

Economic Development Committee



Date of meeting 29.09.2022

Title	<i>Draft Economic Prosperity Strategy 2023 - 2028</i>
Purpose of the report	To Note
Report Author	<i>Keith McGroary Economic Development Manager</i>
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	<i>N/A</i>
Corporate Priority	Community Recovery Environment Service delivery
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: <i>Note the report and comment on the content of the draft strategy to inform the final document which return to the Committee in January 2023</i>
Reason for Recommendation	<i>Not applicable.</i>

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 This report seeks to deliver a draft Strategy which will secure sustained economic growth for the benefit of businesses and the community whilst protecting and enhancing the borough's environment and character. Details of this are outlined within the Action Plan contained with the draft Economic Prosperity Strategy for 2023 - 2028

2. Key issues

- 2.1 The previous 2017 – 2022 Strategy has concluded and many of the successes have been highlighted within the new 2023 – 2028 Economic Prosperity Strategy. Over the last few years, the national and local economy has faced a series of successive major challenges including Brexit, Covid-19 and more recently the highest level of inflation in 40 years and the cost of living and emerging energy crisis.
- 2.2 It is important that Spelthorne prepares as best it can to respond to the above and plans carefully for future years to ensure that local businesses have the best opportunity to survive, grow and thrive.
- 2.3 The detailed action plan contained within the Strategy (**Appendix A**) has been designed to target specific areas of the economy and has taken note

from various other strategies including the governments Industrial Strategy, EM3 Economic Strategy and the Surrey County Council Economic Strategy Statement. The headline areas for action include Growth and Competitiveness; People; Business Environment and Infrastructure and Places. A lot of evidence and intelligence was gathered to act both as a baseline and to inform the areas of focus with the strategy. This was compiled into a Local Economic Assessment which was considered by this committee on 16 November 2021 (**Appendix B**).

- 2.4 There are over 80 actions contained within the Action Plan including some actions that were originally included within the Council's Recovery Plan that were developed to respond to the pandemic. Actions are spread over 5 years, with several them repeating year on year. However, it is without doubt ambitious, and delivery of the strategy is based upon the current level of numbers within the Economic Development Team. This consists of 3 members of staff, with one further member dedicated to supporting our town centres and shopping parades.
- 2.5 There is a separate draft Town Centre Strategy which will complement and enhance the overarching Economic Prosperity Strategy, but focus on the towns of Ashford, Shepperton, Sunbury and borough shopping parades. This will be presented to the Committee as a separate report on this agenda.
- 2.6 It is critical that Spelthorne Borough Council plans to help enable the future prosperity of the borough so that our residents and businesses are given the support they need, in order to face current and future challenges and provide the jobs and financial security that a sound economy can achieve.
- 2.7 Spelthorne's retail sector competes with other nearby locations including Woking, but with Kingston as the main competitor. Failing to promote the borough and invest in our communities and infrastructure may lead to a loss of business and job opportunities to other locations which can show that they are more competitive and attractive.
- 2.8 The Staines Business Improvement District was voted in for a further 5 years in April 2022 which generates an additional £300k+ for the BID to invest within their catchment area. This is important as it will strengthen the ability of the town to compete with other shopping destinations. The new BID manager, Joana Santos, has already introduced herself to the committee earlier on in the agenda this evening.

3. Options analysis and proposal

Option one

- 3.1 The draft Economic Prosperity Strategy provides a well thought through framework that will support businesses, support residents and support the economic vitality and health of the borough. It has a built-in governance process whereby the Economic Development Committee oversees the Strategy delivery and receive 6 monthly updates on areas where there are particular concerns or significant successes; the Committee may also ask for an update with regards to any part of the Strategy in addition to the above. At this stage the Committee are asked to consider the draft and provide input into areas or actions that may need to be strengthened before a final strategy comes back in January 2023 for final adoption. **This is the recommended option.**

Option two

3.2 Alternatively, the Committee could decide that an economic prosperity strategy is not required. Not having a strategy is not really an option that can be countenanced, so the only realistic option is to ensure that the strategy is right for Spelthorne.

3.3 There are a number of risks with not adopting a clear economic strategy, not least that the lack of strong direction may mean missing out on opportunities to enhance the economic prosperity and vitality of the borough which may lead to a loss of businesses and jobs. Without a strategy, businesses are likely to lose confidence in the ability of the council to support the excellent network of businesses that we have within our boundary.

4. Financial implications

4.1 The Economic Development Team budget outside of salaries is very limited with just £32,000 to deliver the Strategy. However, there is also the Business Rates Retention Fund available which is currently used to support the incubator and pay salaries for two of the officers within the Economic Development Team. The total amount left in this fund is around £600k. It is ring-fenced to economic development activities and is available to use in economic related projects and support and continue to pay for two members of staff (to ensure the effective delivery of the strategy). Most of the actions contained within the strategy do not require finance for them to go ahead. A few projects that are delivered are paid for through donations from business. This includes the Spelthorne Business Awards and smaller events such as the Riverboat Trip for businesses.

5. Risk considerations

5.1 No issues raised by the Audit Team.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 No issues raised by the Legal Team. The Strategy is not a statutory requirement.

7. Other considerations

7.1 This draft strategy needs to be seen in the wider context of the opportunities that exist for greater collaborative working with other Councils. As members of this committee will be aware, part of the work of the Surrey Delivery Board has been to consider options for working more closely between Surrey and other districts and boroughs to pool expertise, and make most of the skills available across the county. Economic development teams across the county have been looking at ways to ensure organisations work at the most effective level, deliver what they do best and ensure the right outcomes for our businesses.

7.2 As a result, a potential cluster of five local authorities in northwest Surrey has been identified (Spelthorne, Runnymede, Elmbridge, Woking and Surrey Heath). A number of initial joint actions have already been included within the strategy, and future opportunities will be developed and delivered as and when the need arises. However, where there are actions that are unique to this borough and its needs, then these have been recognised within the draft Action Plan contained within the strategy.

8. Equality and Diversity

- 8.1 The impact on equality and diversity issues is considered at every action within the strategy.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment is being undertaken and will be available before final adoption.

9. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 A number of actions contained within the strategy specifically support a greener economy and reduction of CO2 emissions, particularly within A5 in the Action Plan. The Economic Development Team have liaised very closely with the Sustainability Team throughout the development of this draft Strategy to ensure this, and the Climate Change Strategy which is being considered by the Environment and Sustainability Committee in September are fully aligned and look to achieve the same outcomes.

10. Timetable for implementation

- 10.1 The draft report to be presented to the Economic Development Committee on 29th September for comment. Those comments will be captured within the final document and presented back to the Committee on 12th January 2023 for a decision and approval for adoption.

11. Contact

- 11.1 Keith McGroary k.mcgroary@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers:
There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft Economic Prosperity Strategy 2023 – 2028
Appendix B: Local Economic Assessment 2021