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Public

ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2022-2027

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1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire (EGS) has been refreshed for 2022-2027 across 3 strategic themes: supporting local businesses, strategic locations and employment and skills. Following engagement with businesses, stakeholders and partners, Cabinet approval will precede public consultation.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The development of the draft Economic Growth Strategy is the outcome of ongoing collaborative work between Shropshire Council and the Economic Taskforce, Shropshire business community, along with partners and key stakeholders. This is a strategy for the County which is co-owned by our business community and will be delivered in partnership for the economic prosperity of Shropshire.
- 2.2 The development of a draft EGS has built upon the Council's and partners response to the Covid 19 pandemic and the impacts of Brexit. The Council established an Economic Taskforce with the Shropshire business community along with partners and key stakeholders to address the priorities and issues facing Shropshire's economy. An outcome of this was to review and refresh the previous EGS for Shropshire to reflect the impacts, changes, and approach to the short-, medium- and long-term prosperity of the County. The Economic Taskforce has helped to shape and guide the development and progress of the strategy to date and the approach has been collaborative.

- 2.3 This report outlines the work undertaken to date, provides details of the stakeholder engagement work and recommends the proposed public consultation that will be undertaken over a period of six weeks.
- 2.4 The draft EGS to be consulted on sets out the key principles of the Strategy, what's next for Shropshire, mission statements, vision, core values, strategic themes, proposed governance, resourcing, impact, and action plan headlines. In so doing, it links very clearly, not only with the recently approved Shropshire Plan, which is the council's own 'corporate plan', but also with the Council's Target Operating Model (TOM), particularly with regard to Commissioning and to Digital Connectivity and uptake/usage. The Shropshire Plan priorities include specific focus on economic growth, housing, infrastructure, and enabling cohesive and sustainable communities in both more rural, and more urban, areas of the county. Place shaping is a central feature of the plan, recognising that the benefits arising from this work reach into enabling improved health and wellbeing and protecting and enhancing the environment. These links will be further reinforced in the development of the action plan for this strategy.
- 2.5 Following consultation, the outcome will inform the final version of the EGS 2022-2027 and will be presented to Council for endorsement. This will guide future activities in line with the EGS vision and aims and will be used to direct funding and support to deliver the EGS.
- 2.6 The proposed Governance approach will look to ensure oversight and collective ownership of the strategy and will be tested with partners to provide the structure to develop an action plan that will sit across all the partners and stakeholders. The Economic Taskforce has been driving forward the EGS to date and this will look to evolve into a Shropshire Economic Partnership. This will ensure that the EGS is collectively owned both internally and externally, ensuring that the outcomes and outputs for the EGS are effectively monitored, reviewed and progress is tracked.

3. Recommendations

- 1) Cabinet agrees the draft Economic Growth Strategy 2022-2027 and that a Final Draft be made available for public consultation for a period of six weeks, to commence from the end of June 2022.

- 2) Cabinet agrees that the officers will report the outcome of the consultation back to Council and present the final Economic Growth Strategy 2022-2027 for endorsement.
- 3) Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Economy, Regeneration and Planning, to develop an action plan and appropriate governance with partners to support the Economic Growth Strategy 2022-2027.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been undertaken to incorporate planned consultation as well as make use of equality impact assessments carried out for the previous Economic Growth Strategy and related policy endeavours. A further screening ESHIA is due to then be carried out following the planned consultation on the draft EGS, due to take place from June 2022. This will enable any adjustments in order to minimise perceived negative equality impacts and maximise perceived positive equality impacts arising, in the light of responses received, as well as set out plans for engagement where low responses may have been received from particular groupings.
- 4.2 Undertaking public consultation on the draft EGS will demonstrate that visible efforts are being made to ensure that the EGS reaches a wide audience beyond the partners, stakeholders and businesses that have been engaged through the development of the strategy. By not undertaking public consultation, opportunities could be missed to capture any ideas/feedback which may help to shape the future economic strategy for the County.
- 4.3 The new Economic Growth Strategy 2022 - 2027 (EGS) is anticipated to have a positive impact on business communities and, in consequence, residents across the whole of Shropshire. There are many benefits in terms of equality, diversity and social inclusion associated with a resilient economy such as increased employment opportunity, greater social mobility opportunity, provision of housing, infrastructure benefits, facilities and utilities, climate change considerations and well-being improvements.

- 4.4 Positive impacts would be intended for a variety of intersecting groupings (Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex, and Social Inclusion) through future engagement process and through the delivery of specific projects developed within the Action Plan for the EGS. This would be due to an emphasis within the EGS on developing the County as a better place to live, to do business, to access and to move about in.
- 4.5 Furthermore, there is potential for an increase in the positive impact in equality terms from low to positive, for the groupings of Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion and Belief, and Sexual Orientation, if efforts are made to engage with faith communities and LGBT communities and with those undergoing gender reassignment.
- 4.6 There is potential for further positive impacts through the adoption of the new Economic Growth Strategy 2022 – 2027, including stimulation of economic development and investment which will provide jobs and improved workspace. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty on the Council, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, the Council will need to ensure that contractors engaged in commercial development are likewise able to demonstrate compliance with PSED duties. In so doing, they will also be expected to adhere to guidance with regard to equity of access to economic opportunities.
- 4.7 It is also anticipated that the EGS will contribute towards improving on Shropshire’s position as one of the healthiest places to live which will positively influence people’s mental and physical wellbeing, while contributing to the people of Shropshire’s prosperity, improvements in prospects and the commitment to responding to the climate emergency.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs incurred in the preparation of the review has been met by Government grants to support Brexit and Covid recovery. There are no further financial implications for Shropshire Council in relation to the adoption of the Strategy document.
- 5.2 As the Action Plan is prepared, and subject to the Council’s role being determined in the delivery of those key actions, it will be subject to further assessment, financial appraisal and the Council’s governance and reporting procedures.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 The draft EGS supports the challenge of climate change through clean growth with increased investment in low carbon innovation and industries with a focus on sectors that support the environment and local green job growth.
- 6.2 Key areas of focus for the economic strategy in terms of climate change and aligning to the climate change strategy are:
- Supporting renewable energy development to mitigate business energy costs and build self-sufficiency and resilience;
 - Energy efficiency retrofit measures for existing buildings (both domestic and non-domestic);
 - Supporting local business to identify their current carbon footprint and measures to improve this, to help address client and supply chain requirements
 - Low carbon vehicle fuels (e.g. electric and green hydrogen fuels) to support our key sectors such as agriculture and minerals;
 - Waste, materials and resource management;
 - Land management, carbon capture & storage.
- 6.3 Sustainability has been identified as a core value to be considered across all proposed EGS activities. As the action plan is developed and activities are finalised, these key areas of focus will be explored further with partners and stakeholders to identify key actions and activities, and these will be thoroughly investigated and appraised against the key Climate Change considerations.

7. Background

- 7.1 In January 2021, Cabinet supported the principles of setting out an economic recovery framework which would inform a new Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2022-2027 (EGS) (see appendix1) and replace the current Economic Growth Strategy 2017-2021.
- 7.2 The EGS is an external facing strategy for Shropshire, which has been co-developed with our business community and will be directed at government, businesses, and investors with the aim of setting out Shropshire's growth opportunities and how to maximise these to create new jobs, employment opportunities to benefit residents and businesses of Shropshire.
- 7.3 The strategy sits under the wider existing Invest in Shropshire and Economic Recovery branding used by the Council and partners. This is reflected in the style and branding of the

document which showcases the reinvigorated Invest in Shropshire branding.

Structure of the Strategy

- 7.4 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to inform the evidence base, which has helped to develop the core values and themes of the EGS along with a Logic Model framework which maps out the impact that the EGS will be striving to achieve. The development of the emerging EGS is supported by the University Centre Shrewsbury and has been developed in line with the emerging Shropshire Plan and other key strategies to ensure synergies and interdependencies are reflected.
- 7.5 The four Strategic Objectives of the Shropshire Plan are:
- Skills and employment
 - Safe, strong, and vibrant destination
 - Connectivity and infrastructure
 - Housing
- 7.6 The draft EGS has been co-developed with the members of the taskforce and Shropshire Council colleagues across departments to ensure it reflects the Shropshire plan strategic objectives and the key issues, priorities, opportunities, and challenges facing Shropshire's economy.
- 7.7 The **core values** of the EGS are:
- Resilience
 - Sustainability
 - Inclusivity
 - Wellbeing and Health
- 7.8 These core values run through the key themes of the strategy and will be embedded in the action plan.
- 7.9 The **key themes** are:
- Supporting local business
 - Strategic locations
 - Employment and skills

7.10 The EGS provides a focus for the strategic objectives set out in the Shropshire plan to deliver safe, strong, and vibrant destinations alongside improved connectivity and infrastructure which translates, in a business sense, to the ability to support local businesses and identify strategic locations for business development. The Shropshire plan also sets out to deliver skills and employment opportunities which is a direct link and reflection of a key theme in the EGS and highlights how fundamental this is to being able to live your best life in Shropshire.

Engagement and co-development

7.11 The core values and themes have been developed and tested with the Economic Taskforce for Shropshire and as part of a wider business, stakeholder and partners workshop held in November 2021 at Shrewsbury Town Football club. This hybrid event successfully brought together over 90 participants to discuss, debate, inform and shape the key themes outlined. It also gave our business community the opportunity to tell us about their requirements, asks and wants from a refreshed EGS for Shropshire. The feedback from the event can be found [here](#).

7.12 Following the event, further work was done on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for each of the key themes which can be viewed [here](#).

7.13 The key themes and logic model have been further co-developed and tested through the Economic Taskforce and as part of a series of engagement events and activities including:

- Members update Dec 2021
- Progress meeting with Communities Overview Committee 23 March 2022
- In person workshop for Taskforce and Senior SC officers 30 March 2022
- Second members update given 28 April 2022
- Proposed content of EG Strategy Refresh at Communities Overview Committee Meeting 4 May 2022

7.14 Following feedback from the Communities Overview Committee, discussions with Zero Carbon Shropshire have developed and a representative has now joined the Economic Taskforce.

Next Steps

Action plan

- 7.15 A detailed action plan will be developed over the summer to support the EGS key themes and core values which will set out the key activities, outputs and outcomes we expect to collectively achieve for Shropshire. The development of KPI's of the EGS will be developed in partnership as they will cover a wide and cross cutting agenda to support the aims of the strategy. They will also be developed and tested through Communities Overview committee as well as being aligned to the Shropshire Plan delivery plans and emerging performance management framework.
- 7.16 This also aligns well with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) requirements for Shropshire Council to submit an investment plan to Government by 1st August on what collectively we intend to allocate the £12m of funding on for 2022-2025 and the action plan development will help to inform this work.

Governance

- 7.17 The outline Governance approach is provided to Cabinet which will provide the structure to develop an action plan that will sit across all the partner and stakeholders to collectively deliver, monitor and review to ensure the outcomes and outputs for the EGS are effectively monitored, reviewed and progress is tracked.
- 7.18 Future governance and management of this will be reviewed, however the current economic taskforce is potentially looking to evolve into a Shropshire Economic Partnership, which will have overview and oversight of the strategy going forward and will monitor and review delivery. This gives accountability for the actions to all partners involved in the development and delivery of the strategy. This will need to be further defined given the emerging funding landscape regarding UKSPF and requirement to have robust Governance in place to manage this.
- 7.19 The draft EGS has been to two Community Overview committees and following this it was agreed that the development of the KPIs and actions will be shared with the committee and that, going forward, it will have a monitoring and review role of the strategy and the associated action plan.

Consultation

- 7.20 Engagement on the EGS to date has been of a collaborative nature, primarily through the forum of workshops and with external organisations represented through the Economic Task Force. Further consultation of stakeholders is now sought, from representatives of Town and Parish Councils via SALC (Shropshire Association of Local Councils), wider business consultation via Shrewsbury and Oswestry Business Improvement Districts, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses plus businesses supported by and accessed through the Marches Growth Hub.
- 7.21 The consultation process will predominantly be informed by the online survey and portal as well as being publicised on social media with local press releases, responses will be collated via the online portal with opportunities for written feedback for those preferring not to use online facilities being made possible.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The draft EGS 2022-2027 provides a high-level strategy to Cabinet setting out clearly the framework on which collectively we are looking to drive forward the economic future for Shropshire. Further work will be undertaken to develop the action plan and Governance to support the implementation and delivery of the EGS 2022-2027.

List of Background Papers

Cabinet report 18 January 2021 - Shropshire's economic recovery, transformation and resilience framework.

Council report 12 May 2022- The Shropshire Plan

Cabinet Member Edward Potter

Local Member All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Economic Growth Strategy for Shropshire 2022-2027