

Spelthorne Economic Prosperity Strategy 2023 – 2028

Update January 2023 to August 2023

Activities to achieve the 4 key themes in the strategy are detailed below.

1 Growth and Competitiveness - Spelthorne to become a stronger economy through a range of initiatives including access to training and business coaching.

Key Objectives

Key activities / Main projects

- Spelthorne business awards
- Business plan competition
- Business Incubator development / partnerships development
- Partnership working with business support organisations/neighboring local authorities
- Business mentoring / support / sustainability / energy cost reduction.
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Smaller projects / strategic tasks

- Coding Competition
- New Website – Choose Spelthorne
- Promotional video
- Town center / Parades support strategy
- Business leaders events
- Business survey
- Startup support / Start your business in Spelthorne book / startup club
- Schools project
- Procurement strategy

This part of the strategy has seen a strong start to 2023 by building on the strong foundations set last year.

By using the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) to procure a new service provider to deliver 1-2-1 business support, a startup club, peer to peer network and assist in creating an Innovation Forum. This contractor is due to launch all these activities from September 2023.

The Business Hub is going from strength to strength, and we are expanding the service upstairs at 33 Hanworth Road, Sunbury to accommodate the business enquiries and expand our business training facilities to ensure more business outside the business hub can benefit from all the work that is being done by the team.

The SPF has also allowed us to continue with another round of energy cost reduction clinics.

We are also running a series of Digital Media courses and as well as a number of business skills workshops being run by local businesses partners.

We will be re launching a new series of networking events which had been stopped during the COVID-19 Pandemic and will alternate them between morning, lunchtime, and evening events to ensure we are fully inclusive to everyone who wants to attend.

The Business Plan competition was held with Kwasi Kwarteng MP in May 2023 and was another great success with 6 finalists. The winner was Natalie Morris with Doodle Kids, a business to help children with mental health and SEND challenges through art classes. Natalie is receiving 1-2-1 business support and guidance and all the finalists are being offered the opportunity to join the startup club this September.

The new Choose Spelthorne Website has been built and the content is being written and inputted into the website over the next couple of months.

The business awards are open for entries and the finals will be held in November 2023. We have three new categories this year (1) Retail excellence (2) Best hospitality & leisure business (3) Best community service provider.

2 People - More quality jobs and greater earning power as well as enhanced access to skills via the Apprenticeship Levy gifted to small businesses.

Key Objectives

Key activities / Main projects

- Jobs & Skills Hub
- Skills and employment projects / events / Jobs Fairs
- Wellnorth Enterprises / tackling low skills provision
- Health & Wellbeing in workplace

Smaller projects / strategic tasks

- Coding Club
- Apprenticeship promotion
- Partnership work
- Promoting STEM subjects
- Promoting local careers opportunities in Shepperton Studios, Heathrow, Dnata etc.
- Corporate Social Responsibility / Social Value
- Health & Wellbeing in workplace

This part of the strategy has also seen a strong start this year with the work being undertaken by the team at the Jobs & Skills Hub driving good quality outcomes for local residents looking

for work or skills & training opportunities. There is a strong focus as an overall team to bring together local education providers, businesses, Council departments and community providers to deliver a range of services focusing on the key objectives without duplication of services. The result has been a good level of engagement from residents and partners to exceed targets set by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and SPF fund grant.

The team are new and still bedding in as a team however there are several events planned at the jobs & Skills Hub this year to bring stakeholders and residents together.

Through the Jobs & Skills Hub we are working closely with local schools, colleges, and universities as well as all service providers delivering in Spelthorne to ensure there is a cohesive and coordinated approach towards the jobs and skills provision in Spelthorne

The work with Wellnorth Enterprises has identified a clear link between the lack of 6th form / STEM subject skills provision in the borough, coupled with poor transport links as a key driver for the high unemployment and use of NHS services. This is being explored and a report will be produced by Wellnorth Enterprises to NW Surrey Health Alliance (who procured and funded the work) outlining suggested interventions.

We held a Health & Wellbeing event at the Staines Upon Thames Day and our first Health & Wellbeing corporate conference will be held in December (working with internal colleges and other partners).

3 Infrastructure and Places - To complete and deliver the Local Plan and Staines Development Framework to make best use of our assets including Bridge Street carpark, Thameside House and Ashford multistory carpark.

Key Objectives

Key activities / Main projects

- Work with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) & neighboring boroughs on shared projects
- Support “Spelthorne in the Zone” campaign

Smaller projects / strategic tasks

- Feeding into the consultation process for the Staines Development Framework / Local Plan
- Support Assets team and Planning team with their research with thoughts and insights
- Support the delivery of Southern Rail access
- Support 5G / full fiber rollout

This section of the strategy sets out how the Economic Development Team can help support the activities of the council where they impact on the Inward Investment and Economic Growth of the borough. This is more in an advisory capacity as Economic Development have little impact in these areas we will continue to keep abreast of the work of the relevant teams and assist / advise where needed.

4 Supporting Business - To provide one of the best mechanisms of business support in Surrey via the Economic Development Team and the best place to start and grow a business.

Key

Key activities / Main projects

- Support Spelthorne Business Forum (SBF)
- 1-2-1 Business support / training events / digital media training
- Local procurement campaign in council & local businesses
- Staines Business Improvement District (BID) support
- Partnership working – Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) / Department Infrastructure and Trade (DIT) / Chambers of commerce etc.

Smaller projects / strategic tasks

- Business networking / Riverboat event / Businesswomen / Culturally diverse offer
- Business awards
- Staines Business Improvement District (BID) support
- Visitor economy forum
- Support nighttime, leisure & wellbeing economy
- Free website provision
- Free Federation of Small Business (FSB) memberships
- Support Shopmobility
- Develop Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) offers with corporate partners.

This section of the strategy is one of the Economic Development Teams strengths as business support has always been the main focus of our team. This however has increased in importance since the Covid pandemic and subsequent cost of living challenges. This has left many businesses struggling to survive, and many have turned the Council to seek guidance and help. Most of the objectives of this part of the strategy are being delivered in part or in full. Many of the strategic objectives have been mentioned earlier in this report.

The SBF now has 960 members and is a well-known and trusted source of business support and information amongst the business community. A new look website with a procurement portal

will be launched later this year which will help the council to deliver on its “buy local” commitment.

We have been delivering a package of support utilizing grant funding with 28 free websites being given to small businesses who have struggled to compete with the larger online competitors, 17 free FSB memberships awarded to small business that will benefit from the membership services, two rounds of the Digital Media Training this year with 15 businesses per round, with a third in September, and 76 businesses receiving 1-2-1 business support through Pro-actions business coaching. The next round of 1-2-1 business coaching will start in September aimed at growth businesses with a focus on (but not exclusively) in the tech sector.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a priority, and we are fortunate to have a number of very community conscious corporate businesses in the borough who are very generous and support a number of initiatives which otherwise would not be able to take place.

For example, events sponsored include the Business Awards, Business Plan Competition, Riverboat networking event and in December a Health & Wellbeing Conference.

Overall, we have made a really strong start this year to deliver our strategic objectives. The challenges we currently face are the resources on the team. We have been one team member down since December 2022, however we are recruiting a replacement team member to start in September 2023. Both this post and the Town Centre Manager post are temporary contracts which and are due to end in 2024.

The current strategy was written on the basis that we keep the current resources on the team. If we lose members of the team due to funding, we will need to review the strategy and reduce activity according to resources available.

However, having won a national award from the Federation of Small Business in 2022 as the best local authority providing “Future ready business support” it is important that we do not let this standard of business support and activity decline as our businesses need to be supported through these tough times.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy> 6

<https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/em3-strategic-economic-plan> 7

<https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=74942>