



# COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET - 5 OCTOBER 2020</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM 7</b>
Subject	<b>GREEN ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills Email: tony.dale@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Paul James, Economic Development Lead Tel: 01285 623558 Email: paul.james@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider adopting the Green Economic Growth Strategy, to guide the District Council's activities to support economic growth in the district in line with Council Plan priorities.
Annexes	Annex A – Green Economic Growth Strategy
Recommendation/s	<p>a) <i>That the Green Economic Growth Strategy is approved for consultation.</i></p> <p>b) <i>That a focussed consultation exercise takes place over a four week period and a further report is brought back to Cabinet once this has been completed.</i></p> <p>c) <i>That updates on progress against the strategy are brought to Cabinet every six months.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	Delivering Green Economic Growth.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation has taken place during the formulation of the strategy with key partners such as Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP, institutions such as the Royal Agricultural University and Cirencester College and a number of local businesses

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Administration has set a Corporate Plan priority of 'Delivering Green Economic Growth. In the 2020/21 budget, provision was made for a new post of Economic Development Lead. The position was filled in July 2020 on a two-year fixed term contract and this strategy is the result of the work the postholder has undertaken in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills since being appointed. It is intended to guide economic development activity over the next 4 years.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The Administration's ambition is to nurture a dynamic, vibrant and balanced economy in the Cotswolds, growing high value, highly-skilled, low environmental impact businesses in our district.
  - 2.1.1. The district is a relatively prosperous area, but faces a number of key challenges – a heavy reliance on the visitor economy in which many of the jobs are fairly low-paid, changes to the role of town centres, high property prices which make it difficult for many people to afford the type of home they aspire to and a lack of opportunities for young people compared with bigger cities.
  - 2.1.2. The economy also has many strengths with numerous successful and innovative companies, key institutions like the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester College, the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh, RAF Fairford and the Campden BRI in Chipping Campden and assets like Cotswold Airport and the Cotswold Water Park, on top of the traditional Cotswold features of beautiful towns, villages and landscapes. These strengths can be built upon and form the cornerstone of our economic growth strategy.
  - 2.1.3. The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated some of the trends already in existence, such as the shift to online shopping and increased working from home, which are likely to remain a feature of the 'new normal' with significant consequences for the economy. It is important that we support our business community in adjusting to the post-pandemic economy, particularly in relation to improving their digital presence. Sadly, the recession caused by the Coronavirus lockdown will result in many people losing their jobs. A significant proportion of the workforce in the Cotswold District is still furloughed and when the Government's Job Retention Scheme ends on 31 October the unemployment rate is almost certain to increase substantially. It is important that people looking to find new employment, re-train or start their own businesses are able to access the support they need and the District Council will work with partners to deliver this.
  - 2.1.4. The Strategy has been written in parallel with the new Corporate Plan and other key strategies such as the Climate Change Strategy and Recovery Investment Strategy to ensure it is fully aligned. The Strategy also draws heavily from the Gloucestershire Draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) drawn up by GFirst LEP.

- 2.1.5. The LIS identifies key growth sectors for the County, many of which are particularly relevant to Cotswold District, such as agritech, cyber/digital and green technologies. This Strategy identifies how the District Council can work with partners to deliver growth in these sectors within the district. Agritech draws upon the work of the Royal Agricultural University/Farm 491 Incubator and the Campden BRI Food and Drink Innovation Centre. The main focus for the Cyber Security sector in the County will be Cyber Central in Cheltenham, next to GCHQ, but the scale of the sector means that there are opportunities for other districts. Cotswold is already home to a number of digital and technology-based businesses and the award of £4.48 million to Cirencester College for an Applied Digital Skills Centre through the LEP will help to provide the workforce these kinds of businesses will need. The Council's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency and stated intention to put climate change at the heart of everything it does makes it a natural sector for the Council to seek to grow.
- 2.1.6. Infrastructure, both transport and digital, is also key. The District Council will look to build on the success of the Fastershire broadband project in making Cotswold the best-connected rural district in the country. The A417 Missing Link project will remove the biggest congestion hotspot affecting the District and will contribute to economic growth.
- 2.1.7. The District Council's role will vary depending on what the actions and initiatives are – some may be delivered directly by the Council, others will come through partnership with various organisations and the Council's role in some instances may simply be supporting, promoting or signposting.
- 2.1.8. Adopting the Strategy will provide weight to funding bids the Council or other partners make in support of the priorities and projects contained within it. The Council will also seek to identify projects in which it can invest directly which support the economic growth objectives and which meet the criteria set out in the Recovery Investment Strategy.
- 2.1.9. Discussions have been held with key partners like Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP, key institutions like the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester College and the Cotswold Water Park Trust and a number of key local businesses during the formulation of this strategy but Cabinet may wish to consider whether a more formal consultation period is needed prior to the adoption of the strategy.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. The actions contained within the Economic Growth Strategy will be financed from existing budgets. Where possible, external funding will be brought in from other partners. Investment opportunities identified to meet the economic growth objectives of the Council will need a Business Case to satisfy the criteria in the Recovery Investment Strategy and if successful will support the Council's revenue budget.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations made in this report.

#### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. There is a risk that the actions set out in the strategy may not be delivered due to resource constraints or a downturn in the economy. This risk will be mitigated by being focused on key priorities and seeking to lever in funding and other resources from partners.

#### **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1. The Strategy seeks to deliver inclusive growth which will benefit all sections of the community and which promotes equality and wellbeing.

#### **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Strategy seeks to grow the environmental technologies sector in the district, including renewable energy and the retrofitting of energy saving measures in homes and commercial buildings, and to encourage businesses to embed climate change objectives within their operations. All of this will have a positive impact on emissions and the district's wider climate change objectives.

#### **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. The District Council could choose not to have an Economic Development function and simply allow the free market to work. This is likely to mean that opportunities are missed and benefits to the local economy and local people would be lost. The benefits of being seen to be a supportive and business-friendly local authority are significant.
- 8.2. The Council could also choose not to have an Economic Growth Strategy and could simply work on a reactive basis. This would not represent the best use of resources. Neither of these options is recommended.

#### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. None

(END)