



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Cabinet

Tuesday, 16th April 2024

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for Finance and Economic
Development

Draft Economic Development Strategy Consultation

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To seek approval for stakeholder consultation in respect to the draft Economic Development Strategy 2024 – 2028 and accompanying action plan.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approves a four week public consultation exercise on the draft Economic Development Strategy and accompanying action plan set out in Appendix A.

Decision Information	
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority 1 - Connecting Communities • Priority 2 - Sustainable South Kesteven Healthy and strong communities • Priority 3 - Enabling Economic Opportunity • Priority 4 - Housing • Priority 5 - Effective Council
Which wards are impacted?	All wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report. There may be financial implications depending upon the final adopted Strategy and supporting action plan but these will be considered at that time.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 The Economic Development Strategy is not a statutory document, instead it sets a vision for future growth in the District. The statutory Local Plan remains the overriding document for determining volume and location of growth in South Kesteven. However, this document will help to set out how the Council aims to respond positively to that growth.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.3 It is important that consultation relating to this strategy is carried out in a fair and equitable manner. Any reasonable adjustments to our consultation process will be made to meet the needs of relevant protected characteristics.

Consulted with: Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. Enabling Economic Opportunity is a priority identified in the Council's recently adopted Corporate Plan (2024-27). Delivering an Economic Development Strategy is a key objective which will support the creation of a vibrant economy in the District; economic development is a golden thread running through both the Corporate Plan and the Local Plan. A thriving economy is essential to ensure sustainable development can be delivered to meet the needs of our existing and future population.
- 2.2. The previously Economic Development Strategy was adopted in 2016 and covered the period to 2021. Since then, much has changed across the District and this should be reflected in an up-to-date strategy.
- 2.3. At its meeting on 22 November 2022, (the then) Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEDCO) considered and provided feedback on the first draft framework of the South Kesteven Economic Development Strategy (2023-2028). Since that meeting, the draft strategy has significantly evolved taking into account the feedback from a FEOSC Working Group in March 2024 and the newly adopted Corporate Plan.
- 2.4. Accordingly, members of the Economic Development Team have produced an updated draft Economic Development Strategy and accompanying Action Plan (**Appendix A**)
- 2.5. The Economic Development Strategy looks ahead to 2028 and how the Council should manage the impact of growth. It sets both a vision for the future of the District and a series of proposals for the Council. Working together with partner agencies and organisations will lead the growth agenda for the benefit of residents, community groups, businesses and the environment.
- 2.6. The Economic Development Strategy sets a clear direction for the Council to lay the foundations for longer-term objectives. The Economic Development Strategy does not form part of the statutory Development Plan which sets the Council's planning policies and proposals for the use and development of land. The Local Plan includes economic policies including allocating sites for future economic development and safeguarding existing employment sites. The Local Plan is currently being reviewed and a consultation is taking place on the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan. Whilst the preparation of the Local Plan is a separate process with its own timetable (agreed

through the Local Development Scheme), the Planning Policy and Economic Development teams work closely together. The Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy will complement each other.

2.7. The Economic Development Strategy is focused on five areas of focus where the Council is most likely to influence the key challenges to economic prosperity and set a path to achieving the vision for South Kesteven in 2028, as follows:

- Business, job creation and employment safeguarding
- Skills development
- Inclusive growth and regeneration
- Inward investment
- Enhancing South Kesteven's tourism and visitor economy offer

2.8. The Economic Development Strategy can be used as a basis to promote the District as a prime location for investment and to assist in securing new infrastructure. Crucially, the strategy can communicate messages to Government, investors and interested parties, that South Kesteven has a positive approach towards managing and delivering growth in the long term.

2.9. Should the draft Economic Development Strategy be approved for consultation, the next steps are:

- A four-week consultation process ending on 4 June.
- A progress update to FEOSC on 8 May and a further report on the consultation exercise on 27 June.
- Recommendation to Cabinet on 9 July to approve the final economic development strategy and action plan.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The Economic Development Strategy will need to be considered as a live document to take account of emerging policy and the legislative picture, as well as delivery of the new Corporate Plan and Local Plan.
- 3.2 Consultation is an important part of the development of the strategy. Feedback from stakeholders including employers and businesses, local representatives and community groups will be invaluable in shaping the Economic Development Strategy and helping us understand the needs and aspirations of local communities and businesses.
- 3.3 Consultation will take place over a four-week period and in addition to being published online; utilising software to capture and analyse comments, it will be

marketed through social media, established business networks and via Officers' attendance at a number of business networking groups across the District.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 An option is not to provide an Economic Development Strategy. However, this may risk loss of focus on achieving the aims of the Council within the quickest practicable timescales.
- 4.2 An alternative is not to consult on the Economic Development Strategy. However, this may risk the loss of critical engagement with the public, partners and delivery agencies who will be vital in achieving the aims of the draft strategy.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The public consultation will enable stakeholders to consider and recommend changes and additions to the draft Economic Development Strategy.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The original draft Economic Development Strategy had been an ongoing process led by the Council's Economic Development Team. Following the previous report to (the then) Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FEDCO) Committee in November 2022, there had been dialogue with several Council internal departments and external stakeholders, all of whom helped to set a proposed vision for the District over the strategy's five-year period.
- 6.2 Additionally, there has been invaluable help from organisations providing funding for town centre initiatives, as well as existing landowners, prospective inward investors and developers.
- 6.3 On 21 March 2024, a 'Members Workshop' was hosted by the Leader of the Council at which Members of the Council were invited to receive a presentation on the strategy and were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the structure and content of the draft strategy.
- 6.4 The next stage is to have a period of consultation with key partners including: government agencies, local businesses, community groups, members of the public and delivery bodies. These stakeholders will be given an opportunity to comment on the proposed strategy prior to consideration by Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet later in the year.

7. Background Papers

7.1 *Progress update on the new South Kesteven Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028* – Report for Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published 22 November 2022, available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s36141/Progress%20Update%20on%20new%20South%20Kesteven%20Economic%20Development%20Strategy%202023%20-%202028.pdf>

7.2 *Local Development Scheme for the Local Plan – Revised Timetable (May 2023)* – Report to Cabinet, published 30 May 2023, available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s37841/LDS%20Cabinet%20Report%202023-26.pdf>

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Consultation draft of the new Economic Development Strategy and accompanying action plan.