



Cabinet

Tuesday 8 October 2024

Economic Growth Strategy

Report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor A Brennan

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. Rushcliffe Borough Council's Corporate Strategy was adopted by Council in January 2024. One of the strategic tasks in the Corporate Strategy was for the Council to produce an Economic Growth Strategy.
- 1.2. With the changing local government landscape and the establishment of the East Midlands County Combined Authority (EMCCA), it was identified that it was more important than ever that the Council has clear priorities and a plan to support economic growth.
- 1.3. Consultation on the proposed priorities and then the executive summary document has been carried out in April and August 2024. The responses received have informed development of the Strategy and an overview is included in this report. Endorsement of the Strategy and Action Plan is now sought from Cabinet to enable delivery.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet endorses the Economic Growth Strategy for publication.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

It is important for the Council to have an ambitious plan for the economy of the Borough to ensure it remains a thriving place to live, work and visit. By adopting this Economic Growth Strategy, the Council is setting out its vision for the Borough and how it will work with partners to achieve this. The supporting Action Plan will ensure focus and momentum are maintained and the Strategy delivers for the residents and businesses in Rushcliffe.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. Rushcliffe Borough Council's Corporate Strategy was adopted by Council in January 2024, and a strategic task included within that was the creation of an Economic Growth Strategy. This report seeks Cabinet's approval of the draft Strategy and Plan.

4.2. To inform the development of the Strategy a number of steps have been taken including:

- Two presentations and discussion at the Rushcliffe Strategic Growth Board.
- Presentation and discussion at the Rushcliffe Business Partnership Steering Group.
- Workshop with a number of colleagues from Nottinghamshire County Council.
- Two public consultation on the proposed priorities (March/April 2024) and the Executive Summary document (July/August 2024), which went out to local businesses, residents, stakeholders and Councillors.
- One to one discussion with the Countryside and Land Association (CLA).
- One to one discussion with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).
- One to one discussion with East Midlands Chamber (EMC).
- One to one discussions with some of the Borough's big businesses.
- Commissioning of data gathering and analysis report.
- Review of the Nottinghamshire Observatory to provide further data insights.

4.3. As already outlined, consultation has taken place twice to help inform the development of the Strategy; in March/April on the proposed priorities and then again in July/August on the Executive Summary document. The response rate across the two consultations was 116 and the results provided some good insights, including:

- When respondents were asked what they thought of the key opportunities over the next five to 10 years to drive economic growth, the top three answers were:
 - Good location and transport links;
 - Attractive town and village centres;
 - Quality of life on offer.
- When asked about the biggest challenges facing the Borough, the top three responses were:
 - Cost of living pressures – for residents and businesses;
 - Lack of funding to support regeneration and other projects;
 - Good public transport links.
- When asked what the focus of the Council should be to support economic growth, the top three responses were:
 - Improvements to our town and village centres and support for businesses located there;
 - Infrastructure needs including transport and broadband;
 - Attracting new investment through more promotion of the Borough as a place to do business.
- A question specifically for people who live in the Borough was to rank in order of priority things that are important to them for the place that they live, the top three responses were:
 - Access to good quality services including schools, doctors, libraries etc;
 - Access to green space;
 - Good town/village centres with a good mix of local businesses.

- 4.4. The consultation exercise in August/September focussed on the draft Action Plan/Executive Summary document and asked respondents to consider if they felt the document contained the right priorities and actions, whether it aligned with their own strategies and plans and anything that was missing. Feedback included:
- The need for consideration of free town centre parking.
 - More skills support.
 - More of a focus on environment/sustainability.
 - Partnership working with Nottinghamshire County Council to create the Commercial Developer Forum.
 - Ensuring work in West Bridgford does not only focus on Central Avenue.
 - The need to focus on innovation as a priority for the future growth and prosperity of Rushcliffe.
- 4.5. As outlined, data analysis was commissioned to help inform the development of the Strategy. A detailed update on that can be found in the Strategy document, for reference some key highlights include:
- Rushcliffe is home to 5,225 businesses, 90.7% of which are micro and only 0.4% (20) are large.
 - The number of business start-ups in Rushcliffe is lower than the UK average; however, closure rates are also lower and a higher proportion of businesses in Rushcliffe survive for five years.
 - Many residents are highly skilled with 34% having a Level 4 qualification or higher, there are also though 17% of residents who have no qualifications.
 - When comparing the key stage 4 results in English and Maths, young people in Rushcliffe rank 1st in Nottinghamshire.
 - In terms of employment in the area, according to Nomis, between July 2021 and June 2023 there has been an increase of approx. 9% in economic inactivity in Rushcliffe population aged 50 – 64. These figures are comparable with National levels of early retirement increase.
 - Economic inactivity amongst those aged 16+ has decreased by 0.6% when comparing 2022 to 2023. 15.6% of residents have a long term physical or mental health issue, which is preventing them from working.
 - In 2017 there were 49,000 vacancies in the area compared to 51,000 in 2021. Most areas have seen a rise in vacancies.
 - Analysis of the travel to work area for Rushcliffe residents shows that the majority of residents travel to Nottingham for work (27%), closely followed by those who work in Rushcliffe (25.6%) and residents who mainly work from home (13.5%).
- 4.6. The Borough Council's vision for Economic Growth is to promote sustainable economic growth and regional opportunities to deliver a prosperous and thriving local economy, place to live, work and visit, which retains the unique local heritage and character of the Borough.

- 4.7. This vision is underpinned by three priority themes:
- Place and Experience; what it is like to live, work and visit Rushcliffe including our town centre and high streets, housing growth and our culture and heritage.
 - Investment and Infrastructure; attracting new businesses to the Borough and securing the right transport and other infrastructure to support any growth.
 - Business Support, Growth and Skills; providing the right support to our existing businesses and understanding our current and future skills needs.
- 4.8. The Strategy (Appendix A) sets out the challenges and opportunities associated with each of these priorities and identifies nine ambitions to support delivery of the vision. These ambitions have associated actions, which are set out in the Action Plan. The Economic Growth Strategy and Action Plan at Appendix A will be designed to match the style of the Executive Summary document previously consulted on (Appendix B) before it is published.
- 4.9. The intention has been to keep the Strategy relatively short and focus on the Action Plan as the live document that will be regularly reviewed and refreshed in response to emerging challenges and opportunities. The Strategic Growth Board will have oversight of the delivery of the Action Plan and identify performance measures.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

The Council does not need to have an Economic Growth Strategy and therefore an alternative is to not produce one. It was identified, however, that given the changing local government landscape, the need to attract additional investment into the Borough and prioritise resources, that an Economic Growth Strategy was required to support delivery of the ambitious growth plans for the Borough.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

- 6.1. As there is a limited amount that the Borough Council will be responsible for the direct delivery of, there is a risk that, with a lack of buy in, a limited amount will be delivered. However, to inform the production of the Strategy, extensive consultation has been carried out with stakeholders to secure buy in to the identified priorities and areas of work. In addition, there are many actions within the Plan which are aspirational and may take a number of years to deliver and will be subject to securing external investment.
- 6.2. There is a risk that Rushcliffe has fewer opportunities to apply for and secure external funding than other areas in the County. With the Strategy in place, it is intended that it can be used to highlight the need for external support for Rushcliffe residents and businesses to unlock significant growth opportunities for the region.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The internal staffing resource to deliver the Strategy is already in place and involves the Economic Growth Team as well as other teams in the Council including Property, Planning, Community Development and Communications.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Strategy (Appendix C).

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder act impacts associated with this report.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications associated with this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

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| The Environment | A key focus for the Economic Growth Strategy is promoting and supporting sustainable growth, ensuring it is delivered in the right places with the required infrastructure. |
| Quality of Life | A thriving local economy impacts on all aspects of our residents quality of life including; the provision of good work, successful town/village centres and good growth that respects the unique character of the Borough. |
| Efficient Services | There is no link to this corporate priority. |
| Sustainable Growth | This is a key focus for the Economic Growth Strategy ensuring new homes and commercial development are delivered in the right places, to high standards and with the required infrastructure. |

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet endorses the Economic Growth Strategy for publication.

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| For more information contact: | Catherine Evans Service Manager Economic Growth and Property 0115 914 8552 cevens@rushcliffe.gov.uk |
| Background papers available for Inspection: | N/A |
| List of appendices: | Appendix A – draft Economic Growth Strategy and Action Plan Appendix B – Designed Executive Summary document Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment Form |