

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 10 July 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon

Report summary:

On the 10th October 2023, Cabinet considered the [Local Economic Review](#) developed by EDDC's Economic Development team.

In summary, it was resolved that: 1) the work be endorsed; 2) that the evidence it contains be used to inform the development of the Council Plan; and 3) that a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed to directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

With this direction, the Economic Development team developed a brief for the Strategy to be developed in-house. The approach was approved by the Economy PFH and a series of local consultations with a range of stakeholders most relevant to our district economy and employment trajectory was undertaken. From this, an initial Economic Development Strategy (EDS) document was produced. This was then subject to extensive internal/corporate and external district wide review with feedback informing the finalisation of the Strategy.

The work was presented for review to EDDC's Executive Leadership Team ahead of Overview Committee on the 30th May 2024. Members of Overview endorsed the Economic Development Strategy document and recommended it to Cabinet for publication.

The current report now introduces at **Appendix A** our final draft Economic Development Strategy for East Devon (2024-2029) for Cabinet review ahead of publication.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendations:

That Cabinet;

- 1) Endorse the final draft Economic Development Strategy for East Devon (2024-2029);
- 2) Delegate to EDDC's Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place consent to approve final design and content updates in producing a digital version of the Strategy for publication on EDDC's website.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Council's resources and those of our partners most effectively engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review whilst delivering on the [Council Plan](#) (2024-2028) priority for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.

Officers: Dr Robert Murray, Economic Development Manager, 01395 517514
rmurray@eastdevon.gov.uk; Tom Winters, Economic Development Officer, 01395 571528,
twinters@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Medium Impact

Our policy programme promotes activity in support of the broadest range of residents, organisations and employers. The Strategy aligns with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals which include a commitment to reduced inequality. The work has been developed on the basis of an inclusive consultation programme, ensuring the widest range of perspectives have been considered. In relation to protected characteristics, we are prioritising support across demographics, from younger working age adults to helping older residents who wish to remain economically active. The work includes commitments to coordinate employment support for economically inactive residents of all ages, including specialist support for those with disabilities. It aims to reduce the number of households facing poverty, including through the provision of retrofitting grants to reduce energy use and associated spend.

[Equality Impact Assessment.](#)

Climate change Medium Impact. ONS data shows East Devon's higher levels of out-commuting is a significant contributor to our high emissions. The Strategy responds to the need to prioritise decarbonisation and reduce travel to work times through strengthening local employment and associated land provision. This will improve our job density alongside supporting the wider transition to a low carbon economy

Risk: Low Risk; There are no significant risks associated with the report recommendations.

Links to background information

30th May 2024 Overview Committee Report: [An Economic Development Strategy for East Devon](#);
10th October 2023 Cabinet Report: East Devon – [Local Economic Review](#);
7th December 2023 Economy [Portfolio Holder Report](#) to Scrutiny Committee;
19th Feb-10th March District Wide [Consultation](#) on the Draft Economic Development Strategy;
2024-2025 Growth, Development & Prosperity [Service Plan](#).

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Report in full

1. Background

1.1 On the 10th October 2023, EDDC's Economic Development team presented a report to Cabinet setting out the main findings of their Local Economic Review (LER). It highlighted the core issues and challenges facing our district economy as evidenced from the most up-to-date Census and ONS data.

1.2 Some of the core findings from the LER are as follows:

- **Demographics:** East Devon has the third lowest proportion of working age residents and fourth highest proportion of retirees in the country. We've notable variance in the age profile of settlements, though only two of our 30 wards have a retiree population below the national average.
- **Employment:** East Devon has the lowest proportion of economically active residents and highest number of economically inactive residents compared to the other EHOD geographies, regional and national averages. Despite this low proportion of economically active residents, the district has one of the lowest rates of unemployment, with claimant count figures slightly above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Wages:** Despite the critical loss of Flybe in 2020 and around 1,000 of our most valuable highly skilled jobs, average wages in East Devon have increased to match the regional average, though remain below the national average.
- **Productivity:** Average productivity rates in East Devon are catching up with Exeter but remain consistently below the national average.
- **Workspace:** There is high demand from employers to provide local employment, though the available supply of employment land and premises is critically constrained. This means some local employers must relocate in order to grow, contributing to high levels of out commuting.
- **Wellbeing:** East Devon residents' sense of worthwhileness and life satisfaction was previously high but has decreased back down to the national and regional average since the pandemic. Reported anxiety has increased since 2018-19 to meet the regional average in 2021-22 with our happiness index score dropping below the regional and national average over the same period.
- **Carbon:** Our carbon emissions per capita has decreased, but remains higher than neighbouring authorities, national and regional averages with transport (including commuting) accounting for 31% of our overall emissions. The amount of carbon emitted in East Devon will need to rapidly decrease in order to reach net zero by 2040.

2. Context

2.1 Endorsement of the LER work was sought alongside approval for its use in informing both the emerging Council Plan and in the development of a new 5-year Economic Development Strategy for East Devon.

2.2 Members noted that the data presented had far reaching consequences that would help shape future decisions in the district. They saw the significance of this reliable and transparent evidence as providing an important baseline from which to develop a robust

Economic Development Strategy. This, in turn, would inform an improved policy approach and direct actions in supporting delivery of our new Council Plan aims.

2.3 October Cabinet resolved:

1. That the report and detailed Local Economic Review which underpins it, be endorsed.
2. That the use of the Local Economic Review and up-to-date statistical evidence it comprises be used to inform the development of the emerging Council Plan.
3. That a new Economic Development Strategy for East Devon would be developed that would directly engage the core challenges highlighted by the Local Economic Review.

3. Strategy Development

- 3.1 Since this Cabinet resolution was agreed, the Economic Development team have employed a strong project management approach in developing the new Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) presented at **Appendix A**.
- 3.2 Just as with the Local Economic Review, the work has been produced in-house, employing existing Economic Development Officer expertise and support from wider corporate teams, without recourse to external commissioning. The work has benefited from strong levels of engagement across Council services, most notably from Comms and we are grateful for this collaboration.
- 3.3 The work began with the initial development of the detailed Project Brief outlining the purpose, timeframe and process for developing the Strategy. This included an ambitious approach to maximising engagement and feedback from 1) our business community, stakeholders, and organisations in order to develop first draft of the Strategy, and 2) a district-wide consultation seeking views on this initial draft to inform a final draft to be developed. The brief was reviewed and agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Economy in November 2023 and work got underway.
- 3.4 To provide some context to the approach taken by the team in developing this work, an overview of project milestones delivered is presented in **Appendix B**.
- 3.5 The result of this work is the 5-year Economic Development Strategy document content now presented to Cabinet for review at **Appendix A**. If endorsed by Cabinet, the work will be subject to final design and content updates (to be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place) with a digital version then being published to EDDC's website [here](#).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Widely consulted on, we believe the Economic Development Strategy sets out a clear, shared vision for East Devon's economy from 2024 to 2029.
- 4.2 Aligned with the Council Plan, the work articulates a consistent message on our economic priorities. We feel it makes clear how we will direct resources in delivering an achievable set of outcomes, working with partners to strengthen future funding bids. We hope we have made clear the links to relevant strategies and plans already being delivered, as well as the objectives we share with our regional partners and local stakeholders.
- 4.3 The Strategy presents a clear policy programme. This will be effective in focusing the Council's resources and those of our partners in a) addressing our most pressing local economic challenges, and b) helping to both inform and deliver on our Council Plan priorities for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.

- 4.4 Should the work meet with members' approval, we invite Cabinet to endorse our final draft Economic Development Strategy (2024-2029) and delegate approval of final design and content updates to the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets and Interim Director of Place enabling a digital version of the Strategy to be published.
- 4.5 This will ensure EDDC has in place a robust, transparent and effective Economic Development Strategy, making clear our most pressing local priorities (issues and opportunities) for investment and intervention whilst delivering on the [Council Plan](#) (2024-2028) priority for a resilient economy that supports local businesses.
-

Financial implications:

At this stage no additional funding is being requested, it should be noted that certain actions do rely on devolved funding and some on possible Council investment which in these cases that will have to be considered by Cabinet and Council on case by case basis if outside existing budgets and approvals.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.

Appendix A: Strategy Development Milestones

TASK	PROGRESS	START	END	WORK DAYS
Stage 1: Project Brief				
Develop Project Brief	100%	1/10/23	16/10/23	11
Seek endorsement from PH	100%	16/10/23	20/10/23	5
Establish officer group to assign roles	100%	25/10/23	25/10/23	1
Stage 2: First Consultation and Strategy Drafting				
Prepare consultation	100%	30/10/23	10/11/23	10
Consultation period	100%	13/11/23	15/12/23	25
Review responses	100%	11/12/23	22/12/23	10
Draft consultation version of EDS	100%	1/1/24	19/1/24	15
Service & ADs review, PH update	100%	22/1/24	2/2/24	10
Stage 3: Second Consultation and Strategy Finalisation				
Prepare consultation	100%	5/2/24	16/2/24	10
Consultation period	100%	19/2/24	8/3/24	15
Review responses	100%	11/3/24	22/3/24	10
Draft post-consultation version of EDS	100%	25/3/24	5/4/24	10
Team review	100%	8/4/24	12/4/24	5
Final draft development	100%	15/4/24	26/4/24	10
Stage 4: Engagement and Endorsement				
GDP service review	100%	18/4/24	26/4/24	7
ADs review	100%	30/4/24	2/5/24	3
ELT consideration	100%	3/5/24	7/5/24	3
Overview meeting	100%	30/5/24	30/5/24	1
Cabinet meeting	0%	10/7/24	10/7/24	1
(Days remaining)	100%	11/6/24	10/7/24	29