

## **Appendix 1: Draft Economic Development Strategy 2018 - 2023**

### **Summary of Consultation Responses**

NB. Officer comments (in brackets); any revision to Strategy shown in *italics*.

#### **1. Do you agree with the key issues identified?**

**1.1 Education** - recognise the education sector within the district as key players in providing the workforce of the future.

(We will continue to work with the LEP Education Trust and locally with Newcastle and Stafford College Group to provide training and education opportunities for our future workforce)

*Reflected in the strategy – no change required.*

**1.2 Kidsgrove** - develop the brown-field spaces within the town centre and develop a long term strategy for the growth & well-being of our town centre & surrounding residential areas

Make the most of Kidsgrove having a train station - unlike the rest of the borough, focus should be on improving business in Kidsgrove – and perhaps better links to the rest of the borough.

(We will work together with the County Council and other partners to developing a master plan for Kidsgrove during 2018. In addition the emerging Joint Local Plan will seek to earmark suitable sites for development.)

*Minor revision on page 17 to reflect the proposed master planning.*

**1.3 Social Enterprise** - development of social enterprise as a priority, given the commitment to pursue the SE place agenda

More focus on work with the Third Sector to develop this area of work

(This is an area we have worked previously and successfully with Aspire Housing and PM Training - we will review the current position and explore the scope for improving work with the Third Sector and the Newcastle and Employment and Skills Group).

*Reflected in the strategy – no change required.*

**1.4 Resources** – has the Council allocated resources to support the strategy. Need smarter targets.

(We will continue to work within the constraints of the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy, noting that this will require the Council to play a greater enabling role where other parties deliver specific initiatives. We will also work with our partners and the Local Enterprise Partnership to secure additional resources for the Borough)

*Reflected in the strategy – no change required.*

**1.5 Partnerships** - Newcastle can't be considered in isolation from the wider sub-regional and regional context

(We will continue to work with our partners both locally, regionally and nationally; notably the LEP and the Constellation Partnership in terms of formal partnerships)

*Reflected in the strategy – no change required.*

**1.6 Culture** – Good to see recognition of the value culture has to play in making the town a great place to live and work. Suggest the council + partner provide more support to generate a more varied and distinctive cultural offer in the town.

In particular the Council should support smaller and up-and-coming cultural organisations as well as the larger NPOs (like the New Vic). As well as financial support, the Council could use historical buildings to provide subsidised studio space or work-live options for people working in the creative industries.

The Philip Astley Project, part-funded by Heritage Lottery is at the heart of the areas cultural tourism development. The project has raised the profile of Philip Astley and of the Borough. It has encouraged people to celebrate their local cultural heritage and learn more about this. Through the project, relationships have been built which will create exciting plans for future collaborations to promote Philip Astley & Newcastle-under-Lyme both nationally and internationally. The Philip Astley Project has enabled Newcastle to be named as one of the six towns/cities at the heart of Circus 250 celebrations in 2018.

(The Council recognises the value of culture and the importance of cultural heritage to the town. We will continue to support this work with officer time)

*Revision to acknowledge the work of the Philip Astley Project part funded by HLF on page 17.*

**1.7 Transport** – address the issue of large parts of the day when traffic is slow or stationary. There are particular problems with getting across the A500. What plans are there to increase mobility?

(Newcastle Sustainable Transport group has been established for over two years and will look into these issues. More specifically the Council will continue to work with the Highway Authority (the County Council) and Highways England, along with the City Council, to promote strategic infrastructure projects which have the potential to unlock development and/or relieve congestion.)

*Minor revision to reflect the ongoing signage and wayfinding work Page 13.*

**1.8 Town Centre** - The town has some good independent businesses but what is the Council doing to support that particular sector

Can the Council do anything to address the empty buildings in then town centre?

Recognise the importance of public realm

(We will continue to work with Newcastle BID to support local businesses and with the County Council to improve the public realm)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**1.9 Night time economy** – car parking decisions to close the Midway earlier does not support the development of the night time economy and parking charges are too high compared to nearby areas

(We will continue to work with partners and the BID to retain Purple Flag status. There are a number of other car parks within and adjacent to the town centre which support the night-time economy.)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**1.10 Economic Growth** – over ambitious plans given the growth in the last 15 years is 6,000 people or 0.3% per year. The last 15 years saw some of the highest growth the UK has ever seen. The next 15 years will include adjusting to Brexit and a loss of manufacturing jobs, which is Newcastle's largest employment group.

(We will continue to work with our partners and the LEP to ensure that growth projections are as accurate as possible with the aim of optimising delivery of investment in our borough.)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**1.11 Student town** – what happens when the students are away during summer break?

(We believe the town centre economy will benefit from having more students in town during term time and accept that student numbers will dwindle at certain times of the year. The additional footfall will support local businesses and re-energise the town centre)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**1.12 Greenbelt** – given the amount of brownfield land available in the city there is surprise that land in the Greenbelt at Keele is being considered.

(The Joint Local Plan will provide strategic direction in respect of any Green Belt release. This strategy recognises the importance of Keele University as a driver of economic growth and a significant contributor to the area's prosperity, the land use considerations of which will need to be considered by the JLP.)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**1.13 Priorities** - There are too many priorities.

(We will review the priorities to see what we believe can be realistically achieved over the 5-year life of the strategy)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

2. **What do you feel are the most important issues to you for us to address over the life of the strategy? Do you feel that the actions proposed will ensure that these issues are addressed?**

**2.1 Kidsgrove** - It's clear that the borough council has no strategy for the development of Kidsgrove town centre or for the necessary resources to support the population & communities outside of Newcastle town centre

Invest in Kidsgrove to make it a thriving town

(see 1.2)

*No further revision required.*

**2.2 Student Town** - graduate retention. Making the town a more innovative and exciting place to live and work.

Relook at over inflated growth figures for student population and Business Park development

(We will continue to work with Keele University and the Science and Innovation Park to support further development and will keep growth projections under review)

*Minor revision to reflect specific work on graduate retention and growth projections on pages 13 and 14.*

**2.3 Business** - Support for SME businesses to generate more wealth, employment and skills.

That pre-start and start-up businesses have the support and advice to thrive and grow in the Borough...we want to keep them here, so need to ensure the correct growth space is available and is cost effective

Negative impact of Brexit on manufacturing

(We will continue to work with the Stoke and Staffordshire Growth Hub and LEP to ensure high quality business support and we will work with the LEP and Staffordshire Chamber to ensure we are best prepared for the challenges and opportunities of Brexit)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**2.4 Town Centre** - There seems to be a complete absence of thinking related to SMART Cities ideas. What about free Wi-Fi in the town centre, digital kiosks etc. If you want to attract visitors especially business visitors, they need somewhere to stay. At the moment there is a very small number of beds available and the quality of some of them is much to be desired. What are you going to do to grow B&Bs and hotels?

(We will work with our partners at Enjoy Staffordshire and the Destination Management Partnership to explore opportunities to improve the B&B offer)

(We will continue to work with the BID to identify Wi-Fi hot spots in the town centre)

Creative approach to addressing the vacancy rate in town centre.

(We will continue to work with Hometown Plus and BID to further develop a creative approach to encouraging more businesses into the town centre)

*Minor revision to reflect opportunities to improve B&B offer on page 10, And minor revision regarding Wi-Fi hotspots and work with Hometown Plus creative approach at York Place on page 11.*

**2.5 Partnership working** - Working better with Stoke on Trent City Council would be a start.

(We continue to work closely with the City Council on a number of projects including the Enterprise Zone and the Joint Local Plan along with partnership activities such as those associated with the LEP and Constellation Partnership)

*No revision require as reflected in the strategy.*

**2.6 Financial Inclusion** - provision of ethical & affordable alternatives to Pay Day Lenders and Loan Sharks

(The Newcastle Partnership works closely with the Financial Inclusion Group to address these issues)

*No revision as the links to the Council's Stronger and Safer Communities Strategy and inclusive growth approach are stated in the introduction on page 2.*

**2.7 Housing** - The lack of starter homes, social housing and retirement villages. Inflated growth figures of 9,000 homes required when it's nearer to 2500

The over-supply of housing and the reliance on buy to let and private land lords who are unregulated.

Address empty homes and provide more social housing

(Our housing policy team and housing enforcement team will continue to monitor the private rented sector whilst the Joint Local Plan will seek to provide for future housing need based upon up-to-date evidence. The Council's adopted policy on Affordable Housing continues to enable delivery of new affordable housing. And the Belong Village is an excellent example of the Council working in partnership with private sector and Heritage Lottery to deliver high quality homes for 100+ people and the restoration of a key Listed Building.)

*Minor revision to reflect how the Council is addressing the issue of empty homes and social housing on pages 14 and 15.*

**3. Are there any local economic conditions / barriers to growth to doing business in Newcastle? Does the strategy address these?**

**3.1 Town centre** - address the problem of empty shops in Newcastle. You need to be bold on this issue, lower business rates, lower parking fees and start competing with Hanley etc.

Parking too expensive and provision is poor quality

Town centre is lack lustre and looks run down

(We will continue to work with the BID, Hometown Plus and other partners to encourage more businesses to choose Newcastle as their preferred location. In addition the committed growth of student accommodation within and adjacent to the town centre, along with plans for more housing within the town centre catchment area, should generate greater demand for goods and services thereby improving the prospects and sustainability of town centre businesses)

*Minor revision to reflect more strongly how we will encourage more businesses to relocate to the town centre along with plans to increase footfall on page 13.*

**3.2 Kidsgrove** - Better links between the boroughs only rail station and the rest of the borough

(see 1.2)

*No further revision required.*

**3.3 Joint Local Plan** - The current lack of a development plan limits clear strategic direction

(We will continue to work with the City Council on the delivery of the Joint Local Plan due to be adopted by 2020)

*No revision required as reflected in the strategy.*

**3.4 Student town** - Graduate retention - provide starter units in the town centre targeted at students and graduates to retain them in the area

Staffordshire University is an asset on our doorstep not just Keele University

(We will continue to work with both Keele and Staffordshire Universities to explore ways of retaining more graduates in our area)

*No further revision required; already noted in 2.2.*

**3.5 Local Economy** - We are a low income economy - needs to be more realism about the long term decline in the area and the consequences of that

Poor local transport links

(We are seeking to promote the expansion and growth of Keele University and its' Science and Innovation Park with the aim of increasing the number of higher value, knowledge economy, jobs. Also we will continue to work with the County Council, as the Highway Authority, and through the Newcastle Sustainable Transport Group to improve transport links in the area)

*No revision required as already reflected in the strategy.*

**3.6 Skills** - We need more apprenticeships and jobs to go with them. There is a huge shortage of plumbers, electricians, builders, truck drivers, etc. and the JDP could put money with the colleges into promoting the area.

Shortage of skilled jobs in Kidsgrove

(We will continue to work with our local college Newcastle and Stafford College Group, the Universities and the LEP Education Trust to encourage more people into training, apprenticeships and education to improve the levels of skills within our area)

*No revision required as already reflected in the strategy.*

**3.7 Housing** - Promote new forms of building such as SIPS (Structured Insulated Panels) and solar, including house batteries.

(We will explore options for innovative house building solutions with our local housing partners and the central government agency, Homes England)

*Minor revision to reflect exploration of innovative approaches to house building on page 15.*

**4. What are the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you feel we should be measuring?**

- Average salaries - NOMIS
- Leisure centre provision – Council Leisure Services
- Skills levels - NOMIS
- Cultural provision – Arts Council England
- Benchmark productivity against local and national - NOMIS
- Levels of business starts and survival - NOMIS
- Graduate retention – Keele and Staffordshire Universities
- Student growth – Keele and Staffordshire Universities
- Growth of business on the science park - KSP
- Percentage of firms exporting – LEP / Staffordshire Chamber
- Salary levels - NOMIS
- Percentage of firms investing in skilled workforce - LEP
- Annual breakdown of key business sectors - NOMIS
- Unemployment levels - NOMIS
- Apprenticeships completed – County Council
- Empty commercial units (council owned and other) – internal survey
- Average house price – Online sources
- Housing built – Planning
- Level of personal debt – Financial Inclusion Group
- Visitors to the town – BID and DMP
- Town centre occupancy - Council survey

**5. Any further comments about the EDS, or suggestions or amendments that could be made?**

**5.1 Kidsgrove** – more joined up approach needed

(see 1.2)

*No further revision required.*

**5.2 Capacity to deliver** - can Newcastle effectively deliver an economic strategy or should it be part of a wider conurbation strategy with a local flavour

(We will work with our partners, locally, regionally and nationally to deliver the strategy and it has been drafted in the context of the LEP's updated Strategic Economic Plan and the Government's Industrial Strategy, along with influences from the strategies of key local partners such as Keele University.)

*No revision required as already reflected in the strategy.*

**5.3 Strategic approach** - how does the plan tie-up with transport, open spaces, green spaces, safety etc.

(We will continue to work across other Council departments and with our partners to ensure a strategic approach to delivery of the strategy recognising that other strategies or long term plans, such as the Joint Local Plan, have a more substantial role in co-ordinating these kinds of considerations.)

*Minor revision to reflect more strongly the Council's strategic approach on page 3.*

**5.4 Threats and developments** - you mention the high speed rail development but have not, as far as I can see, said how you are to going to address the problem of SOT not being part of it? Likewise, if leaving the EU is a threat, what type of threat is it, and why does your strategy address that specific threat

(We will continue to work with the Constellation Partnership to ensure we make the most of opportunities for the Borough through HS2 and will work with partners to address challenges and opportunities presented through Brexit)

*No revision required as already reflected in the strategy.*

**5.5 Earlier testing of the draft** - The draft strategy should have been tested earlier than this to remove some of the glaring issues, such as HS2 being a benefit and the proposed growth in population. Being 40 miles from both Manchester & Birmingham is a difficult place to be economically. If you factor in the comments from parishes and residents and scale back the housing development and move the student accommodation to the golf course and social housing to the centre of Newcastle this could be a great strategy.

(All consultation responses will be reported to the Council's Cabinet for consideration. More specifically, the Council is a partner within the Constellation Partnership with one of the key aims being to optimise the economic benefits of HS2 for our area.)

*No revision required as already reflected in the strategy.*

**5.6 More join up** - I was disappointed that this consultation ran concurrently with the JLP Preferred Options consultation, this shows a lack of joined up thinking. Newcastle has the potential to thrive. It has cheap housing, good external transport links e.g. proximity to motorways and airports, a proud industrial heritage, good training facilities and in neighbouring Stoke on Trent a great deal of cheap property and land.

(We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in the Council and City Council to ensure strategic fit with the emerging Joint Local Plan)

*No revision required as joined up approach is already reflected in the strategy.*