy even more resilient. While the national picture is subject to uncertainty, Shropshire is committed to being an attractive place to do business.

A WORD FROM DAVID POOLER

TAX PARTNER

I highlighted three challenges for our county when I penned the introduction to our first Shropshire Growth Report. The three challenges remain, but much is now being done to address them.

The first challenge was infrastructure, which the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership has committed to addressing through two major projects due for completion next year or in 2021.

The Shrewsbury Oxon Link Road project will see almost £13m going into a single carriageway road that will facilitate the creation of 2,800 jobs and 750 new homes. Meanwhile a £12m-plus Integrated Transport Package is designed to improve network capacity and deliver 1,555 jobs and 2,130 homes.

A second challenge I identified was the need for business property. Here again, Shropshire is making great strides—turn to p10 to see the many areas that the council is opening up for development.

Finally, it is to be hoped that the investments in these two areas should help solve the third issue I highlighted: the need for an energetic, educated and skilled workforce.

We already have most of the ingredients needed to make Shropshire a great place to live and work, and universities are increasingly expanding their educational offering in the county.

If investments in infrastructure and business premises can help bring further growth to companies such as those featured in this year's report, then that will only make Shropshire a more desirable place for the diverse, high-quality workforce the county needs.

And this recipe for robust business growth is likely to become all the more critical as uncertainty over Brexit continues. More than the quality of our history and our landscapes, it's what we've most clearly got going for us at the moment.

DAVID POOLER
PARTNER
BDO

TOP 50 ANALYSIS

A MIXED BAG AT THE TOP

Shropshire's fast-growing business community is dominated by two sectors. But you wouldn't know it by looking at the county's top five fastest growers.

Leading the pack is Capital Care Group, a social care and welfare business, which has grown more than 59% over the past three years (see p13 for the full top 50 list). After Capital Care comes Pickstock Telford, a food and drinks company with almost 48% three-year average growth.

Then it's Elements Europe, a construction business. And then Northwood Hygiene Products, a manufacturer. The fifth-fastest growing company is the IT services business Nasstar. In short, a more diverse top five would be hard to imagine. And so it is with the rest of the top 10.

The 10 fastest-growing companies in the county represent no fewer than eight sectors, highlighting the fact that no single industry is in charge when it comes to spectacular success in Shropshire. That's no bad thing, since a diverse business community helps strengthen the local economy.

Only further down the top 50 does it start to become apparent that almost a third (32%) of companies are in manufacturing, while retail and wholesale businesses make up another 24%.

Other sectors with a significant showing are food and drink (10%), real estate, construction and civil engineering (10%) and social care and welfare (8%). At the other end of the spectrum, three industries are represented by a single company within the top 50.

TOP 50 SECTOR SPLIT



- Business services
- Food & drink
- Hospitality & leisure
- Manufacturing
- Real estate, construction & civil
- Retail & wholesale
- Social care & welfare
- Technology & media
- Transport & logistics
- Environmental services

The average three-year growth rate across the top 50 was almost 22%, a figure which was exceeded by 21 companies on the list.

And the slowest grower, marking the minimum boundary for entry into the top 50, was Land Rover parts maker Border Holdings (UK), trading as Britpart, which expanded by an average of just over 11% in the last three years under review.

The fastest-growing sector in this year's report was hospitality and leisure, with a 33% three-year average growth rate. However, this figure is likely not representative as it is attributable to a single company, part of the KFC-to-Starbucks franchise empire built up by fast-food king Akram Khan.

Close behind it came four social care and welfare businesses, which averaged 31% three-year growth between them. They included the leader of our report, Shrewsbury-based Capital Care Group, along with the Shropshire Doctors' Co-operative and Nutrix Curae and Bryn Melyn Care of Telford.

Business services and technology and media, with four companies between them, both averaged 26% three-year growth per sector.

At the other end of the scale, retail and wholesale saw relatively modest average three-year growth of 17%, despite being the second-most highly represented market in this year's report.

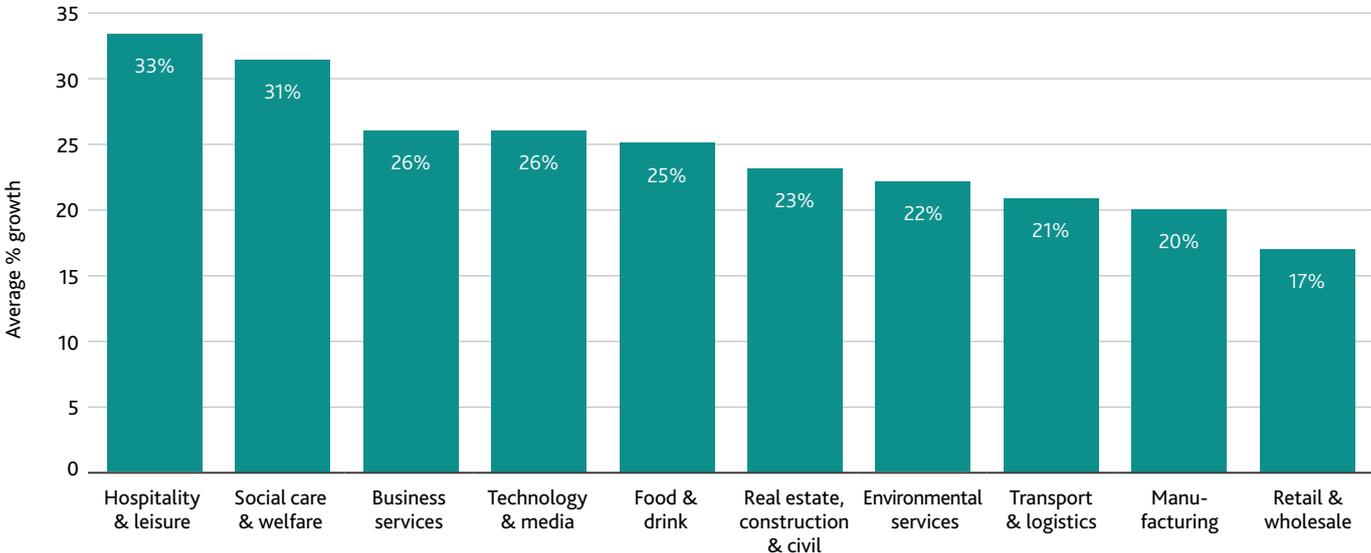
Geographically, Telford is the clear centre of business growth in Shropshire; the town is home to 27 of the 50 companies in this year's report. Only Shrewsbury, with nine members of the top 50, comes anywhere near to being another high-growth hub.

The distribution of high-growth names in Telford might lead one to conclude that the town also accounts for most of the turnover among the top 50. But that's not the case, because of the single Market Drayton-based company on our list.

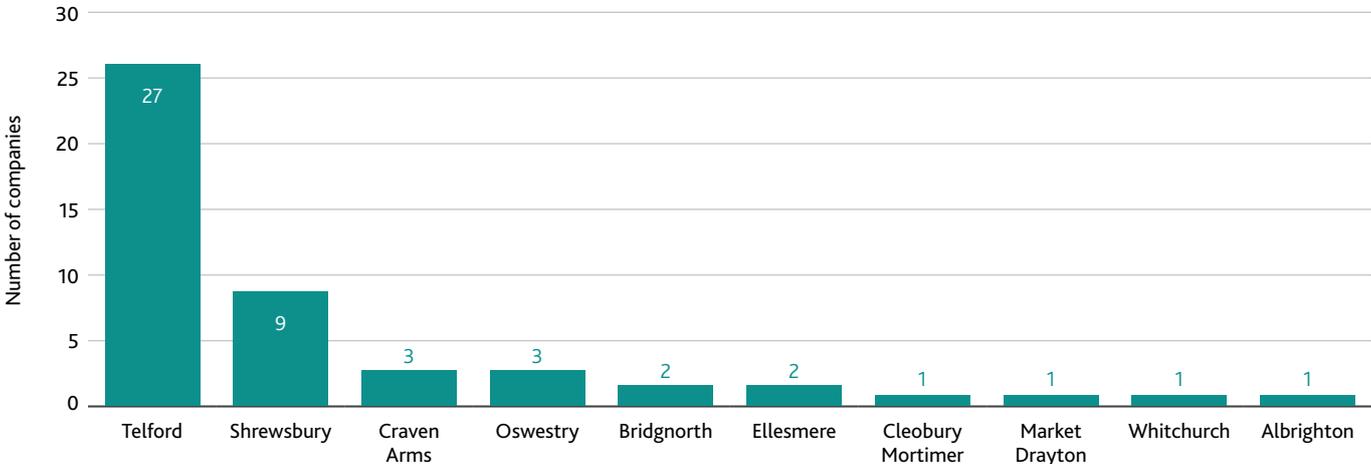
The company, dairy product giant Müller UK & Ireland, had a turnover of more than £2bn in the last year under review. It thus accounted for more than 43% of the combined turnover of all the companies in this year's report, making Market Drayton Shropshire's capital for high-growth company turnover.



SECTOR GROWTH



TOP 50 COMPANY DISTRIBUTION



TOP 50 ANALYSIS

THE MÜLLER EFFECT



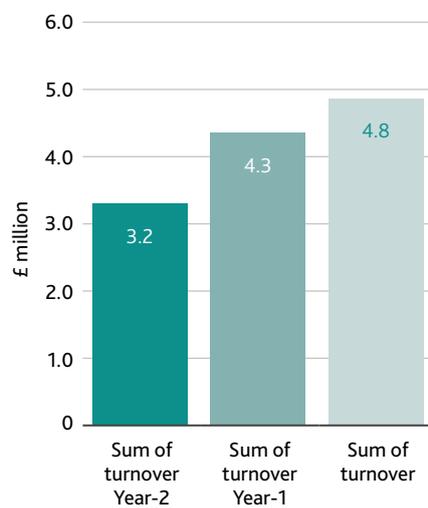
Is growth slowing within this year's top 50? What is clear from the figures is that Shropshire's 50 fastest-growing businesses added fewer revenues and employees in the last year under review than they did in the one previous.

In total, the companies on our list brought in almost £4.9bn in the last year under review. That's a hefty amount. And the latest year represented an almost 12% increase on the top 50's combined revenues from 12 months before.

The increase sounds substantial until you compare it to the growth these same companies experienced the year before that. Then the increase was 33%, from £3.3bn to £4.4bn.

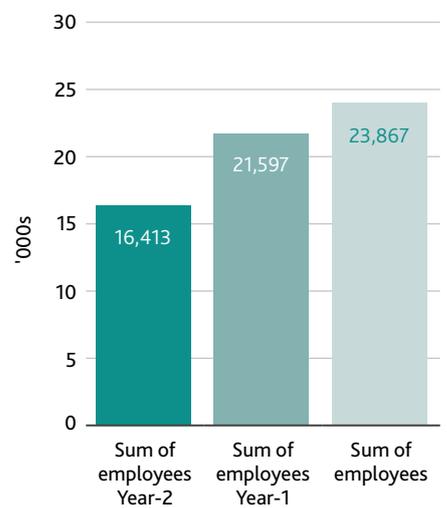
Put another way, over the last three years the companies in our sample have increased their turnover by almost 49%, but most of that growth happened two years ago. And that has had an impact on employment.

TURNOVER GROWTH



The top 50 companies have taken on more than 7,450 new staff in the last two years, a growth rate of more than 45%. But more than 5,180 came on board the year before last, when employment growth stood at nearly 32%.

EMPLOYEE GROWTH



In the last year, the top 50 only took on 2,270 employees, which represents less than 11% growth year on year. The question is: is this simply a blip or is it the beginning of a worrying trend? To find out, it pays to dig into the data. And there's one company in particular that is worth focusing on.



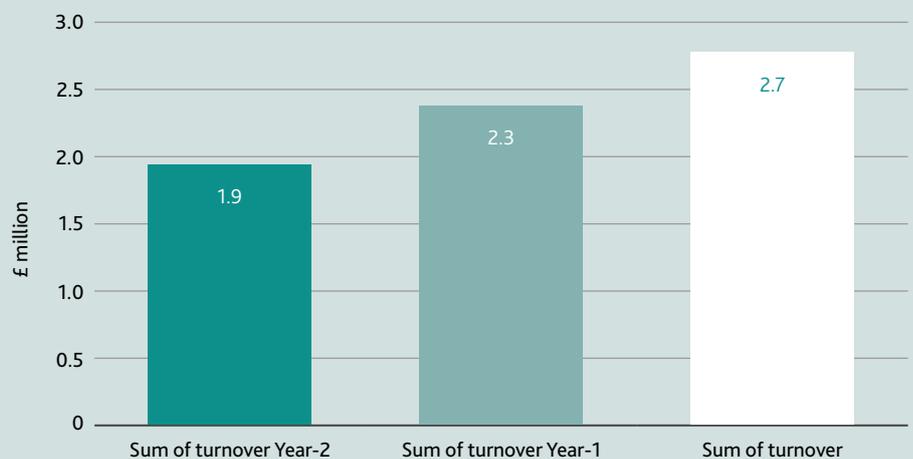
As noted previously, around two-fifths of the last year's total top 50 revenue came from Müller UK & Ireland. A quick look at the company's three-year performance confirms it is almost certainly the cause of most of stalling in growth we see in the top 50.

Müller's revenues have lifted more than 27% over the last three years, but as with the top 50 overall most of that growth was in the first two years.

In the last year under review, Müller went from earning roughly £2bn to £2.1bn, a very modest increase compared to the leap from £1.3bn to £2bn the year before. Müller's employment growth follows a similar pattern, increasing just 5% in the last year but 57% in the year before.

Müller has acknowledged the need to refocus on growth. Despite still being one of Shropshire's fastest-growing businesses, in 2019 the business was implementing a cost cutting and margin improvement scheme, called Project Darwin, aimed at streamlining operations and rationalising production.

TOP 50 REVENUE GROWTH, WITHOUT MÜLLER



So what happens when we take the dairy giant out of the local picture? Things change significantly. Revenue growth among the remaining 49 members of the top 50 still dips slightly in the last year under review, but the fall is from roughly 23% to 17%, rather than 33% to 12%.

It's the same story with employment growth. Without Müller, the employment growth rate falls from around 21% to 14%, instead of 32% to 11%. So it is still possible that growth in the top 50 is slowing down, but taking Müller out of the equation makes it a lot harder to say so with certainty.

THE TOP 50'S FIVE BIGGEST HITTERS

Although Müller dominates the top 50, the other highest-earning businesses on our list are all manufacturers.

	COMPANY NAME	CITY	TURNOVER*	GROWTH**	SECTOR
1	Müller UK & Ireland Group LLP	Market Drayton	2,103,504	27.20%	Food & drink
2	Ricoh UK Products Limited	Telford	341,686	13.09%	Manufacturing
3	CEDO Holdings Limited	Telford	310,460	14.67%	Manufacturing
4	Whittan Group Limited	Telford	190,307	19.01%	Manufacturing
5	Luceco PLC	Telford	167,600	27.55%	Manufacturing

* In thousands of pounds, for the last year available.

** Average over last three years.

EXPERT VIEW

TWO PATHS TO GROWTH

Paul Bennett, chairman of the Shropshire Business Board, poses a question. “If you want to bring in 500 or 1,000 jobs,” he says, “do you chase one big manufacturer, or do you encourage 50 SMEs [small to medium enterprises] to grow?”

It’s a very pertinent question in Shropshire, since the county has the luxury of being able to do either. Like other counties in the West Midlands, is already home to major brands, from BAE Systems and Caterpillar Defence Products to Müller UK & Ireland.

At the same time, though, the vast majority of the 15,480 or so businesses in Shropshire are SMEs, with less than 250 employees. Many of these are expanding rapidly; 32 of the names in this year’s Shropshire Growth Report, for example, are SMEs.

Forced to consider which group to foster, Bennett has a simple answer: choose both. Shropshire’s Economic Growth Strategy envisages increasing the county’s £6bn gross value added 12% by 2021, while attracting £300m of private sector investment and creating at least 3,700 new jobs.

For that, Shropshire needs to be taking aim at all targets. Thankfully, it has plenty of firepower at its disposal. Easy access to the M60 north and south and the A5 route to the Irish Sea has already attracted a slew of logistics companies.

The Harper Adams University Agri-tech Growth and Resources for Innovation project, meanwhile, promises to act as a hub for a blossoming agricultural technology sector. A strong business and professional services sector complements biomass and emerging energy technologies.

Further infrastructure investments are coming down the pipe, courtesy of plans being hatched under the aegis of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership. But perhaps Shropshire’s strongest card is the quality of life that it can offer.

Whereas most towns in the UK now have cookie-cutter centres, Shropshire developments such as Shrewsbury town centre’s redevelopment and Southwater in Telford have managed to retain a unique character by putting the accent on local outlets and the best of the nationals.

This adds to the attraction of being in one of the most beautiful counties in the country.



Bennett says this picture is attractive to business leaders looking to invest in a well-connected location with great work-life balance. It is also luring back many people who had left in search of opportunities elsewhere.

The task now, says Bennett, is to make sure people don't leave in the first place, by giving them employment opportunities that didn't exist before, using technology, innovation and the skills derived from having multiple universities expanding into the region for ongoing staff development.

Hence the need to focus on all levels of the business ecosystem. As well as helping bring in further investments from companies such as the food giant Zwaneberg, "our key challenge is to encourage 100 to 200 SMEs that can double in size over the next decade," he says.

The good news is that those businesses should have plenty of room to grow. Unlike many other parts of the Midlands, in Shropshire there is no war for talent, but a workforce willing to develop skills for higher-level opportunities.

Plus, the county has land ready for commercial development, through the Invest in Shropshire programme. Furthermore, the economy is extremely diverse, making it easier for employees to find the job they want—and meaning employers aren't always fighting for the same kinds of talent.



PAUL BENNETT, CHAIRMAN
SHROPSHIRE BUSINESS BOARD

This diversity also means the benefits of the local economy are likely to endure for a long time. In places where a single large company dominates the business landscape, it is easy for related businesses to thrive.

But there is also a danger that the whole ecosystem might suffer if the dominant company takes a hit. In Shropshire, there are certainly big companies—Müller is a good example—but their presence is not essential to the wellbeing of other businesses.

On the contrary, Shropshire seems to attract and foster a wide range of companies. "We're quite unusual in that there is such variety," says Bennett, "which means we're not really dependent on a particular sector."

EXPERT VIEW

WHERE THE GRASS IS GREENER



Shropshire's verdant countryside and picture-postcard towns could easily fool a visitor into thinking the county offers little for hard-nosed investors. But Shropshire Council has a different view—and is looking to attract over £300m in private-sector cash across a range of developments.

The centrepiece of the Council's investment strategy is a Local Plan, currently under review, that calls for the development of almost 750 acres of land in Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Market Drayton, Bridgnorth, Shifnal and Ludlow.

The Council has been careful to make sure development plans will not spoil what makes the county unique. It is adopting what it calls a 'mosaic approach' to development, aiming to preserve and re-use historic estates.

Shrewsbury is at the core of the plans, but there are ambitions across the whole county. One example is Flaxmill Maltings, an iconic building and the first iron framed building in the world, whose construction foreshadowed the techniques used in modern skyscrapers. The Council are working with Historic England to bring forward new-build housing and commercial outlets in the 6 acres that surround the historic Flaxmill Maltings location.

Flaxmill Maltings is one of four areas of Shrewsbury where the council aims to foster regeneration while preserving the character and heritage of the town. There are also plans to develop the riverside, Victoria Quay and the northern corridor.

By 2036, the Council pictures a Shrewsbury where in amongst familiar landmarks and timeless streets there are exciting new and re-used buildings. Parts of the town that were once dormant will be re-colonised, the Council alongside its partners in Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan - Shrewsbury Town Council and Shrewsbury BID hope.

Moving to the outskirts, the Council plans mixed-use sustainable urban extensions, or SUEs, to the south and west of the town.



PROF. MARK BARROW, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PLACE SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

The south SUE could see 50 acres being put to commercial use, while the western extension would comprise 14 acres and include a healthcare business campus.

At Shrewsbury Business Park, two further phases of development will cover 98 acres.

Another major development is the former Ironbridge Power Station, a 350-acre site belonging to Harworth Group, one of the UK's largest land and property regeneration companies, which is preparing the land to accommodate more than 1,000 homes, employment space and leisure facilities.





Over in Oswestry, meanwhile, the council is bringing forward a number of developments, including a possible healthcare cluster and creating an innovation park across a 56-acre greenfield site.

Other development hotspots include Whitchurch and Market Drayton in the north and Craven Arms and Ludlow in the south. Overall, the council is looking to foster almost 530 acres of commercial development and build 4,300 houses, to bring in more than 15,000 jobs.



The man tasked with making this happen is Whitchurch resident Mark Barrow, who was appointed Shropshire Council Executive Director for Place in September 2018.

A visiting professor of urban policy and development at Birmingham City University, Barrow claims to be passionate about making Shropshire "as successful and attractive as it can be."

The County is already attractive, and not just in visual terms. High-performing sectors include the creative and digital industries, construction, food and drink, agri-tech, environmental science, advanced manufacturing and engineering, professional services and health and social care.

And Shropshire has plenty of space to grow, with a population similar to Nottingham's in an area that is 44 times bigger. The council's current plans could be just the start.

SHROPSHIRE VITAL STATISTICS

44.9% | **70.5%**

OF PEOPLE ARE EMPLOYED IN **MANAGERIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL FIELDS**

OF RESIDENTS ARE **LIVING AND WORKING** IN SHROPSHIRE

AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE **£213,390**

15.1% | **14.2%**

OF RESIDENTS ARE **WORKING FROM HOME**

OF PEOPLE ARE **SELF-EMPLOYED**

£26,519 **AVERAGE GROSS SALARY**

POPULATION 317,500

122,000 | **15,710** | **159,000**
JOBS | **BUSINESSES** | **PEOPLE EMPLOYED**

Source: Shropshire Council

TOP 50 LIST

WELCOME TO THE STARS

Here are the first 10 fastest-growing companies in Shropshire, based on average turnover growth for the last three years on record.

CAPITAL CARE GROUP LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Shrewsbury	59.10%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£10.3m	Social care & welfare

1

Shropshire's fastest-growing business is powering ahead after a 2017 funding injection from Metro Bank, used to refinance a portfolio of five care homes and acquire a 47-bed care home in Wolverhampton.

LARS (GFUK) HOLDINGS LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Shrewsbury	33.06%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£22.2m	Hospitality & leisure

6

Lars (GFUK) Holdings is the highest-growth vehicle owned by fast-food franchise entrepreneur Akram Khan, who skipped university to work in a KFC and by 2015 owned 14 of the restaurants.

PICKSTOCK TELFORD LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Telford	47.63%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£91.1m	Food & drink

2

Meat processor Pickstock is investing heavily in new technology as it moves towards a 100% farmer-procured cattle model. New software is helping get payments to farmers within two days of processing.

CURAE LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Telford	31.26%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£14.1m	Social care & welfare

7

Nutrrix Curae, trading as NC Care, is the second social care and welfare company in the top 10 and has based its solid growth on providing all aspects of home-based care across the UK.

ELEMENTS (EUROPE) LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Oswestry	41.11%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£40m	Real estate, construction & civil

3

Elements' modular construction technique can cut build times by 25% and is taking off as the company wins contracts for buildings such Embankment West in Salford and Oxygen Towers in Manchester.

AJ MAIDEN AND SON LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Telford	29.34%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£16.3m	Transport & logistics

8

Maidens of Telford has been providing quality warehousing and distribution services for more than 80 years and has recently benefited from being part of the massive Kinaxia Logistics group.

NORTHWOOD HYGIENE PRODUCTS LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Telford	39.70%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£91m	Manufacturing

4

Paper towel maker Northwood, which owns seven sites and has 450 employees across the UK, has been on a growth spurt following a multi-million pound investment in factory space and machinery in 2017.

SKYJACK UK LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Oswestry	29.11%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£122m	Retail & wholesale

9

Mobile elevated working platform supplier Skyjack has benefited from growing interest in worker safety, which has led to increased demand for platforms that can help people work at height.

NASSTAR PLC

LOCATION	GROWTH
Telford	33.47%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£24.5m	Technology & media

5

Nasstar has turned into one of the UK's leading managed IT services providers by focusing on the growing trend for companies to transfer their computing needs into massive 'cloud' infrastructures.

AMODIL SUPPLIES LIMITED

LOCATION	GROWTH
Cleobury Mortimer	27.98%
TURNOVER	SECTOR
£43.8m	Manufacturing

10

Formed in 1976, privately owned Amodil Group has grown to be the largest UK stockholder of stainless steel long products, such as tubes, with more than 5,000 tonnes at its Cleobury Mortimer site.


 A circular logo with 'TOP 50' at the top and 'OVERVIEW' at the bottom, surrounding a large '50' in the center.

SHROPSHIRE'S NEXT 40 GROWTH COMPANIES

Here are the next 40 fastest-growing businesses in the county, based on three-year growth rates.

	COMPANY	AREA	TURNOVER*	GROWTH	SECTOR
11	LUCECO PLC	TELFORD	167,600	27.55%	MANUFACTURING
12	MULLER UK & IRELAND GROUP LLP	MARKET DRAYTON	2,103,504	27.20%	FOOD & DRINK
13	SHROPSHIRE HOMES HOLDINGS LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	35,333	27.06%	REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL
14	REASSURE COMPANIES SERVICES LIMITED	TELFORD	29,255	26.27%	BUSINESS SERVICES
15	V A TECHNOLOGY LIMITED	TELFORD	17,109	24.92%	TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA
16	IHSAN HOLDINGS LTD	CRAVEN ARMS	60,907	24.81%	FOOD & DRINK
17	PROTO LABS, LIMITED	TELFORD	42,652	24.10%	MANUFACTURING
18	SWEGON AIR MANAGEMENT LIMITED	BRIDGNORTH	33,338	22.79%	MANUFACTURING
19	KIYOKUNI EUROPE LIMITED	TELFORD	10,672	22.62%	MANUFACTURING
20	FILTERMIST INTERNATIONAL LIMITED	TELFORD	16,481	22.51%	MANUFACTURING
21	RECONOMY (UK) LIMITED	TELFORD	121,987	22.30%	ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
22	SALOP LEISURE HOLDINGS LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	42,138	21.35%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
23	DODD GROUP HOLDINGS LIMITED	TELFORD	154,118	20.99%	REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL
24	T G BUILDERS MERCHANTS LTD	ELLESMERE	24,350	20.92%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
25	SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC SYSTEMS UK LIMITED	TELFORD	37,388	20.59%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
26	GUESTLINE LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	16,241	20.42%	TECHNOLOGY & MEDIA
27	WHITTAN GROUP LIMITED	TELFORD	190,307	19.01%	MANUFACTURING
28	BRYN MELYN CARE LIMITED	TELFORD	13,715	18.86%	SOCIAL CARE & WELFARE
29	DELVES & CO LIMITED	CRAVEN ARMS	16,180	16.90%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
30	C J WILDBIRD FOODS LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	24,529	16.76%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
31	I2R PACKAGING SOLUTIONS LIMITED	TELFORD	33,264	16.05%	MANUFACTURING
32	CHOICE SHOPS LIMITED	TELFORD	12,744	15.79%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
33	FARR & HARRIS (HOLDINGS) LTD	SHREWSBURY	15,645	15.05%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
34	FULLWOOD LIMITED	ELLESMERE	36,689	15.05%	MANUFACTURING
35	THE SHROPSHIRE DOCTORS' CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	16,861	14.98%	SOCIAL CARE & WELFARE
36	TELFORD CONSUMER PRODUCTS LIMITED	TELFORD	12,664	14.76%	MANUFACTURING
37	CEDO HOLDINGS LIMITED	TELFORD	310,460	14.67%	MANUFACTURING
38	STAUBLI (UK) LIMITED	TELFORD	12,355	14.37%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
39	PAVE-AWAYS HOLDINGS (2011) LIMITED	OSWESTRY	28,784	14.20%	REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL
40	EDGMOND FOODS LIMITED	TELFORD	18,045	13.50%	FOOD & DRINK
41	HOSHIZAKI EUROPE LIMITED	TELFORD	23,347	13.17%	MANUFACTURING
42	RICOH UK PRODUCTS LIMITED	TELFORD	341,686	13.09%	MANUFACTURING
43	T I A (GB) LIMITED	TELFORD	96,430	12.84%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
44	DAVID AUSTIN ROSES LIMITED	ALBRIGHTON	22,035	12.58%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
45	GRAINGER & WORRALL TECHNOLOGY GROUP LIMITED	BRIDGNORTH	60,013	12.56%	MANUFACTURING
46	KUHN FARM MACHINERY(U.K.)LIMITED	TELFORD	33,643	12.47%	RETAIL & WHOLESALE
47	SIRANE LIMITED	TELFORD	13,861	12.41%	FOOD & DRINK
48	GROCONTINENTAL LIMITED	WHITCHURCH	41,992	12.36%	TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS
49	ARH GROUP LIMITED	SHREWSBURY	22,551	12.31%	REAL ESTATE, CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL
50	BORDER HOLDINGS (U.K.) LTD.	CRAVEN ARMS	87,104	11.37%	MANUFACTURING

* In thousands of pounds, for the last year available.

SELECTING THE SAMPLE

The companies included in the Shropshire Growth Report were selected by conducting an initial search of FAME for companies with both a registered office and trading address in the Shropshire postal areas ('the region').

We eliminated any companies that have a parent company, where there are consolidated financial statements produced, also based in the region so that there is no duplication of data in our sample. We also eliminated companies that were judged not to be trading or controlled within the region.

The 'current period' financial information is based on latest filed accounts available on FAME as at 21 March 2019. To produce the financial information, we simply took the last three years' worth of turnover data and calculated a year-on-year average growth, before calculating an overall average growth rate.

We eliminated companies where there was less than three years' worth of turnover data available or where there had been negative growth in any year. Depending on the accounts filed, some of our figures will be based on consolidated accounts and some on entity-only accounts.

In addition, some of the financial information will be based on UK Generally

Accepted Accounting Principles accounts and others will be based on International Financial Reporting Standards accounts.

The financial information in this report has been compiled exclusively from publicly available information under the key assumptions and limitations outlined above. It has been designed solely to illustrate trends in the financial performance of a representative sample of companies in the region.

BDO has not carried out any verification work on the financial information in this report and gives no opinion on the financial information. BDO makes no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of the contents of this report.

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BDO has made a number of judgments in aggregating the information into a consistent format. BDO does not, and cannot, warrant the completeness or accuracy of the adjustments made during the aggregation.

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We pride ourselves in offering all the ingredients for excellent client service with our resources in the region, while providing the national and international support you would expect of a major global firm.



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