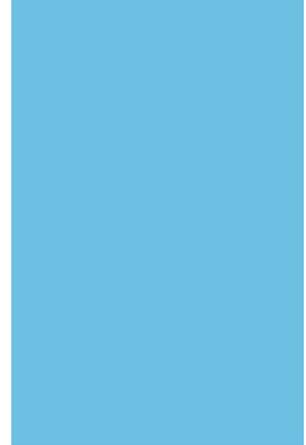


**DRAFT
ECONOMIC
GROWTH
STRATEGY
2017 – 2021**



Economic Growth Strategy

2017-2021 DRAFT

Introduction

The Vision

Target actions and resources on Economic
Opportunities

Enable businesses to grow and succeed

Deliver Infrastructure to support growth

Meet skills needs and people's aspirations
for work

Promote Shropshire to investors

Build our reputation as a Council that is
'good to do business with'

Performance and monitoring



Introduction



This draft strategy sets out Shropshire Council's commitment and ambition to grow the local economy of the County.

It has taken into account the recently commissioned work with IPPR North to develop a new economic vision alongside our own corporate plan and vision to 'make Shropshire a great place to live, learn and work'. It also links into and informs the Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan, the West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan and the national economic picture, in particular the modern Industrial Strategy for the UK.

The aim of this draft economic growth strategy is to provide the vision and ambition that will direct the actions that the Council will take to achieve increased economic productivity and a prosperous and resilient economy from now onwards.

We are serious about the role we have to play in growing Shropshire's economy and this includes our own ability to invest into the economic growth agenda to accelerate activity through our financial capacities. The action plan that will be produced to support this strategy will inform the level of investment that will be required and over what timeframe.

Our values as a Council and how we approach growth across the services within our own organisation will have a large influence on the success of this strategy. Equally we must engage effectively with people to communicate our growth ambitions and what we are doing to achieve them. We have and will continue to develop a commercial, enterprising and innovative approach which we are instilling into the culture of our organisation to help deliver our strategy.

We do however recognise that the Council does not have control over all actions and activities that will generate economic growth. Therefore our vision will only be achieved by working collaboratively across the public and private sectors and with our communities. We will commit to working with our strategic partners including the Marches LEP, West Midlands Combined Authority and neighbouring authorities for the benefit of Shropshire's economy, businesses and residents.

'Building an economic vision for Shropshire – A report by IPPR North', February 2017 has informed this draft strategy. The IPPR North report (jointly commissioned with the University Centre Shrewsbury) is centred on four themes: people, place, private businesses and public services and has made thirteen recommendations linked to these. Our strategy does not repeat these but has taken these recommendations into account in setting out the actions here. There is a wealth of evidence and analysed findings that sit behind this document including a research report from IPPR North, Oxford Economics forecasts and the Shropshire Socio Economic Context report produced by the Council's Policy, Performance and Intelligence team.

The vision



Our vision is for Shropshire to be an excellent location in which to do business, renowned for the pool of talent among its people and widely respected for its ability to attract investment. We will maximise our full economic potential and fully utilise our high quality assets to generate growth and increase productivity.

Shropshire is a high quality location and has a generally well performing economy. It has one of the best natural environments in England, it already has a reputation for being a fantastic place to live, and an economically active population with higher levels of qualifications than the national or regional average. Shropshire people enjoy an exceptional high quality of life and environment. We won't lose sight of these wonderful assets and will continue to nurture them to ensure the quality remains.

Our Objectives

There is however, a step change needed in Shropshire's economic productivity. It has significant potential to do more and do it better. We must be ambitious, focused and committed if we are to achieve maximum economic productivity from the assets and opportunities we have here in Shropshire. This will be based on three key objectives:

- Support and grow existing businesses
- Attract new inward investment
- Develop and retain talent and skills

Delivering our Vision – priority actions and targets

We believe the strategy that will deliver this vision and objectives will be through the following six priority actions:

- Target actions and resources where there are economic opportunities
- Enable businesses to grow and succeed
- Deliver infrastructure to support growth
- Meet skills needs of businesses and people's aspirations for work
- Promote Shropshire to investors
- Build our reputation as a Council that is 'good to do business with'

As part of an organisational communications strategy, we will define a clear communications and relationship plan to underpin these objectives for economic growth. This plan will centre on regular communications with residents and businesses. We will also work collaboratively with our partners and neighbours, to ensure that Growth delivery agencies understand our vision and to influence decision makers in Central Government.



The vision

This ongoing two-way conversation will define clear messages and re-iterate the objectives of our economic growth strategy. We will continue to build on relationships with businesses, organisations and networks to achieve shared objectives, and maximise our use of communication channels for effective and positive outcomes.

In order to qualify our ambition for growth, and to support the Marches LEP ambitions and targets to build 70,000 new homes and create 40,000 new jobs by 2031, together with the West Midlands Combined Authority ambitious plans for growth, this draft strategy sets the following targets in Shropshire over the next 5 years (to 2021);

- Increase GVA (currently £6 billion) by 12%
- £300 million of private sector investment
- At least 3,700 new jobs
- 1,375 new homes per annum

These targets are ambitious, and importantly are informed by evidence from the current Local Plan together with recent studies and forecasts including work by Oxford Economics. The following sections set out each of the six priority actions. A detailed action plan will support this strategy.



Target actions and resources on Economic Opportunities

There are a number of key opportunities that have been considered by IPPR North and in the preparation of this draft strategy. This will be the focus of our future activity, working to maximise and promote these opportunities for the economic wellbeing and success of Shropshire.

- Strategic location and economic relationships

The geographic location and economic landscape within which Shropshire is positioned provides an increasingly significant opportunity and one which we should promote and capitalise on. We are in a unique location situated within the West Midlands Combined Authority and Midlands Engine, on the border of the Northern Powerhouse and the boundary of Wales. This is a major opportunity given the status of these economic regions by Central Government and the collaborative cross border benefits with Mid Wales, particularly for infrastructure and skills.

Shropshire is also in a relatively strong position to benefit from both Birmingham HS2 hub and the future Crewe hub. The Northern Gateway Development Zone is the area of growth potential surrounding the Crewe hub station and particularly for Shropshire, the North Eastern part of the County has the potential for positive benefits from this transformational investment in national infrastructure.

Immediate actions:

- Participate in the West Midlands Combined Authority as a non-constituent member for the benefit of Shropshire and focus on the key areas of collaboration that are set out in the Strategic Economic Plan to 2030 to accelerate economic growth, employment and productivity and focus on mutual priority actions, including specifically the Land Commission and Growth Company working groups.
- Welcome the Midlands Engine strategy and identify Shropshire's role within it.

Short/medium term actions:

- Work with Powys Council and Growing Mid Wales Partnership to understand the opportunities for collaboration on shared agendas – currently infrastructure and skills.
- Work with partners in the Northern Gateway Development Zone to align economic growth and infrastructure priorities in the North East of the County and ensure we are 'HS2 ready'.
- Position investment opportunities within promotional campaigns and collateral presenting the economic opportunities in the West Midlands Regions and other regions adjoining Shropshire.

- Major employment sites and growth corridors

There will be further opportunities to bring forward new employment land to meet our economic needs and we will work with developers and partners to prepare existing sites for occupation and to identify and prioritise deliverable future sites based on a return on investment. We want to build on our rich legacy of quality business, high added value, high wage rates quality of life and sustainability. The Local Plan review and the existing SAMDEV provide the framework for this identification and focus, ensuring that we have a plan-led approach.



Target actions and resources on Economic Opportunities

Having readily available serviced employment sites in the right locations is key to our growth strategy and fundamental to increasing our economic productivity. Both in terms of meeting the needs of Shropshire based companies who are expanding and we need to retain, and to meet the requirements of other businesses and developers outside of the county looking to relocate and invest in the county. We will be bold, ambitious and forward thinking in our methods and approach to prioritising sites, and investing resources where needed to bring these sites forward for employment activity. This will be clearly presented in our investment strategy.

The strategic corridors and growth zones are clustered into the following:

- M54/A5 East growth corridor – this is linked to investment in Telford and the clustering and supply chain opportunities from existing and future companies in close proximity to this part of the County. This is a key road and rail transport corridor which reinforces Shropshire’s close proximity to the West Midlands and the growth potential that will develop from the Land Commission as part of the combined Authority structure. We recognise that there are site constraints in some of these urban centres, but there are also opportunities:

- To support the cluster of activities and key sectors in Bridgnorth and work with existing companies on future plans.
- For the Council to work with neighbouring Telford and Wrekin Council and other key stakeholders to play a leading role in capitalising on opportunities arising from the redevelopment of the former Ironbridge Power Station.

- A5 west growth corridor including the site for Oswestry Innovation Park and Oswestry as the second largest market town in the County.
- Central Shropshire – Shrewsbury is the County town and serves a much wider catchment including Mid Wales. Opportunities within the town centre and the major employment sites at Shrewsbury Business Park, Battlefield, and the Sustainable Urban Extensions to the South and West of the town.
- North East Shropshire and the A41 growth corridor linking to the M54 – related to Northern Gateway Development Zone and proximity to HS2 hub at Crewe and links to the North West to Cheshire and beyond. Includes the town of Whitchurch, Market Drayton and the Clive Barracks site that will become available for development in 2022.
- A49 growth corridor related to strategic north-south road and rail links and key market towns in the South including Ludlow, Church Stretton and Craven Arms with rail links that might potentially benefit from the proposed Crewe Hub and linking into Herefordshire, specifically to Leominster and Hereford.

Immediate actions:

- Produce a growth investment strategy for the key employment sites.
- Develop a project pipeline for the next 10 to 15 years. This will include the short and medium term priorities and set out what enabling works the sites will need to come forward. This will include Council owned sites, as well as understanding any interventions critical to third party owned sites that will contribute to our growth objectives. (This is aligned with the current Local Plan review.)



Target actions and resources on Economic Opportunities

Short/medium term actions:

- Work with the Marches LEP and West Midlands Combined Authority to articulate the offer that Shropshire has for employment growth and work to secure funding to support this.
- Work with the Department for International Trade to present clearly the strategic employment sites in Shropshire.
- Develop a growth strategy for each of our key market towns. (Aligned with the current Local Plan Review.)

- Target growing and under-represented sectors

Shropshire and the Marches have a number of sectors that are performing well and where there are extremely successful companies operating in the locality. Our strategy includes working with companies in these sectors to support their growth and ongoing success. We will support innovative and advancing solutions in these sectors to enable their growth in an ever competing global economy. We have identified six existing sectors where there is growth potential, particularly with an emphasis on high and digital technologies;

- Advanced manufacturing including engineering, agri-food and agri-tech
- Food and drink processing
- Health and social care
- Visitor economy (including luxury goods)
- Environmental technologies
- Creative and digital industries

As part of our strategy to increase investment in these sectors, we will set out specific and clear actions relating to each of them. This will include supporting work on the development of the Agri-Tech west offer, a cross LEP initiative that is being led by Harper Adams University. We will pay particular regard to the implications of Brexit to specific sectors, notably the agricultural sector. We are committed to working with the health and HE sectors on opportunities for us to become an area renowned for advancements in health and social care technologies and digital solutions. There will be a strategic view of the visitor economy for Shropshire and the wider Marches area, this will be an opportunity to develop strategic linkages and a coherent approach to marketing the County on a national and international scale. There is a specific action for us to optimise the knowledge that exists in Shropshire within the environmental technologies sector and to align this with the Government’s agenda to promote smart and clean technologies and a low carbon economy. We will take a coherent approach to the creative and digital industries sector and understand the network and business to business opportunities for increasing productivity.

As well as growth and existing sectors, we will also target growing under-represented sectors in our current economy, but those that are linked to the sector strengths we already have. Financial and professional services is a particular sector where we can target. There is already a presence of companies operating across this sector (including legal, accountancy, banking, business administration, land and property agents) and they are a fundamental cog in the business processes of companies across other sectors both within Shropshire and beyond the County. We have scope to increase this and to promote our location and business base to existing and new companies.



Target actions and resources on Economic Opportunities

Immediate actions:

- Use this strategy to clearly set out the sectoral propositions and actions relating to each of these with partners.
- Work with the Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology in Shropshire and support the work of the partners in the engineering cluster.
- Prepare a coherent visitor economy strategy alongside the sector that clearly sets out the ambitions and opportunities and is clear on the Council's role within it.

Short/medium term actions:

- Support growth opportunities in the agri-tech sector by working with Harper Adams University and partners to become leaders in this field and develop the agri-tech West proposition.
- Develop an approach with the agricultural sector in preparation for Brexit and work with the Marches LEP and neighbouring authorities to explore the opportunities to play a key role in influencing Central Government.
- Explore and define the scope for the digital health and social care sector in Shropshire working with colleagues in the HE sector (particularly University Centre Shrewsbury) and health sector.
- Work with our existing HQ businesses in the advanced manufacturing sector to help promote Shropshire and its successes to external partners.
- Strategically understand Shropshire's environmental assets, knowledge and expertise, and the ways in which they can be used as resources. This links to the University Centre Shrewsbury ambitions to become a centre of excellence for environmental sciences, technology and management and create an environmental innovation hub.
- Review the previous study carried out into creative industries and set this in the current context of increased digitisation, social media and innovation in the sector. We will also learn from successes elsewhere e.g. Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Work with the Marches LEP and West Midlands Combined Authority to articulate the offer that Shropshire has for employment growth and work to secure funding to support this.
- Work with the Department for International Trade to present clearly the strategic employment sites in Shropshire.
- Develop a growth strategy for each of our key market towns. (Aligned with the current Local Plan Review.)



Enable businesses to grow and succeed

There are over 15,200 businesses in Shropshire with the vast majority of these classed as small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) where the number of employees is less than 250. Continuing the positive work already in place to support this SME base, including the Marches Growth Hub, remains a key action in our strategy. The relationships and track record of success with this group of companies will not be underestimated in terms of the importance that they play in our economy.

We will identify fast growing companies and work with those who have potential to increase output and employee numbers through our business relationship management function.

We will also build on our existing programme of engagement and collaboration with our larger companies, supporting their growth potential and the spin off benefits from their presence in Shropshire including business chain opportunities (linked to under-represented sectors explained above) and their involvement in generating solutions to common challenges for example the Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology.

The Shropshire Business Board will continue to be a key partner for us in our growth agenda and we will work with the members of the board to continually build on the relationships and opportunities that are generated from this close collaboration. The members will have an increasingly important role to act as champions for Shropshire and to support representation to Government on key policy issues and future changes.

Immediate actions:

- Continue to deliver the Marches Growth Hub in Shropshire and work with partners, in particular Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, the Business Board and the universities to deliver a gold standard support package for SMEs.
- Ongoing business relationship management with our existing companies and provide efficient and effective responses to their queries.
- Continue to service the Business Board and work collaboratively with Board members to achieve this strategy for growth.

Short/medium term actions:

- Record effectively all engagement with companies and communicate this internally within the Council with relevant departments to ensure businesses receive a joined up approach.
- Identify those sites that could provide space for smaller businesses in the County to expand.
- Revise the terms of reference for the Board and work with the Chair and Vice Chair to review and evaluate progress annually.



Deliver Infrastructure to support growth

The delivery of high quality infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses and residents is essential to the implementation of this draft economic growth strategy for Shropshire. We will ensure that the infrastructure is fit for purpose by putting in place a coherent strategy and clear programme to address the issues and fulfil future requirements. A list of all immediate and short/medium term actions related to transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, utilities capacity, housing and local place infrastructure is summarised at the end of this section.

Transport infrastructure:

There are a series of local, regional and national challenges to transport infrastructure provision to enable growth and the development of new homes and employment space in Shropshire. The transport infrastructure in Shropshire has a particular regional importance and the Council's involvement with Midlands Connect is key to enhancing its capacity. Shropshire Council and the Marches LEP is actively engaged with Midlands Connect at both Board level. The Marches LEP has also produced a Strategic Corridors study, supported by the three Local Authorities, which is informing the Midlands Connect programme. Through the Marches LEP we have identified our strategic transport corridors which are vital to deliver growth across the Marches area. These are the strategic road and rail networks that are the responsibility of Highways England and Network Rail and which will require investment from Central Government to improve them, which will provide benefits that spread beyond Shropshire onto the regional footprint.

Our ongoing engagement with Highways England, as they develop their Route Improvement Strategies, is focussing on improvements to the A49 and A5, together with secondary impacts caused by pinch points on both the Strategic Road Network and the local highway network. The resolution of those pinch points on the chosen routes taken accessing European and global markets through the Welsh and North West ports, will have a beneficial impact both regionally and locally. The Council is also working with the Road Rail partnership, a statutory body with Network Rail and Highways England and that is enabling conversations about linking improvements to railway infrastructure to growth opportunities.

Shropshire Council, through its active involvement and Directors seat within West Midland Rail Ltd is already having a tangible effect in gaining service improvements in the Franchise ITT for the Shrewsbury to Birmingham service, together with later and improved Sunday services.

Shropshire continues to input its development proposals into both the Midlands Connect process and the periodic Rail industry consultations to enable the use of rail to enable growth in those rail connected Shropshire market towns, which will support the wider WMCA Strategic Economic Plan objectives. An example of this is the extension of electrification from Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury.

The ever tightening public purse and the increasingly competitive environment to secure public investment into infrastructure means we must be smart and clear about our priorities and look at innovative ways to deliver schemes including co-ordinating with neighbouring authorities where appropriate. We have been successful in securing investment into some of our transformational local schemes including the Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package, Oxon Link Road and feasibility funding for the North West Relief Road. We need to continue to demonstrate clearly the case for investment and articulate with partners how investment in our infrastructure facilitates economic growth.



Deliver Infrastructure to support growth

Digital connectivity:

Ensuring that mobile connectivity and broadband provision across Shropshire supports our ambitions for growth and fulfils the requirements of how our residents and employers choose to live and work is extremely important. The role of our Connecting Shropshire programme is key as is our responsibility to continue to put forward the case for greater investment in mobile and broadband coverage and for this to be specific to meet the needs of a rural geography such as ours.

Digital connectivity is no longer an 'add on', but a fundamental necessity for operating businesses whether global, small or for individuals in Shropshire working from home. Provision and reliability of the digital network will enable all aspects of business to operate and grow and will be a basic requirement of any investors looking to locate here.

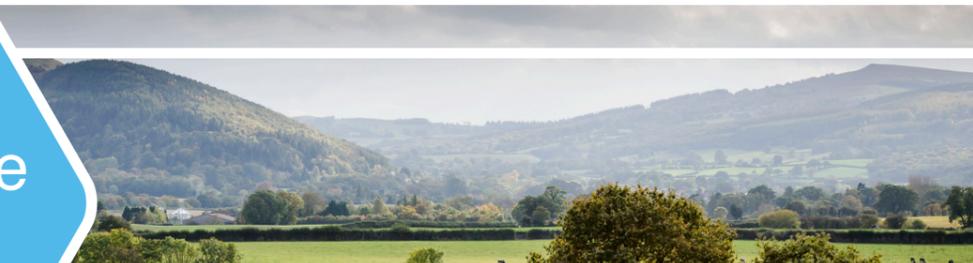
Utilities capacity:

We know that on some of our existing and future employment sites that there are constraints as a result of the lack of capacity in some of the utilities. We will work closely with landowners, tenants and utility providers to foster the effective planning of infrastructure investment in Shropshire, to understand capacity constraints and to explore ways of addressing these where it is possible to do so. We acknowledge that our role within this can be limited and that there may be opportunities for the market and for investors to address such constraints. For example, we have engaged with Scottish Power Energy Networks in helping to secure significant investment proposals in the north of the County to improve electricity infrastructure by 2021. There may also be opportunities to look at our own abilities and opportunities to produce some of our own supply – for example district heat networks.

Housing:

The availability of housing of the right type, quality and cost and in the right location to meet the needs of the population and to ensure that Shropshire remains an attractive place to live forms part of our growth strategy. It is an important consideration for businesses that employees will be able to secure the type of housing they want and for our balanced approach to growth with increased homes, jobs and productivity. This will need to align with our housing strategy and the Local Plan review.

We recognise that the delivery of housing is not always in our control as a Council but we must support the supply of housing by looking at the broad distribution and allocation of strategic sites through the local plan process. We will also need to support the delivery of sustainable residential development which provides appropriate access to local facilities, services and infrastructure. There are different requirements for different segments of our population and the needs of older people compared to graduates and families must be considered in the strategic planning of housing. There is a particular need to consider adequate provision for starter and affordable accommodation to help retain and attract families and young professionals to the area.



Deliver Infrastructure to support growth

We will work in partnership with communities, registered providers and the private sector to ensure opportunities are available for the market to continue to deliver homes at a sufficient rate to meet needs. We will be developing new innovative housing solutions to scope and deliver homes that meet the needs of our communities and support the wider adult social care agenda, as well as support a growing economy. We will also engage with the Homes and Communities Agency to explore how programmes they operate can be implemented in Shropshire and full consideration of the actions proposed in the Government's Housing White Paper: Fixing our broken housing market (February 2017).

Local place infrastructure:

There are many facilities and assets that contribute to a place and the Council's role in place shaping is important in the context of economic growth because it helps to create the conditions and environment that attracts people and businesses to Shropshire. This links to the Council's leisure and cultural strategies, the provision and standard of schools in the County, the provision of public services and the use of public assets.

The high quality of the natural environment and attractiveness of the historic and built environment is referred to later in this document as part of our activities to promote Shropshire to investors but within this infrastructure context, it is important to highlight the role of the Council in helping to shape the proposition of Shropshire as a place to live and work.

All actions related to infrastructure to support growth

Immediate actions:

- Refresh and update our infrastructure investment plan and programme to support growth over the short, medium and long term (this will need to be continually reviewed and updated).
- Continue the roll out of Connecting Shropshire and continue to push the case for increased mobile and broadband coverage with Central Government and providers.

Short/medium term actions:

- Deliver the schemes already in the programme that have secured funding and maximise the positive impacts of them to the economy and communities e.g. Shrewsbury Integrated Transport Package.
- Continue to work with utility providers both at a strategic level to communicate Shropshire's vision and growth objectives and at a local scheme level to seek to deliver the optimal solutions for employment and housing developments.
- Through the Council's role as planning authority, seek to secure high quality design solutions as part of balanced and sustainable new development.
- Promote a strategic 'plan-led' approach to housing development and use the local plan review to support this.
- Work with the Homes & Communities Agency, communities, Registered Providers, Trusts and the private sector to help bring forward the supply of new homes
- Develop and deliver new innovative housing solutions to meet our residents' needs.
- Consider use of our own assets, services and skills in ways that continue to support place making and deliver economic growth.



Meet skills needs and people's aspirations for work

We will need to support potential across all segments of the working age population if we are to maximise our full economic output. We will need to do some further work to prepare a skills strategy that meets the future needs and growth opportunities for Shropshire's economy and which aligns with the recently published Marches LEP skills strategy and action plan. Our strategy will be focused both from the business perspective and take into account what skills companies need currently and into the future, and a people perspective to ensure that those who want to work can access the training provision and tools that will lead to employment.

We recognise that the Council has a role to play in helping to match the skills needs of existing companies, and future projections of business activity, with training and learning provision from our educational institutions and providers. This will apply through all stages of learning from schools, FE colleges, the HE sector and adult training providers. We can help to share information of what businesses are telling us about skills needs, introduce businesses and education providers to each other, and communicate known future development plans and growing sectors so that schools can inform and prepare children who may take these opportunities in the future.

We will use the opportunities from the apprenticeships levy to recruit apprenticeships into our own organisation as well as work with businesses on the apprenticeship plan for the County. We need to work with centres of excellence and Higher and Further Education sectors to develop more centres in Shropshire that provide vocational learning, opportunities for collaboration with businesses and to ultimately support more apprenticeship positions.

We want to support collaboration between research and business as this will be a key route to seeing the development of innovative solutions and new technologies in some of our target sectors and help give Shropshire a leading edge in some of these. We see the presence of the HE sector in the County as essential going forward alongside working with HE institutions based outside our area in neighbouring authorities and with whom a number of our businesses work with and have connections to.

The current demographic make-up of Shropshire is well evidenced and documented including in the appended IPPR North reports. We need to work within this context and maximise the opportunities this provides us. We need to find ways of supporting a younger workforce and retaining the talent and skills of young people and graduates in the County. This is linked to the housing offer, affordability of the area, and cultural and vibrant hubs in the key towns.

We need to support the spectrum of ages within the 'middle' range of our working population by encouraging those people who are likely to be professional individuals or couples and families to choose to locate to or stay in Shropshire. Providing the opportunities of good quality employment and future potential in the work place for ambitious residents to progress are key factors for this demographic of population.

We have an under-employed skills base with those qualified people working in roles that they are over-qualified for. This gives us two key problems, one that there is the threat that these people will leave Shropshire to take on 'better' employment outside of the County and we lose these skills and resources (and those of their families potentially) and secondly,



Meet skills needs and people's aspirations for work

that whilst these people are in these roles and not progressing then vacancies that lower skills people can take are not available. Tackling in work progression by working with companies and attracting new companies into our area with higher qualified opportunities for work is part of our strategy.

Our increasing older population gives Shropshire an opportunity for those that want to work within this age group. This provides a pool of labour for volunteering opportunities within businesses and communities, and knowledge and skills to share with a future workforce and new generation of entrepreneurs through mentoring and coaching. This could lead to volunteering hubs in the community and potential to work with other public service providers to help deal with demands and build community resilience.

Whilst there is lower unemployment in Shropshire compared to regional and national averages, and unemployment is not a major concern, our strategy does recognise the barriers facing some of our residents in accessing employment. These challenges can be particularly complex and often relate to health and well-being issues as well as a lack of skills. This calls for a joint public sector approach between Health and Employment services to deliver support to individuals in a more holistic way.

Immediate actions:

- Prepare a detailed skills plan for Shropshire working collaboratively with businesses and education and training providers to ensure this is evidence based and targeted on actions to address the challenges specific to us e.g. encouraging an increase in higher qualified and better paid jobs.
- Continue to build on the work with schools and colleges to facilitate relationships with businesses and help to foster entrepreneurship and ensure young people are aware of future opportunities for employment in Shropshire.

Short/medium term actions:

- Agree a way of sharing information on future developments and sector growth with schools, colleges and universities to support young people to make informed decisions about their careers.
- Implement the Council's apprenticeship plan and work with vocational facilities and providers including the Marches Centre for Manufacturing and Technology to support the advanced manufacturing sector.
- Continue to collaborate on initiatives and programmes with the HE sector that will benefit Shropshire businesses and economy.
- Working with businesses, explore initiatives to facilitate in work progression, this could relate to retraining courses and programmes and some up-skilling.
- Work with the community and voluntary sector and public service partners to understand the volunteering capacities and opportunities and help to facilitate where appropriate.
- Explore best practice in multi-agency approaches to supporting individuals with health and employment skills needs and align this with the Government's new Work and Health Programme.



Promote Shropshire to investors

If we are to attract new investment into Shropshire we will need to promote our offer clearly and effectively in the national and international market place. This will require establishing and communicating a strong identity and clear messages as to why investors should choose Shropshire to commit their investment over any other location.

We need to be bold and confident in our promotional pitch and sell the benefits that Shropshire can offer to companies and investors. Understanding what the private sector are looking for when making decisions on where to invest is key to informing the material we produce and the approach we take. Fundamentally this needs to be giving them confidence that their business will be successful and they will make a financial return on their investment. In addition to bespoke requirements that will be specific to each enquiry, the components set out in this draft strategy will be fundamental to their considerations.

We already have a strong relationship in place with the Department of International Trade and we will ensure these links are retained and built upon going forward, including with specific sector leads.

We need to promote our economic growth ambitions and opportunities with Central Government as well as with the private sector and we can do this in a number of ways. In particular we will work with our MPs to increase engagement with Ministers and support our approach to key businesses and responses to opportunities that are announced centrally.

We will work with the Business Board, stakeholders and private sector networks to develop and implement our promotional activities. These partners and networks are key to providing the business experience of Shropshire and we will continue to develop our portfolio of Case Studies.

We will have a clear approach to promotional campaigns and the collaborative opportunities for promoting ourselves, this will include on a Marches LEP and West Midlands Combined Authority footprint as appropriate. It will also involve collaboration with neighbouring authorities and wider economic initiatives in some instances.

The quality of the environment for people to work and live in will form part of our proposition to investors and the opportunity for us to promote our strong heritage, cultural, and natural offer. The attractive combination we have to offer includes the mixture of market towns and within them the retail and historic cores, cultural activities, and open space. Their sustainable economic future is important.



Promote Shropshire to investors

Immediate actions:

- Prepare the investable proposition for Shropshire based on why people and businesses should invest/locate/work here.
- Continue to build upon our Invest in Shropshire website and social media presence.

Short/medium term actions:

- Agree the suite of promotional material to communicate the proposition. This will include an investment prospectus and map.
- Grow the investment brand for Shropshire based on our vision and economic ambitions.
- Produce an engagement plan that includes the strategy for targeting potential investors, and use existing relationships and linkages with companies already here to support this.
- Set out which campaigns, conferences and networks we want to target and be involved in, for example Invest in Great campaign (DIT)



Build our reputation as a Council that is 'good to do business with'

In setting out this draft strategy we are demonstrating our serious commitment to support growth in Shropshire's economy. We therefore need to ensure that we work in the most effective, efficient and intelligent ways within our organisation to achieve this including commercial and enterprising solutions and approaches (as outlined in the Commercial Strategy) and targeting our resources where they will have greatest impacts.

We will listen to and understand business needs, both existing and new, and instil the need for timely and clear responses and decisions across all services that have a role in economic growth and support businesses.

We want to be a Council that organisations, partners and businesses have positive experiences of working with.

Immediate actions:

- Continue the strong relationship with Shropshire Business Board.
- Listen to feedback and use this to inform future working and our approaches as a Council.
- Internal review of functions to ensure an 'end to end' offer is provided to businesses
- Continually assess the growth culture of the organisation to ensure that across all services we are working as positively and pro-actively as is possible.

Short/medium term actions:

- Develop the right culture across the organisation by developing specific workforce development packages for colleagues.
- Develop a 'wrap around' support package for major investment into the County.



Performance and monitoring

The actions identified in this draft strategy will be collated into an action plan and defined as immediate (6 months), short term (next 2 years), medium term (next 5 years) and long term (beyond 5 years). This action plan will be monitored regularly and updated annually for the duration of this strategy.

The overall targets set out in this draft strategy for the 5 year period will be reviewed and monitored on an annual basis.

Progress on both the actions and the targets will be reported to the Business Board, and Shropshire Council through Cabinet, regularly.