

## **Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee**

**Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 at 6.00pm**  
**In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Priory Road,**  
**Dudley**

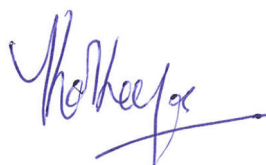
### **Agenda – Public Session** **(Meeting open to the public and press)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 as a correct record (Pages 4 – 21)
5. Public Forum
6. Dudley Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy (Pages 22 - 42)
7. UK Shared Prosperity Fund / Multiply Programme Update (Pages 43 – 70)
8. Stalled Sites – Strategies for bringing back into use vacant or derelict land and property (Pages 71 – 82)
9. Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business (Pages 83 - 85)

10. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8)

**Distribution:**

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)  
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Eccles, J Foster, A Hopwood, L Johnson, E Lawrence, S Mughal, N Neale, T Russon and P Sahota.



**Chief Executive**

**Dated: 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2024**

**Please note the following:**

**Health and Safety**

- In view of ongoing health and safety requirements in the workplace, you are asked to comply with any safety instructions applicable to the venue. Various mitigating actions are in place to minimise any risks and to ensure we adhere to the latest guidance.

**Public Gallery**

- Seating in the public gallery is subject to limits on capacity and will be allocated on a 'first come' basis.

**Toilets**

- Toilet facilities are available on site.

**No smoking**

- There is no smoking on the premises in line with national legislation. It is an offence to smoke in or on the premises. You cannot use e-cigarettes and/or similar vaping devices.

**In Case of Emergency**

- In the event of the alarms sounding, please leave the building by the nearest exit. There are Officers who will assist you in the event of this happening, please follow their instructions.

### **Submitting Apologies for Absence**

- Elected Members can submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services (see our contact details below).

### **Private and Confidential Information**

- Any agendas containing reports with 'exempt' information should be treated as private and confidential. It is your responsibility to ensure that information containing private and personal data is kept safe and secure at all times. Confidential papers should be handed to Democratic Services for secure disposal. If you choose to retain the documents you should ensure that the information is securely stored and destroyed within six months.

### **Recording and Reporting**

- The use of mobile devices or electronic facilities is permitted for the purposes of recording/reporting during the public session of the meeting. The use of any such devices must not disrupt the meeting – Please turn off any ringtones or set your devices to silent.

### **General**

- Public Wi-Fi is available.
- Information about the Council and our meetings can be viewed on the website [www.dudley.gov.uk](http://www.dudley.gov.uk)

### **If you need advice or assistance**

- If you (or anyone you know) requires assistance to access the venue, or if you have any other queries, please contact Democratic Services - Telephone 01384 815238 or E-mail [Democratic.Services@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@dudley.gov.uk)

**If you are reading these documents on an electronic device, you have saved the Council £7.00 (on average) per printed agenda and helped reduce the Council's carbon footprint**

## **Minutes of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee**

**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 at 6.00 pm  
In Committee Room 3, The Council House, Dudley.**

### **Present:**

Councillor D Stanley (Chair)  
Councillor S Henley (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors C Eccles, J Foster, A Hopwood, E Lawrence, T Russon and K Westwood

### **Officers:**

H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise), C Blunn (Corporate Performance Manager), S Haycox (Corporate Performance Support) and K Taylor (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

### **Also in Attendance:**

Councillor P Atkins (Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy)  
S Shingadia (Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration), A Shaw (Executive Director) and J Hughes (Member Relationship Manager) (Transport for West Midlands) for Agenda Item No. 6 – Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Delivery Update.

### **37 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors S Mughal, N Neale and P Sahota.

---

38 **Appointment of Substitute Member**

It was noted that Councillor K Westwood had been appointed to serve as a substitute Member for Councillor P Sahota for this meeting of the Committee only.

---

39 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

---

40 **Minutes**

Councillor J Foster referred to Minute No. 32 – Commercial Strategy page 11 paragraph two stating that the word unity should be replaced with unitary.

**Resolved**

That, subject to the amendment referred to above, the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed.

---

41 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

---

42 **Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Delivery Update**

The Committee received a presentation by representatives of Transport for West Midlands on progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.

A Shaw, Executive Director, provided an update on progress made in relation to the main construction works as part of phase 1, which was expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Members were advised that following construction, and to ensure a safe operating tram network, an entry into service would commence including technical sign-off and completion of safety assessments. Further extensive driver training would also be undertaken given the significant change of metro operations from a single line to a network. It was anticipated that the entry into service would be completed within two months following construction.

Reference was made to the closure of the Dudley Bus Station from Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2024 in preparation of the significant transformation of the Dudley Interchange.

A map outlining the locations of the three areas that had been identified for Phase 2 of the project namely, 2a to Waterfront, 2b to Merry Hill and 2c to Brierley Hill was provided at the meeting.

It was noted that there were a number of risks associated with construction costs on all capital projects in particular as a result of inflationary supply chains. The complexities of projects within the Black Country in ensuring the ground was stabilised to support the tram construction was mentioned together with the Delta Junction tie in works and expansion of the West Midlands Metro Depot in Wednesbury. The importance of ensuring connectivity with the main railway line at Dudley Port Station was also emphasised.

S Shingadia, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration, then confirmed that the overarching business case was being refreshed recognising the number of additional factors and developments that had occurred since the commencement of the project and to ensure that a robust investment case overall was maintained.

It was noted that work was ongoing on the upgrade of the Wednesbury Depot to ensure that it was fit for purpose to support the wider network of operations, additional trams, larger stabling facilities, and the operational workforce. It was hoped that this extension would enable the metro network to expand across the wider West Midlands in the future.

An overview of the progress made on a number of significant major projects within the Black Country was provided, including the construction works on the Wednesbury Delta Junction which would allow the operations to run into line one forming the wider metro network, which included a large extension to the metro network of eleven kilometres with 17 stops identified along the route. It was noted that the project would help regenerate over 170 hectares of brownfield land within the area resulting in up to 50,000 houses across the corridor.

It was noted that 33,000 tons of ballast had been delivered for the track installation across the railway corridor, and that a number of tram stops across the route were starting to take shape. The positive collaborative working with the local Transport Team was acknowledged in order to ensure local accessibility to the tram stops by integrating into existing cycling and walking routes along the corridor.

A number of significant new structures for phase one of the new route had been delivered, however works were continuing on the Wednesbury Delta Junction and Hanson's Ale Bridge.

Reference was made to the completed track work in Castle Hill within Dudley Town Centre with the installation of rail continuing at pace in Flood Street and King Street. The number of projects within the Town Centre were acknowledged and the importance of ensuring that all work programmes fit together into the wider program of the metro works to ensure that projects were delivered efficiently and effectively at the same time.

Members were advised of the work undertaken to strengthen the Parkhead Viaduct in Dudley in order for the structure to be fit for purpose and the natural and historic nature of the structure retained whilst ensuring structural integrity. This activity was recently highly commended at the Institution of Civil Engineers West Midlands Awards.

The importance of communicating forthcoming disruptive activity was mentioned together with working closely with local authority teams to ensure that construction disruption was being managed accordingly and engagement with elected members and local communities that were directly affected. It was essential that the right levels of journey planning messaging through targeted social media was undertaken and working with local attractions to promote that they were open as usual.

It was expected that there would be a significant improvement to public transport accessibility and public transport journey times once operational.

An overview was provided of the work underway to support the overall programme of works including refreshing the business cases working with the Department for Transport and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was provided. The business case was expected to be submitted to Government in Mid 2024 and considered later in 2024 for the mobilisation of phase two, subject to approval.

In concluding, it was noted that the overall cost of the extension and the additional funding that had been indicatively allocated from the Government required the refresh of the business case to ensure good value for money. Collaborative working with the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and colleagues would continue to ensure briefs were being met and the delivery of the project whilst managing costs was being undertaken.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were provided where appropriate as follows: -

- a) The Chair commented positively on the presentation given and thanked officers for their attendance and sought clarification as to whether the Metro Depot located in Great Western Street was sufficient to cope with the additional loads.

In responding, the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration confirmed that the proposed extension was for both the Depot building and to accommodate the additional stabling required for the larger number of trams that would be in operation. It was noted that the connectivity from Dudley Town Centre would be to either Birmingham or Wolverhampton through the Delta Junction, which would be constructed during Easter. It was noted that there would be some closures and disruption to the metro whilst works were ongoing.

- b) The Chair referred to the poor condition and accessibility issues at Dudley Port Station and queried whether there were any proposals for enhancement works.

In responding, the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration confirmed that work had been completed in relation to integrating the metro and heavy rail services. It was recognised that the current structure did not meet access standards, therefore consideration would be given to the longer-term aspirations for Network Rail at Dudley Port.

- c) Following a request by Councillor C Eccles in repainting the mural previously displayed on Hanson's Ale Bridge to the new structure, the Executive Director agreed to refer comments back and investigate options available.



- d) With regard to Phase 2C, Councillor C Eccles referred to the extensive discussions held over a number of years relating to extending the metro line to Stourbridge which was considered vital in improving future connectivity to other areas including Wolverhampton.

In responding, the Director of Strategic Partnerships and Integration acknowledged that it had been recognised that the wider connectivity from Stourbridge to Walsall remained important. Heavy rail solutions had been considered within the area to enable connectivity back towards Brierley Hill but that was not operationally or commercially feasible. Further work would be commissioned on the connectivity for the entire Walsall to Stourbridge corridor with options being considered in terms of light rail.

- e) Councillor E Lawrence referred to the unresolved ownership of the Canal bridge with Network Rail and the Mineshafts at Birmingham New Road and queried why these were deemed a risk now and not during the planning process.

In responding, the Executive Director confirmed that work was being undertaken with the Canal and River Trust and Network Rail with regard to the ownership of the Canal bridge for maintenance responsibility. Although the structure was not part of the metro infrastructure, the metro would travel across and underneath. Intrusive surveys had been undertaken to assess the structural integrity of the bridge, and although there was not a significant risk in terms of its condition, it was essential that responsibility for ownership was taken. It was hoped that this would be concluded prior to formal 'sign-off' of the project.

The issues associated with mineshafts and projects throughout the Black Country was acknowledged. As a result of poor record collection, mineshafts were identified during programmed works with suitable action taken to stabilise the mineshafts as appropriate. This area therefore scored high on the risk register until investigated and resolved. Ground condition surveys had been completed for phase one with some undertaken for phase 2 and it was confirmed that budget contingencies had been allocated for any additional works required.

- f) Councillor K Westwood echoed comments made by Councillor C Eccles and referred to the heritage value of Hanson's Ale Bridge that was located within a large leisure area within the Black Country. In considering local heritage, Councillor K Westwood queried whether reference points to the old Bridge and display boards highlighting the Parkhead Viaduct heritage could be arranged.

In responding, the Executive Director commented positively on the work undertaken in preserving the Parkhead Viaduct and undertook to work with Dudley officers and the Dudley Canal and River Trust with regard to interpretative signage accordingly.

- g) In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise undertook to confirm whether the Parkhead Viaduct was locally listed.
- h) In responding to a question raised by the Chair in relation to anticipated timescales in undertaking works to extend to Brierley Hill, the Executive Director confirmed that all transport work order powers had been approved, and that the timescales were dependent on final sign-off of the business case by Government. A further update could be presented to the Select Committee later in the year if requested.
- i) An update was provided on the mitigation strategies considered during the closure of the Dudley Bus Station.
- j) The Chair referred to the Very Light Rail works undertaken at the bottom of Castle Hill, Dudley and queried whether there were any proposals to connect the Very Light Rail and Metro.

In responding, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that whilst there was a possibility in the long-term, the financial implications would need to be considered. It was noted that there was currently a very light rail and track with a 15 metre radius which was testing different options for a very light rail transit service.

The Chair thanked officers for the presentation given and the informative discussions undertaken during the meeting.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in the presentation on progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension, be noted.
  - (2) That the Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands be requested to refer comments and explore options available in relation to:
    - Repainting the mural previously displayed on Hanson's Ale Bridge to the new structure.
    - Interpretative signage for the Parkhead Viaduct and Hanson's Ale Bridge.
  - (3) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to confirm whether the Parkhead Viaduct was locally listed.
- 

#### 43 **Progress on Major Regeneration Projects**

A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was submitted on an update on the major regeneration projects and other town centre proposals/projects in development.

In presenting key information through presentation slides, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise referred to the support provided by the Local Authority in delivering significant projects that were not Council projects such as the Dudley Interchange and Metro Extension, including exercising Compulsory Purchase Order powers to acquire the required properties. Reference was made to the fully granted funded schemes that were in delivery where the Council was a key delivery partner including Brierley Hill Future High Street Fund Programme and Dudley Towns Fund – Health Innovation.

It was noted that although the Local Authority did not have a dedicated Regeneration Team, there were a number of professionals within the Directorate, including conservation officers, planners, tree experts and designers. Collaboration working with colleagues across the Council enabled delivery of the projects that were progressing.

The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise gave a detailed overview on the status of the next phase of projects both in Dudley town centre and around the Borough, including the Health Innovation Dudley, Portersfield, Eton College, Flood Street, Wellington Road, Brierley Hill Future High Street Fund Programme, Brierley Hill Street Heritage Action Zone and Lye Regeneration Programme. A sustainable and connectivity package was being considered with colleagues from the Highways Department for Stourbridge to improve pedestrian movement and safety together with wider sustainable connectivity enhancements to support the town centre. Maps and drawings associated with each development were displayed at the meeting, and further details of the projects on site and in the pipeline were contained within the report submitted.

An overview was given of the projects that were being considered as part of a 10-year programme across the Local Authority, working closely with colleagues in Public Health, with a whole system approach being adopted to areas that require improvement. Funding bids for each individual element would be explored and submitted as appropriate.

It was noted that the Local Authority was one of 25 local authorities taking part in the Design Code Pathfinder programme to develop a design code for their area based upon National Design Code Guidance 2021. It was confirmed that work was being undertaken with stakeholders to produce a design code for the regeneration of Lye. It was anticipated that the process undertaken would determine future arrangements for regeneration and improvement across Town Centres and areas within the Borough.

Members were advised of the successful national government grant allocations awarded including the Longer-Term Plan for Towns of £20m for a 10-year socio-economic regeneration programme in Dudley Town Centre. Although the four Levelling Up Fund Bids that were submitted to the Government were not successful, in November 2023, non-competitive allocations had been awarded of £20m to both the Brierley Hill and Halesowen bids, which were required to be spent by March, 2026. It was noted that the Lye Regeneration Programme currently remained unfunded.

It was reported that the Brierley Hill bid would support the development of a new Technology Centre at Venture Way, with the existing building being relocated to Wolverhampton, together with a package of support to address connectivity issues between the High Street and Merry Hill.

A new college facility would also be provided in Halesowen on the existing Pool Road Car Park site; however, consideration would need to be given to accessibility access. Additional parking capacity would be considered at Andrew Road and Halesowen Leisure Centre to offset some of the loss at Pool Road.

Work continued in developing the Economic Regeneration Strategy which focussed on key themes which identified a number of actions and interventions needed to address and maximise the benefits of the regeneration programme.

(At this juncture, Councillor E Lawrence withdrew from the meeting)

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were provided where appropriate as follows: -

- a) The Chair welcomed and expressed his gratitude for the comprehensive report presented.
- b) Councillor J Foster although commented positively on the significant number of projects that were progressing, queried the allocation of funding and consideration as to who would benefit from the investment and how these improved the quality of life for residents.
- c) Councillor J Foster requested further clarification on funding requirements and timescales associated with Brierley Hill and Halesowen.

In responding, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that the Local Authority was required to work through the guidance to undertake steps to access the funds. In considering that the funding will have to be spent by March 2026, work had commenced in developing business plans outlining the delivery of the programme. Discussions had also commenced with the Colleges, as these were a prominent force in the design work for both areas. It was hoped that both business plans would be submitted in the near future. Although guidance had not yet been issued with regard to the funding restrictions, it was anticipated that the process would be similar to the Longer-Term Plan for Towns funding, however the funding would need to be spent by March, 2026. The challenges associated with the implementation of the funding within a limited amount of time was mentioned.

- d) Following comments made, Councillor J Foster considered there to be a significant amount of work for staff to undertake within the current challenging financial situation, and queried whether there were any projects at risk due to the emergency financial measures implemented and the requirement in setting a legal budget this year.

In responding to all comments made, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that Benefit Cost Ratio assessments had been undertaken on all projects to determine the benefits to the community. It was evident that the Government was satisfied that the two projects in relation to Brierley Hill and Halesowen had demonstrated significant local benefits in terms of driving up skills, providing access to meaningful and well-paid employment and future proofing investment.

The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise acknowledged comments made in relation to the current financial position and stated that the significant elements that placed the biggest risk to the entire project is the inability to identify match-funding. It was noted that match-funding totalling £1.3m had not yet been identified and was not considered an exception within the spending control restrictions. Conversations were being held with several organisations, including the West Midlands Combined Authority, to identify what support could be provided to bridge the gap. Discussions were also being held with colleagues in the Highways Department to review work programmes over the next couple of years in order to re-prioritise work and allocate available funds to support the delivery of the infrastructure and connectivity.

- e) Councillor J Foster shared her concerns that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report would not be presented to individual Select Committees. It was acknowledged that some difficult decisions would need to be made that were in the scope of the Select Committee and therefore queried whether any special meetings would be arranged as a matter of urgency where Elected Members could examine the proposals within the remit of their respective Select Committees.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy confirmed that a dedicated question and answer session had been arranged for Members and that the budget would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Councillor J Foster further emphasised her concerns that there would not be an opportunity to discuss the proposals in public before approval in particular during such a difficult time with a proposed budget with significant implications for this year and forthcoming years. Reference was made to processes that had been implemented for several years which allowed Members the opportunity to examine budget proposals at a Scrutiny meeting.

Following further discussion, Councillor J Foster recommended the scheduling of an urgent cycle of additional Select Committee meetings where Elected Members could examine the most controversial and impactful proposals within the remit of their respective Select Committees. The Chair acknowledged the comments made and agreed to consider the suggestions further.

- f) Councillor S Henley referred to the proposed car parking in Andrew Road, Halesowen following the closure of Pool Road Car Park and suggested that this was located too far for users of the leisure centre. The Leisure Centre was an asset to the Town Centre which should be promoted to encourage attendance.

Reference was made to the new college facility on the Pool Road Car Park site and the potential increase in traffic in an area that was already heavily congested. It was therefore queried whether any other locations had been considered near to the Pool Road Car Park in order to maintain footfall within the Town Centre.

In responding, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise acknowledged comments made and undertook to provide a written response.

- g) Councillor T Russon echoed comments made by Councillor S Henley and referred to e-mails he had received indicating that visitors would not use the Leisure Centre in Halesowen should there not be any nearby car parking facilities available.
- h) Councillor A Hopwood sought clarification on the proposed consultation on the proposals contained within the Stourbridge Project Plan which was scheduled to take place in January 2024, and whether there were any proposals to improve car parking facilities within Lye as part of the Regeneration Programme.

In responding, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that the consultation would commence within the next couple of weeks, and that no plans had been finalised for Lye. Consideration would need to be given to the impact on parking facilities as a result of Town Centre developments on all proposals.

- i) Councillor K Westwood referred to the Eton College project within Dudley, which if successful, would result in the closure of the car park located in Tower Street, Dudley which would have a significant impact on visitors to the Dudley Town Hall during events, and queried whether there would be alternative provision to accommodate visitors.

In responding, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that, if successful, it was anticipated that the entirety of the site would be utilised by the developers for their own purposes resulting in the closure of the car park. However, plans of the proposed layout were awaited.

- j) The Chair emphasised the importance of long-term future regeneration within the Borough and supporting traders and businesses during regeneration works.
- k) In responding to a question raised by Councillor T Russon in relation to the designation of the vacant Daniel's Land in Brierley Hill, the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that the land was largely made up of ground following works undertaken nearby and that she was not aware of any designation adopted to the site. The challenges faced financially in developing the site was outlined and it was noted that discussions were being held with colleagues at the West Midlands Combined Authority and Homes England over potential strategic acquisitions that they may wish to support to hold it in control in advance of the metro being operational in the area.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted and as reported at the meeting, on an update on the major regeneration projects and other town centre proposals/projects in development, be noted.
- (2) That the Chair consider the comments made with regard to scheduling an urgent Committee meeting where Members could examine the most controversial and impactful of proposals within the remit of the Select Committee.
- (3) That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to provide a written response to options considered in relation to car parking following the closure of Pool Road Car Park, Halesowen.

---

#### **44 Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 2 (1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2023)**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Quarter 2 Corporate Quarterly performance report covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> July to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 which aligned to the 2022-25 Council Plan.



In presenting key information through presentation slides, the Corporate Performance Manager stated that of the eleven measures to be reported on there were three on target, four below target and four with no targets with those being noted in the respective scorecards. One measure would be reported during Quarter 3. The direction of travel comparing short term trend and annual trend within the respective scorecards was reported, together with an overview of measures that were showing areas of concern with assurances given by relevant services to monitor and improve performance.

With regard to PI.47 - % of Corporate Complaints given a full response within 20 working days, it was noted that although the outturn for Quarter 2 was 79%, against an 85% target, the trend of increasing positive performance against the key performance indicator had continued. It was noted that a brief presentation on the complaints procedure to include processes and how they were handled would be presented during Quarter 3.

With regard to key performance indicators relating to sickness absence, it was noted that there had been a 16.35% decrease in the number of working days lost per full time equivalent, 9.37% decrease in the number of long-term days lost, and 33.5% decrease in short-term days lost during this period. The primary reason for short-term absence related to Covid symptoms and positive testing. Further information in relation to work being undertaken with regard to staff and sickness absence would be presented during Quarter 1 or 2 of the next financial year.

An overview of the progress made on key actions recorded for Quarter 2 was provided at the meeting.

Reference was made to the four Directorate Service Summary Documents that had been appended to the report submitted, providing an overview of service delivery, service achievements and opportunities for improvement during the relevant quarter focusing on Finance and Legal, Digital, Customer and Commercial Services, Regeneration and Enterprise and Chief Executive's.

Members were advised on the training developed for Councillors on Corporate Performance that had been made available through the Members Portal. Reference was made to the implementation of the new Learning Experience Platform namely, Thrive at Dudley. A training package had been developed for Managers and Elected Members and further discussions would be undertaken with regard to accessing Member training on Thrive.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows: -

- a) A discussion was held in relation to Elected Member training, which the recent LGA Peer Review report had identified as inadequate, therefore further work was needed to explore why the current format was not fit for purpose in order to implement improvements accordingly and emphasise the importance of Member Training.
- b) Councillor J Foster commented positively that the Quarterly Performance Report was being used to directly inform the work programme for the Select Committee, which was not being followed in other Committees. It was also considered that as performance management was within the remit of the Select Committee, recommendations could be made about how performance data was used.

In responding to comments made, the Corporate Performance Manager confirmed that it was her understanding that performance was considered by all Select Committees individually and undertook to discuss further with relevant officers.

- c) Councillor J Foster suggested that as several areas of business were deteriorating, there was some potential to consider areas such as sickness absence and complaints in-depth. In particular, as it was expected that there would be a significant escalation of complaints as a result of budget proposals and potential impact to services. The challenges in managing complaints when resources were decreased, and the possible changes to performance benchmarking arising from service areas potentially being withdrawn or impacted resulting in further delays was mentioned.
- d) Councillor C Eccles referred to short term sickness absence and sought clarification on the Council's current policy with regard to COVID testing. It was also noted that stress had been identified as a factor in long-term absences and given the significant amount of pressure that was expected, queried what measures had been considered to support teams across all Directorates to ensure that stress levels were not exacerbated.

In responding, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to provide a written response.

Following comments made, Councillor J Foster considered that an in-depth scrutiny exercise on sickness absence and in particular stress should be undertaken, and recommendations made to drive improvement.

- e) Councillor A Hopwood echoed comments made in relation to stress and emphasised the importance in addressing and understanding causes, the effect it has on people and the environments they were situated in.
- f) The Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy referred to the improvement made in the outturn in Corporate Complaints over the last three quarters taking into account the challenges faced in meeting the 20 working days for responses target. Although welcoming further scrutiny in this area, it was suggested that the Committee consider whether there was a core element of the Council that was underperforming as opposed to an overview of complaints.

With regard to sickness absence, the improvement on an annual basis was acknowledged and it was suggested that further consideration should be given as to whether employees were able to work flexibly in order to suit their lifestyle, as flexibility and ensuring a work/life balance impacted stress and sickness absence.

- g) The Chair suggested that a happy team was a productive team, working to one objective within the right atmosphere. It was important to have more involvement with employees and consider their welfare in order to give the right support as necessary.
- h) The Corporate Performance Manager reflected on the flexibility given to employees which had been very positive in her experience and referred to the work undertaken by Public Health and Human Resources and Organisation Development colleagues in relation to the People Strategy.
- i) In responding to a question raised by Councillor J Foster in relation to Staff Surveys, the Corporate Performance Manager stated that there had been some discussions as to whether an interim survey with limited number of questions would be more beneficial, however no decision had been made.
- j) The Chair referred to the importance of obtaining information from exit interviews from employees that had left the authority.

In responding, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to ascertain whether an overview of the reasons why employees had left the authority could be provided to Members for information.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the Quarter 2 Corporate Quarterly Performance report of the 2023/24 financial year covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2023, be noted.
  - (2) That the Corporate Performance Manager be requested to:
    - (i) Discuss with relevant officers future reporting of the Corporate Performance Report to all Select Committees.
    - (ii) Provide a written response on the Council's Policy for COVID testing and the measures taken across the Council to mitigate stress levels for employees in view of the current financial situation and challenging times ahead.
    - (ii) Liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair on dedicated sessions focusing on specific elements raised by the Committee, including complaints and sickness absence, in future reports.
    - (iii) Investigate whether an overview of the reasons why employees had left the authority could be provided to Members for information.
- 

### **45 Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business**

A report on the Progress Tracker and Future Business was received and noted by Members. The future work of the Select Committee would be considered to reflect the discussions and suggestions made during the meeting by the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Senior Democratic Services Officer.

### **Resolved**

That, the information contained in the report submitted on the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business, taking into accounts comments made during the meeting, be noted.

---

46 **Questions Under Council Procedure Rule 11.8**

There were no questions to the Chair pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm

CHAIR

## **Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee - 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

### **Report of the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**

### **Dudley Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to update Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee on the work undertaken to date on the proposed Dudley Borough 'Economic Regeneration Strategy', in advance of a report to cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

2. It is recommended that the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee notes;
  - The work undertaken by SQW in developing the Dudley 'Economic Regeneration Strategy' following their appointment in June 2023.
  - The four key themes and a cross-cutting priority that should underpin actions and investment.

#### **Background**

3. In June 2023, the Council appointed SQW to prepare an 'Economic Regeneration Strategy' for the Borough, following a competitive tender exercise. The Strategy is required to address a corporate priority highlighted in the internal Regeneration & Enterprise audit and to underpin future funding bids to Government, The West Midlands Combined Authority to maximise external funding opportunities. It also addresses a key recommendation from the recent LGA Peer Review, setting out the strategic priorities for regeneration and economic growth in the Borough and highlighting future delivery and governance requirements. The Strategy will align to the Council Plan, supporting key priorities to secure economic growth and maximise income opportunities through Council tax and business rates.

SQW has been liaising closely with a core officer team within the Regeneration & Enterprise Directorate and has undertaken the following:

- A detailed econometric analysis, baselining and preparation of a Key Issues Paper, highlighting the Boroughs key challenges and the themes that should form the focus of the Strategy.
- A workshop with the Council core team in early October 2023 to discuss the above and agree the evolving Strategy.
- A series of stakeholder consultations across different Council departments and with members, and with external bodies/ individuals.
- Four themed workshops with internal/external parties in late October 2023.
- A workshop with the 'Dudley Business Champions' and the 'Education and Skills' Boards on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.
- A workshop with the Council core team on the 6<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the draft Strategy and the Action Plan.

A draft Strategy and Action Plan was submitted by SQW on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 and comments on that draft were provided to SQW on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024. A further workshop was held with SQW on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024, to discuss the comments and the projects/interventions proposed in the Action Plan. Following that workshop, SQW has produced the final Strategy and Action Plan.

### **Key issues**

4. Following its baseline assessment of Dudley's economy, a review of the strategic context and scoping consultations, SQW identified six 'emerging issues' as being important to the Borough's short-to-medium term prospects. Four of these issues are 'thematic':
  - Structural economic change - how the Borough manages this ongoing process, supporting a balance between maximising the potential of Dudley's historic capabilities in the manufacturing sector and supporting the growth of a diverse, broad-based economy.
  - Raising aspirations and increasing workforce skills - at all levels, realising the benefits and building out from substantial recent (and forthcoming) investment in further and higher education and the links through to schools and community development.

- The changing roles of the town centres - how the Borough should reflect and respond to these changes, and the relationships between them.
- Its location within one of Europe's largest city-region economies - how the Borough can make the most of this, through understanding the relationship between Dudley, the rest of the West Midlands and its wider 'functional economic area'.

The other two issues related specifically to major investment opportunities:

- How the Borough can make the case for, and secure, the Metro Extension to Brierley Hill (and ultimately through to Stourbridge Junction).
- How the Borough can make the most of its Enterprise Zone and future Levelling Up Growth Zone designations.

These emerging issues formed the basis of the next stages of work, which explored them in greater detail, with further consultations, workshops and analysis, to prepare the Strategy and the Action Plan.

## **The Strategy**

5. The new Economic Regeneration Strategy is informed by evidence and has been developed in consultation with stakeholders. It sets out an ambitious 'route map' for the borough over the next ten years – to shape a more prosperous, more equitable and more sustainable economy in which businesses and communities thrive.

The Strategy sets out a Vision that “by 2033, the borough of Dudley will be recognised nationally for its thriving local economy. With specialisms in advanced manufacturing, it will be a focus for innovation, particularly in respect of the net zero transition, and it will also have a growing profile in 'new economy' sectors. It will be far better connected and it will function as a hub for business – both those formed locally and those that have relocated to the borough. It will be playing a full role in driving the West Midlands as a whole forward. It will be an aspirational place in which individuals, families, communities and businesses thrive.”

The Strategy seeks to achieve the following outcomes for the Borough:

- new businesses are formed and existing businesses grow – including in new sectors.
- inward investors choose to locate.



- local people develop new skills and can ‘pivot’ as new opportunities come to the area.
- town centres are vibrant and sustainable, and attractive both to local people and visitors.
- the quality of the natural and built environment (including heritage assets) are recognised at the heart of the visitor economy and more generally.
- communities and businesses are connected by a high quality transport infrastructure across the borough.
- significant progress is being made towards net zero carbon.
- everyone can reach their potential.

To progress this, the Strategy sets out four key themes and a cross-cutting priority that should underpin actions and investment.

### **Theme 1: Unlocking enterprise and innovation**

To reposition Dudley as a borough of enterprise and innovation at the heart of the West Midlands. This means creating new opportunities for businesses to start up, grow and invest, creating well-paid, sustainable jobs in both established industrial strengths and across a diverse, broad-based economy. The strategy proposes action in four priority areas:

- creating space for business growth.
- increasing productivity and innovation in Dudley’s manufacturing ‘core’.
- developing a wider environment for innovation across the economy.
- building stronger networks of support.

### **Theme 2: Investing in people and building skills for tomorrow**

Over recent years, there have been major changes across the labour market in the borough – in part because of economic restructuring. Residents are more highly qualified than they were previously, but employers can recruit neither the skills nor the number of people that they need in order to grow. The strategy proposes action in several priority areas:

- Strengthen links between employers, schools and providers to equip people for changing jobs.
- Support local people to access skills, training and education opportunities, especially those currently furthest away from the labour market.
- Leverage new investment coming into the borough to deliver skills and training opportunities for local people.
- Develop and actively promote Dudley’s new and evolving higher education offer.

### **Theme 3: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and supporting the Visitor Economy**

Dudley has substantial assets linked to heritage, culture and the visitor economy. These need to be seen as a key economic driver in their own right. More could be done with these assets – not least in giving them scale and visibility. A series of priorities have been defined in response.

- Develop a stronger ‘package’ across different visitor economy attractions within the borough, helping to increase visitor numbers, dwell time and spend.
- Promote Dudley as a cultural and creative borough.
- Deliver more cultural events, particularly in the town centres, helping to change perceptions of the borough.
- Explore the feasibility of new sport and/or cultural infrastructures within the borough.

### **Theme 4: Reinventing town centres across the borough.**

The town centres across the borough – principally Brierley Hill, Dudley, Stourbridge, Lye and Halesowen – are at the heart of the local economy. They differ from each other, but all face challenges, not least in the context of profound change across the retail sector. The town centres need to redefine their economic purposes, and the priorities to achieving that include:

- Advancing a new economic vision for Dudley town centre through a Long-Term Town Plan.
- Supporting partnership working in town centres across the borough to deliver change.
- Developing Business Improvement Districts.
- Promoting cultural and creativity across the borough’s town centres.
- Working with developers to forge constructive working relationships across the borough in respect of town centre regeneration and delivery of investment into the Levelling Up Growth Zone.

### **Cross-Cutting Priority – Maximising the impact of Metro and driving investment in future connectivity**

The Borough also needs to advance a major transformational connectivity opportunity – to maximise the economic impact of the first phases of Metro Extension. It also needs to make the case for subsequent investment in later phases of Metro and in other connectivity improvements - substantially enhancing Dudley’s connectivity, linking up key town centres and major developments and aligned with the Levelling Up Growth Zone. Over the coming decade, the Borough needs to maximise the impact of this new

asset – recognising that this is the first stage of a journey towards a better connected Borough, not the end of the story. The priority is to continue to advance a compelling economic case for investment in the network, including:

- Maximising the benefits of the first phases of the Metro extension.
- Making the case for future phases of the Metro.
- Championing sustained efforts to improve connectivity.

The themes and the priority areas for action set out in the Strategy provide the framework for determining corporate priorities and responding robustly to the internal audit and the LGA Peer Review. Key to this however is how the Council delivers the interventions necessary to achieve the outcomes required. SQW identify that:

“Delivering the ERS means action ‘at scale and pace’: in ensuring that there is strategic delivery capacity for transformational change and in ensuring that people and businesses see tangible progress and opportunity in the shorter term.”

SQW identify that the need now is for ‘something different and appropriate to the borough of Dudley’s metropolitan scale and ambition’. Delivering change means action on three fronts:

- ensuring that there is strategic capacity in place for long-term change and planning, marshalling a wide range of resources.
- in the short-to-medium term, ensuring that the whole Council works together to deliver the more ‘incremental’ changes that show visible progress on the ground.
- ensuring that local communities and businesses benefit throughout the regeneration process.

Progress will depend on focused and dedicated delivery resources, aligned to securing the priorities in the Economic Regeneration Strategy, alongside a strong working relationship with the West Midlands Combined Authority and the private sector.

### **The Action Plan and next steps**

6. The Action Plan will set out the schedule of interventions that need to be progressed to deliver the strategic themes. It has been prepared as two documents:
  - A detailed spreadsheet that the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise will use as a working document, to be updated as required, likely on an annual basis.

- An executive summary, in table format which forms an Appendix to the attached Strategy document.

Following consideration of a report to Cabinet in March 2024, the next step will be for the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise to develop the Action Plan into a schedule of agreed work programmes, highlighting those required in the short term (0-12 months), the medium term (2-3 years) and the longer term. This will need to include resource requirement – revenue and capital – together with proposals for internal governance and monitoring, to enable delivery in a robust and controlled environment.

### **Project Finance**

7. There are no current financial implications as a result of this report. When the Strategy has been agreed and adopted, the Director of Regeneration & Enterprise will undertake the above next steps and, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, advise Cabinet on financial implications.

### **Law**

8. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

### **Risk Management**

9. The corporate risk register identifies that the lack of an Economic Regeneration Strategy is a key risk to the Council. The completion of this work addresses that risk. When the strategy progresses to delivery, the corporate risk register will need to set progress targets and determine risk on the basis of available resources and timescales.

### **Equality Impact**

10. The Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the implementation of the Strategy, including the identification of any specific equality impacts. Where required equality impact assessments/statements will be prepared.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

11. Resource will be brought in to contribute to the delivery of the Strategy. This will be progressed in partnership with Council policy.

## **Commercial/Procurement**

12. Any contracts or commercial agreements needed to deliver the actions and interventions set out in the Action Plan will be let in accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

13. The Economic Regeneration Strategy highlights net zero as a key priority and interventions to deliver the Strategy will need to highlight the benefits that will support achievement of net zero.

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

14. Facilitating the Economic Regeneration of the Borough is a key priority of the Council. This Strategy will contribute to that aim by setting out the priorities for intervention and governance.

**Helen Martin, Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**



Report Author: Mark Reynolds  
Telephone: 07946 382107  
Email: [mark.reynolds@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:mark.reynolds@dudley.gov.uk)

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 – Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy – emerging themes**

**List of Background Documents**

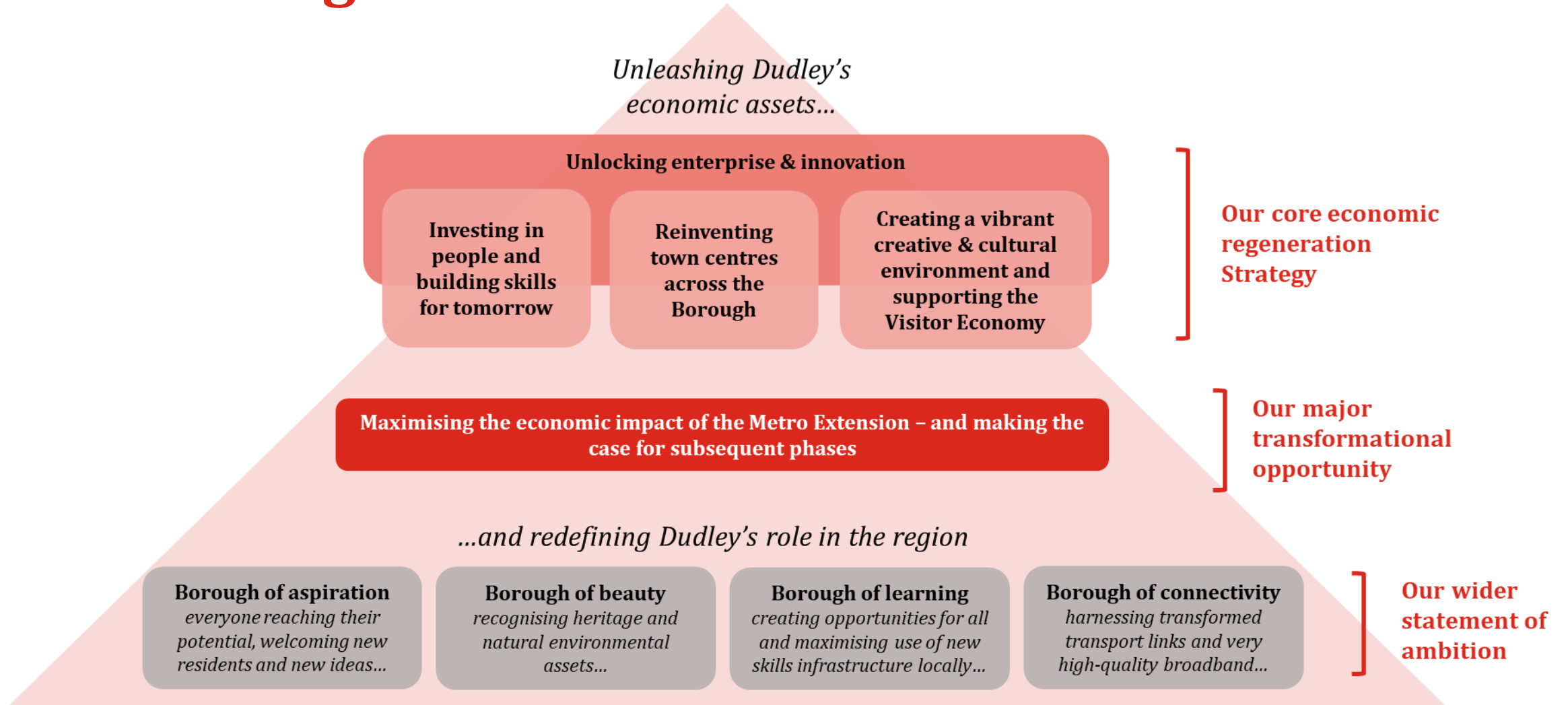
# **Driving forward the Economic Regeneration Strategy – at scale and pace**

# Economic ambition for the Borough

## **By 2033, Dudley will be a place where...**

- new businesses are formed and existing businesses grow – including in new sectors
- inward investors choose to locate
- local people develop new skills and are able to ‘pivot’ as new opportunities come to the area
- town centres are vibrant and sustainable, and attractive both to local people and visitors
- the quality of the natural and built environment (including heritage assets) are recognised at the heart of the visitor economy and more generally
- communities and businesses are connected by a high quality transport infrastructure across the borough
- significant progress is being made towards net zero carbon
- everyone can reach their potential

# Our strategic framework





# Theme 1: Unlocking Enterprise & Innovation

## Objective

To reposition Dudley as a **borough of enterprise and innovation**, and ensure that existing businesses are fully part of this redefined role

## Rationale

Dudley has seen - and will see - **significant economic restructuring and change**. Yet its businesses appear to be innovative and resilient - if fragmented as a 'community' and invisible in wider economic narratives. The borough has seen major investment in an innovation infrastructure, **but this needs to be used more effectively**. It also has **outstanding digital connectivity**. There are **challenges linked to employment land** which need to be addressed. However Dudley as a whole needs to be a confident borough in economic terms, promoting its knowledge-based competencies and re-defining its role within and beyond the West Midlands.

# Theme 1: Unlocking Enterprise & Innovation

## Action areas

1. Developing an enhanced business support package to enable more local businesses to 'pivot' and thrive, including in the transition to net zero carbon
2. Building, animating and promoting networks among SMEs in Dudley, allowing for collaboration and knowledge sharing, and improving (for example) access to finance
3. Drive forward Dudley's innovation capabilities in relation to advanced manufacturing and technology, and promote new innovation institutions (BCIMO, etc.) locally.
4. Invest in innovation facilities across the Borough, especially where they support new and emerging sectors and contribute to a more diverse, knowledge-based economy.
5. Promoting 'Digital Dudley' as a focus for existing businesses and inward investment
6. Developing provision for early-stage businesses in different parts of the borough
7. Developing an effective approach to brownfield employment sites (through land assembly, etc.)
8. Enhancing the dialogue between local businesses and skills providers to ensure that 'the right skills' continue to be available locally
9. Crafting a new narrative (to be used within and beyond the West Midlands) to promote Dudley as a borough of enterprise and innovation (particularly in knowledge intensive sectors) with outstanding digital connectivity

# Theme 2: Reinventing town centre across the Borough

## Objective

To create **vibrant town centres** with evolving economic, social and community roles

## Rationale

Town centres in Dudley - like many elsewhere - have seen **significant change** over recent years, some of it related to the restructuring of retail. A **new vision** is needed for its town centres. This must recognise and respect the differences between them, whilst **re-inventing future roles** which are defined in partnership with local communities and businesses. More generally employers across the borough, including those in the public sector, need to **recognise the role they can play** in helping to sustain town centre economies.

# Theme 2: Reinventing town centre across the Borough

## Action areas

1. Supporting partnership working in town centres to deliver change
2. Supporting a more innovative retail sector on high streets across the borough
3. Re-energising Dudley's towns through a redefined the mix of uses in town centres (through planning policy and direct investment into land/property)
4. Working with public sector employers to encourage greater use of town centre amenities across the borough

# Theme 3: Investing in people & building skills for tomorrow

## Objective

To ensure that **people are equipped for economic life**, and that employers can find the skills they need

## Rationale

With changing technologies and economic change, **job roles are evolving quickly**. It will be important that skills and training provision keeps pace. This will mean that **local people and more and better opportunities**, and that employers can find the skills they need.

# Theme 3: Investing in people & building skills for tomorrow

## Action areas

1. Strengthening links between employers, schools and providers to equip people for changing jobs
2. Supporting local people to access skills, training and education opportunities, especially those currently furthest away from the labour market
3. Leveraging new investment coming into the borough to deliver skills and training opportunities for local people
4. Develop Dudley's higher education offer

# Theme 4: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and promoting Dudley's Visitor Economy

## Objective

To **build creativity** and ensure that the borough is **culturally enriching** for residents, workers and visitors

## Rationale

Increasingly, culture and creativity are seen as core economic assets - and Dudley has important assets in relation to both. These need to be **used and supported**, and their wider role in economic regeneration needs to be encouraged. The borough also benefits from strong VE assets, many of which have a catchment that extends across the region and beyond. They therefore have a wider role in bringing people and investment into the borough.

# Theme 4: Creating a vibrant creative and cultural environment, and promoting Dudley's Visitor Economy

## Action areas

1. Developing a stronger 'package' across different VE attractions within the borough, helping to increase visitor numbers, dwell time and spend
2. Delivering more cultural events, particularly in the town centres, helping to change perceptions of the borough
3. Forging stronger links between the cultural and creative sectors to shape town centre regeneration
4. Exploring the feasibility of new sport and/or cultural infrastructures within the borough
5. Promoting Dudley as a 'creative borough' and providing more adaptable and affordable workspaces for creative businesses



# Unlocking transformation through the Metro Extension

## Objective

To **maximise the impacts** from Metro Extension, particularly in redefining the borough's role in the West Midlands

## Rationale

The Metro Extension is a very important infrastructure investment, but it must be completed, used and harnessed as an economic driver too. This requires a proactive response and one that seeks out the opportunities to leverage opportunities linked to it.

# Unlocking transformation through the Metro Extension

## Action areas

1. Maximising the economic impact of the first phases of Metro extension by identifying and promoting development and regeneration opportunities along the route
2. Ensuring that disadvantaged people in Dudley are able to benefit from new opportunities linked to the Metro Extension
3. Making the case for future phases of the Metro as well as championing other options for improved connectivity i.e. Very Light Rail.

---

**Meeting of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee**

**Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund / Multiply Programme Update**

**Purpose**

1. This report is to provide Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee with an update on the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Multiply Programme.

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee acknowledges:
  - The progress being made with regards to the Council's financial year 1 (2022-23) and year 2 (2023-24) programme of activity.
  - The continued risk linked to the original delays in the receipt of both year 1 and year 2 funding.
  - The year 3 funding allocations and the proposed range of activity across Communities & Place, Local and Regional Business Support, People & Skills and Multiply

**Background**

3. In March 2022, the Government launched the Levelling Up White paper, which included as a central pillar, £2.6 billion of funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for local investment to March 2025 with the primary aim being 'to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK aligning with the Levelling Up White paper missions.

To achieve the overarching aim, UK SPF will focus investment priorities on

- Communities and Place
  - Supporting local business and
  - People and Skills
4. The Levelling Up White Paper made clear that where Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA's) exist, MCA's will have responsibility for the development and delivery of a UKSPF Investment Plan with the investment plan being approved at the WMCA Board meeting on 28 October 2022 and subsequently submitted to Government in early November 2022.
  5. As referenced in the 27 October 2023 Cabinet report, following internal workshops and discussions with key stakeholders, including Dudley Community and Voluntary Sector, Dudley Business Champions and Dudley Economic Growth Board, a desire in Dudley to focus UKSPF 'Communities and Place' activity on town centre interventions (public realm enhancements, events, capacity building), support for culture and heritage activity as well as enhanced support for the continued promotion of Dudley as a tourism destination.
  6. In addition, given the low business birth rates in Dudley it was felt that business startup support should be a key propriety for the 'local Business Support' pillar together with improving innovation and productivity rates of local businesses. It was also agreed that the 'People and Skills' activity which is not due to come on stream until year 3 (2024-25), would seek to replicate (acknowledging reduced funding) the successful Black Country Impact Dudley delivery model following the project end date of 31 December 2023.
  7. On 5 December 2022, Government subsequently announced that all UK SPF Investment Plans had been approved, and the Council formally signed the UK SPF grant agreement with the WMCA in February 2023 which included year 1 grant. A meeting of the cabinet on 16 March 2023 approved the high level year 2 and year 3 programme schedule as well as approving the governance arrangement for the UK SPF programme, and the Council subsequently signed a deed of variation with the WMCA in October 2023 to accept the year 2 funding allocation of £2,173,403.

### **UKSPF Funding allocation**

8. As previously confirmed (27 October 2022 Cabinet report), Dudley has been allocated £4,496,355 as part of the double devolution of UK SPF funding to support Communities and Place, Local Business Support and People and Skills activity to cover the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025. The Council will also receive an additional local funding allocation of £2,333,830 to support with the development of a core business support programme as part of the regional UK SPF business support allocation.

9. In addition, the Council will also benefit from a management fee of £275,000 for the three-year period to support with the programme and project management of projects as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities. The year 1 amount was £55,000 to reflect the delayed start to the programme with year 2 and year 3 allocations being fixed at £110,000 per annum. The breakdown of Dudley UK SPF allocations across years the three themes is detailed below.

<b>2022-2023</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>Total</b>
£545,674	£1,091,348	£2,859,332	£4,496,355

### **Year 1 activity**

10. As noted above, given the delays in the confirmation of the year 1 grant award, and in order to ensure that the year 1 allocation was fully spent, activity focussed on projects that could be completed by 31 March 2023 and included using UK SPF to supplement core funded projects which meet the UK SPF eligibility criteria. Example projects included:

i.) Masterplan and Feasibility Studies

- Supporting the development of the Stourbridge Town Centre and Shell Corner masterplans
- Master planning and design works aligned to the councils Levelling Up Fund programme and projects.
- A feasibility study for Dudley Town Centre and Stourbridge Town Centre to identify opportunities to use UKSPF to support in the development of business and/or community groups to drive forward improvements to the respective Town Centre's with the aim being to replicate the successful models in Halesowen (Halesowen Business Improvement District) and Brierley Hill (Brierley Hill Community Forum)

ii.) Enhancements to local parks

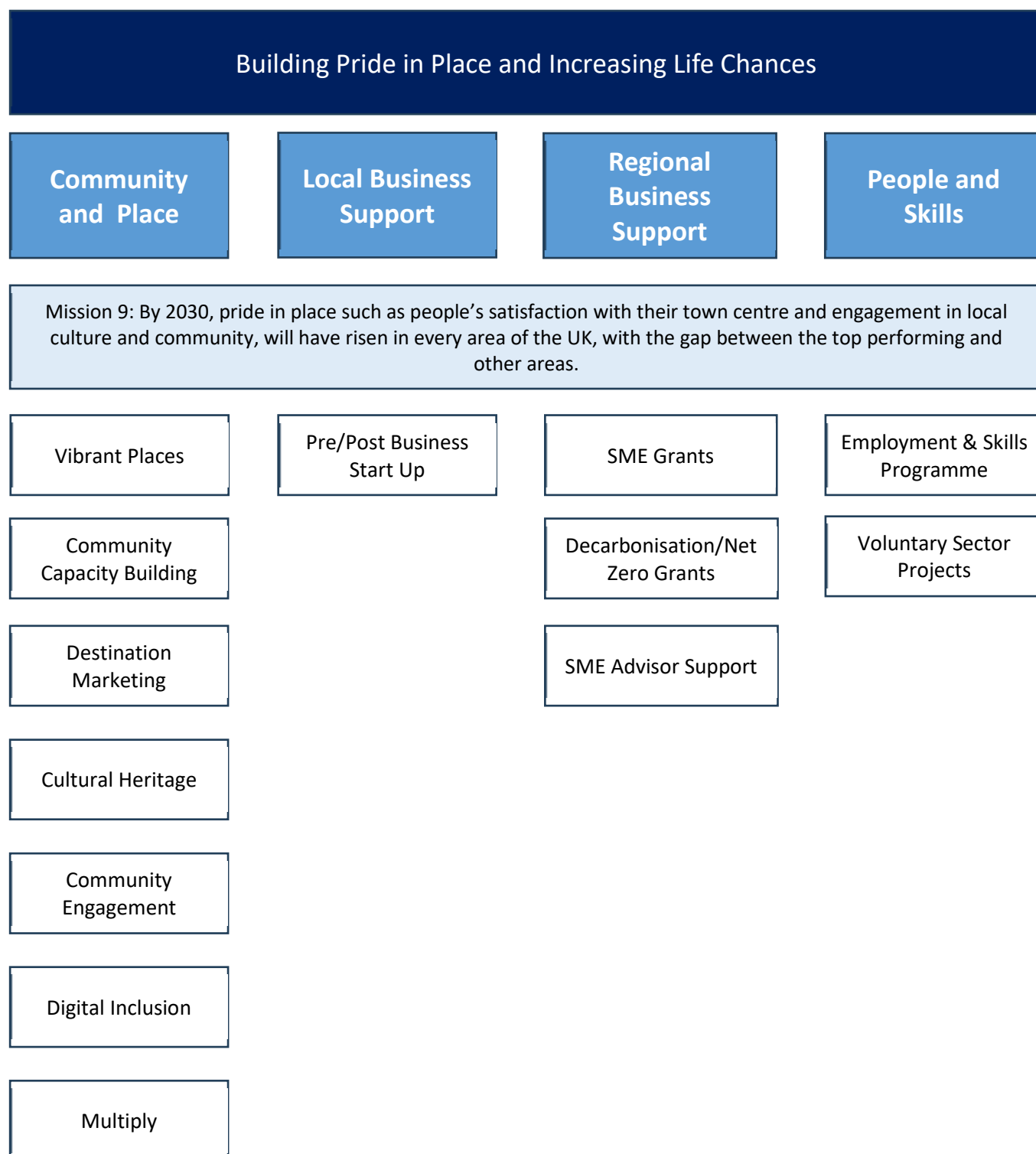
11. Several Parks and Green Spaces projects are also being funded including,
- Stevens Park, Quarry Bank – resurfacing of the skate park and play area and installation of knee rails
  - Buffery Park, Dudley – improvements and resurfacing of pathways and introduction of bollards and knee rails
  - Netherton Park – improvements and resurfacing of pathways
  - Priory Park, Dudley – replacement and refurbishment of benches
  - School Drive, Amblecote – improvements to the play area

12. The respective masterplan projects were included within the year 1 spend on the basis that UKSPF year 2 and 3 funding allocations will provide opportunities for small scale capital projects in town and district centres resulting from the masterplan and design works.

### **UKSPF Year 2 and Year 3 Project Activity**

13. The 16 March 2023 Cabinet Report approved the high level year 2 and year 3 programme schedule however, subsequent Government delays in approving the year 2 funding contract with WMCA meant that the Council was not presented to formally sign the deed of variation with WMCA to enable year 2 funding to be released until late October 2023. This has effectively resulted in the need to deliver a (12 month) year 2 programme of activity in less than 6 months.
14. Notwithstanding the above, the delays in the start of year 2 activity meant that the programme team could focus on the development of a UK SPF Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to operate throughout the period of funding which would enable services to be procured from local, regional and national organisations who successfully applied to become registered providers on the UK SPF DPS. The DPS has allowed the Dudley UK SPF programme to be divided into categories of products, works or services that are defined under the category of the procurement. An initial call for delivery organisations to register an interest in becoming part of the DPS was launched in May 2023 and currently 74 organisations have successfully registered on the DPS. As the programme is now in the delivery phase the DPS remains open for new organisations to register on an ongoing basis.
15. The diagram below shows how the UK SPF functional pillars determined at a national level have influenced the focus of programme level activity at a local level. The regional business support project is shown as a separate pillar given the dedicated funding and pre-determined outputs and outcomes assigned to the funding.

## Dudley UKPSF Programme by functional pillar



16. As noted above, to simply the procurement of activity via the DPS, the four functional pillars have been split into nine service lots (including the Multiply programme which is a Department for Education funded programme) each with a focus of activity and indicative funding allocation. These reflect the high-level intervention areas included in the 16 March 2023 cabinet report. The table below notes the anticipated value of activity to be procured against each service lot for years 2 (23/24) and year 3 (24/25)

Table 1. UK SPF/Multiply funding breakdown via Service Lot:

Service Lot	Description	Cap Rev Split	Year 2	Year 3	Total Lot value
			2023-34	2024-25	
Lot 1	Vibrant in Towns and High Streets	Capital	£200,000	£350,000	£550,000
		Revenue	£111,782	£39,960	£151,742
Lot 2	Visit, Discover Dudley	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£75,000	£125,000	£200,000
Lot 3	Culture and Heritage	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£75,000	£125,000	£200,000
Lot 4	Community Engagement	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£250,000	£210,000	£460,000
Lot 5	Increasing levels of Digital Inclusion	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£15,000	£20,000	£35,000
Communities & Place Totals		Capital	£200,000	£350,000	£550,000
		Revenue	£526,782	£519,960	£1,046,742
Lot 6	Pre-start, Start-up and early growth support	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£75,000	£115,883	£190,883
Lot 7	Established Businesses	Capital	£459,746	£851,557	£1,311,303
		Revenue	£260,993	£525,867	£786,860
Business Totals		Capital	£459,746	£851,557	£1,311,303
		Revenue	£335,993	£641,750	£977,743
Lot 8	Engagement, employment, training and skills.	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£0	£550,000	£550,000
People & Skills Totals		Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£0	£550,000	£550,000
Lot 9	Communities and Place, Visit, Discover Dudley	Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£206,715	£233,115	£439,830
Multiply Totals		Capital	£0	£0	£0
		Revenue	£206,715	£233,115	£439,830



## Dudley UKSPF project updates

### Communities and Place

#### **Vibrant Towns & Places (Service lot 1)**

17. The project seeks to improve vibrancy in town centres, high streets, neighbourhoods and green spaces. The project will also identify challenges and deliver targeted support to retail and leisure businesses. It will support and encourage alternative uses within public spaces and/or vacant units to increase vibrancy and appearance. Projects will also support wider aims towards improving safety, reducing crime and greening and cleaning of spaces. Marketing campaigns for businesses such as national high street campaigns may also be supported.

Sub projects include:

- i. **Dudley Town Centre Vibrancy Feasibility study (year 1)** which produced priority recommendations to improve vibrancy in Dudley Town Centre. Actions implemented as a result of the year 1 feasibility study include:
  - Pilot project to develop a business led **partnership for Dudley Town Centre**, building multidisciplinary stakeholder relationships, capacity and ownership. This partnership is helping to shape the recommendations and actions from the feasibility study.
  - Employing a **dedicated neighbourhood services officer** to bring enhanced cleaning and greening to Dudley Town Centre and problem areas. Includes enhanced graffiti and deep cleaning, small budget for planting and additional cleaning of the town centre full time until March 2025.
  - **Increased events and activities in the town**, including events budget and member of staff. Events have taken place at the marketplace during Summer, Halloween, and Christmas for example.
- ii. **Development of a Business Improvement District for Stourbridge Town Centre.**
- iii. **Public realm improvement projects / enhancements** – see paragraph 20 to 25 below.
- iv. **Procurement of a Crowdfunding Platform** and ringfencing of a grant pot to deliver community grants totalling up to £155k in match grant funding to be made available financial year 2024/25.

18. All projects are moving forward positively. The Town Centre Partnership in Dudley has been well received and attended, forging better links with wider stakeholders such as the council, Midlands Metro Alliance, Castle Hill, Transport for West Midlands. A core steering group is held monthly, and wider topic focussed session every quarter. It is clear from past experience that the partnership has to be business led, not Council led and this has been acknowledged by key stakeholders and as a result the partnership are beginning to look at potential governance structures that could help it become sustainable post March 2025. The Stourbridge BID project has also been extremely well received by local businesses and collaboration is already strong.

More recently three projects as listed below have been approved for capital funding totalling £106,960 to deliver public realm improvement projects following an internal call for projects.

### **Stourbridge Northern Gateway Lighting Project (£15,000)**

19. The project will deliver a lighting scheme which will not only improve safety and security in the area making it more likely that people will use this space and travel to and from the town centre, thereby supporting town centre footfall, but alongside the Community Infrastructure Levy investment in the pocket park will create a new area of public realm for people to dwell and enjoy the town centre, and forms part of the Stourbridge Town Centre project which has recently launched a public consultation.

### **Improvements to Dudley Market (£40,000)**

20. The Council recently appointed an independent consultant to advise on the work required to improve the vibrancy of the market, ensuring it once again becomes a welcoming and attractive place for customers to visit. Furthermore, advice was requested on ways to attract new traders.
21. An Action Plan was developed which included issues such as improving communication, signposting, cleanliness etc. We now wish to carry out their recommended improvements to the configuration of the market stalls which will open up the area aimed at ensuring increased footfall. A new catering area within the centre aisle has been designed, again, aimed at attracting more customers to the market.

The Council and Tudor Markets are keen to look at initiatives to attract a wider range of traders including food vendors and college students. Engaging with such 'operators' may be more productive once the new layout has been developed.

Furthermore, the new metro link is scheduled to stop near to the town centre, this has the potential to increase footfall into the town.

## **Refurbishment of outdoor gyms across Dudley (£51,960)**

22. The project is for the refurbishment work required to nine outdoor gyms that we have in the borough. The age of these gyms varies according to the time of their installation, but some date back to 2009. Although the equipment has generally remained functional and popular, there are inevitable issues, deterioration and failing items through use and age.

The nine sites are located across the borough, and as such the benefits would not be concentrated to a particular part of the borough. The nine sites are:

- Mary Stevens Park, Stourbridge
- Huntingtree Park, Halesowen
- Stevens Park, Quarry Bank
- Netherton Park
- Hawne Rec, Halesowen
- The Dell Stadium, Brierley Hill
- Clayton Park, Coseley
- Buffery Park, Kates Hill
- Silver Jubilee Park, Coseley

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

### Outputs

- No of neighbourhood improvements undertaken
- No of facilities supported/created
- No of local events or activities supported
- Amount of green or blue space created or improved (m2)
- Number of new or improved cycleways or paths

### Service Lot 1 Outcomes

- Increased footfall (% increase)
- Improved perception of facilities/amenities (%)
- Increased use of cycleways or paths (%)

## **Discover Dudley (Service Lot 2)**

23. The project will provide a refreshed promotion and marketing campaign for Dudley's local areas of historic interest, visitor attractions, and experiences to increase visitors and pride in place. Investment in additional in-house

communications will enable additional place marketing for key attractions in Dudley resulting in increased number of visitors.

Activities to date include:

- A significant number of digital, print, and social media advertising for Summer 2023.
- Advertisements promoting the Discover Dudley offer.
- Half page advertorial promoting the Stourbridge Glass Quarter in the December issue of Country Living Magazine.
- Three-page wrap in the Express & Star on 21 March 2024 targeting Easter school holiday's distributed to 70,000 homes across West Midlands and Staffordshire.

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

### Outputs

- Number of people reached (Number of people)

### Outcomes

- Increased visitor numbers
- Increase number of web searches for a place

### **Culture and Heritage (Service Lot 3)**

24. A Dudley Cultural Strategy and Action Plan has recently been commissioned to maximise culture's contribution to Dudley's economy, through collaborative working and implementation of a 10-year strategic vision and supporting action plan involving key partners and stakeholders.

Key outputs for the strategy include:

- a. Identifying the priorities, objectives, and outcomes for the strategy, alongside regional priorities for the sector.
- b. Positioning Dudley strongly to secure funding and investment in culture, ability to lever in funding making the case for investment, from regional and national sources.
- c. Bringing the cultural sector together and develop a wider network of stakeholder, champions, and providers in other sectors.
- d. Setting out the role for culture as a catalyst for change to the benefit for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

e. Baseline the cultural provision and sector in the borough of Dudley.

25. An Action Plan will also be developed which sets out:

- f. Prioritised deliverable actions and approach over the lifetime of the strategy for the short, medium, and long term.
- g. A framework which allows for its evolution as actions are completed and new ones emerge with a clear, justifiable process for incorporation.
- h. Outlines a resourcing and funding plan, including who will invest and where new investment might come from, including alternative scenarios and options.
- i. Considers communication, marketing, and ongoing engagement.

26. The Cultural Strategy and Action Plan is due to be completed by 31 March 2024 and it is envisaged that year 3 funding will be ring fenced to support the delivery of priority activity within the action plan in addition to utilising emerging double devolved cultural funding via the Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund

All of these actions will complement UK SPF / Multiply outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

#### Outputs

- Number of local events or activities supported

#### Outcomes

- Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support

### **Community Capacity Building – Residents (Service Lot 4)**

27. Six community organisations were appointed via the DPS in September 2023 to deliver community engagement programmes across the borough with a focus on engagement with local hard to reach residents to support their journey back into education and employment. The six organisations are:

- Just Straight Talk
- Black Country Housing Group
- Beacon Centre for the Blind
- Black Country Healthcare Foundation Trust

- Provision House (formerly known Loaves 'n' Fishes)
- The Connect Project, Top Church Training

28. Since September 2023, 101 residents have been engaged in the programme and meetings have recently been held with the Department for Work and Pensions and health partners to consider wider needs of the project to help shape and prioritise year 3 activity.

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

#### Outputs

- Number of local events or activities supported
- Number of people reached

#### Outcomes

- Improved engagement numbers (% increase)

#### **Local Business Support (Service Lot 6)**

29. This project comprises 3 strands of activity:
- **Pre-start, start-up, and early growth ('Start-Up Dudley')**: support to improve the life chances of new businesses. The budget will be used to commission start-up support appropriate to Dudley's needs.
  - **Grassroots entrepreneurship**: activity to promote pre-prestart entrepreneurship in Dudley's communities.
  - **Innovation**: activity to promote and support innovation within Dudley's business population, including raising awareness of innovation funding and support opportunities and highlighting success in innovation.
30. Good2Great Limited were contracted in December 2023 to deliver the BGWM in Dudley, startup programme for delivery across years 2 and 3 with delivery now underway. In addition, a first start-up eco market was held in Halesowen Town Centre on 2 December 2023 with support from Halesowen Business Improvement District
31. As part of the Innovation strand the Council supported Venturefest to bring their new Mobile Hub format to Dudley on 15 November 2023. This is the first time Venturefest has been outside of Birmingham. A Programme of innovation engagement is also being developed, including working with Innovate UK to bring an Innovate Local event to the Dudley in March 2024 and a further Venturefest Mobile Hub event scheduled for autumn 2024.

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

### Outputs

- Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready

### Outcomes

- Number of new enterprises created as a result of support

## **Regional Business Support (Service Lot 7)**

### SME Advisor Support

32. Provision of business support service to small medium enterprises (SME) in Dudley Borough to include triage, information, diagnostic, brokerage, and ongoing account management. The service level agreement with WMCA sets out the standards for the delivery of the business support service by each local authority - the service must be universal but tailored so that all businesses can access support, with resources targeted at priority businesses, such as those:
  - seeking to grow by employment and/or productivity measures
  - identified in the WMCA Plan for Growth
  - seeking to achieve net zero transition
  - eligible for local programmes, including grants
  - identified by local strategies
33. The Council has appointed Oxford Innovation Services (November 2023) as the supplier for the business support delivery contract to run across years 2 and 3 to provide navigator and account management services. Oxford Innovation's delivery team is now in place and work is underway to identify priority business support requirements for further spend within this project.

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

### Outputs

- Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support
- Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready

### Outcomes

- Number of enterprises with improved productivity

### **Dudley SME Grants Programme (DGP)**

34. A capital grant programme to stimulate business and enterprise activity, encourage investment and create local jobs by supporting eligible SME businesses. Assistance from DGP is in the form of a capital grant contribution of £2,500 - £50,000 with up to 50:50 match.
35. The project seeks to fund businesses where there is a demonstrable need for the proposed project and clear evidence of future growth of the business as a direct result of the proposals. Eligible activity includes relocation, expansion, and growth of existing businesses; developing new market opportunities; innovation, including the development of new products, including prototyping, testing, and commercialisation; improving systems and processes.

### **Dudley Decarbonisation and Net Zero Grants (DNZ)**

36. A capital grant programme to support SME businesses to make carbon savings through increased energy and resource efficiency. Assistance from DGP is in the form of a capital grant contribution of £2,500 - £50,000 with up to 50:50 match.
37. Grants will support businesses to purchase assets that will support them to become more efficient and cost effective. Eligible activity includes but is not limited to ventilation, heating, renewable technologies, lighting, refrigeration, compressors, insulation, recycling and waste and water management. Before applying for either grant, a free Business Growth West Midlands (BGWM) diagnostic must be completed through the Business Growth West Midlands in Dudley team. Both grant schemes went live in December 2023 and will run across years 2 and 3.

All of these actions will complement UKSPF outputs and outcomes reported to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities:

#### **Outputs**

- Number of enterprises receiving grants

#### **Outcomes**

- Increased amount (£) of Investment

### **People and Skills and Multiply (Service Lot 8 and 9)**

38. Multiply is part of the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund but is funded via the Department for Education. The overall objective of Multiply is to increase the



levels of functional numeracy in the adult population across the UK. Government have identified the following success measures for the whole programme at a national level:

- More adults achieving maths qualifications courses (up to, and including, Level 2 – with GCSEs and FSQs as the qualifications of choice in England – or equivalent) and an increase in participation in numeracy courses. We expect local areas to evidence improvements in functional numeracy, rather than solely participation in Multiply interventions.
- Improved labour market outcomes e.g., fewer numeracy skills gaps reported by employers, and an increase in the proportion of adults that progress into sustained employment and / or education.
- Increased adult numeracy across the population – this overall impact, which goes beyond achieving certificates or qualifications, will track both the perceived and actual difference taking part in the programme makes in supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work - and to feel more confident when doing so.

39. In Dudley the focus of the Multiply activity is to support residents to improve their financial resilience by working closely with voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver support. Five organisations have been appointed via the DPS to deliver Multiply activity on behalf of the council and these are,

- Aston University
- Business 2 Business
- Dudley Caribbean Friends Association
- Just Straight Talk
- Provision House formerly known as Loaves 'n' Fishes

To date, a total of sixty two residents in Dudley have been supported with financial resilience training via the programme since it was launched in September 2023.

#### 40. Multiply Outputs

- Expected number of learners participating in substantive learning provision.
- Number of people engaging in outreach/engagement focussed provision.
- Number of different types of initiative.
- Number of initiatives to be developed in collaboration with community groups.
- Number of initiatives that lead to a qualification.

## Multiply Outcomes

- Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2.
- Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2.
- Increased number of adults participating, acquiring, and evidencing skills through non-qualification provision, or towards a qualification, including online learning.
- Improved labour market outcomes.
- Increased adult numeracy (by supporting learners to improve their understanding and use of maths in their daily lives, at home and at work).

## **UK SPF Programme Governance**

41. The UK SPF programme has implemented the successful governance arrangements used to manage Black Country Impact, with the same Programme Management Team managing and administering all process and systems as well as establishing a Steering Group, Technical Support Group and an Operational Group. Each group has specific functions as articulated below and specifies in its Terms of Reference. All meetings will be formal with a chair, agenda, and minutes.

### **UK SPF Steering Group (SG)**

The SG oversees the strategic operations of all UK SPF activities to ensure that innovative solutions are found to tackle worklessness and business support in the sub-region. The group will be responsible for approving all funding requests from external delivery partners and advise on how to tackle issues escalated to the group.

42. The Steering Group is chaired by the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise and has representation from
- Cabinet Member
  - Shadow Cabinet Member
  - Public Health
  - Public Realm
  - Children's Services
  - Housing
  - Economic Growth & Skills
  - Programme Management Team
43. The group meets on a quarterly basis and will receive information on activities, progress, achievements, risks, and issues. The chair will in turn provide programme update reports to Dudley MBC's Major Projects Group and Cabinet.

### Technical Support Group (TSG)

44. The TSG is an internal Dudley MBC group made up of senior staff from Economic Development, Employment and Skills, Community and Place, Programme Management Team, Finance, IT, information governance, HR, internal audit, procurement and marketing. The groups remit is to ensure that all technical challenges faced by the Council in managing UK SPF are addressed in an efficient and timely manner to ensure the programme meets its strategic and operational objectives. The group is chaired by the Head of Economic Growth & Skills and meet quarterly.

### Operational Group (OG)

45. The OG's primary remit is to focus on delivery related matters and ensure that, all activities are addressing the needs of residents, businesses, and the local area, are fully compliant with funders regulations, and projects are achieving their contracted expenditure and output targets. The OG will also be responsible for implementing any recommendations or decisions made by the Steering Group or Technical Support Group regarding the programme, or specific individual activities. The group is chaired by the UKSPF Programme Manager and currently meets on a weekly basis.

### **Finance**

46. As previously noted, Dudley has been allocated £4,496,355 of UKSPF for Communities & Place, Local Business Support and People and Skills activity in order to develop a programme of activity which aligns with the priorities of UK SPF. A grant agreement was signed in February 2023 which included year 1 funding only. The council subsequently signed a deed of variation with WMCA in October 2023 to accept the year 2 funding allocation of £2,173,402.
47. This figure also includes an allocation from the regional business support programme to enhance the SME advisor capacity in Dudley as well as providing SME/Net Zero grants to businesses . We are now in discussions with WMCA regarding the timing of our year 3 Funding Agreement. It should be noted that WMCA has confirmed that any year 2 underspend can be carried forward into year 3.
48. As Government / WMCA continue with annual grant allocations the Council will need to manage the financial risk where the commissioned activity goes into

year 3, and this will be managed via back-to-back agreements with delivery partners / projects.

49. The Council will also receive annual revenue funding to support with the financial and performance monitoring of UKSPF projects. A total of £55,000 has been claimed to cover year 1 costs and further annual allocations of £110,000 have been confirmed in years 2 and 3 respectively. Capital funding allocations for year 1 to 3 have been included in the Councils capital programme which was reported to cabinet on 16 February 2023.

## **Law**

50. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate the discharge of any of its functions. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, a Local Authority has the power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do. Further advice will be required on the terms of any funding that is provided. However, the Council should expect to be required to confirm that all funded projects will comply with procurement and public sector subsidy requirements.

## **Risk Management**

51. As indicated in the financial section of the report there is a financial risk to the council where UKSPF activity is being commissioned across years 2 and 3, and this will need to be managed via back-to-back grant agreements with delivery partners / projects.
52. The reality of delivering programmes and projects under an entirely new system for UK SPF is not to be underestimated. As an authority, we have worked with existing funding systems and processes for skills and business support for decades. What is currently proposed is different from what has previously operated, meaning there is a steep 'learning curve' to go through, and it is crucial that resources are adequately allocated to the process of embedding UK SPF funded activity into council services if reputational risk is to be mitigated.
53. In order to mitigate these risks, the council has established a Programme Management Team (PMT) to oversee the development and management of all UKSPF activities. Until 31 December 2023, the team were the Lead Accountable Body for a £58m ESF Youth Employment Initiative programme delivered in collaboration with all four Black Country local authorities and has extensive knowledge and experience of managing complex programmes.
54. UKSPF projects and programmes are now subject to monthly internal monitoring meetings led by the PMT where progress against expenditure, outputs and outcomes are scrutinised to maximise performance against

contracted KPI's. Risks will be assessed at the meetings and mitigating actions will be logged and reviewed regularly. Where risks are deemed to be major, they will be reported to operational and or steering group meetings for discussion and decision where necessary.

### **Equality Impact**

55. It is envisaged that projects funded via UKSPF will have positive impact on people with different protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) by improving the access to employment and training opportunities as well as enhancing community infrastructure across the borough. In addition, the Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the delivery of any subsequent UKSPF projects.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

56. As detailed in the 27 October 2022 cabinet report, funding for the existing Black Country Impact Dudley delivery team and local accountable body team ended in December 2023. The majority of these posts are now being funded via UK SPF to oversee the programme management and delivery of 'People and Skills' activity following approval of decision sheet DRE/20/2023 in September 2023.
57. Where existing roles could not be extended or realigned to other service/council requirements this will be managed in accordance with the appropriate council HR processes.
58. Approval has also been sought to recruit to several fixed term project co-ordinator posts, via a secondment opportunity, which will be 100% funded via UKPSF. It is hoped that these posts will be in place by end of March 2024 following approval of decision sheet DRE/01/2024 in January 2024.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

59. As a local authority, we are required by law to adhere to Public Contract Regulations 2015, therefore, and have adopted Council procedures in setting up a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to operate throughout the period of funding to any delivery operator that satisfies the selection criteria.
60. The DPS will allow us to divide the whole programme into categories of products, works or services that are defined under the category of the procurement. It will also not restrict the number of delivery operators that can be admitted to the system.

## **Environment/Climate Change**

61. UKSPF will positively support local businesses, residents and community groups to address issues relating to climate change and net zero targets by providing advice, support and funding to make buildings and homes more energy efficient as and to support with issues relating to fuel poverty.
62. In addition, UK SPF will support the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Goal 3: Good Health & Wellbeing

Goal 7: Affordable and clean energy

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Goal 13: Climate Action

## **Council Priorities and Projects**

63. The UK SPF investment priorities of 'Communities and Place', 'Supporting Local Business' and 'People and Skills' and the proposed priorities for Dudley align fully with the Council priorities to be the 'Borough of Opportunity', the 'Borough of Ambition & Enterprise', a 'Safe and Healthy' borough and the 'Destination of Choice'.
64. in addition, the proposed interventions will support the aspirations of the Dudley Borough Vision 2030 through
  - Full of vibrant towns and neighbourhoods - improving the vibrancy in town centres and high streets access
  - A place to visit and enjoy that drives opportunity – continued promotion of Dudley as a tourist destination with improvements to the visitor experience
  - A place where everybody has the education and skills they need – proving employment and training support for local residents
  - Renowned as home to a host of innovative and prosperous business – dedicated support for businesses
  - A place of healthy, resilient and safe communities - supporting community capacity building and resilience
  - An affordable and attractive place to live with a green network of high quality parks, waterways and nature reserves – improvements to local green spaces and new open public spaces.



**Helen Martin**  
**Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**

Report Author: Paul Mountford, Head of Economic Growth & Skills  
Telephone: 01384 814186  
Email: [paul.mountford@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:paul.mountford@dudley.gov.uk)

### **List of Background Documents**

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

WMCA UKSPF Investment Plan

<https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/mm5dd5vp/ukspf-investment-plan-wmca-final.pdf>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Cabinet Report 27 October 2022

<https://dudley.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/116/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/543/Meeting/6444/Committee/468/Default.aspx>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Cabinet Report 16 March 2023 – Approval of Year 2 UKSPF Programme Schedule – Communities & Place and Local Business Support

<https://dudley.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/116/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/543/Meeting/6447/Committee/468/Default.aspx>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund Interventions, Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs – England

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62568938d3bf7f600782fd79/UKSPF\\_England\\_Outputs\\_and\\_Outcomes.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62568938d3bf7f600782fd79/UKSPF_England_Outputs_and_Outcomes.pdf)



West Midlands  
Combined Authority



UK Government

# LEVELLING — UP —





# Community & Place - Vibrant Places and Towns

## Dudley Town Centre Vibrancy Pilot



## Development of Stourbridge BID



## Events



- Town Centre Vibrancy Feasibility study completed.
- Dudley Town Centre Partnership group formed
- Capacity building of group
- 1 x Neighbourhood officer recruited for cleaning and greening

- Development of Business Improvement District ongoing.
- Launch campaign scheduled Oct 2024.
- Ballot scheduled end of 2024, if successful to commence April 2025.
- Group have been able to feed into recent consultation works.

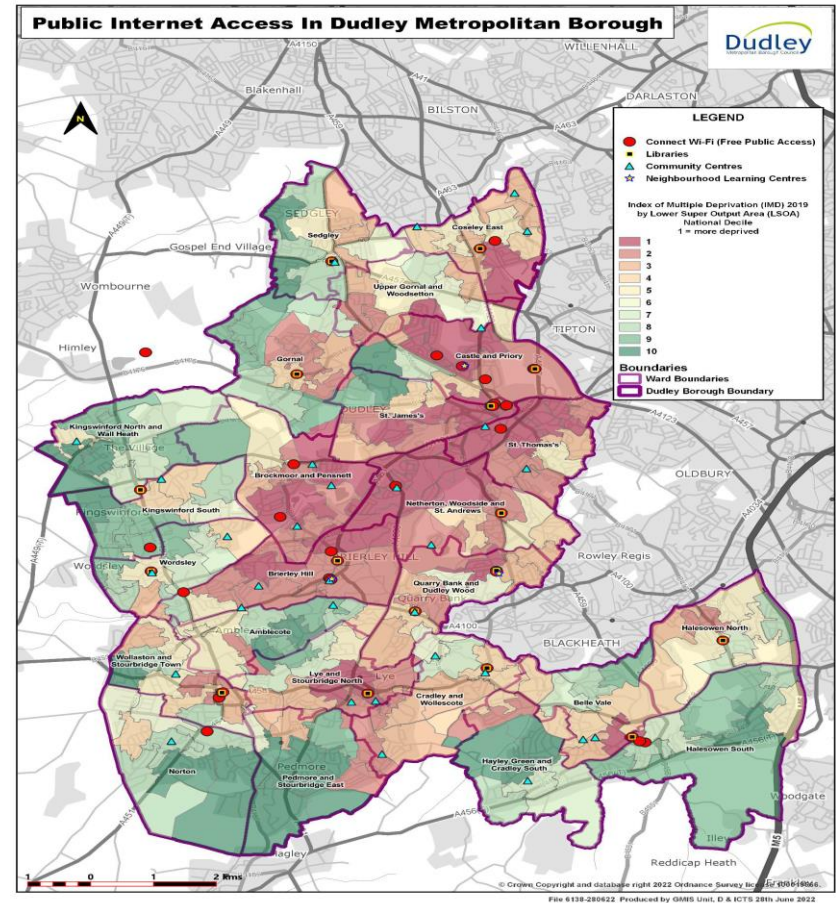
- 20+ events including half term activities in town centres (Dudley, Sedgley, Halesowen, Stourbridge, Brierley Hill).

# Communities & Place – Resident Delivery

- Six community organisations appointed through our Dynamic Purchasing System to engage with local residents and provide support, motivation, resilience, confidence building opportunities prior to progressing into employment and learning opportunities.
- To date 98 residents are being supported with group and one to one activities which will help them with future opportunities to engage with formal education and employment..
- Next Steps – Year 3 – negotiating contract allocations for final delivery year.

# Communities & Place – Digital Inclusion

- Mapping exercise completed with ICT services to consider investment and support for digital connectivity for local community facilities.
- 2 centres have been agreed for internet server improvements, with work to be completed by March 2024.
- Year three priorities under discussion



# Multiply - Financial Resilience

- Five community organisations appointed through our DPS to engage with local employed residents to provide financial resilience support with progression opportunities to formal education.
- To date 72 employed residents are being supported with group and one to one activities which will help them with financial management, understanding of basic maths and career progression opportunities.
- Next Steps – Year 3 – negotiating contract allocations for final year.





# Regional Business

## Business support and advice for SMEs

- Procured Oxford Innovation Services to deliver information, diagnostic, brokerage, advice and account management services to support Dudley SMEs to thrive, collaborate, innovate, and grow.
- More than 70 businesses supported November-February.



## Dudley SME Grant Programme

- Scheme launched in December 2023; first successful applicants expected to contract before end of year 2.



## Dudley Decarbonisation & Net Zero Grant

- Scheme launched in December 2023; first successful applicants expected to contract by end of y2.



# Local Business

## Start Up programme for Dudley

- Procured Good2Great Ltd to deliver a comprehensive business start-up support offer; building micro and small businesses and delivering activities to support them across the borough.
- Over 30 entrepreneurs registered to join programme since December 2023.

## Innovation

- Strengthened relationships with innovation organisations to bring 2 innovation events to Dudley in Q3/Q4 – Venturefest Mobile Hub and Innovate Local

## Grassroots entrepreneurship

- Start-up market project delivered in Halesowen



---

**Corporate & Economic Strategic Select Committee 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise**

**Stalled sites - strategies for bringing back into use vacant or derelict land and property.**

**Purpose**

1. This report is to update Corporate & Economic Strategic Select Committee on the activity undertaken by the local authority to bring back into use land and property which remains derelict or untidy or where development is stalled since the last update to the committee on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that Corporate & Economic Strategic Select Committee:
  - Note the progress made since report to Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023
  - Acknowledge the positive actions being undertaken by services in seeking to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remains vacant and derelict.
  - Endorse the methodology for drawing up the revised short and long list of sites to be included in the programme for the next period.
  - Recognise the limitations of statutory powers in requiring private landowners to bring forward vacant and derelict sites for development.
  - Recognise the constraints on resources following the introduction of spending controls measures and the implications on service priorities

**Background**

3. The council has established a multi directorate working group of officers to encourage positive actions from private landowners to bring forward development using vacant and or derelict land and property.

4. The council has established strategies and a range of statutory powers which we can deploy where the circumstances allow. These have previously been reported to the committee in the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023 report and include the councils;

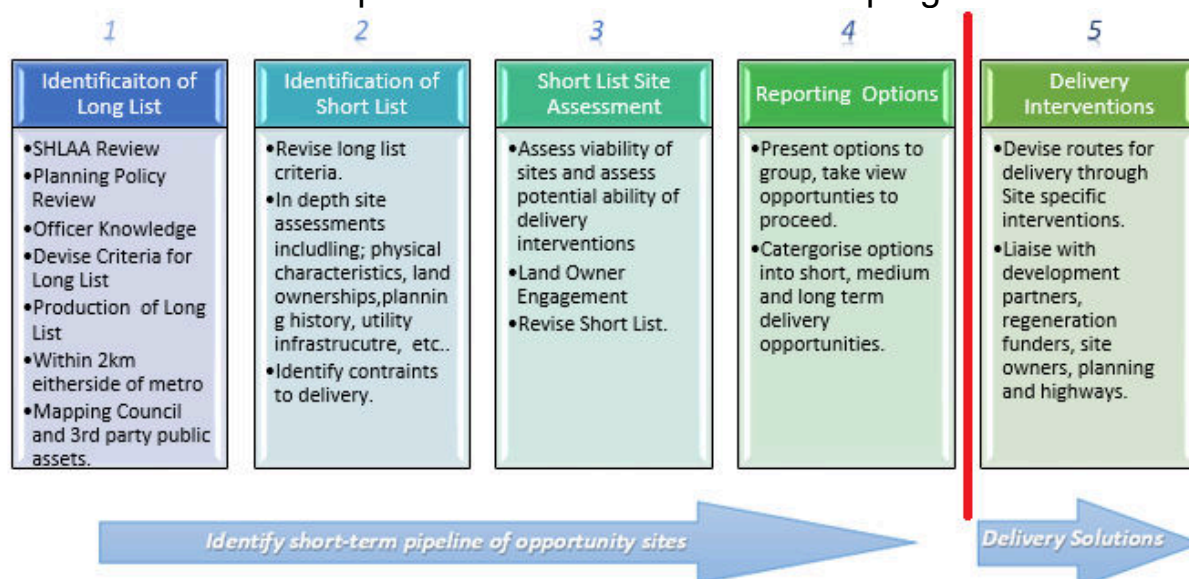
- Empty Homes Strategy,
- Empty Homes Grant,

As well as enforcement tools in the form of

- Empty Dwelling Management Orders,
- Enforced Sale,
- Section 215 Notice, and the power of last resort,
- Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

## Site Progress

5. The programme started with an initial long list of 68 sites. This has been added to in last six month following further ward walks undertaken by the Chief Executive and local ward councillors as well as new officer recommendations.
6. A prioritised list of 20 sites was decided upon for first tranche of work and these 20 have been the focus of the work programme to date. The methodology for scoring these sites is included below;
7. For a site to become part of the Stalled and Derelict Sites programme, officers in the working group will undertake a separate assessment for each site, before placing either into the long list short list or recommend the site is unsuited to become listed within the programme. The chart below, shows the steps taken for the initial long listing task, and for consistency will be used as new sites are put forward for inclusion in the programme.





The working group then undertake a scoring exercise based on these criteria:

8. 1 = Priority Site - proceed to short list for further assessment.  
2 = Important site - remain on long list  
3 = Not a priority site at this stage - site does not proceed any further
9. The individual sites scores are noted, the whole list of sites is then reordered according to their score. The result of which will be a revised long list. Officers will then recommend to Regeneration & Enterprise Strategy Group which new sites should be added to the working group's short list & form the basis for new activity.
10. The Stalled & Derelict sites working group subsequently separated these sites in to four initial categories. Since then, the working group have introduced a fifth category to review / remove from the programme, sites that should no longer form part of the programme due a range of factors including the positive development of sites.

The four categories are:

**Category 1** - Positive actions of private sector landowner towards delivery (e.g., Recent pre-applications advice, recent full application submitted or impletion of)

**Category 2** - Positive actions of DMBC/landowner towards delivery (e.g., Pre-applications, recent full application submitted or impletion of, recent negotiations, recent conversations)

**Category 3** – No recent engagement with landowners, further information required and group steer to co-ordinate next steps.

**Category 4** – Typically long-term difficult site with private sector owners, enforcement action and heritage status - Group steer to co-ordinate next steps required.

**Category 5** – Review appropriateness of placement on Longlist/Shortlist.

11. Following the latest additional sites being considered as per paragraph 5 the original long and short list is in the process of being updated and as per the table 1 below it is suggested that seven sites are removed from the short list and replaced and nine to be removed from the long list with a further twenty six sites to be further reviewed.

The updated list will be taken to a subsequent meeting of the Regeneration and Enterprise Strategy Group for approval as per the governance process noted in paragraph 9 of the report.

Table 1. Short list & Long list review

Remain on short list	13
Remove from short list	7
<b>Total short list</b>	<b>20</b>
Remain on long list	13
Remove from long list	9
Review appropriateness of placement on long list	26
	<b>48</b>
<b>Total long list</b>	<b>68</b>

### **Working Group Progress**

12. Following the success of first round of Homes England revenue funding to support with Stalled and Derelict sites activity, a further opportunity arose in December 2023, to bid into Homes England for additional revenue funding (up to £70,000), to procure specialist property development and legal expertise. Following submission of a bid we were notified in late December 2023 that we have been successful in securing an additional £70,000 revenue funding which must be spent by financial year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
13. A tender exercise was quickly undertaken via the Homes England Framework and we have subsequently appointed external advisors Thomas Lister surveyors Freeths solicitors and PCPT architects to consider and report on routes to bring forward a further nine sites for redevelopment. A final draft report is expected mid March 2024.
14. In addition, a report was taken to Cabinet in December 2023, to establish the principle of progressing background work including the service of statutory notices, reinforcing the Council's willingness to use its CPO powers on sites that fall within the programme, subject to meeting the CPO tests, suitability, funding, and end use.
15. In terms of individual sites having acquired the Freehold Title to all the land required for the scheme at 122 to 128 Colley Gate, in summer 2023, a decision was taken to withdraw from the Public Enquiry for the CPO at Colley Gate and approval has subsequently been sought to commence the demolition of properties to facilitate the redevelopment of the site which is due to commence in February 2023 and be completed by the end of March 2024. Other example sites where positive progress has been made are included at appendix 1.

## **Next Steps**

16.
  - Continue to hold Cross directorate multi-disciplinary working group meetings to oversee the programme and actions for shortlisted sites.
  - Oversight of the demolition and site preparation, for the Colley Gate site.
  - Work with colleagues in Corporate Landlord Services to bring the council owned sites to the market for redevelopment purposes.
  - Develop delivery options and work plans incorporating recommendations of commission into actionable steps to progress regeneration of sites.
  - Report to and seek endorsement of action plans from RESG and onward to lead Member for Regeneration and Enterprise.
  - Update high-level project plan, including spend profile for the programme.
  - Review and update scoring of sites added to the long list since 2021 and begin to prioritise next tranche of priority sites.
  - Provide Cabinet and shadow cabinet and members of CESS a copy of the stalled and derelict sites list.
  - Update the mapping of the sites on the councils Geographic Information System – Mapping Online GIS-MO.
  - Investigate options to secure additional external funding to progress priority sites given the introduction of spending control measures and the implications of the recent decision noted in paragraph 17.

## **Finance**

17. A £1 million budget was approved by the Council in February 2022 to support the work of the stalled & derelict sites working group, with a specific focus to facilitate the acquisitions of properties by the council to bring forward development. The £1million is funded by prudential borrowing, the debt charges for which are to be built into the Council's base budget.
18. To date the only costs incurred have been on the acquisition and demolition & associated fees, of the properties at Colley Gate however, it should be noted that any future spend will be subject to the councils spending control measures, and following a recent review of the Capital Programme it has

been agreed that any future spend against this budget is delayed until financial year 2027/28, leading to revenue budget savings.

19. In addition, over the last 12 months a total of £130,000 revenue grant funding has been received from Homes England to support the work of the stalled and derelict sites working group.

## **Law**

20. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything (whether involving the expenditure, borrowing, or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.
21. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do. Section 123 Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Council receives best consideration in respect of disposals of land.
22. There are a number of statutory authorities for intervention but to summarise they include the following: Legal Services will advise on a case-by-case basis.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

Law of Property Act 1925

Compulsory Purchase Act 1965

Land Compensation Act 1973

Housing Act 1985 & 2004

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

## **Risk Management**

23. There are no identified material risks to the Council resulting from the report. As part of the proposed delivery plan for each priority site a detailed risk register will be developed that captures any key risks. Where the council is taking a lead role in the development of sites key risks are likely to include the ongoing effect of inflation on construction projects and the impact this has on budget allocations.

## **Equality Impact**

24. There will be no negative impact on people with protected characteristics as a result of this report. The development of regeneration projects is

undertaken with full regard to the requirement for equality impact assessment.

The Council's Equality and Diversity policies will be applied throughout the delivery of this project

Equality impact assessments will be developed for individual schemes where the need to is identified by the site working group.

There are no specific impacts that will affect children / young people.

### **Human Resources/Organisational Development**

25. There are no direct HR/OD impacts associated with this report. Where additional specialist support is required to support the activity of the working group this will be procured in line with the Council's standing orders.

### **Commercial/Procurement**

26. There are no direct commercial implications associated with this report. Where additional specialist support is required to support the activity of the working group this will be procured in line with the Council's standing orders.

### **Environment & Climate Change**

27. The establishment of the Stalled and Derelict site programme, with the aim to promote and support the redevelopment of former brownfield sites for commercial development accords with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

### **Council Priorities and Projects**

28. Bringing back into use vacant and derelict sites will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Dudley residents through improved residential amenity and a reduction of anti-social behaviour which is often associated with derelict sites.  
It will also work towards providing access to a range of housing offers that are affordable, accessible, and attractive, meeting the needs of our diverse communities.



**Helen Martin**  
**Director of Regeneration & Enterprise**

Report Author (s): Paul Mountford, Head of Economic Growth & Skills  
Telephone: 01384 814186  
Email: [paul.mountford@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:paul.mountford@dudley.gov.uk)

Mary Cox, Strategic Development Surveyor  
Telephone: 01384 815345  
Email: [mary.cox@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:mary.cox@dudley.gov.uk)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Stalled and Derelict site examples

# Stalled & Derelict Sites

## Before and after photographs – Appendix 1

The following are all examples of sites that have / are in the process of being redeveloped as a result of intervention from the council's Stalled and Derelict Sites programme.

### 1. Market Street, Stourbridge.



32 Market Street, Stourbridge is the site of the former Page Arms Public House, and was the subject of informal enforcement action by the Local Planning Authority.

The site has now been successfully redeveloped for 19 residential units and is now fully occupied.



## 2. Former Commercial Inn, Pensnett.



The former Commercial Inn, Pensnett had been the subject of various planning applications and subsequent formal enforcement action through a Section 215 of The Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

The site is now nearing completion for 6-unit apartment scheme.



### 3. 122 to 128 Colley Gate, Halesowen.



122 to 128 Colley Gate is row of derelict shops that have remained vacant since circa 2015. The Council has now successfully acquired 122 to 126 Coley Gate which will facilitate a planned redevelopment of the site for residential use following approval of a planning application P22/0220 in May 2021 for 8 apartments.

#### 4. Enville Street, Stourbridge.



A council owned site which has remained a long-term vacant site. Stalled and Derelict Sites programmed assessed planning and development potential and achieved full planning approval subject to condition in March 22. Planning approved for 10 apartments split seven one-bed apartments and three-two bed apartments over three levels with 12 parking spaces.

**Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker**

<b>Subject (Date of Meeting)</b>	<b>Recommendation/action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer/Area</b>	<b>Status/Notes</b>
Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Delivery Update (11 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024)	Minute No. 42 Resolution (3) - That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to confirm whether the Parkhead Viaduct was locally listed.	Director of Regeneration and Enterprise	Response circulated to Members 12 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024 <b>(Completed)</b>
Progress on Major Regeneration Projects (11 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024)	Minute No. 43 (Resolution 2) - That the Chair consider the comments made with regard to scheduling an urgent Committee meeting where Members could examine the most controversial and impactful of proposals within the remit of the Select Committee.	Chair / Vice-Chair and Relevant Officers	Confirmation received that an additional cycle of meetings was not possible due to the restricted timescales. Concerns raised by the Committee were forwarded to the Director of Finance and Legal on 15 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024. <b>(Completed)</b>

Progress on Major Regeneration Projects (11 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024)	Minute No. 43 (Resolution 3) - That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to provide a written response to options considered in relation to car parking following the closure of Pool Road Car Park, Halesowen.	Director of Regeneration and Enterprise	Response circulated to Members on 30 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024 <b>(Completed)</b>
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 2 (11 <sup>th</sup> January, 2024)	<p>Minute No. 44 (Resolution 2):-</p> <p>That the Corporate Performance Manager be requested to: -</p> <p>(i) Discuss with relevant officers future reporting of the Corporate Performance Report to all Select Committees.</p> <p>(ii) Provide a written response on the Council's Policy for COVID testing and the measures taken across the Council to mitigate stress levels for employees in view of the current financial situation and challenging times ahead.</p> <p>(iii) Liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair on dedicated sessions focusing on specific elements raised by the Committee, including complaints and sickness absence, in future reports.</p>	<p>Corporate Performance Manager</p> <p>Corporate Performance Manager</p> <p>Corporate Performance Manager/Chair/Vice-Chair</p>	<p><b>Noted.</b></p> <p>Awaiting a response <b>(outstanding)</b></p> <p>To be considered at future Agenda Meetings and rolled-forward to the next Municipal Year, if appropriate.</p>

	(iv) Investigate whether an overview of the reasons why employees had left the authority could be provided to Members for information.	Corporate Performance Manager / Assistant Director People and Inclusion	Awaiting a response <b>(outstanding)</b>
--	--	---	---