



South Somerset District Council

Economic Development Strategy 2012 to 2015

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Executive Summary

South Somerset's economy is particularly special and arguably unique amongst the local economies of the South West. Cutting-edge technological engineering aerospace and computer software businesses follow in the footsteps of the manufacturing of lace, rope, gloves, agricultural machinery, motorised engines and aircraft. The history of economic success has a clear and continuous thread running through it. This 'thread' is the remarkable ability of South Somerset to innovate and adapt quickly to changes in the market demands for manufactured products

The Government White Paper; *Local Growth, realising every place's potential* (2010) is a response to the current economic climate. The White Paper raises the concept of maximising the potential of *local* economic growth to drive national performance, and implores councils to be positive in creating conditions for growth.

We believe our Council is well placed to rise to this challenge. We understand local strengths and can see opportunities to encourage businesses in order to foster growth that can help the economy out of the current recession. It is for this reason that South Somerset District's Council Plan (2012) puts Jobs at the heart of the Council's activities.

The Strategy recognizes that South Somerset has a great deal to offer businesses that wish to start up or relocate into our district; accessibility, an outstanding built & natural environment and being within easy reach of the coast is an incentive to locate here. However it is innovation by local companies which has sustained long-term jobs growth; companies such as Numatic who make Henry vacuum cleaners, Agusta Westland, who are developing important civil & military aircraft contracts. Brecknell Willis of Chard started as agricultural engineers and are now producing electrification/traction for all types of transportation systems and Screwfix who have developed a distribution business supplying the building and DIY market with their requirements the next day. All of these are examples of locally grown firms. There are many more such examples in food processing and other sectors.

The Strategy identifies the issues and areas in the South Somerset economy where intervention will make a positive and measurable difference. There is no intention of getting involved where the market is delivering its own solutions, nor do we not want to duplicate work where others are already providing successful services. It prepares us for looking differently at the way that Economic Development might be resourced. This includes a more proactive view of the use of SSDC's capital reserves with more focus on potential joint ventures with third parties. It advocates moving towards new solutions.

This Strategy has been based on extensive research and influenced by local businesses, partners' and elected member views. Their input have helped to shape the recommendations and prioritise the main objectives of the strategy

The main aim of this strategy is to ensure that the Council helps to create and maintain the economic conditions that will help individuals and businesses to grow and prosper and make the local economy thrive.

The need for a strategy

In 2012 we are in the midst of the deepest recession since the 1940s. Whilst the South Somerset economy has displayed a degree of resilience, the national economic climate has forced many major national businesses to make decisions that have impacted in South Somerset for instance in our High Streets . The demographic profile of our population is changing. We are all living longer, more people are retiring to Somerset, family structures are prone to greater change, and South Somerset has benefited from an influx in the labour force. Changing demographics bring new and different requirements to our towns.

We need a strategy that sits well with the expected rise in population and Our Local Plan (2012) sets out the required balance between jobs and housing. We need to plan and explore innovative ways of providing an increased population/workforce with jobs and with accommodation, ensuring that our towns remain vibrant, self contained and as sustainable as possible. The strategy will also address changing national and local priorities by facilitating and supporting the residents and businesses of South Somerset.

Methodology

A wide evidence base has been used in the preparation of this Economic Development Strategy. Two documents 'The State of the Somerset Economy' (Ekosgen 2010) and an 'Economic Review of Yeovil' (Ekosgen 2010) were produced to inform Economic Policy. The latter document was commissioned specifically to provide a robust appraisal of the Yeovil Economy set in a South Somerset context. These documents in themselves were the result of wide consultations across the Somerset and South Somerset business community and provided the basis for determining trends and issues that currently impact on the South Somerset economy.

Outline drafts drawn from emerging issues, together with suggested areas of work were presented to the South Somerset Local Strategic Partnership, the Corporate Equalities Group, and the Yeovil Chamber of Trade in the Autumn of 2011 and Spring 2012. Comments and feedback from these sessions provided a strong steer in the early stages of the process. The policy context for the Strategy was framed against the emerging LEP business plan in early 2012.

Workshops were undertaken in June and July 2012 to incorporate the views of the Council's elected members and a cross-section of private and public sector bodies that included developers, construction surveyors, the retail trade and jobs providers. Comments of the draft were also invited from Scrutiny Committee, other members and Council officers. The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development has been actively involved throughout the development of the strategy.

The South Somerset Economic Development Strategy 2012- 2015 will take its route through the Scrutiny Committee before formal adoption by the District Executive Committee in the autumn of 2012.

Vision

The Council's vision is 'to create a strong local economy, which has low unemployment and thriving businesses'

Aims of the Strategy

1. To maintain the jobs we have and bring new jobs to our towns and rural centres to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to work
2. To encourage the creation of new , high value employment by attracting investment and fostering the growth of small and medium sized companies
3. To promote business diversification and innovation to further increase the value of local employment

(Council plan 2012-2015)

The Context

The National Agenda

The Coalition government came to power in 2010 with the economy at a serious low point. Whilst the UK has been affected by a recessionary period in every decade since the 1950s, the current recession has been deep and protracted. The **Government White Paper 'Local Growth: Realising every place's potential' (2010)** recognised that fundamental changes to the economy were needed to tackle the prevailing weak economic climate. These changes would be accompanied by a new economic philosophy that no longer rested on the old principles of regional competitiveness, growth and convergence but on a culture of fostering prosperity in all parts of the country. Manufacturing features as a key driver in the Government's economic agenda, and this suggests that Yeovil and South Somerset are well positioned for growth as the economy becomes more favourable.

The growth of the public sector during the last government was viewed to have detracted from the strength of the national economy. Public Sector spending will now be reduced, and this in itself will prove challenging for areas that have a high percentage of their workforce in that sector. It will provide new challenges for SSDC as it seeks to deliver services differently and more cost effectively whilst adding value to the local economy

Former governance structures of regional economic development have been stripped away, removing the Regional Development Agencies. To bridge the gap between central government policy and local economic development, the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) were created. The **Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** aims to attract higher paid jobs and increase skill levels; secure infrastructure and improve support for businesses; and ensure job creation through economically successful market towns and rural areas

The Government has called for actions on growth and the stimulation of local economies to benefit the national picture. This clearly illustrates the importance now being placed on the success of local economies.

The South Somerset Context

Manufacturing remains important to South Somerset despite a national drift towards a service-based economy. This is especially true in the dynamic engineering and high-tech sectors that are capable of accommodating diversification and rapid change. South Somerset has also enjoyed a prolonged growth in business services, partly encouraged by the presence of the strong core manufacturing businesses. The district has also been considerably less reliant on public sector employment than many other parts of the county.

Between 1991 and 2010 South Somerset's economy grew significantly taking the number of jobs in the district from 47,482 to 65,200 - an average of 932 new jobs created per year. The current, deep, global recession impacted on South Somerset between 2006 and 2010 with a net decline of 2,100 jobs. Perhaps more importantly, our longer term historic view reveals that past contraction in our workforce has always been replaced by growth.

The evidence also shows that South Somerset copes well with changes in the manufacturing market, and the economic appraisals indicate that we are well positioned to absorb or even drive further change and adaptation. For example, our strong high-tech manufacturing sector is now advantageously positioned to take advantage in the development of low carbon and knowledge intensive sectors. South Somerset can pioneer transition and develop new markets that will help diversify the economy. The market will determine the direction but SSDC for its part, is well positioned to plan for, and help facilitate those changes

A **Local Investment Plan (LIP)** has been prepared by all Somerset Local Authorities to assist the LEP in the prioritisation of major infrastructure projects. The document outlines all significant development sites in Somerset that can contribute to the delivery of jobs and homes in the County. The current priorities for South Somerset are Yeovil's Western Corridor and the Chard Eastern Development Area. The LIP will be used to target the infrastructure capital investments of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and for Government initiatives such as the Regional Growth Fund and the Growing Places Fund.

Current Position

Currently the Council delivers economic development and regeneration through a small team of specialist officers based centrally at Brympton Way and regeneration officers who work in the four Area Teams across the district.

There are three core functions - the main Economic Development Service, Tourism and the Yeovil Innovation Centre.

Current priorities include the Chard Regeneration Scheme and the Yeovil Vision, but there are many areas of collaborative working including planning consultations, development appraisals, business support, marketing and the dissemination of economic information at a local level. The Economic Development team are able to provide economic expertise to local, area-based projects.

Much is achieved using officer time and minimal resources, but the key to successful regeneration programmes almost unfailingly rests on the ability to access capital funding for our larger projects.

Even though there is little scope for capital development within the existing budget, the service has made significant achievements through maximising potential for regeneration and working with partners. These are shown in the table below:

The key achievements for the service in 2011/12 were:

Yeovil Innovation Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of the available tenant space was let. • There were 17 businesses in the YIC employing 111 people. There were 12 'virtual tenants' • 6 businesses had expanded and left the centre
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct advice was provided to 70 small businesses in 2011/12 • 300 business were supported through events - Local Food Producers Event and Tourism events. • There were 54 E.D. inputs to planning applications
Major Redundancy Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self employment advice and advice on employment in the high tech sector was provided to Westlands and BAE (40+ employees) with offer of further support if required
Regeneration projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of Chard Town Centre -Henry Boot developers appointed- Development Agreement should be signed in June 2012. • Chard Eastern Development Area – Business Plan to be considered by inspector in Sept 2012 • Public Consultations for Chard Town Centre • Assembly of development site in Yeovil
LEP Projects supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superfast Broadband- Co-ordinated the provision of data and facilitated links to Area Teams • Originally submitted a bid for EDDC and SSDC to be a LEP Area • We contributed to LEP Business Plan • Assisted with bids to the Regional Growth Fund and Growing Places Fund (both for Western Corridor Yeovil)
Into Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the relocation of 3 companies (115) jobs into South Somerset. This number is likely to increase to 200+ as the companies reach full operating capacity
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism was worth almost £1.6 million to the South Somerset Economy. SSDCs Tourism Services (through TIC and publications) generated almost £1.86 million per year for the South Somerset Economy • The tourism team provides specialist business advice and information for approx 1290 tourism businesses annually • Our two Tourist Information Centres are run at the Cartgate Service Area and at Petter's House, Yeovil • We provide support to all Local Information Centres in South Somerset
Tourism Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide two major publications annually (Discover and Classic Gardens) • Provided Market Towns and Cycle Rides leaflets

The Proposed Strategy trends, issues and actions

This section details a summary of key trends and issues within the wider economy and proposes strategic directions for the Council.

<p>Population and employment growth</p> <p>South Somerset’s population was 161,300 in 2011 making it the largest of Somerset’s five districts and the tenth largest authority in the Region. Its population grew by almost 20% between 1981 and 2008 about double the rate reported nationally. The South West experienced strong population growth in this period with South Somerset marginally higher than the regional trend. The growth equates to the addition of 25,600 residents over a 27-year period, an average of approximately 950 people per annum.</p> <p>Yeovil is the largest population centre in South Somerset with a population of just under 45,000. The town has experienced rapid employment growth over the past eight years, and has marginally increased its share of the District’s total population.</p> <p>It is expected that the economic structure of South Somerset will allow it to perform well and lead to at least 9,200 new jobs over the Local Plan Plan period until 2028.</p> <p>The working-age population varies across the District with Yeovil in particular benefitting from a larger than average working age population. In line with District and Regional trends there has been a large decrease in residents aged 25-34, linked to the out-migration of younger generations to larger more urban areas, with a broader range of employment opportunities.</p> <p>South Somerset is also experiencing an increasing growth in the retired population. South Somerset’s growth projections forecast growth in excess of both regional and national trends.</p>	<p><i>Population projections for South Somerset indicate significant population growth and a changing demographic profile that has implications for economic performance, workforce availability and the need for housing growth.</i></p> <p><i>Employment growth is dependent on infrastructure i.e. transport links, broadband etc</i></p> <p>We will : Endeavour to create a job range sufficient to match a changing demographic profile</p> <p>Working with partners, enhance the skill base of local people to generate local employment.</p>
<p>Key Economic Sectors and Trends affecting the Market Towns and Yeovil</p> <p>Between 1991 and 2010 South Somerset’s economy grew significantly taking the number of jobs in the district from 47,482 to 65,200 - an average of 932 new jobs created per year. The global recession did however have an impact with a net decline of 2,100 jobs in the District between 2006 and 2010, but this reversal is predicted to slow down and revert to growth as the economy recovers.</p> <p>Evidence also shows that South Somerset copes well with changes in the manufacturing market, and the economic</p>	<p><i>South Somerset can capitalise on potential economic growth particularly in high tech manufacturing.</i></p> <p><i>The market will determine the direction but we are well positioned to plan for, and help facilitate those changes.</i></p>

<p>appraisals indicate that we are well positioned to absorb or even drive further change and adaptation. For example, our strong high-tech manufacturing sector is now advantageously positioned to take advantage in the development of low carbon and knowledge intensive sectors.</p> <p>The relative strengths and employment specialism of the local economy begin to emerge when comparing the proportion of employment in each of the sectors against the national average.</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>Manufacturing remains important to South Somerset despite a national drift towards a service-based economy. This is especially true in the dynamic engineering and high-tech sectors that are capable of accommodating diversification and rapid change.</p> <p>All of the economic appraisals and analysis that have been used underline the strength of the manufacturing sectors and all indicate the strength of Yeovil’s manufacturing ‘hub’ as the real key to growth and stability.</p> <p>It is recognised that existing companies need to develop new markets and that further diversification will be needed. This to ensure that large numbers of jobs are not over dependent on a small number of major employers and their supply chains.</p>	<p>We Will:</p> <p>Ensure that businesses are able to operate in a vibrant local economic environment that enables existing businesses to thrive and prosper.</p> <p>Work with Businesses and the LEP to pioneer transition and develop new markets that will help diversify the economy.</p> <p>Help provide businesses, particularly those in the high- tech sector, with adequate access to business support</p> <p>Work with Into Somerset Inward Investment project to promote Somerset as a destination of choice for those wishing to start, relocate or expand their business into the South West of England.</p>
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<p>Retailing</p> <p>The higher concentration of employment in the retail sector reflects Yeovil’s role as a district centre serving a wide hinterland. The recent recession saw local established businesses in all of our market towns enjoying greater resilience than national companies. National companies are generally influenced by national economic conditions and this will often result in local branch closures that do not truly reflect the relative strength of local economies The Ekosgen appraisals particularly advise that growth amongst independent retailers should be encouraged.</p> <p>The Chard Regeneration Framework and the Yeovil Vision both provide robust, sustainable development guidelines for the regeneration of those towns. Additionally we should maintain a focus on the non-traditional (B-use) jobs in leisure and related fields to keep a core of activities close to a town centre. Where practical and possible, offices should be located in town centre locations so that retailers gain regular and routine support from within the town.</p> <p>The principle of protecting and sustaining the retail heart and employment bases of all our market towns should be maintained as part of our strategy</p>	<p><i>Locally created retail business will be a strength and there needs to be a good balance between indigenous business and inward investment</i></p> <p><i>Local retailers help to develop strong customer bases and help create and maintain more distinctive town centres.</i></p> <p><i>Town Centres can lose significant trade and linked visits to out of town stores</i></p> <p>We Will:</p> <p>Work with adopted town regeneration schemes to create vibrant town centres, market towns to help existing businesses survive and grow</p> <p>Aim to keep our towns as sustainable as possible, maximise their self-containment</p> <p>Use the planning process to preserve the integrity of our town centres, resist the loss of retailing and employment premises within the town and resist inappropriate out-of-town and edge-of town development.</p> <p>Use funding secured by the Portas Review to innovate and increase attractiveness of town centres</p>
<p>Tourism.</p> <p>The tourism industry also remains strong despite changes in trends caused by economic recession (South West Research 2012).</p> <p>South Somerset has a number of tourist attractions in the distinctive ‘heritage tourism’ sector. Our tourism market is a niche market lending itself to the specialised short break, repeat visit market, rather than being a ‘major destination’ market. The district also provides an excellent stopping point for those making longer journeys into the South West peninsular.</p>	<p><i>Tourism offers tremendous potential for wealth creation and supports many small businesses particularly in the rural areas and market towns</i></p> <p>We Will:</p> <p>Work to the strengths of our niche tourism market to increase the volume and value of tourism in South Somerset</p>

<p>Whilst overseas and staying visitors are down in number, there has been an increase in short- break and day visitors keeping the tourism spend fairly constant.</p> <p>Tourism is an important sector accounting £160m gross value to the local economy. This represents about 6% of the total value of the local economy, but is significant because tourism-spend tends to support local businesses and the value of that spend stays local with strong multiplier effect.</p> <p>Much of the industry is comprised of small businesses that will both need and heed the help and advice offered by the District Council. Whilst South Somerset does not offer the major destination advantages of some of the neighbouring counties, it has a strong niche-market focussed on quality of life, the countryside, local food, culture and heritage. This brand is strong and should be developed further.</p>	<p>Working with multi-agencies, market the wider incentives - cultural, tourism/leisure, schools and the family-related 'offer'</p> <p>Work in partnership with local businesses to market the area more effectively using SSDC publications and website to promote their business</p>
<p>Agriculture, Food and Drink Sector</p> <p>Agriculture is a critical element of the South Somerset economy. Similar to manufacturing, agriculture employs over twice the national average within the sector. Farming in the District appears to have recovered considerably since 2001, but many smaller less viable farms have failed in that time, with some continuing to struggle.</p> <p>Farming and agriculture contribute in a major way to the distinctive character of the South Somerset countryside which itself is an economic asset for tourism</p> <p>Diversification has become a necessity for many farmers as they attempt to bolster their core farming business and this is underlined by a continuing number of planning applications for change of use and diversification from farms and other land-based businesses.</p> <p>Food and drink sectors are strong by comparison to the national average, with opportunities to develop this market. There is a strong local food tradition and it is now well linked to the diversifying agricultural economy.</p>	<p><i>The agricultural and land based industries are important to South Somerset, but need to adapt to market opportunities as they arise</i></p> <p>We will:</p> <p>Support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas</p> <p>Promote and facilitate the diversification of agricultural and other land based industries</p> <p>Support sustainable rural tourism, which benefits residents and visitors</p> <p>Where possible we will promote opportunities for economic change by strengthening the market for local food products.</p>

<p>Yeovil</p> <p>Evidence points to Yeovil being the significant driver of the South Somerset Economy. The relative success of the district is a reflection of the strength of Yeovil as a major economic generator.</p> <p>In 2007, it is estimated that Yeovil generated £1.5bn additional value, which accounts for around 17% of Somerset's total, marginally above the Town's share of the County's total employment (16%). In particular, Yeovil accounts for a fifth of Somerset's manufacturing employment, which includes a high proportion of jobs in the manufacture of transport equipment- notably aerospace equipment - which has one of the highest value sectors of the economy. Yeovil also accounts for a fifth of Somerset's total business and financial services employment.</p> <p>Yeovil has 27% of South Somerset's total workplaces however it employs almost 50% of the districts's FTEs. This statistic is a key economic indicator. It illustrates the larger average workplace size in Yeovil, and highlights a much smaller proportion of micro-workplaces (those employing between 1 and 10 people). Despite strong growth, the dominance of micro-businesses in Yeovil continues to lag behind that of the District and the region. Further, almost two thirds of South Somerset's large workplaces are situated in Yeovil reflecting the relative importance of public sector employment and large manufacturing businesses. That said the district has also been considerably less reliant on public sector employment (particularly relevant in the current economic climate) than many other parts of the county.</p> <p>Recent statistics show South Somerset to have a business density of 505 businesses per 10,000 residents, exceeding both the regional and national averages but marginally below the Somerset average</p>	<p><i>High Tech engineering, aerospace and business services concentrated in Yeovil are the highest value sectors of the economy providing significant injection of and need to retain our strongest focus</i></p> <p><i>Over dependence of a town on single or large employer (this makes Yeovil and Chard especially vulnerable) and diversification is needed</i></p> <p>We will:</p> <p>Work with our private sector and key public sector partners and build on the work undertaken with the Yeovil Vision</p> <p>Maintain Yeovil's role as a sub regional centre and work with regional and national bodies to support national investment into Yeovil</p> <p>Work with our existing businesses to ensure that they grow in a sustainable way that will help boost the local economy and provide a broader range of additional jobs for local people.</p>
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<p>Sustainable Economic Growth</p> <p>South Somerset is forecast to secure high levels of both economic and residential growth over the next 15 years. Delivering new development needs to be planned in a way that minimises potentially harmful environmental and wider impacts to ensure that changes are sustainable over time.</p> <p>Whilst the transition to a low carbon economy will be a significant challenge to all businesses, there will also be opportunities associated with the transition. There is considerable debate regarding how nations and regions can exploit this opportunity and develop a comparative advantage.</p> <p>These opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the Low Carbon Sector • Developing low carbon opportunities in sectors/areas of existing strengths • Providing the conditions for innovation and entrepreneurship 	<p><i>High standards of sustainable construction will be needed in the future</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities for South Somerset in the developing low-carbon technology sector with Innovation main driver</i></p> <p>We will:</p> <p>Explore opportunities to assist with the development of the low carbon sector in South Somerset.</p> <p>Support the LEP in developing these aims and will particularly encourage the growth of new businesses in this sector who wish to start up or grow their market.</p>
<p>Infrastructure and Land supply</p> <p>Ongoing balancing of employment land supply and demand will be necessary to allow Yeovil and South Somerset as a whole to meet their economic aspirations and potential. Monitoring of supply against enquiries and economic objectives will be important to ensure that the most appropriate use is made of available land. Housing growth projections will continue to place pressure on employment land allocations with a need for land to be protected as well as emphasising the importance of investment in the local retail offer if Yeovil is to retain its market share. The Local Plan recommends a delivery of 107ha across the plan period to accommodate the predicted jobs growth. This is entirely in keeping with economic growth projections and the dynamics associated with bringing the land forward.</p> <p>The Government’s overarching objective is to achieve sustainable economic growth. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sees the role of land –use planning as a key to ensuring that a sufficient amount of the right type of land is available in the right place and at the right time to support growth and innovation, ensuring the vitality and viability of town centres and enabling a strong rural economy (PPS4 & NPPF).</p> <p>The role of a local authority, certainly in a local economic development context is changing. Our goal is to foster an attractive local economic environment in which business can thrive and grow. Private sector resources are currently scarce and we need to be more proactive, imaginative and business-like in our approach to economic intervention.</p>	<p><i>Supply and availability of employment land and infrastructure is key for new and existing business.</i></p> <p>We Will:</p> <p>Work to provide a ready supply of employment sites and workspace that meets the development and expansion needs of local firms and of those relocating.</p> <p>Work with other appropriate agencies to promote and market new investment sites, available commercial land and buildings to attract and secure inward investment.</p> <p>Take a more proactive role in the provision of infrastructure in market towns where appropriate and maintain a balance between the supply and demand of employment land.</p> <p>Work with our private sector partners to secure infrastructure funding</p> <p>Work with partners to lobby for improvements to the A303 and</p>

<p>Support for pro-active use of SSDC resource was well supported by our members and by a cross section of private sector stakeholders.</p>	<p>provision of superfast broadband. Be prepared to invest in infrastructure projects that will create jobs and yield long-term revenue streams</p>
<p>Skills</p> <p>In the years immediately prior to recession South Somerset experienced a strong rate of employment growth and as a result the District has a much higher employment rate when compared regionally and nationally. Hence the district was in a strong position to cope with the recession with its relatively low levels of unemployment. Skills development is however an issue for the District, with higher-level skills in particular presenting a challenge for the coming years.</p> <p>The Leitch Review of Skills (2006) although now dated, remains relevant and presented ambitious targets which require South Somerset to double the proportion of the working age population with skills at NVQ Level 4 or above. The district also has a high proportion of residents with no qualifications. This is likely to lead to associated difficulty in securing employment as businesses increase the minimum standards required even at entry level employment. Both of these points highlight that there is a need to develop a culture of learning in the district, including in key business sectors. Enabling and maintaining an appropriately high skills level is recognised as a critical performance driver in key economic areas (Financial Times July 2012). This agenda, however, can only be delivered by multi-agency working.</p> <p>The relatively high proportion of working age residents with qualifications at Level 2 or above is a positive attribute. Supporting those in employment to continue to progress in terms of qualifications will be key to meeting the targets set by Leitch.</p> <p>As well as affecting the employment and training prospects of young people, performance of secondary schools is an important factor for some parents in choosing where they live. This will affect employers wishing to attract higher paid and higher skilled workers.</p> <p>The occupational profile of the district is changing, characterised by a move away from industrial based occupations to more service based. Although the workforce profile indicates a high prevalence of workers in skilled trades occupations, managers and senior officials and associated professional and technical occupations, there is also a significant proportion of the workforce (13%) in lower-skilled occupations.</p>	<p><i>Low number of students achieving NVQ level 4 is an issue for South Somerset – is linked to lack of choice in local Higher Education provision in the county</i></p> <p><i>Employment and training prospects for young people could be improved</i></p> <p><i>South Somerset District Council is not a direct service provider for education but can have an influencing role in shaping the skills agenda.</i></p> <p>We will:</p> <p>Work with our service providing partners to help ensure that the skills sought by local employers and the predominant local sectors are matched by the training provided.</p> <p>Ensure that the district continues to attract and grow businesses that require a cross-section of skills that can match the abilities of the local work-force.</p>

Way Forward

One of the main purposes of an Economic Development Strategy is to give clear focus to the priority areas of work that we will undertake in the coming three years. Members contributions, through workshops and consultation have been included giving us strong local opinion on exactly what we need to do to assist the South Somerset economy.

The profile of the Economic Development Service on [page X](#) indicates the breadth of work currently undertaken. Many regeneration programmes can be undertaken successfully by officers without access to further funding, but many of the actions recommended by this Strategy may well require further capital funding if they are to be implemented. We also need to access income streams as they become available to local authorities, use this funding imaginatively and be less risk averse in committing investment to achieve regeneration.

Money available for funding and maintaining a progressive regeneration programme is limited. If capital expenditure is required for infrastructure projects then the Economic Development Service will have to compete with other services for an allocation of scarce capital resources.

An even closer alignment and co-operation between the Economic Development and Area Teams is needed to ensure our own resources are deployed to optimum effect. We need to enhance the economic development role in the Areas.

The Strategy recognises that the role of a local authority in the local economic development context is changing. Private sector resources are currently scarce and we need to be more proactive, imaginative and business-like in our approach to economic intervention. Our goal is to foster an attractive local economic environment in which business can thrive and grow.

A headline action plan is shown in Appendix 1. Priorities have been assigned as determined by elected members.

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Appendix 1: High Level Action Plan (tasks relating to these will be detailed in the Service Plan)

Aim 1. To maintain the jobs we have and bring new jobs to our towns and rural centres to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to work					
Action	Resource	Budget	Time	Indicator	Priority
Work with and support our existing businesses to ensure that they grow in a sustainable way that will help boost the local economy and provide a broader range of additional jobs for local people.	Economic Development, Tourism and YIC Teams	Existing budgets	Monthly monitoring with annual comparison.	The differential between South Somerset and National JSA percentage figure will increase annually.	Med
Use the planning process to preserve the integrity of our town centres, resist the loss of retailing and employment premises within the town and resist inappropriate out-of-town and edge-of town development.	Economic & Development Management Tourism and YIC Teams	Existing budgets	Annual	100% of Planning applications responded to within deadlines	High
Work with our service providing partners to help ensure that the skills sought by local employers and the predominant local sectors are matched by the training provided.	ED team working with Somerset ESB	Existing Budgets	Ongoing annually	Outputs of the Somerset Employment and Skills Board will form part of ED Annual Report	Low
Aim 2. To encourage the creation of new , high value employment by attracting investment and fostering the growth of small and medium sized companies					
Action	Resource	Budget	Time	Indicator	Priority
Take a more proactive role in the provision of infrastructure in market towns where appropriate and maintain a balance between the supply and demand of employment land.	ED Team supported by Area Team	ED Budget, Private Sector Investment, HCA(RDA) funding	2015	Chard Town Centre regeneration	High
	ED Team	ED Budget, Capital funding. Property exchange	2013	Yeovil, Town Centre Site assembly	High
Work with other appropriate agencies to promote and market new investment sites, available commercial land and buildings to attract and secure inward investment.	ED Team/Private Sector/ Joint Venture (JV)	ED Budget, Private Investment and JV re-investment	Ongoing annually	Commence Sale of Plots at Lufton phase 3 as a key indicator for 2013	Med
Work with Into Somerset Inward Investment project to promote Somerset as a destination of choice for those wishing to start, relocate or expand their business into the South West of England.	ED Team/ Into Somerset	Allocated £12.5k annually from ED project funding	2012-2015 by contract	Outputs of the Somerset Inward investment Project will form part of ED Annual Report	High
Aim 3. To promote business diversification and innovation to further increase the value of local employment					
Action	Resource	Budget	Time	Indicator	Priority
Where possible we will promote opportunities for economic change by strengthening the market for local food products.	ED and tourism Teams	ED and Tourism Budget	Annual	Business Support to 5 local food producers and suppliers annually	Med
Promote and facilitate the diversification of agricultural and other land based industries	ED and tourism Teams	ED and Tourism Budget	Annual and ongoing	Business Support to 12 land based businesses annually	Med
We will support the LEP in developing their aims for a low carbon economy and will particularly encourage the growth of new businesses in this sector who wish to start up or grow their market	ED/SSDC through LEP	Support from existing resource	Ongoing	Outputs for the LEP for South Somerset will form part of ED Annual Report	Low