

Kirklees Inclusive Economy Strategy

November 2024

Foreword – Carole Pattison, Leader Kirklees Council

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FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

This is the first Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) for Kirklees, developed by Kirklees Council.

Inclusive growth is defined by the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission as *'enabling as many people as possible to contribute to and benefit from growth.'* This can be both social – benefitting people across the labour market spectrum, including groups that face high barriers to high quality employment – or place based, addressing inequalities in opportunity between different localities¹.

The Inclusive Economy Strategy sets out how, working with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners we will create the conditions for economic growth across Kirklees – and how, working together, we will ensure that as many communities and residents as possible both contribute to and benefit from growth.

The Inclusive Economy Strategy covers the period from 2025-2030. It sets out a vision, objectives and high level priorities for action under three main themes:

- supporting our **People** to have the skills they need and to access jobs where those skills will be put to good use, including helping those residents who are furthest from the labour market to re-enter and remain in work
- supporting **businesses**, including social enterprises to start up, grow and invest so they create more good jobs, improve their productivity and increase wage levels whilst contributing to wider inclusive growth aims
- investing in our diverse **Places** and the physical and digital connections between them to increase access to job opportunities for Kirklees residents, widen the talent pool for local businesses and ensure that Kirklees remains a fantastic place to live, work and do business.

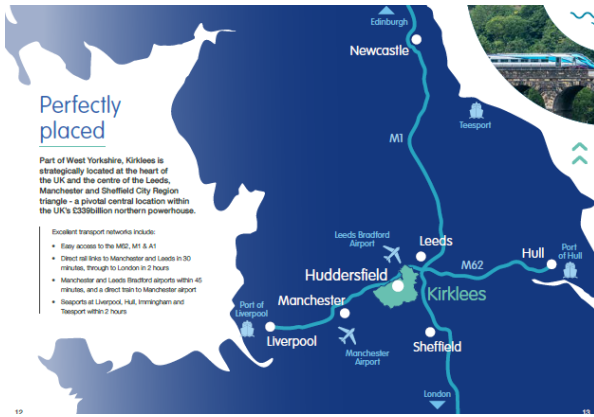
The strategy is aligned with the Government's emerging Industrial Strategy and with the Local Growth Plan developed by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in response. The Inclusive Economy forms part of a wide suite of 'top tier' strategies developed by the Council and its partners – the Inclusive Communities Framework, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Environment Strategy. The strategy will inform the review of the Kirklees Local Plan.

¹ Inclusive Growth Commission – Making our Economy Work for Everyone, RSA, 2017

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Introduction

Perfectly placed between the core cities of Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, Kirklees is an exceptional business location with strong connections to the UK's strategic road and rail network offering ready access to international airports and seaports.



Why Kirklees

Kirklees is the perfect place for businesses to grow, innovate and improve efficiency. We have industrial property solutions for investing businesses, including priority areas offering incentives and opportunities for development of employment space.

An integral part of our £9.35 billion GVA economy, 15,000 local businesses benefit from:

- Commercial property rents up to c15% cheaper than competitor destinations
- Grade A office space costing up to c20% less than nearby cities



Potential incentives to support delivery of employment space



Access to 7 million consumers within one hour's travel



First access to world-leading research and innovation centres



Dedicated business support via Business Kirklees



Affordable gigabit-speed internet services across 86% of the district



A skilled local workforce, with significant labour-saving costs



A highly developed sector supply chain and easy access to exporting



A beautiful, vibrant place to live and work

Our diverse network of larger towns – Huddersfield and Dewsbury – and local centres (like Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth and Marsden) – are evolving as centres for shopping, leisure and community activity and offer a wide range of housing with easy access to beautiful surroundings.

Connectivity within Kirklees and to the core cities beyond is being transformed through unprecedented levels of public investment in infrastructure projects like the TransPennine Route Upgrade, reducing journey times between Leeds and Manchester from over an hour to just forty minutes.

Alongside planned improvements to the Penistone Line connecting Huddersfield with Sheffield, these investments will increase access to job opportunities and widen the talent pool for local businesses. Bus deregulation also offers significant opportunities to connect more people with jobs and learning. In the long-term, the regional Mass Transit programme aims to improve connectivity between Leeds and Dewsbury. We also need continued improvements to our strategic road network, and to build on our active travel infrastructure to deliver a cohesive network that offers a safe and viable alternative to car use for short journeys.

Despite these improvements, we have yet to realise our full economic potential. This section of the IES sets out some of the opportunities and challenges that will need to be addressed over the next five years.

(Following section to have graphs/images added)

Our business stock

The Kirklees economy comprised 17,450 separate 'business units' in 2024. 84.1% of these were microbusinesses employing fewer than 10 staff – slightly below the England average of 84.6%. Just 60 businesses in Kirklees have more than 250 employees.

The number of new business start-ups in Kirklees increased from 1,735 in 2017 to 2,155 in 2022, or 18.4% of all start-ups in West Yorkshire, in proportion to our share of the West Yorkshire business stock. Business startup data suggests that entrepreneurs from neighbourhoods in Kirklees falling into the 20% most deprived nationally are now responsible for 40% of new businesses.

Key sectors

Manufacturing remains a key driver of the local economy, accounting for 25,000 employee jobs in 2023 or 15.8% of all jobs in Kirklees, more than double the England average of 7.4%. This figure has remained consistent since 2015.

With twice the national average concentration of manufacturing and engineering industry, and an established global reputation in multiple fields, Kirklees retains a pivotal role in the UK supply chain – with many businesses demonstrating their resilience by supplying a wide range of different sectors.

Key specialisms include textiles, which has been synonymous with Kirklees for over 300 years and still employs over 3,500 people locally. The home of textile innovation, Kirklees leads the way in sustainable fashion and design, textile and product manufacturing, supplying fabric to world's most prestigious and best known fashion brands, with products exported across the world.

Our advanced precision engineering cluster produces gears, bearings, valves, pumps, motors, turbochargers and other critical components for diverse markets. Global automotive manufacturers, niche precision engineering supply chain companies and leading-edge innovators combine precision manufacturing with data analytics, artificial intelligence and robotics. This is reinforced by the presence of the National Physical Laboratory at the University of Huddersfield which provides world leading measurement capability.

Alongside these sectors, exciting new opportunities are emerging in the health and life sciences. Huddersfield is emerging as a key regional hub for health, wellbeing, medical and digital technologies. The University of Huddersfield's National Health Innovation Campus (NHIC) will create the largest and most dynamic centre for workforce transformation and healthcare innovation in the North of England, building on the University's world leading research and innovation expertise in areas including clinical diagnostics, skin integrity and infection prevention.

With the benefit of Investment Zone status, the aim is to curate a unique mix of research institutions, public health facilities and businesses seeking to co-locate alongside the NHIC to access its expertise and facilities. This will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the Station to Stadium Corridor which connects Huddersfield's iconic railway station with the John Smith's Stadium to the east of the town centre.

Productivity

Productivity is a key measure of an area's economic effectiveness and over the last decade Kirklees has seen a significant improvement. ONS estimate that the Kirklees economy generated Gross Value Added of some £8.5bn in 2022 – representing a 31% increase over 2015 levels and in line with GVA growth for England as a whole over the same period.

Whilst individual measures of productivity have seen significant improvement in recent years - GVA per hour worked in Kirklees has risen from £22.20 in 2012 to £30.70 in 2022, or 77% of the UK average – a significant gap remains. Factors affecting productivity include workforce skills, workforce participation, access to capital, diffusion and adoption of innovation and 'market dynamism' – the gradual movement of capital and labour from less productive to more productive firms.

There is also a strong correlation between productivity improvements and increased wage levels and household income. Gross weekly pay for full-time workers in Kirklees (based on place of residence) was just 89% of the England average in 2023 – representing a gap of more than £70 per week for the average full-time worker.

West Yorkshire has seen lower investment as a share of GVA than the already low national average. Performance has particularly diverged since 2013 at which point the region's productivity also diverges from the national average. Closing the investment gap would have required an additional £2.5bn of investment in West Yorkshire in 2019 alone.

Our economy has seen significant transformation of the last twenty years through automation and this will continue to be a factor in driving up productivity. This takes different forms across sectors through robotics in manufacturing to self-checkouts in retail. This progress is set to continue, as is the uptake of artificial intelligence. Whilst this undoubtedly means that some jobs roles will be a greater risk of redundancy moving forward, there is also an opportunity to create new, skilled roles to support greater use of automation, digitisation and AI.

Demographics and the labour market

Kirklees had a population of 433,500 residents in 2021. In the ten years from 2011, the population increased by 2.5% - a slower growth rate than for Yorkshire and Humber (3.7%) or England (6.6%) as a whole. In 2021, 62.2% of the Kirklees population was aged 16-64 or of working age, slightly lower than the working age population of England as a whole (63%).

Kirklees is a net exporter of labour to other parts of West Yorkshire, with 2021 (pre-COVID) data highlighting significant net outflows of commuters to Leeds in particular (-13,564 commuters) but also to Bradford, Calderdale and Wakefield. There is a small net inflow of less than 1,500 commuters from Barnsley.

Commuting patterns partly explain why the low number of jobs available in Kirklees relative to the number of working age adults (the 'jobs density') is low – at just 0.66 in 2022, compared to the England average of 0.88. Job density is also higher in the adjoining local authority areas (e.g. Wakefield 0.80, Calderdale 0.83, Leeds 1.03) which suggests there is scope to increase employment and economic activity rates in Kirklees as long as residents have the necessary skills and the right environment for business growth is in place.

There has been a significant reduction in the number of adults holding no qualifications – in December 2023 this equated to 6.6% of residents aged 16+, only marginally higher than the England average of 6.2%. The proportion of Kirklees residents qualified to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A-C) also mirrors the England average, but there is a significant divergence at Levels 3 and 4.

41.2% of Kirklees residents hold a degree or higher qualification (RFQ Level 4) – significantly lower than the England average. Closing the gap would require almost 15,000 Kirklees residents to achieve a Level 4 qualification.

Poverty, worklessness and health

Economic inactivity has increased both locally and nationally since the COVID pandemic, especially for residents aged 50+. In June 2024 there were 64,600 economically inactive residents of working age (23.5% of the working age population compared with 21.0% for England as a whole) – 10,000 of which want to work.

The overall picture of economic inactivity is worse for women as the gap to the national average is wider (around 4%) than for men (around 2%) and continues to diverge. Poor health and worklessness are inextricably linked, with a high proportion of economically inactive residents suffering from one or more limiting health condition. This is especially the case for residents aged 50+.

Health inequalities are especially acute in our most deprived neighbourhoods – with males living in our most deprived wards experiencing a difference in life expectancy of 8.6 years than those living in our most affluent wards. Health Equity North found in their *Health for Wealth* report that ill-health in the North of England:

- reduced the probability of remaining in employment by 4.9% (3.5% in rest of England),
- reduced relative weekly wages by 32.4% (19.5% in rest of England),
- reduced household income by 13.3% (no effect in rest of England), and
- amongst those who remained in employment, reduced hours worked by 5.6% (7.9% in rest of England).

Kirklees has three neighbourhoods within the wealthiest quarter in England but also a quarter within the poorest 10%. Nationally we know that disposable income – our best measure of living standards – for the bottom 10% of households barely changed over the 20 years to 2020 while all other groups saw improvements of around 25%.

Alternative business models

A healthy and resilient economy is one which has a range of business types and broad ownership. Community ownership and worker ownership have been demonstrated to be beneficial in improving long-term decision making and increasing investments in research and development as well as improving employee terms and conditions and environmental impact.

Employee ownership is seeing a rapid increase nationally and there have been some recent examples of Kirklees businesses taking up this option to ensure succession. This option may be attractive to more SMEs moving forward. There are also opportunities to extend cooperative approaches in key areas including rolling out digital infrastructure, renewable energy generation and home energy efficiency.

Sustainability and net zero

Human activity since the industrial revolution – particularly burning of fossil fuels – has driven climate change. The 2015 Paris Agreement created a legally binding international treaty on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit climate change to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Kirklees Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, and following analysis by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change agreed to reach net zero – i.e. no longer adding to the total amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane – and climate ready by 2038. This is in line with the 2038 net zero targets agreed by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Yorkshire Leaders Board.

In 2022, the transport sector accounted for 28% of UK emissions with industry accounting for a further 19%. Business therefore has a critical role to play in meeting net zero targets – in the transition away from fossil fuels to sustainable energy sources, in reducing waste and use of resources and in developing more sustainable solutions to transport goods and employees.

There are significant economic opportunities for Kirklees businesses arising from the transition to net zero. This includes being part of the renewable energy supply chain and developing sustainable construction methods as well as developing the role of the circular economy which reduces waste and supports refurbishment and recycling of materials and products.

Capitalising on this opportunity will require more businesses and their employees to acquire green skills. For Universities, Colleges and training providers delivering appropriate training courses can be challenging as there is often a lag in business/learner demand which drives funding.

Conclusion

Kirklees is a great place to start and grow a business – but we have yet to fully capitalise on its economic potential. Unprecedented levels of infrastructure investment, particularly in improving rail connectivity, are opening up new opportunities for housing and commercial development and widening access to skilled labour from across West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

Manufacturing and engineering continue to play a vital role in our economy, alongside new opportunities in the health and life sciences. We are truly 'the supply chain' to the nation, with many of our most resilient and dynamic businesses supplying a wide range of sectors.

Productivity is improving, but there is still a significant gap to the UK average and this impacts not only on our economic performance but also on wage levels and household incomes. In addition, levels of economic inactivity are rising, often linked to poor health, particularly in those aged 50 and over. Tackling these challenges together is essential if Kirklees is to be a genuinely inclusive economy affording all residents the opportunity to both contribute and benefit from growth.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Inclusive Economy Strategy has been developed during a period of change in the national policy landscape, with a new Government adopting a renewed focus on economic growth including the early publication of an Industrial Strategy Green Paper three months into its first term in office.

This section of the IES presents an overview of the national, regional and local policy frameworks and the related policy drivers that will impact on the delivery of the strategy.

Industrial Strategy Green Paper – ‘Invest 2035’

The Government published the Industrial Strategy Green Paper in October 2024. The Green Paper outlines how the Government plans to develop a new industrial strategy that will *‘deliver the certainty and stability that businesses need to invest in the high growth sectors that will drive...growth.’*

The Green Paper indicates that the slowdown in productivity growth since 2008 and its consequent impact on household income and living standards will be the key focus of the Industrial Strategy. It argues that whilst private investment and entrepreneurship must be at the heart of the strategy, there is a clear ‘strategic and coordinating role’ for Government, and that *‘there is a need to prioritise and target policy interventions carefully in areas that will deliver the largest growth benefit.’*

The Industrial Strategy will focus on enabling *‘growth that supports high quality jobs and ensures that the benefits are shared across people, places and generations.’* It will also incorporate objectives on net zero, regional growth and economic security.

The Green Paper notes that UK productivity growth since the late 1990s has been concentrated in a limited number of economic sectors. It proposes to prioritise eight growth-driving sectors, based on their contribution to driving productivity growth, which will be the focus of more detailed Sector Plans that will set out a roadmap for future growth and where Government support/intervention may be required. These are:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean energy industries
- Defence
- Digital and technologies
- Financial services
- Life sciences
- Professional and business services.

There is a strong correlation between the proposed priority sectors that will underpin the Government’s Industrial Strategy and those economic sectors in Kirklees that are high performing or display future growth potential. The Industrial Strategy presents an important opportunity to ensure that the national policy and regulatory framework supports business growth and investment and the IES will complement this at local level.

West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper highlights the significant disparities in regional economic growth rates that have resulted in what is estimated to be a £47bn productivity gap for the eight largest cities outside London.

In this context Mayoral Combined Authorities have been invited to develop Local Growth Plans that will set out how they can unlock regional growth potential. In West Yorkshire, developing a Local Growth Plan (LGP) was also an earlier Mayoral manifesto commitment.

The draft LGP aims to tackle the barriers to growth – investment, skills and connectivity – that are holding back growth in West Yorkshire. It sets out five high level priorities:

- *Unlocking growth through a targeted approach to clusters and sectors*; there will be an important interface here with the sector-focused Industrial Strategy and the LGP identifies financial and professional services; advanced manufacturing -including textiles, chemicals, food and drink, green manufacturing and space – and the creative industries as key regional opportunities to drive growth
- *Enabling all businesses to succeed and promoting good work* – which details how public/private sector support for businesses will be developed; support for alternative business models and promoting good business practices including the Fair Work Charter
- *A region of learning and creativity – equipping people with the skills they and the economy need*; this sets out how West Yorkshire’s education and training system will be enhanced, including new technical pathways; improving the transition between different stages of education/learning; boosting the availability of early years childcare provision and increasing employer investment in skills
- *Transport and connectivity – an integrated transport network*; which sets out the Combined Authority’s plans to develop a Mass Transit network, initially focused on connecting Bradford with Leeds and Leeds and the White Rose shopping centre; development of a deregulated, franchised bus network across West Yorkshire; and highlighting the importance of rail infrastructure investment including the Transpennine Route Upgrade and Penistone Line
- *Supporting thriving places* – acknowledging that vibrant places drive economic growth, the LGP identifies a series of ‘Corridors of Opportunity’ that seek to strengthen connectivity between the core city of Leeds and the adjoining communities; the ‘Southern Corridor’ extends from Leeds South Bank to include the major Dewsbury Riverside housing site, Dewsbury Town Centre and the Station to Stadium Corridor in Huddersfield.

As the Local Growth Plan and its relationship with the Government’s Industrial Strategy evolves, the Council will continue to ensure that opportunities for investment in Kirklees continue to be showcased.

Local Policy Framework

The Council and its partners have a shared vision for Kirklees – for it to be *a district that combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.*

Our vision is underpinned by eight Shared Outcomes. Our vision for Kirklees is underpinned by eight shared outcomes. Whilst the IES primarily impacts directly on Sustainable Economy and Aspire and Achieve we recognise that our health and nature of our economy will impact on all of the outcomes. A population that is healthier means a stronger workforce and a more sustainable economy, and a sustainable economy means more disposable income to help children to have the best start in life.



Best Start



Aspire & Achieve



Well



Independent



Safe & Cohesive



Sustainable Economy



Clean & Green



Shaped by people

The Inclusive Economy Strategy is one of four 'top tier' strategies in Kirklees – the others being the Inclusive Communities Framework, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Inclusive Economy Strategy, and the Environment Strategy. They are based on shared principles or 'building blocks,' namely

- Tackling inequalities must be at the heart of all we do.
- Working together we can achieve more than as individual organisations and must use all the levers we have available to us as anchor organisations .
- One size does not fit all and the approach we take must reflect the different assets and needs of our places, residents and businesses
- Change must be made sustainable through partnership, by sharing power and where possible 'getting out of the way' where appropriate
- Our environment is important and we need to think 'green' and think local.
- Fair work is a vital way to enable good mental health.



VISION AND OBJECTIVES 2030

Vision 2030

We have a clear vision for an inclusive economy in 2030:

We aspire to have a resilient and inclusive economy, in which everyone can take part and benefit from growth. We aim to equip all of our residents to fulfil their potential.

We will take advantage of investments in our towns and villages and strong connections to surrounding cities and beyond to make Kirklees one of the best places to live, work and do business in the North of England, acknowledged for our exceptional quality of life.

We will be known for our strengths in advanced manufacturing, precision engineering, textiles and health and life sciences – and as the supply chain for the nation.

We will contribute positively to achieving net zero and the transition to a low carbon economy and protect and enhance our natural environment as a vital economic asset.

Our objectives

How will we realise the vision, in partnership with private, public and voluntary sector partners?

We know we must continue to work with business to improve **productivity** in Kirklees. This is the primary route to increasing workers' wages, improving household incomes and wellbeing.

We must also work with the private sector to improve **sustainability** - how much we make and consume, how much new resource is required for this, how things get from A to B and the energy used to do it. We must also seek to capitalise on the economic opportunities arising from sustainability and net zero.

We must improve **inclusion** as there are significant differences in how residents experience our economy and the extent to which they can participate in it and benefit from it, strongly linked to health outcomes.

As resources become increasingly constrained, the Council will seek to prioritise investment in activities that achieve productivity, sustainability and inclusion outcomes.



(t note graphic to be amended to add Productivity/Sustainability/Inclusion icons)

Building on this framework, we have identified three simple objectives to achieve progress towards a more inclusive economy in Kirklees:

- supporting our **People** to have the skills they need and to access jobs where those skills will be put to good use, including helping those residents who are furthest from the labour market to re-enter and remain in work
- supporting **Businesses**, including social enterprises to start up, grow and invest so they create more good jobs, improve their productivity and increase wage levels whilst contributing to wider inclusive growth aims
- investing in our diverse **Places** and the physical and digital connections between them to increase access to job opportunities for Kirklees residents, widen the talent pool for local businesses and ensure that Kirklees remains a fantastic place to live, work and do business.

The following sections of the Inclusive Economy Strategy set out the priorities for action to achieve each of these objectives, and how we will measure success.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO ACQUIRE THE SKILLS THEY NEED

Ensuring that Kirklees residents have the skills they need to access good work, and progress within work at all stages of their career, lies at the heart of our ambition for an inclusive economy. Accessing a skilled workforce is also essential for businesses to drive up productivity and increase wages. Increasingly this means creating a supportive environment for those who are furthest from the labour market to regain the confidence and resilience to return to and remain in work.

Section 2 highlights both the challenges and opportunities facing our education and skills system. This embraces every stage of learning and work – from early years childcare, through primary and secondary school, further/higher education, adult learning and work. To truly fulfil the potential of our residents and businesses, each stage needs to operate effectively and deliver a high quality experience for learners. The transition between the stages is also vital.

The Inclusive Economy Strategy is focused on post-16 learning and work – complementing other strategies and plans which focus on earlier stages of the learner’s journey.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Employment rate
- Median disposable household income.
- Percentage of working age adults qualified to NVQ levels 3 and 4.
- Percentage of working age adults economically inactive , including 16-24 year olds and over 50s.

ACTIONS

Empowering our Young People

We will continue to take a partnership-approach to creating an inclusive jobs market for young people in Kirklees, building on our existing offer that includes Employment Kirklees and provision from C&K Careers. This enhanced support will ensure all young people are able to benefit from opportunities in Kirklees and the surrounding area, as our economy transitions towards greater sustainability and increased digital automation. We will seek to enhance support for care leavers, young people with learning disabilities and other priority groups.



Increasing young people’s skills levels and removing barriers to employment is a key enabler of increasing productivity and reducing economic inactivity.

Who: Schools/Kirklees College/C&K Careers/Adult learning



Incorporating green skills and awareness of green jobs and industries into training programmes and employment support will contribute to Kirklees having a workforce that is ready for a new economy.

Who: Kirklees College/University of Huddersfield/employers



We will work with employers and training partners to guarantee opportunities are available for all young people particularly those from the disadvantaged backgrounds.

Who: Employers/Kirklees College/Independent training providers/Employment Kirklees

Strengthening Digital Skills

Working in partnership we will continue to deliver digital skills training for all. Local delivery will provide accessible support and interventions tailored to the specific needs of Kirklees residents and businesses. Our training providers will continue to incorporate new technology into their courses in order that Kirklees is at the vanguard of digital technology enabling all businesses to adopt technology that is appropriate for them.



Digital technology is central to delivering productivity gains in the modern economy. Uptake of this technology however requires a workforce at every level of organisations that can apply it and work with it.

Who: Adult learning providers/Digital Hubs/business support providers



Digital technologies are delivering significant gains in the efficient use of resources and contributing to avoiding travel, all of which supports reduced emissions and net zero targets

Who: University of Huddersfield/private sector



Automation and AI can be seen as risks to jobs particularly those in lower skilled roles. Incorporating digital skills in all employment support will allow individuals to gain skills at an appropriate level and provide a foundation they can continue to build on.

Who: Adult learning providers/Digital Hubs/Employment Kirklees

Progression for all in the workplace

We will support employers to develop their workforce particularly through higher level Apprenticeships, as well as skills training for those seeking work, who are economically inactive or seeking to progress in work through Skills Bootcamps or other training programmes.



Increasing skills is essential for adoption of new technology and improving management practices. We expect productivity to increase with enhanced workforce skills.

Who: Kirklees College/University of Huddersfield/independent training providers/employers



Refreshing and developing new skills is an important way in which individuals and businesses are exposed to new approaches. As courses increasingly incorporate new sustainable practices we expect these to be adopted within businesses' operating models and governance frameworks.

Who: Kirklees College/University of Huddersfield/independent training providers/employers

This will contribute to businesses' ability to innovate and adopt technology but also open up opportunities for those not currently in the workplace.



We will continue to build inclusive practices in supporting progression and training within local employers through sharing good practice and by promoting the West Yorkshire Fair Work Charter.

Who: Kirklees Council/WYCA/employers

Supporting communities to learn and progress

We will build on our successes in adult and community learning and engagement with local communities by the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees College to expand our provision and see Kirklees recognised as a place of excellence for community based learning.



By engaging with our communities, particularly those in our most deprived neighbourhoods, we expect to see individuals supported to overcome barriers to employment and to thriving more broadly.

Who: Kirklees Council/adult learning providers/voluntary sector



Transitioning to a new, greener economy is going to require new skills and new ways of living and working for all of us. Helping our communities to gain those skills and build on existing assets is key to everyone in Kirklees being able to thrive while living within the limits of our planet's resources.

Who: Kirklees Council/adult learning providers/voluntary sector

We will focus more of our activity in neighbourhoods that fall within the bottom 20% of deprivation national, ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups.



This intervention will have a strong focus on our most deprived neighbourhoods in which we know Black and Asian residents are twice as likely to live in as the wider population. Low income has a significant impact on individuals' health outcomes impacting on their ability to participate in society fully and adult learning can be a vital first step in re-engaging.

Who: Kirklees Council/adult learning providers/employers

Tackling poor health and economic inactivity

Levels of economic inactivity have increased rapidly in recent years, linked to poor health.

Tackling this challenge is vital not only to individual wellbeing but also to addressing skills shortages and increasing productivity.

We will work with the Department for Work and Pensions, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Integrated Care Board and other partners to deliver 'Connect to Work' and other employment support programmes, ensuring we retain provision for those individuals with complex needs.



Improving participation rates in the Kirklees labour market will have a positive impact on productivity whilst boosting health/wellbeing outcomes



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Who: Employment Kirklees/Jobcentre Plus/Integrated Care Board/employers



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SUPPORTING BUSINESS TO START, GROW & INVEST

OVERVIEW

Ensuring that Kirklees continues to be attractive as a location to start, grow and invest in business is a key objective of the Inclusive Economy Strategy. Despite a series of global economic shocks over the last five years, our local business base has remained resilient.

Manufacturing and engineering continue to underpin our local economy – accounting for just under 16% of jobs but 26% of GVA – and some of our most successful firms supply into a diverse range of sectors, reducing their dependency on individual markets. Textiles remains a key part of the Kirklees economy as it has for the last 300 years, with many businesses moving up the value chain.

Productivity is improving but continues to lag the UK average. Securing further productivity improvements – through developing the skills of the workforce, applying innovation and increasing capital investment – is a key priority and is, ultimately, how our key employers can sustain increased wages and, in turn, improve household incomes.

There are risks – and opportunities – associated with the rapid development of automation/digitisation and AI, but they will also drive productivity growth. Whilst some roles will undoubtedly be at risk, new, skilled jobs will also be required to ensure that businesses take advantage of their potential.

The vast majority of Kirklees firms are microbusinesses employing 10 or fewer staff. Start-ups, microbusinesses and smaller SMEs often need support – including in some cases grant finance – to capitalise on growth opportunities, deploy innovation or implement productivity improvements. The public sector – both regionally and locally – will continue to play a key role to play in widening access to the support that is available, alongside private sector advisors.

Moving forward, the business support ‘ecosystem’ will balance support for those sectors with the greatest potential for productivity growth with increasing access to support for all businesses, including those in the foundational economy where there are opportunities to create entry level jobs.

Many of our business owners are also residents who care about their communities. We also understand that cooperatives, social enterprises and community businesses drive increased employment and investment while considering their impact on the environment.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Number of start-ups
- Percentage of start-ups surviving 3 years.
- Number of jobs created
- Productivity improvements (measure TBC)
- Number of cooperatives, social enterprises and employee-owned businesses.

ACTIONS

Build on the success of local start-up support

The Council's gateway model ensures there is no wrong way to access support and that each business gains the right support tailored to their needs. Local delivery of the West Yorkshire-wide Ad:Venture programme has been successful along with UKSPF-supported Thrive health and wellbeing incubator.

Moving forward, there is a need to retain locally embedded start-up capacity and develop more effective marketing campaigns and accessible role models to achieve a step change in the number of people considering starting their own business. It will also be important to ensure appropriate referral routes are in place for unemployed or economically inactive residents, and for those seeking to explore social enterprise or cooperative business models.



New businesses formed around innovative goods and services are one of the main ways in which our economy progresses. By entrepreneurs being able to access the right support in a timely manner we will see an increase in new more productive business startups in Kirklees.



Increasingly, new businesses, products and services will take advantage of more sustainable approaches and respond to consumer and business demand for these. Providing rapid access to support will be key to their success in transforming markets.

Who: Kirklees Council/WYCA/
Ad:Venture/University of Huddersfield/PYBT/ private sector business advisors



Data shows that proportionately more business startups are coming from our more deprived neighbourhoods and from a more ethnically diverse background than has historically been the case. By providing tailored support businesses of different types will be able to reach their potential delivering benefits for local communities as well as the wider district.

Maintain an effective and streamlined business support system

SMEs often need access to a range of business support to fulfil their growth potential – particularly in key areas like access to finance, workforce skills, innovation or other drivers of productivity. The support ecosystem includes professional advisors, business networks and public sector-funded support.

WYCA has recently initiated a review of the regional business support system. This has




Businesses across a broad range of types and sectors must be given opportunity to reach their growth potential. Removing barriers to investment, supporting innovation and promoting export readiness will contribute to growth in Kirklees.






Increasingly those businesses able to grow are those that demonstrate their goods and services are socially and environmentally sustainable. This is a trend that will only continue.

Who: Business Kirklees (Kirklees Council)/WYCA/private

<p>highlighted the need to develop a more compelling, universal support offer online to increase engagement levels whilst maintaining essential advisor capacity at local level to sustain business relationships.</p> <p>Working with partners, we will continue to simplify and streamline access to business support whilst seeking to widen and deepen engagement with microbusinesses and SMEs in particular.</p>	 <p>Through balancing a targeted approach to those sectors with most potential for productivity growth alongside a more universal approach that will enable foundation economy businesses to access support– our offer will guarantee all entrepreneurs and businesses with growth potential are able to benefit. Simultaneously, by building on existing requirements on supported businesses we expect inclusive recruitment practices to create more good jobs accessible to all local residents.</p>	<p>sector advisors/ employers</p>
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Developing the role of the University of Huddersfield as an anchor for R&D and inward investment

<p>The emerging National Health Innovation Campus (NHIC) will become one of the largest UK centres for teaching nurses and other allied health professionals and research in key areas of specialism including clinical diagnostics.</p> <p>The inclusion of key public health facilities – including the first NHS Community Diagnostic Centre on a University campus – creates a significant opportunity for the co-location of businesses seeking access to research expertise and the mix of facilities.</p>	 <p>Building on existing mechanisms like Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, there is a significant opportunity to align research and innovation activity with local/regional business needs. Developing new products and processes and diffusing innovation will drive up productivity and increase levels of market dynamism.</p>	<p>Who: University of Huddersfield/Kirklees Council/WYCA/DBT/ employers</p>
<p>The NHIC is a compelling example of a University aligning its teaching and research activity to address both global challenges and local needs and provides a template to further develop this approach. We will work with the University to explore wider opportunities to align research expertise with local business needs and inward investment. The National Physical Laboratory may provide an early opportunity to pilot this approach.</p>	 <p>There is a significant opportunity to align research and teaching to support the transition to net zero and the development of new low carbon products and services.</p>	
	 <p>The University can play a key role in developing a more inclusive economy in its role as an anchor institution through inclusive recruitment, local procurement and through research into inclusive growth.</p>	

Attracting inward investment and supporting the expansion of existing employers

In recent years we have developed our 'place narrative' on the unique benefits of locating in Kirklees and will continue to do so. We will deliver on this ambition by understanding the needs of incoming businesses, building effective partnerships with them and developing our lead generation capability, linked to key sectors.

If we are to compete successfully with other locations within and beyond West Yorkshire this will require a significant increase in the scale, quality and choice of employment land and premises across Kirklees. Market conditions dictate that there is little or no speculative industrial or commercial development in Kirklees and this is a significant barrier to growth.

We will capitalise on the unparalleled investment in rail connectivity to promote key development opportunities including the Station to Stadium Corridor in Huddersfield, underpinned by the University's National Health Innovation Campus



Increasing productivity is dependent on increasing investment levels that allows development of new floorspace to support growth, adoption of new technology and the acquisition of new plant/equipment.



We are keen to see investment from firms adopting new, more sustainable approaches and creating more green jobs. Many of our existing precision engineering and manufacturing businesses are already part of the supply chain for green products.

Who: Business Kirklees (Kirklees Council)/WYCA/DBT/ Key employers



The new jobs created through inward investment will serve to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity. Often inward investment can take the form of the expansion of large or foreign-owned businesses that are already established in Kirklees. This helps to embed those businesses in the area and creates the opportunity to work in partnership to achieve inclusive growth objectives and other corporate social responsibility benefits.

Support for alternative business models

We know that there continues to be strong interest in promoting diverse business models, including those with a clear social purpose.

Often specialist advice and support is required by entrepreneurs seeking to establish social enterprises, cooperatives or other alternative business models as corporate structures and governance frameworks may differ from more conventional business forms.



Productivity has been demonstrated to be higher in European countries with higher levels of cooperatives. This is in part explained through longer term thinking and increased investment in R&D. Employee-ownership is also likely to be important for the retention of well-established local businesses and related jobs.

Who: Third Sector Leaders/Business Kirklees/WYCA/Cooperatives UK/School for Social Entrepreneurs



Increased democratic ownership is expected to support benefits to the environment as decision makers consider the longer-term impacts for themselves rather than the short-term priorities of shareholders

Nonetheless, their founders share an entrepreneurial skillset and attitude with more conventional start-ups.



Alternative business models are often shown to provide better terms and conditions for employees and to have a focus on recruiting those with barriers to employment.

Employee ownership is also an increasingly relevant option for business succession.

We will work with partners to build on and extend the existing support offer.

INVESTING IN OUR PLACES

OVERVIEW

Kirklees is a diverse mix of larger towns and smaller towns and villages, set against the incredible backdrop of the Pennines and Yorkshire Dales and benefitting from the exceptional connectivity afforded by the motorway network and the most important east-west rail link in the North of England. Together these attributes make Kirklees a highly competitive location for investment.

We know that place does matter when it comes to the investment decisions made by businesses and skilled, mobile workers. At the same time, we need to rethink the future role of our urban centres and some of the adjoining towns and villages; as their traditional shopping role changes, they will need to become mixed use, multi-functional places with leisure, cultural, housing and community uses to the fore.

Some of this change was accelerated by the pandemic – with places like Holmfirth and Marsden attracting more visitors and investment, driven by increased homeworking. Improved connectivity with Leeds and Manchester can strengthen the residential role of some communities, including places like Dewsbury and Batley.

Our visitor economy – underpinned by our cultural offer and heritage and beautiful landscapes – remains relatively untapped compared with other locations in West and North Yorkshire and there is a significant opportunity to unlock its potential.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area.
- High street vacancy rates.
- Retail/commercial rental levels
- Housing affordability index.
- Number of neighbourhoods in 20% most deprived in England.

ACTIONS

Vital and vibrant town centres

The Council is leading the delivery of a series of major capital projects that, when realised, will change resident, visitor and investor perceptions of our major centres.

In Huddersfield, this activity is focusing on the Our Cultural Heart project that will transform the town's cultural offer; the reopening of the George Hotel; revitalising the Huddersfield Open Market; and the Station to Stadium Corridor.



Delivering improvements to our principal town centres will create places our residents want to spend time in and where businesses are proud to be based. Public investment will attract private investment so we bring our vision into being in partnership.



Our town centre plans include increasing infrastructure for walking and cycling and creating town centre living

Who: Kirklees Council/Huddersfield BID/Dewsbury Towns Fund Board/key employers

In Dewsbury, the Towns Fund programme will deliver the refurbishment of the iconic Dewsbury Arcade and Dewsbury Market. Investment is also underway in Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth and Marsden.

Alongside this transformational capital investment programme we will work with partners to deliver low cost 'animation' programmes that will focus on events, meanwhile uses, developing local greenspace and public art opportunities and other complementary activity. This will ensure the benefits of our investment are embedded and sustained.

supporting more sustainable lifestyles. In additions, increasing the quality of the local offer will reduce the need for travel to more distant centres, providing more services close to home.



All of our places merit investment and need to develop to support affordable living in order that they are viable places to live for those on lower incomes. Our development plans include improvements to active travel infrastructure and will support public transport improvements

Our plans for our town centres seek to break down barriers, making them places all our different communities can enjoy and feel comfortable in. This will support every individual being able to thrive.

Improving the night time economy

Strengthening the night-time economy in all our centres with a focus on Huddersfield and Dewsbury is part of our vision for modern centres.

To do so we must work with evening economy venues, the Policy and other agencies to significantly improve community safety and tackle negative perceptions of our places.



The culture and leisure sectors form an important part of our economy in their own right while a thriving cultural life is important to the attractiveness of our place for those considering living or starting a business in Kirklees.



Developing a sustainable night-time economy will be an important consideration for the partnership. Direct impacts such as energy efficiency and waste management but also sustainable transport and noise pollution management will be integrated.

Who: Kirklees Council/West Yorkshire Police/
Huddersfield BID/venues and other businesses



The culture and leisure sectors are a major source of entry level jobs providing routes into employment particularly for young people. Our

cultural offer will continue to build on and celebrate our diversity

Housing Growth Strategy

Nationally and locally we have challenges around accelerating housebuilding. Meeting the housing needs of our population is important so families have the foundations on which to thrive. We also need to significantly increase the delivery of affordable homes

We will deliver our Housing Growth Strategy to meet rising need and improve the quality of our stock. This includes projects on large sites such as Chidswell and Dewsbury Riverside, town centre living in Huddersfield and Dewsbury, and working with mid-size SME developers to diversify the range of providers delivering new homes.

Through the review of the Local Plan we will identify a range of new housing sites to meet future needs. This will include exploring development opportunities associated with the proposed Mass Transit line between Leeds and Dewsbury.



High-quality housing underpins good health and residents' ability to go out to work and study. An attractive housing offer that meets a range of needs also contributes to attracting new people to Kirklees.

Who: Kirklees Council/Homes England/WYCA/RSLs/private sector



Provision of energy efficient homes within neighbourhoods that enable and encourage sustainable lifestyles will reduce energy demand and decrease living costs



Improving the availability of affordable housing for those wishing to buy or rent is central to our strategy. Increasing supply contributes to stopping our housing affordability ratio rising further from reach.

Transport Strategy

We will develop a new Transport Strategy in which the Transpennine Rail Upgrade and Penistone Line Upgrade are complemented by development of mass transit for West Yorkshire, shifts to active travel and public transport, seeing improvements to bus services and bus stations, and delivery of key major projects such as the Cooper Bridge Corridor Improvement Scheme to resolve long standing challenges.



Effective transport that connects individuals and businesses to the full breadth of opportunities underpins an effective economy. Our location between three core cities requires top class transport to maximise the possible benefits.



Shifts towards active travel and public transport form an essential part of sustainable lifestyles. By reducing reliance on private cars we will see reduced emissions and improved air quality.

Who: Kirklees Council/WYCA/SUSTRANS/bus operators



Our strategy will allow all individuals to access the work and training they need to thrive including through low cost options such as active travel and buses.

Thriving Rural Communities

We will ensure we support **thriving rural areas** served by gigabit connectivity and high quality public transport services.



Kirklees contains many small rural communities. Each of these has a role to play in the wider productivity of Kirklees. Physical and digital connectivity supports this.

Who: Kirklees Council/Parish Councils/local business networks/businesses

Supporting a mixed economy including agriculture but also cultural businesses and others taking advantage of high-quality digital connectivity.



Rural communities are often more car-reliant than urban ones. Providing high quality bus services will reduce this while world class digital connectivity will reduce the need for journeys to the office or to meet with clients in person whether close by or far afield.



While our rural areas are generally more affluent than our major towns, maintaining good connectivity contributes to older people and those with limited mobility being able to take advantage of all Kirklees has to offer

Visitor Economy and Heritage

Kirklees has significant untapped potential as a tourism destination, including part of the Peak District National Park and a diverse mix of urban and rural centres. We will further develop our culture and leisure offer including outdoor activities both enhancing quality of life for residents and attractions for visitors. This will be done through the Local Visitor Economy Partnership and delivery of our Heritage Strategy and Kirklees strong programme of events and festivals.



Building on our culture and leisure offer – alongside other elements of this strategy – will contribute to attracting people to Kirklees and making it an enjoyable place to live, work and spend time.



The environment is increasingly a focus of and a concern in cultural events and businesses. Kirklees has a strong heritage in practices relevant to growing a more sustainable economy. We will build on this to create a unique offering..



A varied cultural offer will see Kirklees being a place where everyone can participate in and enjoy a range of events. It will provide economic opportunities for all our communities

Who: Kirklees Council/West Yorkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership/Visit England/business

Social Value

A number of large, locally rooted organisations have worked hard over recent years to embed social value (SV) approaches in how they operate – particularly in their procurement, including Kirklees Council.

Moving forward we will continue to adopt a more proactive approach to securing social value benefits from major capital and other projects and share best practice with other partners where we can. We will increasingly adopt a longer-term focus, considering social value opportunities across wider programmes rather than on a project-by-project basis. This will increase the effectiveness of our large, locally rooted organisations at **buying locally** and delivering **social value**.



SV allows organisations to maximise the benefits of their own spending power. Using this mechanism to full effect will contribute to other areas of this strategy including the skills development needed for greater productivity.



Environmental impact is one of the key themes considered through SV approaches. In this way we will continue to encourage best in class practice from our suppliers



We will increasingly target SV benefits towards deprived neighbourhoods to focus the efforts of our suppliers as well as our public providers where there is most need.

Who: Kirklees Council/University of Huddersfield/Calderdale & Huddersfield Foundation Trust/Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust/private sector

