

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	24th February 2022	
Report Title:	Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 This Strategic Refresh document has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS). It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to support economic growth in Fenland.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Since the approval of the Council's EDS much of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly for example EU-Exit, Covid-19, Climate Change and Levelling Up Policy.
- 2.2 In addition, several strategies and plans have been produced by partners including the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy all which impact on the EDS.
- 2.3 These changes all contribute to the need for a strategic refresh of the EDS and hence this document.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to consider and recommend the Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25 for approval by Full Council.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	KEY/17DEC21/01
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Ian Benney
Report Originator(s)	Anna Goodall, Assistant Director Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager Ann Wardle, Business Engagement Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Simon Jackson, Economic Growth Manager
Background Papers	Economic Growth - Strategic Refresh 2022-2025

Report:

1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 The economy, supporting economic growth, is one of the Council's 3 outward facing Corporate Priorities.
- 1.2 This Strategic Refresh has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS). It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in Fenland and ensure that we are known as being "open for business".
- 1.3 Since the approval of the EDS some of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly for example through EU Exit and Covid19. In addition, partner strategies and services have also been created such as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy and Growth Works service. These changes in context and new strategies and services all contribute to the need for a strategic refresh of the EDS and hence this document.
- 1.4 Economic growth is ultimately delivered by businesses, those who are already in Fenland, those who relocate to Fenland and those who create a business in Fenland. One of the key roles of the Council is to support those owners, managers, and entrepreneurs in their growth decisions, location decisions and aspirations by for example enabling access to the high-quality business support that is available including grant funding.
- 1.5 The Strategic Refresh embodies this supportive role and is reflected in the refresh as follows:
 - 1.5.1 **Growing businesses** - Through engagement with existing local businesses the Council will target the support that is available to help enable each business to grow and assist them to overcome any barriers to growth or to develop opportunities. This will include ensuring that businesses are aware of and supported in applying for financial support for which they are eligible.
 - 1.5.2 **More business start-ups** – Help ensure that the support is in place to help enable local people to start a business and to stay in business including the possible availability of grant funding.
 - 1.5.3 **Attract new businesses** - Help attract new businesses into the district from supermarkets and fast-food brands to businesses seeking a UK base. The Council will proactively engage with targeted new business opportunities to ascertain each businesses future plans and location requirements.

- 1.5.4 **Available workforce** – Help ensure that supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Represent companies' skills requirements for the development of skills support, funding and development of relevant courses.
- 1.5.5 **Available serviced land and premises** - Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites and premises to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. To bring together these and other similar requirements into an "Investment Prospectus" for Fenland.
- 1.6 The success of the Strategic Refresh will be demonstrated by the value each business places on their interaction with the Council and partners as demonstrated through case studies and feedback.
- 1.7 Economic growth can also provide opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or potentially via Fenland Future Limited and can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As one of the Council's 3 outward facing Corporate Priorities it is important that how the Council supports economic growth is as effective as possible and this Strategic Refresh updates the existing EDS to ensure that this continues to be the case.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Engagement with partners on other strategies such as the Combined Authority's Employment and Skills Strategy has enabled external views and policies to be incorporated into the Strategy Refresh document.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 An alternative to actively and proactively supporting Fenland's economic growth would be for the Council not to do so. However, there is clear evidence that the Council plays a vital role in the Economic Growth of the District including the attraction of significant external funding and investment, the provision of commercial property, attraction of new businesses into the District and expansion of businesses already in Fenland.
- 4.2 Moreover, all the other Districts in Cambridgeshire also recognise the importance of their Council supporting economic growth and the very competitive environment that exists for securing funding and investment into their District's. Over the last two years several Districts have added resources into their support for economic growth by for example adding to their economic development teams.

- 4.3 This alternative option was considered and rejected as it would result in Fenland being significantly disadvantaged in securing economic growth and external funds.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no specific legal issues engaged by the recommendations contained in this Report.

5.2 Financial Implications

- 5.2.1 All financial implications have been reflected for in the Council's draft budget.

5.3 Equality Implications

- 5.3.1 All individual projects and services have been assessed to ensure equality of access, etc.

6 SCHEDULES

Schedule 1 – Draft Fenland Economic Growth Strategic Refresh, 2022-25

SCHEDULE 1
Fenland Economic Growth Strategic Refresh 2022-25

Fenland Economic Growth

Strategic Refresh 2022-2025

**Delivering the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-
2031**

February 2022

Foreword by Cllr Ian Benney Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth



Fenland is a great place to live, work or visit and as Cabinet Member for Economic Growth I want to ensure that the residents benefit from local economic growth. There are major opportunities for growth in Fenland and this Strategic Refresh sets out how the Council will help maximise these opportunities over the next three years.

Ultimately economic growth is delivered by local businesses and the key role the Council undertakes is to support entrepreneurs, owners and managers when making decisions about how and when to grow or start their business. This refresh sets out how the Council contributes to the decisions made by businesses. They are rapidly becoming known as the people who can open doors and help with the challenges,

Finally, whilst having a Refresh is important by far the most important aspect of what I ask is action, having meaningful impact on economic growth in Fenland. With that in mind, you will find this Refresh to be as concise as possible, with a focus on measurable action and demonstrating that Fenland is truly open for business.

Cllr Ian Benney

Email: ibenney@fenland.gov.uk

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Changing Context	5
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the Fenland Economy	17
Actions	19
Enterprise	20
Workforce development	23
Enabling infrastructure	25
Business retention & growth	27
Inward investment	30
Measuring the success of the Refresh	33
Bidding for external funding	35
Income generation	36

Executive Summary

This Strategic Refresh has been created to continue the delivery of the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031. It sets out how the Council's Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners will continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in Fenland and ensure that we are open for business.

Economic growth is delivered by businesses, those who are already in Fenland, those who relocate to Fenland and those who create a business in Fenland. One of the key roles of the Council is to support those owners, managers, and entrepreneurs in their growth decisions and aspirations by for example enabling access to the high-quality business support that is available including grant funding. The Refresh embodies this role and is reflected as follows:

1. **Growing businesses** - Through engagement with existing local businesses the Council will target the support that is available to help enable each business to grow and assist them to overcome any barriers to growth or to develop opportunities. This will include ensuring that businesses are aware of and supported in applying for financial support for which they are eligible.
2. **More business start-ups** – Help ensure that the support is in place to help enable local people to start a business and to stay in business including the possible availability of grant funding.
3. **Attract new businesses** - Help attract new businesses into the district from supermarkets and fast-food brands to businesses seeking a UK base. The Council will proactively engage with targeted new business opportunities to ascertain each businesses future plans and location requirements.
4. **Available workforce** – Help ensure that supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Represent companies' skills requirements for the development of skills support funding and development of relevant courses.
5. **Available serviced land and premises** - Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites and premises to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. To bring together these and other similar requirements into an "Investment Prospectus" for Fenland.

The success of the Refresh will be based upon how well the Council and its partners interacts with business owners and managers who make the decisions as to whether the business expands, relocates, or starts. Measuring success therefore includes mostly input measures, inputs into the business decision making process. The ultimate outcome of economic growth the Refresh seeks to deliver is delivered by business.

Critically, therefore, the success of the Refresh will be demonstrated by the value each business places on their interaction with the Council and partners as demonstrated through case studies and feedback.

The Council helps enable businesses to secure grant and other funding to support the growth of their business and attracts funding to support the growth of the economy for example for infrastructure to make available land for commercial development.

Economic growth can provide opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or potentially via Fenland Future Limited and can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council.

Introduction

The economy is one of the Council's 3 outward facing Corporate Priorities:

Quality Organisation Supporting effective delivery of our priorities and services	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support vulnerable members of our community• Promote health and wellbeing for all• Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service• Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene• Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland• Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland• Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

The Council created and approved its Economic Development Strategy 2012-2031 (EDS), "Building a competitive vision for Fenland" that focuses on the most important outcomes and outputs required to ensure continued economic growth in Fenland.

This Strategic Refresh (Refresh) has been created to continue delivery of the EDS and sets out how the Economic Growth Team, other Council departments and public and private partners (hereafter referred to in this document as the "Team") can continue to work together to drive forward economic growth in the district.

The Refresh will be reviewed annually to ensure that the actions undertaken by the Team remain responsive, appropriate, up-to-date, deliver real impact and demonstrate how Fenland is open for business.

The Refresh utilises the five strategic 'Model for Growth' themes developed in the EDS designed to underpin economic growth:

- Enterprise
- Workforce development
- Enabling infrastructure
- Business retention & growth
- Inward investment

Within each theme the Refresh sets out the projects and initiatives designed to have the most impact on each theme and includes:

- Action being undertaken
- Outcome expected
- Measurable outputs

Changing Context

Since the approval of the Council's EDS some of the local, regional, and national context has changed significantly. This section sets out the most significant economic changes and the most recent strategic responses made by partners. These changes all contribute to the need for a strategic refresh of the EDS and hence this document.

Economic

EU Exit

Following the referendum vote in 2016, the UK officially left the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020. The following are the major changes and opportunities for Fenland businesses following EU Exit.

New markets - By exiting the EU trading bloc, the UK is free to strike its own trade deals with other non-EU countries. As an EU member state, this wasn't the case.

Less regulation - The UK is free to set its own regulations and standards – and this could be beneficial for businesses.

Business travel to the EU - Travelling to the EU on business, there are a number of changes concerning passports, visas and travel insurance.

VAT - The way VAT is dealt with for importing and exporting has changed.

Data protection - Following the end of the Brexit transition period, how businesses handle personal data has not changed if they have correctly implemented the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

Supply chain - A disruption of the flow of goods and services from the UK to the EU was an anticipated effect of EU Exit. Many businesses responded to this by stockpiling goods while tariff-free trade between the UK and EU was still in place.

Workforce - On January 1st, 2021, freedom of movement between the UK and EU ended. Under the new post-Brexit immigration laws, both EU and non-EU migrants will be subject to a point-based system for visa eligibility.

The termination of freedom of movement, and transition to a new immigration system has resulted in a short-term shrinkage in the workforce.

Covid-19 Pandemic

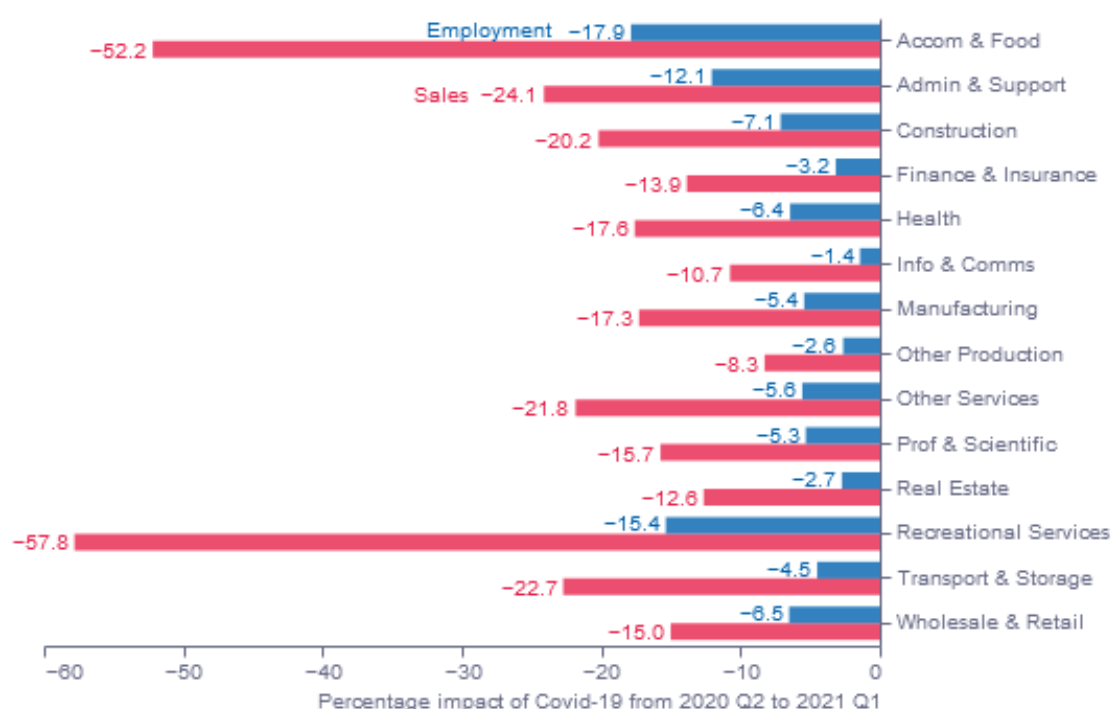
Sales - The figure below shows the estimated impact on sales and employment over the first year of the pandemic. Businesses in all sectors reported a large reduction in sales, which was close to 60% in recreational services. Other sectors reporting a

large reduction were accommodation and food, administration and support, and transport and storage.

The smallest effects were expected in other production (agriculture, mining and quarrying, and utilities) and information and communications – all of which are less likely to be affected by lockdowns and other restrictions.

The reductions in employment were smaller than the falls in sales, in large part due to government support programmes, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

Impact of Covid-19 on sales and employment from 2020 Q2 to 2021 Q1 by industry



Workforce - Businesses have laid off some workers and used the CJRS to furlough others. Businesses have reported furloughing around a fifth of their employees over the past year on average; these workers were still employed but not required to work any hours – see table below.

The spread of Covid-19 has had a profound and potentially long-lasting impact on how businesses operate. For example, workers in some sectors have been able to adapt relatively easily to social distancing at work, for example, by working from home. The ability to do this has varied greatly by industry and firm. It depends on the nature of the firm's activities and the extent to which it is necessary to engage in face-to-face contact with customers or other employees.

The table below shows that working from home has been more prevalent in sectors such as finance, insurance, professional and scientific, and information and communications. These are all higher productivity service industries.

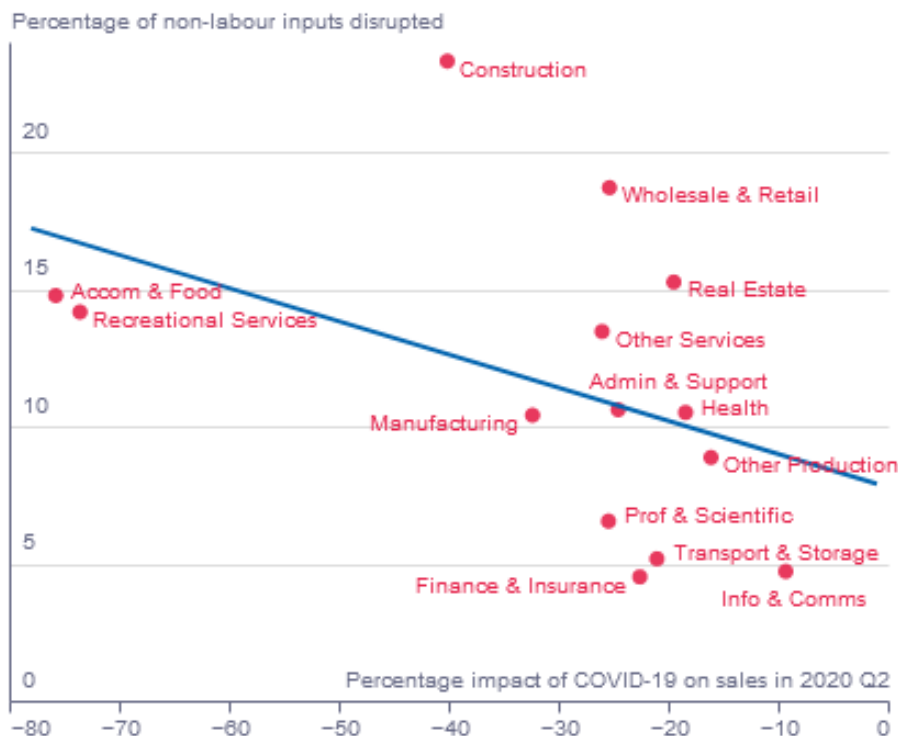
Impact of Covid-19 on employees



Supply chains - Apart from falling demand, businesses have also reduced output because they are unable to obtain crucial inputs or supplies. Around 40% of firms have reported some disruption to their supply chains during the second quarter of 2021.

Supply disruption was reported to be higher in industries and firms that expected larger sales impacts, implying that supply effects could have been a factor that held back output too, and more so in some sectors than others.

Disruption to non-labour inputs from Covid-19 in 2020 Q2 and impact of Covid-19 on sales in 2020 Q2 by industry.



Uncertainty - Covid-19 has also led to a sharp increase in uncertainty for everyone – firms, workers, and consumers. Overall uncertainty in the past year increased substantially, with 70% of businesses reporting that the overall level of uncertainty facing their business was high or very high. On average, 85% of firms reported that coronavirus was one of their top three sources of uncertainty over the year to March 2021.

This uncertainty is larger for firms in recreational services, accommodation and food, construction, and transport and storage – the sectors most affected by the pandemic.

High-street - Shops had been having difficulties already, not least because of online competition, and in 2020, total retail sales volumes fell by 1.9% compared with 2019, the largest annual fall on record.

International travel - remains at low levels compared to pre-pandemic. resumption of travel stretched further into the distance.

Business growth - There has been some predictable business growth. Amazon, Royal Mail, Hermes, DPD – everyone who delivers to the door – have all seen business growth. If you manufacture cardboard in the UK, it has been a record 12 to 18 months.

Company formation - Company formation didn't decline in 2020 – 772,002 new businesses were formed in the UK, up 13% on 2019. Many were in sectors that benefited from the pandemic, such as manufacturers of personal protective

equipment or disinfectants, camp sites catering for all the staycationers, and takeaway food companies.

Working from home – a substantial proportion of workers continue to work from home resulting in less office space being required.

Broadband connectivity – The importance of broadband connectivity at home either via fibre or 4th and 5th generation mobile has been highlighted with more people working from home. Lack of connectivity can be a particular issue in rural economies.

Overall, the sectors and businesses that have been most affected by lockdowns and other social restrictions have also suffered the most in terms of loss of sales and impacts on staff. It is also these industries, principally those related to food, travel, and leisure, which have faced significant future uncertainty.

Assessing the Impact of Covid 19 in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

In July 2021 Metro Dynamics published a report commissioned by the CPCA assessing the impact of Covid 19 on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economies. At the onset of the crisis output fell fastest in Cambridge, followed by South Cambridgeshire, based on modelled estimates of the crisis' economic impact and driven by falls in output across the professional, scientific and technical sector, education, and hospitality and entertainment. Based on these modelled estimates Cambridge has also been the slowest of the districts to recover.

Meanwhile, Fenland, Peterborough and Huntingdonshire were relatively less affected, partly due to the insulating effects of larger agricultural, construction and manufacturing industries, where more businesses were able to continue operating at close-to-normal levels of output.

Based upon the data available, the key findings of the report mostly cover the whole Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy however where possible Fenland specific findings are highlighted.

1. Vaccination is helping recovery, but structural impacts will remain.

Partly because of the successful vaccine rollout, projections for the UK's economic growth are being revised upwards. The Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) now expects the UK economy to return to pre-pandemic levels sometime in 2022, with unemployment to peak in late 2021. That said, this faster bounce back in economic activity is not expected to translate into a complete economic recovery. The national economy is still expected to be 3% smaller in 2025 than it would have been without the pandemic.

2. Economic impact varies across the area

A recovery is underway in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, aided by recovery in construction, manufacturing and retail sectors, though at the end of 2020 the economy remained 7.6% smaller than it was before the onset of the pandemic – a near £500m fall in output. The scale of the fall in output varies across local economies, ranging from a 5% reduction in Fenland to 10% in Cambridge, based on the concentration of more affected sectors in each place.

In Fenland between Q1 and Q4 2020 output fell by 5.2% compared to 10.9% in Cambridge and Fenland has the 2nd highest rate of recovery in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In terms of the rate of growth of new businesses Fenland maintained its rate of growth at around 8% per year. This rate exceeds that achieved by South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

3. Gradual recovery in hospitality and leisure, with labour shortages

The most significant effects of the pandemic have been on retail, hospitality, and entertainment businesses, which have been particularly hit by lockdown restrictions and having to adapt fast to both those restrictions and changing consumer preferences. We are nevertheless seeing signs of recovery in these businesses. Prior to the pandemic 104,00 people in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were employed in entertainment, hospitality, and retail sectors – around one in four workers. Although job losses at the start of the pandemic were concentrated in these sectors, many businesses are now reporting difficulties hiring staff. A particular challenge is to fill jobs previously commonly held by workers from the EU and elsewhere who have left the UK over the course of the pandemic. Business is also reporting difficulty in hiring seasonal student labour as potential employees are choosing not to work this summer.

4. Wider trading environment improving, but with rapid adjustments needed

As consumer confidence has grown the business environment has gradually improved, with more than 90% of businesses now trading an increasing number reporting improved profits. The crisis has required businesses across all sectors to adapt and invest in new processes and practices. There is some indication that this will lead to sustained productivity improvements, though the scale of the impact remains to be seen and may be offset by firms rehiring.

5. Unemployment has increased and the impact has been exacerbated existing inequality.

Employment support schemes (particularly the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, 'furlough') have continued to act as an effective break on increasing unemployment. Across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough nearly 40,000 workers were still furloughed at the beginning of May 2021 and at least 30,000 more people are on Universal Credit now than before the pandemic. Despite this support flowing to

lower-income households, the overall impact of the crisis is a deeply unequal one. There is a clear correlation between areas of pre-existing deprivation and the incidence of Covid-19 cases and deaths, as well as correlated increases in new Universal Credit claims. The pattern is most pronounced in the city of Peterborough and the market town of Wisbech in Fenland, but also in Soham, St Neots and parts of Cambridge, where relatively high levels of deprivation are matched by relatively high levels of Covid-19 cases and deaths and increases in Universal Credit claims. The unequal impacts of the crisis seem likely to spill over into an unequal recovery, with deprived people and places again disproportionately the most affected.

A comparison of district claimant counts within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough shows that Fenland has the lowest claimant increase from January 2020 to April 2021 of all local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Fenland and Huntingdonshire were the first districts to see peaks in their claimant counts in May 2020. While Fenland saw partial recovery immediately following this peak, the claimant count in Huntingdonshire remained relatively high until October 2020.

Within Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, the rates of take-up of the furlough scheme have mirrored the national pattern. Cambridge has seen the largest proportion of eligible employments making use of the scheme (10.0%), while Fenland has seen the lowest (7.3%).

University for Peterborough

The University for Peterborough project is the single most important capital project in the CPCA's skills portfolio, addressing the issue of low Higher Education participation, poor aspirations, and lack of employer confidence in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy.

Climate Change & Net Zero

Fenland is low-lying and vulnerable to unpredictable weather patterns and rising sea levels. Emissions-focused initiatives are now central to economic strategies across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, for example, over 77% of CPCA's major initiatives are climate-focussed.

Meeting the new national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030 and transitioning to net zero by 2050 demands an even greater focus on measures that deliver economic growth through sustainable choices, business models and jobs.

Climate change is a business opportunity. The low-carbon transition creates opportunities for efficiency, innovation and growth that extend beyond high-carbon industries like energy and transport to all sectors. Companies can save energy and materials costs, serve new customer needs, enhance their reputations, and better attract and retain talent — all because of working to reduce their emissions and

those of their customers and suppliers. Through their governance role, boards can help to ensure that climate opportunities are captured by reviewing corporate strategy and focusing on long-term value.

With the increased investment need throughout the housing sector in sustainable and net zero carbon products and services, there is an urgent need to support the growth of existing and diversification of new entrants into the marketplace. This is highlighted when looking just at the Clarion Housing Association portfolio in isolation. In 2021-22, they are expecting to complete circa 120 properties to a “zero carbon ready state” representing less than 1% of the entire portfolio and for the next 3 years they are forecasting that figure to increase by circa 300% year on year (450 2022/23, 1,500 2023/24 and circa 4,000 2024/25).

Levelling-up fund

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) published in 2018 identified the spatial disparities across the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area and (also within) the three distinctive, but overlapping economies of Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough, and the Fens.

Announced at the Spending Review in 2020, the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) will invest in capital investment in local infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK. Building on and consolidating prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund, it will have a visible and tangible impact on people and places and support economic recovery. In doing so, it will also create opportunity across the country, prioritising bids that invest in regeneration and growth in places of need and areas of low productivity and connectivity.

The £4.8 billion fund will support town and city centre regeneration to deliver economic and social levelling-up. In round one the emphasis was on town centre regeneration, culture, and heritage, as well as a major opportunity to promote local transport projects through the Local Transport Authority (CPCA in Cambridgeshire). LUF provides a new approach to tackling economic differences between areas and driving prosperity in towns and cities that have been left behind, and which have now been prioritised by Government for support.

The Growing Fenland Wisbech Masterplan sets out a clear list of priorities for the town and town centre. The Council has commissioned a supporting piece of work to give spatial, map-based expression to these priorities and to identify further opportunities for regeneration and investment. This would help to directly support the development of the town's quality of life offer. This work will enable a focused, detailed proposition supported by a high-level cost analysis and business case for a coherent package of proposals to enable a LUF bid to be made in spring 2022.

Partner Strategies and Plans

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER), September 2018

A review of all the available economic evidence for the area chaired by an experienced and expert panel, bringing in new research on business clusters and growth. The set out a series of key recommendations, many of which were reiterated and developed by the subsequent Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy.

The review segmented Cambridgeshire and Peterborough into three key economic areas with boundaries described as “fuzzy” – Cambridge, Peterborough (includes Whittlesey) & The Fens (broadly comprises most of the District of Fenland, and parts of the Districts of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire).

The key points with regards to The Fens were:

- The Fens is the most challenged economically of the three
- Market towns have lost their former glory and struggle to attract or retain young people
- Rural communities struggling to maintain high value industries
- Brexit poses a challenge to provide low-cost labour – “a concern that at all skill levels, from highly skilled workers to unskilled workers, businesses rely on foreign labour”.
- Businesses need to tackle low labour productivity by investing in the skills of their workers
- Immense potential for the Fens as the apex of British agricultural production & an attractive way of life in thriving Market Towns

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Skills Strategy Evidence Base Report, December 2018

The analysis shows that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy comprises three overlapping labour markets which inform the demand and flow of labour across the region. These are:

- Peterborough and surroundings (including north Huntingdonshire and Whittlesey)
- The Fens (including Fenland, some of East Cambridgeshire and part of Huntingdonshire)
- Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (including southern parts of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire as a third).

The Fens specialisms in the CPCA area were identified as:

- Primary (agriculture)
- Construction & utilities
- Wholesale & distribution

Key Fenland only facts:

- Fenland contributes 5.2% of total employment and 4.9% of total turnover in the Combined Authority, the smallest contribution among the six districts.
- Over half of total employment in Fenland is concentrated in SMEs, while micro firms account for approximately 30% of total employment.
- The largest share of turnover in the area is originated by firms with 10-49 employees (28.2%).
- SMEs have exhibited the highest rates of employment growth (8.4%) and have grown at a faster rate relative to the Combined Authority (6.0%).
- The highest rate of growth in turnover is reported for large firms (7.8%)

The key programmes and projects proposed by the strategy:

- The Skills Hub
- Life Sciences Sector Deal Pilot
- The Mayor's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund
- Strategic Coordination of Local Programmes
- A New University for Peterborough
- Work Readiness Pilot

Of the suggested programmes and projects, the two most significant to improve life chances and labour market performance were seen as the University of Peterborough and the creation of an area wide Skills Hub.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Industrial Strategy, July 2019

The strategy seeks to enhance Cambridgeshire and Peterborough its position as a global leader in knowledge and innovation, further developing its key sectors including life sciences, information and communication technologies, creative and digital industries, clean tech, high-value engineering and agri-business'. The strategy sets out an evidence-based plan to support industry across the area in delivering these goals.

Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Policy Paper, February 2021

The five counties around the line between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge are known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (Arc). The area comprises Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire. The Arc has one of the fastest-growing economies in England and supports more than two million jobs and adds over £110 billion to the economy every year.

A spatial framework for the Arc is being developed; a long-term strategic plan to help coordinate the infrastructure, environment, and new developments in the area. In July 2021 consultation document was published, 'Creating a Vision for the Oxford-

Cambridge Arc', which launched the first public consultation on the development of the Spatial Framework. This consultation ran from 21 July and closed on 12 October with the feedback currently being analysed.

Combined Authority, Local Economic Recovery Strategy, March 2021

The goal of the Combined Authority Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) is to make a leading contribution both to the UK's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and to its future global success. The LERS sets out how it will help accelerate the recovery, rebound and renewal of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy, and achieving the ambition to double Gross Value Added by 2042 in a digitally enabled, greener, healthier, and more inclusive way.

The LERS identifies the Fens sub economy, with a world-leading agri-tech sector and innovative micro businesses, alongside the most productive agricultural land in the UK.

In common with many major economies in the UK and globally the LERS has identified three phases of action. The Response phase lasted well into 2021 with the mission to help people and businesses manage the impact of the pandemic, and to adapt to both temporary changes and emerging new norms in employment, sectors, and markets.

The Recover and Rebound phase began with the reopening of the economy in 2021 and will accelerate through 2022/23. Renewal and Future Growth will follow from 2023 onward. The missions for these phases are to:

- Help people at risk of unemployment by accelerating retraining and upskilling
- Build back faster by accelerating start-ups, scale ups and set ups
- Build back better and greener by accelerating high tech jobs and cluster growth, focussing on green, digital, and net zero technologies.

CPCA Employment & Skills Strategy, October 2021

CPCA is developing a new Employment and Skills Strategy for the region. They have reviewed a robust data and evidence base across the CPCA area and each of the six local authority areas, and through engagement and further analysis have identified priorities for outcomes and objectives. The strategy is due to be published in March 2022.

CPCA - Growth Works, May 2021

To deliver the Local Industrial Strategy, a business growth service, called Growth Works has been designed to fuel growth in business & skills across all of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The vision for the Growth Works service is to

accelerate the rebound and regrowth of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough economy. A consortium, led by Gateley, is delivering the Growth Works Service.

Growth Works has four pillars:

- Growth Coaching Service
- Inward Investment Service
- Skills and Apprentices
- and Equity Investment

The five service lines which make up Growth Works are:

1. A Growth Coaching Service to engage and support the regions' entrepreneurs and business leaders to speed their rebound and growth post COVID. This service is delivered by YTKO.
2. An Inward Investment Service to better engage and persuade firms to locate here or invest in our firms and projects – like a new university for Peterborough or improvements to our towns and cities. This service is led by International Investment Services.
3. A Skills Brokerage Service to link learners and those wanting to retrain for new jobs to employers that are growing and have great opportunities. This service is led by GPC Skills.
4. A Capital Growth Investment Fund to offer grants, loans and equity investment for small firms needing finance to grow and struggling to find support from banks and elsewhere. This is led jointly with YTKO and Gateley.
5. The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Growth Hub, a one-stop shop for support including funding, training, and general expertise. The Growth Hub signposts business leaders to the right support for them.

By integrating all these services into one, Growth Works will deliver over 5,000 jobs, 1400 apprenticeships and Capital Grants 1700 learning opportunities for young people and those needed to find work or build their careers.

Emerging New Local Plan

The emerging new Local Plan for the District is currently under preparation following two rounds of a “call for sites”. It is anticipated that the draft plan will be published for comment in June / July 2022 with the submission draft being available in the Spring of 2023. The plan will cater for the growth of the District to 2040 and seek to allocate enough land in a variety of locations to meet the Council's growth ambition and the demands of business.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the Fenland Economy

The EDS identified several strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats (SWOT) for the Fenland economy and a number remain the same in 2021. However, since 2012 more have been identified and the table below combines the original SWOT with post 2012 additions:

	Fenland economy
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong demand from expanding businesses and relocators • Super-fast broadband i.e., >95% premises now access at least 24Mbps rising to >97% over the next 12 months • Proposed housing growth • Entrepreneurial culture • Port of Wisbech • Low-cost base • Vibrant engineering and food processing sectors • Supportive and flexible planning
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of serviced land or available industrial units • Mobile and mobile broadband coverage in rural areas • Pockets of high levels of deprivation • Poor transport links within the District • Image of the area • Limited arts, culture and night-time economies • Recruitment issues – actual recruits and skill levels
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially available land for development • Levelling Up Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund • EU Exit i.e., new markets • Climate change, low carbon & net zero i.e., market opportunities • University of Peterborough • Strategic employment sites i.e., Stainless Metalcraft Phase II Advanced Manufacturing Park & Whittlesey Science & Technology Park • March High Street Fund • Growing Fenland Funding • North Cambridgeshire Training Centre • Location for Cambridge overspill • Fenland Thinking Place
Threats	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid-19 i.e., continuing uncertainties • Increasing workforce vacancy rates • EU Exit i.e., worker shortages • Climate change i.e., flooding risk • Growth of neighbouring centres • National and international economic climates • Flood risk area
--	--

Actions

Responsibility for delivery of the Refresh rests mostly with the Economic Growth Team comprising the Economic Growth Manager and Business Engagement Manager. The Economic Growth Team will either deliver projects directly or through working with others such as other departments within the Council and the Combined Authority and its contractors to ensure delivery of the Refresh.

The Refresh utilises the strategic 'Model for Growth' themes developed in the EDS; Enterprise, Workforce development, Enabling infrastructure, Business retention and growth and Inward investment.

The Refresh highlights the individual actions being undertaken, the expected outcome resulting from taking these actions and measurable outputs. All of the actions help ensure that Fenland is seen as both support of and open for business.

The actions respond to the changes in context as set out previously and reflected in the SWOT analysis for example the increasing issue of lack of serviced land and available commercial property and in particular light industrial premises and the significant new opportunities including Stainless Metalcraft Phase II Advanced Manufacturing Park and Whittlesey Science & Technology Park.

Enterprise

Objective

Maintain and build a thriving enterprise and entrepreneurial culture that encourages businesses to start up and grow.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables
<p>Community Renewal Fund (CRF) “Start & Grow” programme ends in June 2022</p> <p>To aid Start and Grow to engage individuals and early-stage/micro businesses in an intensive enterprise programme. It will bring skills development and business investment together in one scheme through a 'pre-qualification' process for grant awards.</p>	<p>Increases start-up success through investment in local businesses; it equips new and existing enterprises with the business skills they need for sustainable growth and through this will safeguard jobs and increase employment.</p>	<p>(7 months period to end June 2022)</p> <p>Programme will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 supported enterprises• 8 jobs safeguarded• 25 new businesses• 25 new products• £150k investment attracted• £500k grants paid <p>Value for money: outputs require approximately £10k investment per business compared to the expected investment of £32k via other funded programmes</p>
<p>Fenland Start & Grow programme commencing July 2022</p>	<p>Increases start-up success through investment in local businesses; it equips new and existing enterprises with the business skills they need for</p>	<p>(2022-23 9 months to end March 2023)</p> <p>Programme will deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 supported enterprises

Following an evaluation of the CRF funded programme including an assessment of value for money, this seeks to continue the CRF funded programme blending funding from the Council with external funding such as the CA.	sustainable growth and through this will safeguard jobs and increase employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 jobs safeguarded • 15 new businesses • 10 new products • £75k investment attracted • £100k grants paid <p>2023-2025 per year as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 supported enterprises • 8 jobs safeguarded • 25 new businesses • 15 new products • £150k investment attracted • £100k grants paid
Maintain regular meetings with the business community, including the Fenland Chamber of Commerce	More developed and coordinated approach to business intelligence to support business growth and competitiveness.	One new service to support businesses per year
Develop the Fenland for Business website to support businesses with signposting to advice and guidance and information	More businesses accessing the support and guidance available for example Growth Works that increases survival rates and job growth	<p>20% increase year on year of visitors to the Fenland for Business website.</p> <p>Increase the number of Twitter followers by 10% year on year.</p>
Annual business start-up leaflet – targeting the hard to reach home based businesses	Enabling more business start-ups and increasing the number of businesses registered on the Council's business database	<p>Every household paying Council Tax to receive a leaflet.</p> <p>Feeder for the Start & Grow programme.</p>

<p>Signposting to the Fenland for Business website “Start” section of the website and encouraging new and existing businesses to register to receive regular e-newsletter updates. Delivered with the annual council tax invoices.</p> <p>Sponsorship will be sought to help with funding the project from 2023-24 onwards.</p>		<p>Additional 10% increase in new businesses registered on the Council's Fenland for Business website in the month post- delivery of the leaflet</p>
<p>Economic Growth Team Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote available employment sites and premises via for example the Fenland for Business website, including: • Boathouse Business Centre • South Fens Business Centre and Enterprise Park • Council owned land & industrial units • Private commercial property and land 	<p>Enabling businesses to access to employment sites and development land to support business growth</p>	<p>15 enquiries per year converting to 3 businesses per year finding new premises/site</p>

Workforce development

Objective

Help ensure that current supply of and skills of the available workforce are appropriate for the Fenland marketplace, as well as offering young people improved aspirations, increased wage levels and alternative career paths. Improved access to employment, training, and skills for balanced economic participation.

The Team will act as a key intermediary between business and key training and skills providers including the CPCA, colleges, developing North Cambs Training Centre and emerging University of Peterborough.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables
To engage with CA Growth Works with Skills - demand-led skills service connecting learners and employers with opportunities that enable growth.	Deliver a fair and inclusive economy by empowering local people to access the education and skills needed to meet the needs of the local economy and business, both now and in the future.	Number of referrals per annum
To engage with North Cambs Training Centre (Stainless Metalcraft)	The facility will provide training across a range of vocational subjects for between 80 and 130 apprentices each year. The apprentices will then be equipped to find good careers in the local economy and help businesses meet their skills needs.	Number of company referrals per annum

Encourage businesses to utilise Growth Works with Skills Turning Point scheme (Skills and Employment) - the project includes, personal skills analysis, raising awareness of, signposting to, and providing vouchers up to £600 to enable access to free short course training, 'work re-entry' workshops to support transition back to work from furlough. Funding of £5k per internship will be provided to employers to provide new work opportunities. 'Learning Mentor Training' for the host organisation. Training Needs Analysis to identify re-skilling, up-skilling, and re-training opportunities within a business.	Deliver a fair and inclusive economy by empowering local people to access the education and skills needed to meet the needs of the local economy and business, both now and in the future.	Number of employers referred to the scheme which concludes in March 2022.
Work collaboratively with Jobcentre Plus to help raise awareness to businesses of enterprise opportunities and work placements. Quarterly meetings with Jobcentre Plus and proactive marketing of DWP programmes and initiatives	Improved awareness businesses of enterprise opportunities, apprenticeships, and work placements	4 meetings per annum with Jobcentre Plus 3 listings per annum of DWP programmes in the Team's e-newsletter
Work collaboratively with College of West Anglia (COWA), North Cambridgeshire Training Centre and University of Peterborough (UoP) to deliver programmes that meet the needs of local business including quarterly collaboration meetings	A more supportive environment for private sector involvement and improved opportunities for employment growth	4 meetings per annum with COWA 4 meetings per annum with Up 4 meetings per annum with North Cambridgeshire Training Centre

Enabling infrastructure

Objective

The provision of excellent underpinning infrastructure, which, as well as providing serviced land and available premises, to include road and transport linkages and the provision of superfast broadband.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables
<p>Acquiring technical and specialist support to bring forward employment sites to include infrastructure, highway, and market/commercial assessments. The sites include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stainless Metalcraft, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Launchpad & Manufacturing Technology Centre• Whittlesey Science & Technology Park, 50 acres-built area 70 acres green space, carbon zero• Development of light industrial units adjacent to the ex-Bartletts site• Sites around the location of Fenton Way Chatteris <p>These sites and others to be combined with other infrastructure requirements into an Investment Prospectus.</p>	<p>Enable progress to be maintained to ultimately deliver sites and premises.</p> <p>Enable funding to be sought to support delivery.</p>	<p>2022-23 3 key employment locations assessed and delivery plans in place</p> <p>2023-24 1 key employment locations assessed and delivery plans in place</p>

Work with partners to encourage and promote sustainable low carbon green infrastructure.	A more tailored sustainable environment to support green infrastructure, environmental and renewable supply chains.	Ongoing dialogue.
Support the development of sustainable and enhanced broadband infrastructure including completing the delivery of the Fenland component within the Connecting Cambridgeshire project	Widespread access to enhanced broadband speeds and infrastructure that provide greater business competitiveness and viability.	Engaging with partners including the private sector e.g. CityFibre to help them deliver by 2022-23 >97% premises (homes and businesses) having access to broadband speeds of at least 24mbps

Business retention & growth

Objective

The District is seen as an exciting place to seek to start or grow a business. This objective recognises the importance of proactively targeting and supporting growth-oriented employers in Fenland; helping them to grow through enhanced access to finance, expert advice, suitable premises, and locations.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables
Undertake a proactive account management business engagement programme with larger employers and potential growth companies	Better informed intelligence to enable support and guidance to be delivered in a more coordinated way. Business issues identified and mitigated, growth opportunities identified and supported	6 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team. Group of 40 businesses receive 1:2:1 "account management" service with 40 businesses visited per annum
Undertake a proactive business engagement programme with all known employers and business owners	Significant proportion of businesses aware of the Team and the business support opportunities available to them.	2,500 businesses receive a minimum of 6 e-newsletter communications from the Team per annum. Reactive follow up to engagement with Team from businesses
Reactive follow up to engagement with Team from businesses	Business issues identified and mitigated, growth opportunities identified and supported	4 case studies featuring businesses that have directly benefitted from the support provided by the Team.

CA Growth Works Business Coaching Service – 1:2:1 consultancy, masterclasses, grant funding	Providing support packages tailored to a business's specific needs, growth objectives and timeline. Enabling business growth.	Team to refer a minimum of 20 businesses for 1:2:1 consultancy and grant support per annum
South Fens Enterprise Park additional light industrial units Phase I and Phase II (additional funding will be required to deliver Phase II)	Enabling more businesses to expand and locate in Fenland	Team to take a leading role in the delivery by Q1 2023: Phase I four units Phase II two units (subject to funding)
Work with agents and developers to bring forward employment land provision, encourage investment in 'move on' opportunities through: Quarterly Agents and Developer Forum meetings, 1:2:1 engagement with agents and developers. The Team will work closely with the Council and Fenland Future to assess investment opportunities.	An enhanced district wide office and commercial accommodation that supports growth and diversity in the emerging sectors	10 1:2:1 meeting with agents and developers per annum 2 agents and developers forum meetings per annum
Work with Growth Hub - Peer to Peer network to recruit SME leaders to create strong peer-to-peer networks	Growth and development of businesses. work with individual SME leader's challenges can be explored through an action learning approach.	Team to recruit 5 businesses and enable continuing engaged in the network in the first year. Team to enable a rolling group of 10 businesses in the network from 2023-24
Develop joint Business events with partners to encourage networking, share business issues, etc	Enabling more businesses to expand	2 joint partner business events per annum
Services for Business Leaflet	Enabling more businesses to expand	Every business registered for business rates receives a leaflet.

All businesses registered for business rates receive a leaflet advising them of the services available to them from the Council and its partners such as Growth Works.		
Adopt a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data management	<p>Improved understanding of businesses and their requirements, issues, etc enabling enhanced support to be provided.</p> <p>Data for inclusion in funding submissions, etc.</p>	Increase the number of businesses listed in the CRM database by 5% in the first year (100 to 150 businesses) and then between 1 to 2% growth in years 2&3.
Housing sector sustainable and net zero carbon products and services	<p>A webinar event prior to March 2022 primarily designed to target local supply chain that are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. already working in Net Zero Carbon arena 2. working in construction but not specifically NZC, and 3. existing business and/or start-up's that see this as a growth area and would like to diversify existing activities. 	Growth in the supply chain both locally and nationally

Inward investment

Objective

To maintain and increase the level of employment in the district and improve the quality of employment locally to provide all ages of the community with the opportunities that match their skills and aspirations. This will require the district to secure new inward investment to compliment current local employers.

The district has clear advantages to offer investors in key sectors, in particular Agri/food, precision engineering and manufacturing, professional and business support services, and the environmental and renewable sectors.

The Team will proactively target and engage with different business sectors from supermarkets and fast-food brands to international businesses looking for a UK base. The engagement with individual businesses will help the Team understand the plans and location requirements of these businesses and where appropriate put forward propositions that seek to attract them to locate in Fenland. Even where a business does not currently have expansion plans the Team will have started a relationship with that business which in the longer term may result in investment into the district.

In addition to the Council, Fenland is promoted as an investment destination through the CA Growth Works Inward Investment Team, Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business, commercial agents and developed relationships with strategic employers.

Encourage additional investment from parent companies of existing international investors to bring in new products or technologies leading to the expansion or retention of their Fenland facilities.

Work Plan

Action	Outcome	Measurables
--------	---------	-------------

Work closely with and respond to information enquiries from CA Growth Works Inward Investment Team	Delivering economic growth through the attraction of inward investment.	Working with the Growth Works Inward Investment Team: 10 inward investment enquiries per annum 1 inward investment per annum
<p>Economic Growth Team inward investment service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying suitable land or commercial premises • Helping to facilitate planning applications • Identifying suitable funding streams • Working with businesses to source suitable workforce • Arrange business development meetings with local supply chains, • For large scale investment, facilitating on-going high quality business support to help nurture business growth 	Delivering economic growth through the attraction of inward investment.	<p>2 inward investment enquiries per annum</p> <p>1 inward investment per annum</p>
<p>Continue to market Fenland propositions to target growth sectors, individual businesses and locations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarkets, fast-food brands, hotels, etc • Inward Investor Pack • Targeted Business Exhibitions • Programme of strategic marketing 	Positive coverage of Fenland as a location of choice for business	<p>Creation of Inward Investor Pack.</p> <p>Attendance at a targeted business exhibition per annum and generated of 3 quality leads.</p>
Deliver 'soft landing' tools that support an aftercare programme for new and recently established investors, through:	Effective message of Fenland being 'Open for Business' delivered to businesses and potential investors	<p>Creation of soft-landing package.</p> <p>Marketing of package to potential investors, intermediaries i.e., agents,</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face meetings • Free office accommodation • Priority planning applications 		lawyers, banks and partners i.e., Growth Works Inward Investment.
Collate Insight/data – targeted market research to include opportunities for attracting an hotel into Fenland, high quality manufacturing and engineering, research institutions, etc	Enabling propositions to be communicated to key sectors such as high-quality engineering to market Fenland as an effective location for their business.	1 research project undertaken per annum. 1 proposition created for a target market per annum.
Enable a Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) at Chatteris study	Help enable the delivery of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Launchpad and MTC and provide a substantial boost to economic growth in the district.	Study highlighting the options to market the MTC for inward investment.
Work closely Thinking Place and potential Place Board.	A brand strategy to support the communication of key propositions to attract inward investment.	Brand strategy and prospectus.
Consider Discretionary Business Rate Relief to incentivise businesses to locate in Fenland and commercial developments to be brought forward. Any relief is totally discretionary and only considered where it acts as a real incentive to business.	Attraction of inward investment, expansion projects and development of commercial space for example light industrial units	2 businesses per annum attracting discretionary business rate relief

Measuring the success of the Refresh

The Refresh seeks to help deliver the Council's Economic Development Strategy 2012-31 with the overall aim of achieving economic growth in Fenland. What does economic growth look like?

- More business start-ups
- More businesses relocating into the district
- More expansions of existing businesses
- More local well-paid jobs for local people
- Thriving town and village centres
- More home-based businesses

The delivery of economic growth is substantially in the hands of businesses and specifically the people who run or create them. Businesses make the decisions about whether to expand, relocate, start and so on. Given this, the role of the Team is to:

- support owners/senior managers with their decision making through account management, signposting and so on
- ensure that there are opportunities for businesses to acquire suitable premises and/or serviced land on which to expand or locate
- ensure that the message that Fenland is "open for business" and what that means practically for businesses is understood across Fenland and outside of Fenland by targeted businesses, targeted sectors and those making enquiries about relocating into Fenland

Demonstrating the success of the Refresh is therefore based upon how well the Team interacts with these decision makers that ultimately lead to the business expanding, relocating, or starting. The resultant outcomes being more businesses, more jobs, higher paid jobs, more apprenticeships, etc

Examples of actual feedback from Fenland businesses:

"Thanks for all you've done so far, it's very professional."

"Thank you for taking the time to see us today and with your guidance, we may be able to achieve some expansion in staff and sales turnover in the coming months. Your suggestions and comments were very enlightening."

Example case study (anonymised):

Vegetable Packing Company

The company pack fruit for supermarkets and employ 125 staff at the Fenland facility. During a 1:2:1 engagement meeting with the company a number of barriers to growth and opportunities were identified with the main barrier being recruitment.

The Team introduced the company to Growth Works with skills, Cambridgeshire Skills, Skills for the Workforce and to Everyone Health. The company was able to promote the roles it had available and the support that it provided for staff and health improvements which will help in staff retention.

Introductions were made to Growth Works Skills for the company to make use of recruitment online tool and Job Centre Plus regarding Kickstart and direct recruitment.

The main opportunity identified was research and development (R&D). The R&D opportunities at the National Centre for Food Manufacturing were discussed as well as links to Cambridgeshire Wireless so that the company is able to network with businesses that can provide solutions to the robotics opportunities that the company are developing.

In addition, two local companies were introduced to the company as they would be of interest as part of the supply chain, in particular to aid in plastic packaging reduction, which is a customer requirement and an introduction to a Cambridgeshire company who will assist with new product development.

A further introduction has been made to a new inward investor due to synergies between the two companies and so that they can work together in their development of systems, processes and skills.

Bidding for external funding

The Team helps enable businesses to secure grant and other funding to support the growth of their business and attracts funding to support the growth of the economy for example for infrastructure.

One example of where the Team helped businesses secure grant funding, in early 2021 the Team contacted business to highlight a new CPCA capital grant which resulted in 5 companies receiving £390,000 of grant funding, a total of £2,975,844 in capital expenditure and 59 jobs to be created.

One example of helping to secure external funding is the Team's support to create a proposal to attract Central Government Levelling Up Funding with an application expected to be required by spring 2022. The Team have supported the two successful bids for Central Government Community Renewal Funding (CRF) resulting in an estimated £920k of funds and resource being invested in Fenland. The CRF projects are seen as "pilots" for the Governments Shared Prosperity Fund which the Team will be integral to creating proposals to attract this funding for Fenland.

The team will soon see the first successful inward investment into Fenland due to the introduction to Growth Works by the Economic Growth team. The company has been awarded a £75,000 grant from Growth works and will employ 20 staff. There are plans to develop seven new products in the next 3 years at the Fenland facility

Income generation

Economic growth can provide opportunities for the Council to generate net positive income either through investment itself or potentially via Fenland Future Limited (FFL) and its Business Plan. Such opportunities include investment in existing commercial property both occupied and unoccupied, design and build commercial property for committed end users, speculative design and build of commercial property and so on.

The Team works with existing Fenland businesses that require new premises and businesses that are considering locating in Fenland. The Council or potentially FFL can provide solutions to a business's property requirements and where appropriate the Team will advise businesses of these options. The Team will collect the necessary information from a business to enable both the Council and potentially FFL to make an initial assessment of the opportunity.

Economic growth can also generate business rate growth and therefore an increased revenue stream into the Council.