

North Somerset Council

Report to the Placemaking, Economy and Planning Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 6 March 2024

Subject of Report: New Economic Plan for North Somerset

Town or Parish:

Officer/Member Presenting: Jane Harrison, Head of Economy

Key Decision: No

Reason:

This report will not result in expenditure or savings of £500,000 or over and it is not significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.

Recommendations

1. That the PEP scrutiny panel note the process for the development of the new Economic Plan
2. That the PEP scrutiny panel agree the next stage they should be consulted on the development of the plan will be during an informal session in March 2024.

1. Summary of Report

This report provides an overview of the rationale, process, and timelines for the development of a new economic plan for North Somerset. The PEP Scrutiny Panel are being provided this detail for their awareness and information and to ensure they are engaged in the consultation process going forward.

This report also provides an opportunity for members of the PEP Scrutiny Panel to provide initial thoughts on the priorities for a new economic plan which can be shared with consultants once they are on board. This will not be the panel's only opportunity to engage with this work.

2. Policy

A new economic plan will help to deliver the corporate objectives of being a thriving and sustainable place.

3. Details

North Somerset's existing [Economic Plan](#) was written in May 2020 and was intended to provide the council with a 5-year framework to respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic. The Plan has 16 commitments which span sector development activity, inward investment commitments and improvements to accessibility and active travel. The Plan is now heading into its penultimate year, and although it was intended to provide 5-year framework the evidence base and subsequent commitments have now been superseded by the end of the pandemic, cost of living crisis, a new Local Plan (at Reg 19 stage) and wider economic shifts.

North Somerset now needs a new Economic Plan to help prioritise its activity, investments, and interventions over the next phase of work to stimulate economic growth. This must be based on a clear analysis of the challenges facing North Somerset, with a strong pro-business focus ensuring that we are able to identify, support, secure and exploit future opportunities for growth and job creation, attract inward investment and support our indigenous businesses to thrive.

As a secondary sub-report NSC also requires 'employment land-use and delivery approach' guidance. This sub-report will consider some of the proposed strategic employment sites identified in the new Local Plan and use the updated Economic Plan evidence and existing Employment Land Review documents to advise the council in identifying the best approach to bring some of our key commercial sites forward (more detail provided in the 'requirement' section).

The plan should bring together (and replace) current strategies on the Economy, and Employment and Skills, as well as considering existing work on Inward Investment, and Sectors Development and Placemaking – providing recommendations on where these plans need updating to reflect the new Economic Plan.

Current thinking is that the new Economic Plan will include a 15-year vision and strategy, which aligns to the timescale of the Local Plan. This will be supplemented by a shorter term, ~5-year, action/ delivery plan. However, we will welcome consultant views on these timescales and can adapt these if there is evidence for doing so.

The Council has a commitment to delivering net zero carbon across the area by 2030. The Economic Plan must look for opportunities to help deliver this as well as consider economic opportunities associated with green business growth, energy transition and climate adaptation.

The appointed consultant or organisation will be required to develop and write North Somerset's new Economic Plan and associated sub-reports. This will include:

- 1) Development of an evidence base from which a series of challenges and opportunities can be drawn. This will need to include an evaluation of the existing plan, progress made and any barriers to success as well as a review of the existing data pack for the current economic plan – updating data sets which are still relevant and identifying and filling other evidential gaps.
- 2) Lead consultation with key stakeholders which sets an ambition for our economy and uses the data to prioritise the top challenges the Plan needs to address to reach this ambition. North Somerset Council will provide a list of consultees and will be able to run a resident focussed consultation on our consultation portal. However, the consultant will be expected to design this consultation and to assess and write up the responses/outcomes. Some consultation sessions can be online, some can be via existing forums and groups, but some may need to be set up specifically for the development of the Plan (approx. 4 sessions). This should be built into the budget including costs for venue and catering.
- 3) Provide the council with advice and guidance on positioning the Plan to leverage maximum read across into emerging national political priorities and potential political changes. This should include responding to party political manifestos and building in 'hooks' which position the plan to align with emerging priorities.
- 4) Identify the interventions needed and the core actions to be taken by the council, anchor institutions and partners to address these gaps and potential funding routes/opportunities to achieve this. These should be used to provide a draft action plan with clear, deliverable actions linked back to the overall ambitions.

- 5) Produce drafts of the new Plan which will need to be developed iteratively and with ongoing input and consultation with key stakeholders including meetings/workshops to present to and discuss with NSC senior leadership and members.
- 6) Produce an ‘employment land use and delivery approach’ sub-report which advises the council on the best options for encouraging and enabling commercial development at some of the proposed employment sites identified in the emerging Local Plan ([Local Plan 2039 \(n-somerset.gov.uk\)](https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/Local-Plan-2039)):
 - a. Land East of Junction 20, Clevedon
 - b. Weston Business Quarter (referred to as Haywood Village Business Quarter on the Policies map)
 - c. Parkland Village various commercial sites
 - d. South Gate and Central Gate (referred to as West Wick Business Park on the Policies map).
 - e. Wolverhill commercial allocation

This sub-report should make a link between the development of these proposed commercial sites and meeting the priorities identified in a new Economic Plan.

- 7) Provide recommendations on other Economic Development Plans (inward investment strategy and sector development plans) which need to be updated in line with the new Economic Plan.
- 8) Run a series of pre-launch sessions to socialise the plan with key stakeholders and build ownership.
- 9) Present a finalised version of the Plan to key groups via one or more launch events. The consultant will be expected to build the cost of this event into their final price submission. At least one of the launch events should be in person.
- 10) Provide a monitoring and governance framework for the new plan.

The timeline for the development of the plan is below:



4. Consultation

N/A at this stage. A full consultation plan for the development of the Economic Plan will be developed.

5. Financial Implications

N/A at this stage.

Costs

N/A at this stage

Funding

N/A at this stage

6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A at this stage

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

N/A at this stage

8. Risk Management

N/A at this stage

9. Equality Implications

An EIA will be completed as part of the new plan

10. Corporate Implications

Recommendations from the new plan will likely have some corporate implications but these are yet to be identified.

11. Options Considered

N/A at this stage

Author:

Jane Harrison, Head of Economy

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

None