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It is with great enthusiasm that I present the West Northamptonshire Economic Growth Strategy, a comprehensive blueprint designed to foster sustainable economic development and prosperity in our region. This strategy is the culmination of extensive collaboration, research, and consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local businesses, community leaders, and residents.

West Northamptonshire is a region rich in history, culture, and opportunity. Our strategic location, skilled workforce, and vibrant communities provide a strong foundation for economic growth. However, we must also acknowledge the challenges we face, such as the need for infrastructure improvements, skills development, and support for innovation, productivity and entrepreneurship. This strategy addresses these challenges head-on, with a clear vision and actionable plans to drive economic progress.

Central to our approach is the commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. We aim to create an economy that benefits all residents, ensuring that growth is equitable and environmentally responsible. By investing in green technologies, supporting local businesses, and enhancing our transport and digital infrastructure, we can build a resilient economy that stands the test of time.

The strategy outlines key priorities, including:

- i. **Business Support and Innovation:** Providing targeted support to local businesses, fostering innovation, and attracting new investment to the region.
- ii. **Skills and Employment:** Enhancing education and training opportunities to equip our workforce with the skills needed for the future.
- iii. **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Improving transport links, digital infrastructure, and housing to support economic growth.
- iv. **Sustainable Development:** Promoting environmentally sustainable practices and green technologies to ensure long-term prosperity.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy. Your insights, expertise, and dedication have been invaluable. Together, we can create a thriving, dynamic, and inclusive economy that benefits all who live and work in West Northamptonshire.

Let us move forward with confidence and determination, knowing that our collective efforts will shape a brighter future for our region.

Sincerely,

Councillor Daniel Lister
Cabinet Member for Local Economy,
Culture and Leisure

Summary

This Strategy sets out a clear plan to drive inclusive, sustainable economic growth between 2025 and 2030 underpinned by a longer-term vision to 2041. In order to realise the potential of this area, it is extremely important that we establish how we will develop our local economy, to harness our existing economic strengths and raise the profile of West Northants as a must-invest destination.

West Northants is located at the heart of the UK, within the South Midlands, the Oxford to Cambridge region, the Logistics Golden Triangle and Motorsport Valley. This central location is a huge strength which has shaped where we are today. Anchored between two of the world's leading knowledge and innovation hubs, we are well positioned to benefit from the success of both Oxford and Cambridge to drive our own innovation and technology forward, boasting a skills ecosystem that means the potential within West Northants is unlimited. The perfect blend of rural areas combined with the urban centre of Northampton are a clear part of the reason why companies choose West Northants as a destination to develop & grow.



With over 19,000 business and 228,000 jobs, West Northants has a strong economy. This area is a major provider of jobs within the South Midlands and the location of choice for globally recognised companies such as Mercedes, Cosworth, Carlsberg and Barclaycard. We contribute £14.6 billion in GVA to the national economy and our economy is growing.

Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team

“Brackley has been the home of the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team ever since the three-pointed star returned to Formula 1 with its own works team in 2010. Our performance comes from our people, and West Northamptonshire attracts some of the most highly-skilled engineers and technicians in the world, many of whom are employed in our team. We are proud to be based in such an innovative and cutting-edge environment.”

Rob Thomas, Chief Operating Officer, Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team

We have strengths across a broad range of sectors. Our economic foundations are built on our deep manufacturing heritage linked to shoe manufacturing. West Northants is a global leader in advanced engineering, motorsport, and automotive innovation. The Silverstone Technology Cluster is testament to the success in this area and is an asset we wish to build upon.

Our ambition to grow innovative technologies along with our foundational and experiential sectors is second to none. West Northants is an area where there is a dynamic drive to increase life chances, to capitalise on the existing strengths of the region and to drive UK plc forward.

Our Strategic Framework

We have worked hard to engage with local partners to develop an Economic Growth Strategy which will realise the full potential of West Northamptonshire. Our Strategic Framework is summarised below and sets out how we will achieve our over-arching vision for a:

‘Thriving West Northamptonshire - a place of opportunity and growth for all. A must-invest destination, driving innovative technologies, enabling innovation & enhancing UK plc.’

Our strategy is structured around the three core themes of people, place and business, which are intrinsically linked to each other. Two cross-cutting themes of ‘connected’ and ‘ambitious’ flow through the whole strategy and have been consistently applied to our actions to achieve our vision.

Under each of the themes, we have identified a set of four priorities which will enable us to meet our overall vision. Clear actions have been identified which will allow us to work towards our priorities and a detailed action plan ensures that they are deliverable.

Vision

Thriving West Northamptonshire - a place of opportunity and growth for all. A must-invest destination, driving cutting-edge technologies, enabling innovation and enhancing UK plc

Cross-cutting themes

Connected:

West Northamptonshire is centrally located and has strong road connections. The Council will work with partners to improve these connections, particularly in terms of public transport. We will develop strong connections with our partners (both public and private) more generally to succeed and encourage inclusivity.

Ambitious:

The Council is committed to working collaboratively to deliver an ambitious vision and strategy for the future. We will encourage businesses and local people to become more ambitious. We have set an ambitious target to reduce the council’s carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and residents & businesses by 2045.

Themes

People

Place

Business

1. Increase the skilled workforce to meet the needs of investment sectors

5. Increase & improve quality housing for all

9. Grow investment sectors to encourage higher value employment

2. Increase prosperity for all with a fairer and more inclusive West Northamptonshire

6. Deliver quality employment sites/ premises aligned to investment sectors

10. Increase levels of innovation & productivity

3. Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers

7. Curate thriving mixed-purpose town centres

11. Reduce carbon emissions amongst businesses

4. Increase numbers of people ready for and sustaining fulfilling work

8. Unlock infrastructure for sustained growth

12. Increase the number of ambitious growth businesses

Priorities

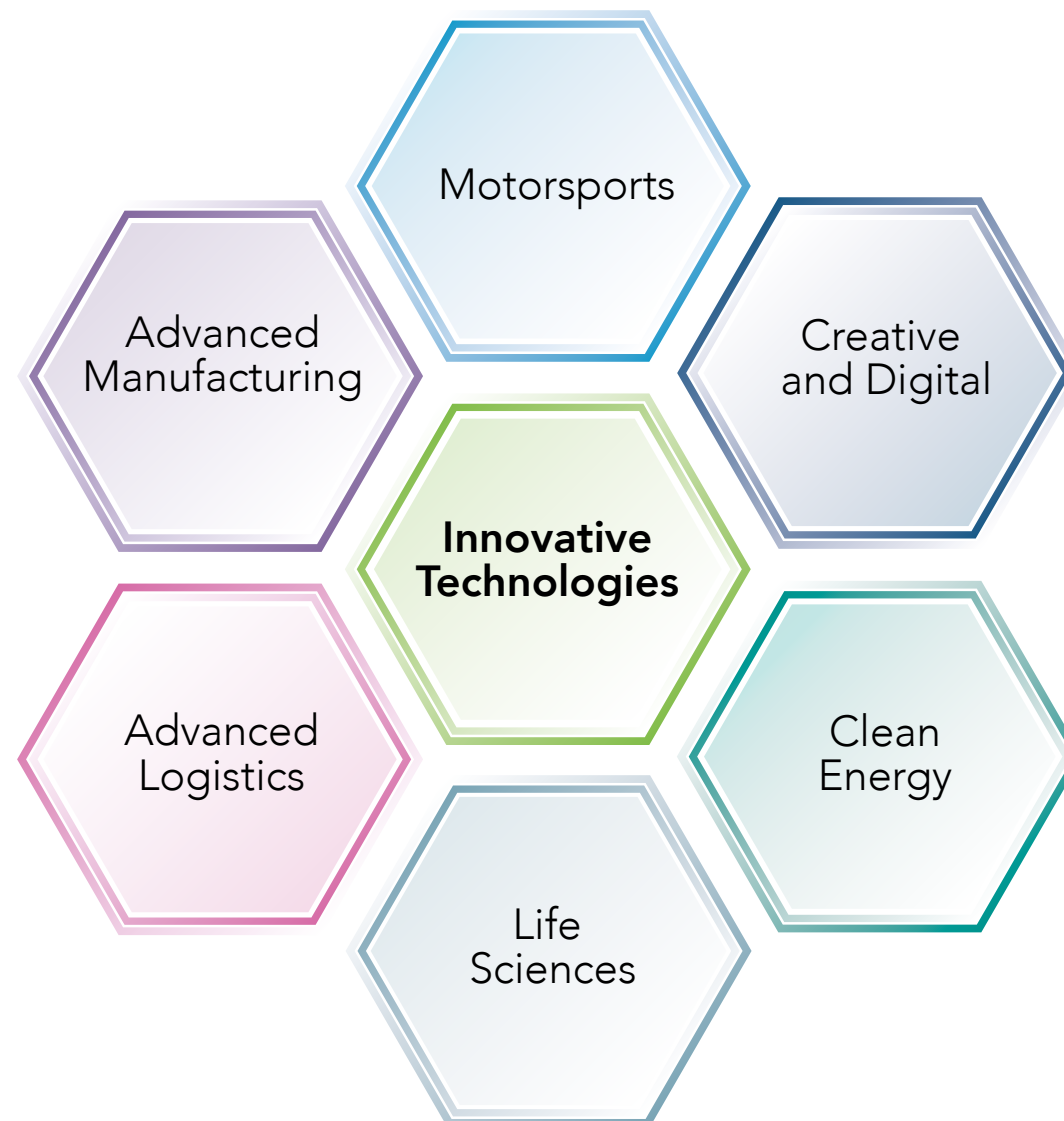
Our Investment Sectors

In order to capitalise on the strengths within West Northants and the wider area, we recognise that we must focus our efforts on sectors with the potential to generate higher levels of economic impact, including higher paying, higher skilled jobs. We wish to be recognised for our strengths in 'innovative technologies'. This central focus will be at the heart of this strategy and will underpin the six sectors outlined below which are our priorities for growth.

Innovative technologies refers to the application and use of new technologies to develop and commercialise new products, processes and services. It will draw on our area's intellectual capital and it has strong synergies with the knowledge economy. We wish to be known for our new ideas, trialling new approaches and investing in new technologies. In turn, this will allow us to make an even greater contribution to the local and UK economy.

This sector focus has informed a more detailed vision for West Northamptonshire to 2041 which is:

We want to become the beating heart of the country's technology revolution, developing and utilising innovative technologies which builds on our sector strengths. We will capitalise on our central and well-connected location to create a thriving West Northamptonshire. We will work with new and existing businesses to deliver high quality jobs which secure economic growth. This will create inclusive opportunities for all of our residents, businesses and future generations.



Our Investment Sectors

We also acknowledge the importance of those sectors which support our quality of life and the vibrancy of our town centres. We recognise the need to support and invest in the following sectors which will benefit our local residents and visitors alike:

- Foundational economy, including health and care and education which supports our quality of life
- Experience economy which includes tourism, culture, leisure and entertainment as well as retail and food which supports our town centres

We have developed a full set of Key performance Indicators (KPIs) which will allow us to measure our progress towards our vision. Below, we set out the key measures against which our success will be measured:

- Levels of productivity above national levels (as measured by GVA per filled job)
- Increased employment in investment sectors
- Levels of specialisation in investment sectors in line with national averages
- Increasing net business formation rate
- A skilled workforce aligned to business needs (measured by incidence of skill gaps)
- Improved life chances for children and young people (measured by progression into positive destinations of education, employment and training at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5)
- Reduction in inequalities and deprivation (measured by the index of multiple deprivation)

The priorities and actions identified for the next five years will enable us to deliver these outcomes.

Science Minister and Oxford-Cambridge Innovation Champion, Lord Vallance, said:

We are already putting billions behind the Oxford-Cambridge region through East-West Rail, the Culham AI Growth Zone, and our record-breaking backing for UK R&D.

As significant as each of these endeavours are in isolation, we stand to achieve so much more if we coordinate our efforts, to bring this remarkable area's strengths together to create what would undoubtedly be one of the most important innovation zones in the world.

This is a mission that will be foundational to the decade of national renewal that this country is embarking on, by unlocking economic growth, and exciting new innovations that will boost our health and wellbeing.

Delivery Arrangements

West Northamptonshire Council will be the lead organisation responsible for the implementation of this strategy. We recognise that delivery of the strategy can only be achieved by working in partnership with a wide range of organisations. The Council is therefore establishing an Economic Growth Board which includes representatives from the public and private sector to help take this strategy forward. We look forward to working with partners to help deliver our vision and achieve our priorities.

Introduction

We at West Northamptonshire Council are dedicated to establishing an ecosystem whereby our residents and employers can thrive. In order to do this, we have established a variety of strategies with clear actions associated with them. Our Economic Growth Strategy is a key document setting out how we will foster economic prosperity within West Northants, harnessing our strengths in innovative technologies, utilising our strategic location and championing innovation on a global stage.

We recognise that in order for West Northants to realise its potential as a must-invest destination for our investment sectors, we must harness the existing organisations and partners in this area that make it such a compelling investment proposition. By working collaboratively, we will realise opportunities to secure appropriate inward investment, increase skills and productivity levels and inclusively and sustainably grow the local economy.



Why we have launched the Strategy

It is an opportune time to prepare our Economic Growth Strategy, with significant changes underway, including a new Government as well as aspirations for devolution. The Government has signalled its renewed commitment towards the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor. Investment in transport and housing across the area is expected to boost the UK economy by up to £78 billion by 2035. West Northamptonshire is well placed to benefit from its location at the centre of the region. This strategy will allow us to be in a position of strength to respond and lead change as it occurs.

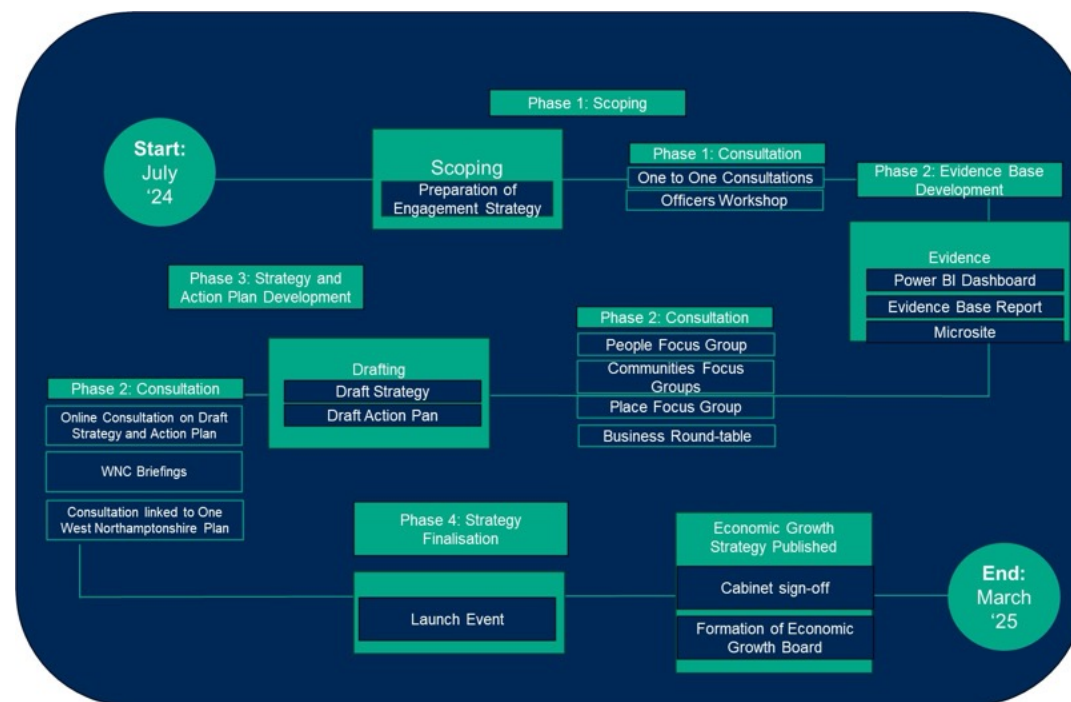
We want to do the best for West Northamptonshire. We want to build on our existing economic strengths, including our well-established sectors whilst seizing new opportunities for growth. In producing this strategy, we will ensure that the benefits of inclusive economic growth are felt by all members of the community and seek to address any disparities which exist across West Northamptonshire.

This strategy brings together a wide range of partners around shared ambitions and actions to help position West Northamptonshire as the perfect place to live, work, visit and invest. It provides the foundations to secure funding to invest in our local area and a framework to inform the delivery of new projects and programmes.

This document will help inform conversations with national Government and partners across the South Midlands. It will provide a framework to work in partnership with our key stakeholders which will benefit West Northamptonshire as a whole.

Development of the Economic Growth Strategy

The development of the Economic Growth Strategy has spanned eight months, from July 2024 to March 2025. A detailed evidence base has been prepared to ensure that priorities and actions are grounded in the latest evidence. Extensive stakeholder engagement has been carried out speaking to a wide range of individuals and stakeholder groups both within the Council and outside of the organisation. The process has been iterative, with the strategic framework being refined following each stage of consultation (as illustrated below).



The Strategic Context

This strategy has been informed by and builds upon national policies. The national policy landscape has shifted considerably with the change in UK central government following the 2024 General Election. This document particularly aligns with “Invest 2035: The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy”. The strategy outlines what the UK will need to do in the next decade to achieve its long-term growth ambitions, focusing on key sectors. This strategy has ensured that there is alignment with these. Our investment sectors are in strong alignment with Government’s.

Significant activity is taking place at the sub-regional level that will continue to have an impact on the West Northamptonshire economy and future growth prospects. Working collaboratively across the Oxford to Cambridge area is a major opportunity to harness one of the UK’s most productive and innovative regions. West Northamptonshire sits within this area and therefore has a key role to play. The wider region’s identified sector capabilities in health, data, future mobility and future energy will be important to the West Northamptonshire economy.

The South Midlands Strategy is also currently in development and will outline how the region can capitalise on its opportunities to achieve economic growth and increased wellbeing for residents. The West Northamptonshire Growth Strategy has informed the advancement of the South Midlands Strategy and we will ensure there is alignment between our respective economic strategies.

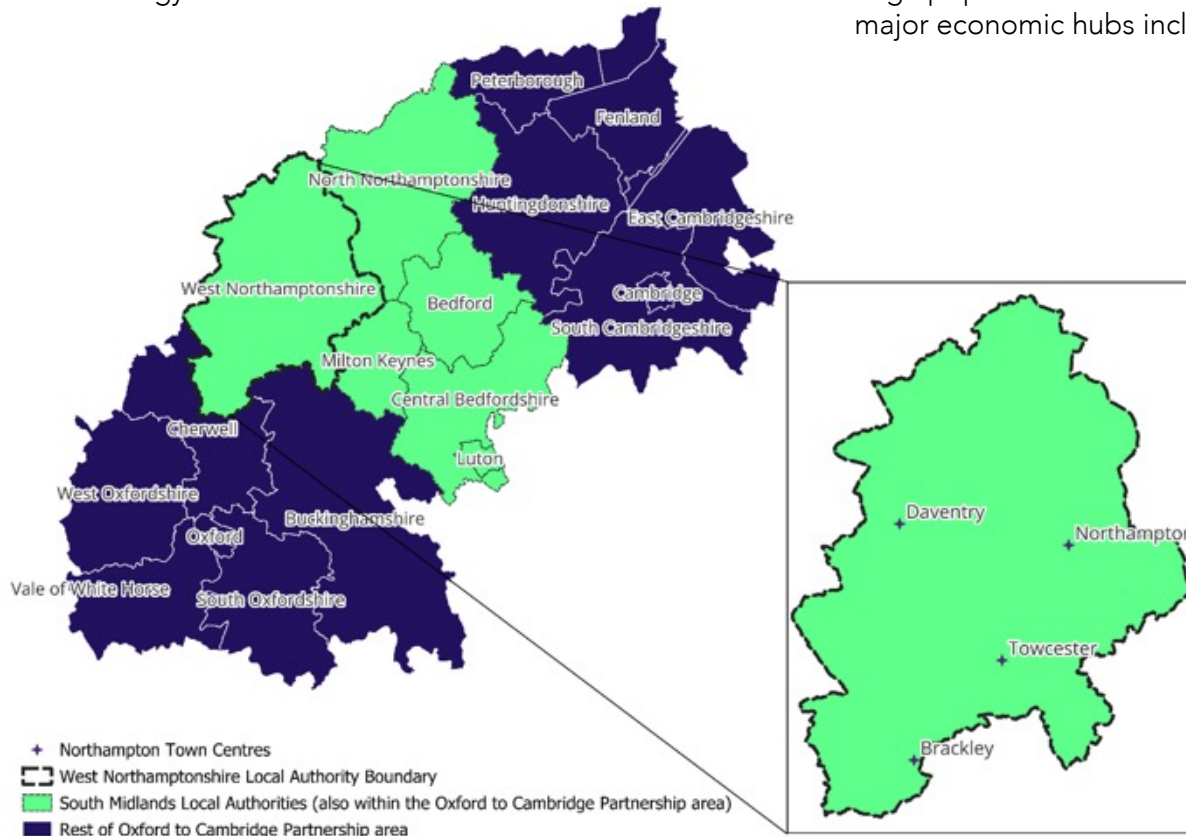
At a local level, several policies and strategies have been closely considered in the development of the economic strategy. These are referred to in more detail later in this strategy where we set out our key priorities. Amongst these, the emerging One West Northamptonshire Plan will be critical with its overall mission centred around economic growth – “harness the opportunities for growth, creating a distinctive and thriving economy and therefore the chance to improve prosperity for everyone who calls West Northants home”. The plan sets out three outcomes, including Thriving Place, Thriving People and an Efficient and Enabling Council. There are strong synergies with the Economic Growth Strategy since they are focused on: a thriving economy; a skilled workforce; good connectivity; a great environment to live in; more and better quality homes; and, a great place to raise a family amongst others.

The New Local Plan for West Northamptonshire is also currently in development and once approved it will guide development in the period up to 2041. The emerging Economic Growth Strategy is informing the development of the New Local Plan by setting out the key areas of focus for economic development and the key sectoral priorities. The investment sectors and strategic approach established within the Economic Growth Strategy will link to future developments. West Northamptonshire Council also intends to target our investment sectors and align these with our investible opportunities.

West Northamptonshire: a place of untapped potential

West Northamptonshire is the beating heart of the UK, located centrally, within the South Midlands Authority area and the centre of the Oxford to Cambridge region. This central location is a huge strength which has shaped where we are today. Anchored between two of the world's leading knowledge and innovation hubs, we are well positioned to benefit from the success of both Oxford and Cambridge to drive our own innovation and technology forward.

We are at the heart of the UK transport network and within the Logistics Golden Triangle, with strong road connections including the M1, M6, M40 and M45 motorways, plus connected to the main rail line from London to Manchester. Two largescale rail freight interchanges also enhance our national and international logistics capabilities, and we are located within 90 minutes of five international airports. All of this means, we have a large population on our doorstep and can easily access major economic hubs including the UK's freeports.



West Northamptonshire is also known for its abundance of attractive villages appealing to families, professionals, and businesses alike. They are attracted by the picturesque countryside and the high quality of life this generates.

We have a rich heritage. West Northamptonshire is known for its historical landmarks and its legacy in world-renowned footwear production, with some of the finest shoe manufacturers in the world located here.

Case Study: Crockett & Jones

Crockett & Jones is a world-renowned manufacturer and retailer of Goodyear welted shoes and boots. The company has been operating out of Northampton town centre since 1879 and now employs over 300 people, with retailers in London, New York, Paris and Brussels. The company exports to 25+ countries worldwide and has recently been granted His Majesty the King's Royal Warrant as the Manufacturer and Supplier of Footwear.

The company cites the following as being the key strengths of its location in West Northamptonshire:

“Northampton is the home of English shoemaking and has a reputation for producing some of the best shoes in the world; it offers good access to suppliers; is home to a strong local workforce with specialist skills in the shoe trade; and, offers close proximity to London and international markets”.

William Jones, Crockett & Jones

Economically, our economy is growing, with employment increasing by 5% over the last five years (2017-2022) and economic output or Gross Value Added (GVA) increasing faster than England and South Midlands levels.

Due to the many reasons that West Northants is a prime location for business growth, the area boasts a large business base, with over 19,000 businesses providing diverse local jobs and driving economic resilience. A number of high-value employers have been attracted to the area, with the district hosting globally recognised companies like Mercedes, Cosworth, Carlsberg,

Barclaycard, and Yusen Logistics cementing its reputation for being a great place for major employers. Our business base is a major provider of jobs, with the area benefitting from a high jobs density. As a result, West Northamptonshire supports 83 jobs per 100 working age adults compared to only 80 for England.

Alongside our businesses, we are home to some outstanding anchor institutions. The University of Northampton and St Andrews Hospital provide significant employment opportunities, and Northampton College is one of the largest Further Education (FE) colleges in the region.

Our area is well known for a number of sector strengths. Our economic foundations are built on our deep manufacturing heritage linked to shoe manufacturing. Beyond our historic industries, we are innovators driving the future of high-value manufacturing and technology, drawing on our intellectual capacity and harnessing the knowledge economy. We have become a global leader in advanced engineering, motorsport, and automotive innovation benefiting from our location within Motorsports Valley*. The Silverstone Technology Cluster is testament to our success. Centred around the iconic Silverstone Circuit, the cluster includes cutting-edge businesses pushing the boundaries of performance engineering, sustainability, and precision manufacturing. This concentration of expertise ensures that West Northamptonshire remains at the forefront of high-value industries, attracting investment and fostering collaboration on a global scale.



*Motorsport Valley is primarily located in the South East and Midlands regions of England. It stretches from Oxfordshire in the west to Northamptonshire in the east, with key hubs in areas such as Silverstone, Milton Keynes, and Banbury

Case Study: Motorsport Valley

West Northamptonshire sits at the heart of Motorsport Valley®, a unique, internationally recognised, technology and business cluster which is home to the global, fast-growing Motorsport and High Performance Engineering industry.

Chris Aylett, CEO of the Motorsport Industry Association says “The Valley is increasingly attracting high-level investment from UK and international high-performance engineering companies and innovative SMEs. They want to be based in and around Silverstone to take full advantage of the proximity of relevant, world-class businesses and technology. West Northamptonshire’s central location means they are within a 2-hour drive of key airports, ports and motorway links, so allowing them to, more efficiently, export and import their products and supplies to meet critical deadlines.”

®Motorsport Valley is a registered trademark of the Motorsport Industry Association and so, owned by the industry

We remain an important location for the logistics sector who are attracted by our prime location within the Logistics triangle. We also have strengths in the visitor economy and sports and construction sectors as well as health and social care (as illustrated below). We are keen to expand the visitor economy, ensuring West Northants is known for sporting excellence, cultural activities and countless reasons to visit. Working in partnership with public, private and third sector organisations we intend to supercharge tourism and the visitor economy to increase footfall, spend and overnight visits on a large scale that is in keeping with the extensive tourism offer already in this area*.

West Northamptonshire’s unique combination of assets - its central location, attractive rural areas, exceptional connectivity, thriving sectors, and manufacturing heritage—makes it a place of unparalleled opportunity. There is significant potential for growth since we are home to strategic scale rail-connected development sites on the M1 corridor, plus a diverse range of sites surrounding the vibrant market towns across the region’s drive for balanced, sustainable economic growth.

*Our overall vision and action plan is outlined in Northamptonshire’s Tourism Strategy 2023-2030. Our extensive tourism offer includes sporting opportunities such as Towcester Racecourse, Northampton Saints Rugby Ground, the Silverstone Circuit. We have numerous museums and art galleries including the Northampton Museum as well as theatres including the Royal & Derngate Theatre.

Current Sector Strengths

Warehouse and Logistics

Business LQ: **1.2**
Business Count: **4,470**
Business Growth: **-8%**

Employment LQ: **1.3**
Employment Count: **57,000**
Employment Growth: **+10%**

Key Drivers: Our central location within the UK's Motorsports Valley and strong transport network, including excellent road links and two Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges means this will remain an important sector for West Northants.

Health and Social Care

Business LQ: **0.9**
Business Count: **665**
Business Growth: **-4%**

Employment LQ: **1.1**
Employment Count: **32,000**
Employment Growth: **+19%**

Key Drivers: A key foundational sector which is an important employer and an ageing population will increase our reliance on this sector. A number of life sciences based businesses (121) may suggest a growing area of focus.

Construction

Business LQ: **1.1**
Business Count: **2,930**
Business Growth: **-1%**

Employment LQ: **1.1**
Employment Count: **12,000**
Employment Growth: **+20%**

Key Drivers: We have significant plans for growth, including plans for over 2,500 homes per annum. As a result this sector will remain important and there is potential for expansion and diversification into sustainable methods of construction.

Advanced Engineering

Business LQ: **1.1**
Business Count: **735**
Business Growth: **-19%**

Employment LQ: **1.0**
Employment Count: **9,000**
Employment Growth: **-10%**

Key Drivers: Our strength lies in the key assets and companies within this sector which are based in West Northamptonshire. There is potential to build on this to support economic growth.

Visitor Economy and Sports

Business LQ: **0.8**
Business Count: **1,195**
Business Growth: **+12%**

Employment LQ: **0.8**
Employment Count: **23,845**
Employment Growth: **+17%**

Key Drivers: One of the few sectors to experience business growth. We are home to a number of visitor economy assets and sporting assets on which to build.

Shoe Manufacturing

Business LQ: **6.9**
Business Count: **10**
Business Growth: **0%**

Employment LQ: **21.1**
Employment Count: **600**
Employment Growth: **-33%**

Key Drivers: A legacy sector showing signs of resurgence. Nearly one in every five shoe manufacturing jobs in England are in West Northamptonshire.

Realising West Northants' Potential

Whilst we recognise the many strengths of West Northants, we are also focused on addressing areas of need and overcoming barriers to inclusive, sustainable growth. There have been unprecedented changes in recent years with the pandemic, the UK's exit from the EU and an energy and cost of living crises impacting on the UK economy. This has placed tremendous pressure on our residents and businesses. As an area, we face some challenges but this strategy provides an opportunity to respond to these.

There is a productivity gap locally, with workers in West Northamptonshire producing £2.80 less output per hour than the England average. There is an opportunity through this strategy to boost levels of productivity through innovation, skills development and diversification. This is a recognised issue for many areas, though West Northants has the best rate in the South Midlands.

Linked to this, employment in West Northamptonshire is heavily concentrated in lower value sectors such as transport and storage, health and social care, and wholesale and retail, which typically offer lower-value opportunities. Expanding strengths in higher-value sectors will support economic growth.

Despite the fact we have a large business base, recent data suggests that this has been in decline (falling by 3% between 2019-24), compared to a small increase of 2% nationally. This has included contractions in high-value sectors like professional, scientific, and technical services, as well as information and communication. Reversing this trend is vital to secure economic growth.

There were more business deaths than births in 2021 (-230) in West Northamptonshire, emphasising the need to stimulate entrepreneurship and improve the conditions for start-ups. At the same time, five-year business survival rates are falling, with only 36% of businesses started in 2017 surviving into their fifth year, compared to 39% for those started in 2016. This highlights the importance of supporting businesses through their critical early years.

A lower proportion of our workforce possess high-level qualifications and are employed in skilled occupations. Instead, a higher concentration are employed in process, plant, and machine operatives. Addressing this gap will help to unlock our potential for growth in advanced industries.

Significant inequalities exist across West Northamptonshire, with high levels of deprivation, particularly in parts of Northampton. These disparities extend to household income, educational attainment, and child poverty, requiring targeted interventions to level up opportunities across the area. Northampton Central and Northampton East Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) are two LAP areas which perform particularly poorly across these deprivation indicators, including around health.

In order to tackle these issues, we need to modernise our economy and attract new sectors which will support sustained economic growth and success. These need to align with the Government's sectoral priorities outlined in their emerging Industrial Strategy:

Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

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

Our Vision

While the Economic Growth Strategy is focused on priorities and actions for the next five years (2025-2030), it is underpinned by a longer term vision to 2041 which delivers the change we are seeking across West Northamptonshire.

We want to create a:
Thriving West Northamptonshire - a place of opportunity and growth for all. A must-invest destination, driving innovative technologies, enabling innovation and enhancing UK plc.

Our Key Themes

Our strategy is structured around three core themes, which are intrinsically linked. For example, we need to support people to develop their skills in order to achieve a successful business base. Our themes are:

We have also identified two cross-cutting themes which flow through the whole of the strategy and underpin all of our priorities and actions. We want to be more:

People

We will ensure that West Northamptonshire is a great place where people are skilled, active, confident and empowered to live prosperous and fulfilling lives.

Place

We will showcase West Northamptonshire as the perfect location to work, live, visit and invest.

Business

We will build on our strong and dynamic business base to secure higher levels of economic growth, benefitting everyone.

Connected:

West Northamptonshire is centrally located and has strong road connections. The Council will work with partners to improve these connections, particularly in terms of public transport. We will develop strong connections with our partners (both public and private) more generally to succeed and encourage inclusivity.

Ambitious:

The Council is committed to working collaboratively to deliver an ambitious vision and strategy for the future. We will encourage businesses and local people to become more ambitious. We have set an ambitious target to reduce the council's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 and residents & businesses by 2045.

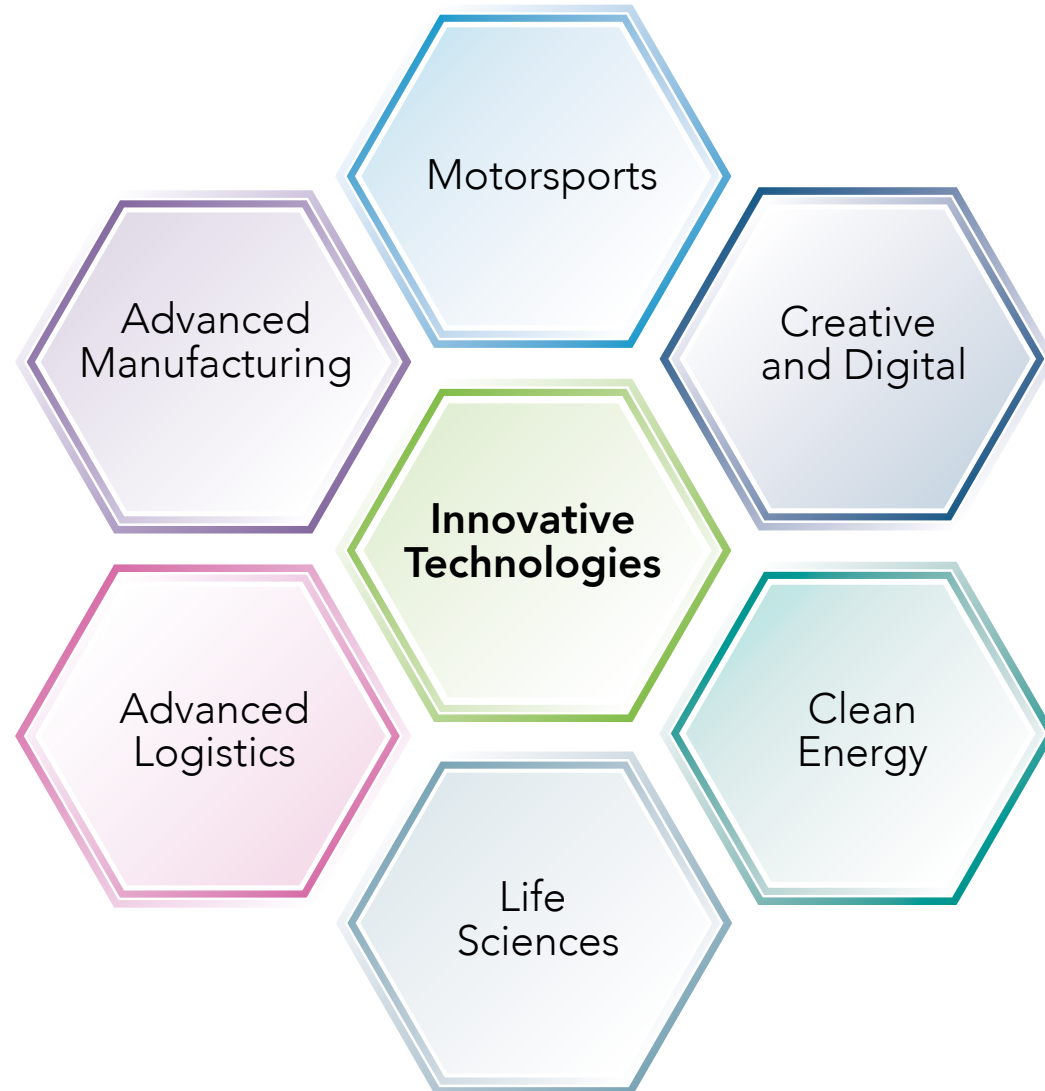
Our Investment Sectors

In order to capitalise on the many strengths of West Northants, it is clear that we need to identify a clear set of investment sectors which will become our focus throughout the duration of this strategy. It is important that these align with the Government's Industrial Strategy and our vision to inclusively & sustainably grow the local economy to increase life chances, and be capable of creating a thriving and growing local economy.

Through extensive research into our existing sectoral strengths and wide-ranging engagement, we have agreed a set of investment sectors which are central to achieving our vision of inclusive growth for everyone.

We will get West Northants recognised for its strengths in 'innovative technologies'. This central focus will be at the heart of this strategy and will underpin the six sectors outlined below which are our priorities for growth. These are the sectors, we will endeavour to attract, grow and enhance. We will focus on the application and use of innovative technologies to develop and commercialise new products, processes and services. We will draw on our intellectual capacity and ensure synergies with the knowledge economy.

Our investment sectors build on our existing strengths, as well as expand the potential of West Northants as a destination for investment, recognising the benefits aligned with the investment sectors to generate highly-skilled, highly-paying jobs and higher levels of inward investment. These sectors will be targeted to build upon strengths or address gaps where there is an opportunity such as Life Sciences, harnessing the regional strengths in this industry and ensuring West Northants benefits.



Our Investment Sectors

We have set out below a more detailed vision to 2041 which builds on this central focus and our overall aim:

We want to become the beating heart of the country's technology revolution, developing and utilising innovative technologies which builds on our sector strengths. We will capitalise on our central and well-connected location to create a thriving West Northamptonshire. We will work with new and existing businesses to deliver high quality jobs which secure economic growth. This will create inclusive opportunities for all of our residents, businesses and future generations.

In the next few pages, we summarise our key strengths and future drivers which will lead to the growth of our investment sectors over the course of this strategy.



Our Investment Sectors

Motorsports

Global Motorsports Hub: West Northamptonshire is positioned to build on its existing strengths as home to leading organisations like Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team, Aston Martin, and Cosworth. These global innovators drive advancements in powertrains, chassis, and advanced engineering, creating opportunities for future growth in high-value manufacturing and technology.

Silverstone's Expanding Role: already a world-renowned motorsports venue, Silverstone's potential as an engineering and innovation hub is set to grow. It attracts skilled professionals, high-tech businesses, and international visitors, offering opportunities to benefit the local economy and the wider visitor economy.

Emerging Opportunities in High-Tech Manufacturing and Supply Chain: the motorsports sector offers substantial future growth potential through its specialised supply chain, with well recognised brands anchoring local manufacturing. There is significant scope to capitalise on increasing global demand for advanced engineering and sustainable technologies.

Education and Skills Pipeline: Institutions like Silverstone UTC and Cranfield University as well as the University of Northampton are vital to preparing the future workforce. Expanding their focus on motorsports, engineering, and related disciplines will support local talent development and attract investment in research and innovation.

This sector is likely to include advanced manufacturers of high end vehicles as well as vehicle parts and components, while also incorporating R&D in the motor sector.

Case Study, Silverstone Park

Based in the heart of the UK's acclaimed High-Tech Cluster, Silverstone Park is centrally located within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and Motorsport Valley. The globally renowned and centrally located environment is already home to market leaders that include Ducati, Dumarey Flybrid, Lunaz, Lotus and Porsche.

"Silverstone Park is a growing campus for future innovation. Home to 90-plus globally renowned businesses, it's situated in West Northamptonshire – an area that's perfect for investors and business owners looking to start, scale and succeed."

Chris Kimber-Nickelson, Commercial Director at MEPC



Our Investment Sectors

Creative and Digital

Established Foundations in West Northamptonshire: significant efforts have been made to establish and grow the creative industries locally, including initiatives like the Northampton Creative Industries Exhibition, which took place in 2023 to inspire creative opportunities and showcase the sector’s potential.

Key Assets Driving Growth: the Vulcan Works, a hub for creative start-ups that opened in 2023, provides a dedicated space for innovation and collaboration.

National Priority Sector: the creative industries and digital technologies sectors are both separately recognised drivers of growth within the UK’s modern industrial strategy, offering West Northamptonshire the chance to align with national priorities and lever funding opportunities.

Economic Contribution: The creative and digital technologies sectors* account for approximately 9,000 jobs (2023)** and support nearly 2,000 businesses (2024)*** in the area, highlighting its current impact and future potential for job creation and business growth.

This sector will include a combination of the arts sectors – creative design, visual arts and performance arts alongside digital industries such as graphic design, media production and software and computer engineering

* Using the “Digital and Creative Industries” sector definition created by the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport

** Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS, 2023

*** UK Business Count, ONS, 2024



Our Investment Sectors

Clean Energy

National Growth Opportunity: clean energy is a key driver of the UK's modern industrial strategy, with significant investment and innovation needed to meet national and global net-zero targets.

Rising Demand for Clean Energy Solutions: as the transition from traditional fuels accelerates, the demand for innovative clean energy solutions is increasing. West Northamptonshire is well placed to capitalise on this, with its central location and access to cutting-edge energy technologies positioning it as a hub for future growth.

Key Anchor Activities and Innovation Hubs: West Northamptonshire is home to pioneering developments, including the sustainable logistics and distribution facility at DIRFT (Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal). Developed by Prologis, this site features solar PV installations, net-zero construction methods, and

extensive EV charging infrastructure. Crucially, DIRFT is set to become a testbed for clean energy innovation, exploring off-grid commercial growth through on-site generation technologies. Plans include integrating hydrogen and gas mixes, alongside micro-nuclear power solutions recently acquired in the US, to create a self-sufficient, sustainable energy ecosystem. This approach ensures DIRFT's growth is not constrained by grid connectivity, setting a precedent for innovation-led clean energy developments across the UK

The clean energy sector will include organisations involved in alternative methods of energy generation and distribution beyond traditional fossil fuels – including wind, solar and hydrogen. This will include businesses producing energy, distributing it and also researching this field



Our Investment Sectors

Life Sciences

National Growth Priority: Life sciences is a key sector within the UK’s modern industrial strategy, recognised for its potential to drive innovation, investment, and economic growth. West Northamptonshire has an opportunity to align with this priority and strengthen its presence in this competitive industry.

Strategic Position in the Oxford-Cambridge area: West Northamptonshire’s location within the Oxford to Cambridge area places it at the heart of a region recognised for its strengths in life sciences. Our central position within this area offers significant opportunities to attract investment, foster collaborations, and capitalise on the development of this key growth corridor.

Established Local Base: the area is home to 158 businesses in the life sciences sector*, with a primary focus on healthcare. This existing foundation provides a platform for further growth and development. Some significant companies in the sector include; HORIBA – specialists focusing on automation, electrochemical and x-ray technologies, Dexcel Pharama – manufacturer and commercial seller of pharmaceuticals and Prism Ideas – providers of support to life science businesses from early stage clinical R&D to commercialisation

Academic-Clinical Partnerships: the University of Northampton’s collaboration with Leicester Hospital highlights the region’s capacity for fostering research, innovation, and skills development in life sciences. Strengthening such partnerships will be critical to attracting investment and expanding expertise in this field.

Life sciences businesses operate in health and pharmaceutical sectors, including research and commercialisation of chemical and biological products and services.



* Based on Data City RTIC definition of Life Sciences: copyright in the data belongs to Data City and/or its licensors, 2024, www.thedatacity.com

Our Investment Sectors

Advanced Logistics

Established Strengths in Logistics: West Northamptonshire has a robust logistics sector, with 5,000 businesses and 57,000 jobs, reflecting a 10% growth in employment over the last five years. Its strategic location, close to the M1 and within easy reach of London and the Midlands, enhances its appeal as a logistics hub. This strategic connectivity offers potential for further development in advanced logistics, including the adoption of automation, data-driven systems, and sustainable practices.

Key Employers and Infrastructure: major employers such as Prologis, Segro and Panattoni have a strong presence, supported by advanced infrastructure and connectivity, making the area a critical node in national and international supply chains.

Emerging Opportunities Through Innovation: the region's advanced motorsports sector offers potential for cross-industry collaboration in logistics, particularly in adopting electric vehicle (EV) and driverless technologies. These advancements could revolutionise the logistics industry, positioning West Northamptonshire as a leader in sustainable and automated distribution.

Sector Growth Driven by E-commerce: the post-COVID rise in e-commerce has amplified the demand for advanced logistics solutions, with further growth anticipated. West Northamptonshire is well placed to benefit from this, leveraging its existing strengths and proximity to key markets.

This will include organisations transporting goods using innovative methods alongside advanced supply chain methods, for example EV freight or driverless warehouse technology.



Our Investment Sectors

Advanced Manufacturing

National Growth Priority: Advanced manufacturing is a key sector in the UK's modern industrial strategy, recognised for its capacity to drive innovation, productivity, and economic growth. West Northamptonshire is well positioned to contribute to this priority through its established and diverse manufacturing base.

Specialisms in Food and Drink: the area has a strong focus on food and drink manufacturing, with major employers like Carlsberg providing a foundation for growth. This specialism offers opportunities for innovation in production techniques and sustainable practices to meet evolving market demands.

Heritage and Expertise in Niche Industries: West Northamptonshire has a rich industrial heritage in sectors like shoe manufacturing, which continues to thrive through niche, high-value production. Nearly one in five shoe manufacturing jobs in England are in West Northamptonshire. This legacy of craftsmanship and innovation provides a unique strength, combining traditional skills with modern manufacturing techniques. Anchor firms such as Church's and Barker demonstrate the commitment to the area.

Links with Advanced Engineering: West Northamptonshire's strengths in advanced engineering, supported by its established motorsports sector, present significant opportunities to drive growth in advanced manufacturing. These may enable the region to leverage expertise in precision engineering, innovation, and cutting-edge technologies, further enhancing its potential to attract investment and deliver high-value manufacturing outputs.

Advanced manufacturing includes manufacturers who utilise current technological innovations to increase efficiencies or bring a new process to the market, including digitalisation, robotics and AI.

We also wish to acknowledge the importance of those sectors which support our quality of life and the vibrancy of our town centres. We recognise the need to support and invest in the following sectors which are essential to a resilient and inclusive economy, enhancing West Northamptonshire as a must-invest destination where residents can live their best lives and businesses can flourish:

- Foundational economy, including health, care and education
- Experience economy which includes heritage, culture, leisure, sport and entertainment as well as retail, hospitality and food

Our Investment Sectors

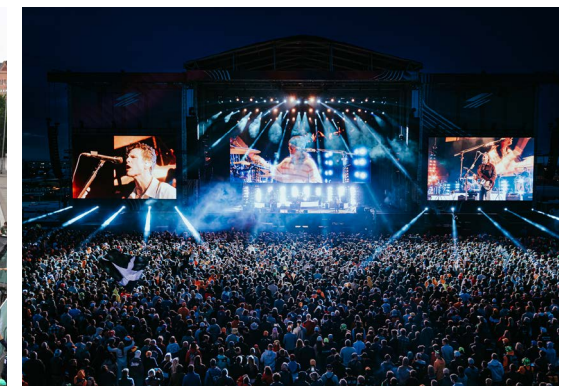
Foundational Economy

The foundational economy is crucial for the West Northamptonshire economy and supports quality of life for residents. This sector underpins daily life, ensuring the quality of life for residents and providing the infrastructure that supports the wider economy. Health and social care services are particularly significant, meeting the needs of an aging population while offering a range of employment opportunities. Likewise, education plays a critical role in equipping the local workforce with the skills necessary for future growth. Strengthening the foundational economy will be vital to maintaining resilience and ensuring other sectors can thrive.



Experience Economy

The experience economy is a vital driver of West Northamptonshire's appeal and economic vitality, encompassing culture, leisure, sport and entertainment as well as retail, hospitality and food. This sector supports vibrant town centres and contributes significantly to local spending, with Northamptonshire's visitor economy generating £1 billion annually from over 18 million visits as outlined in the Visitor Economy Strategy.



Our Priorities

Under each of the themes, we have identified a set of four priorities which will enable us to meet our overall vision. Our priorities are explained in more detail in the pages which follow and clear actions have been identified which will allow us to work towards our priorities. A detailed action plan has been prepared to ensure they are deliverable.

People	Place	Business
1. Increase the skilled workforce to meet the needs of investment sectors	5. Increase & improve quality housing for all	9. Grow investment sectors to encourage higher value employment
2. Increase prosperity for all with a fairer and more inclusive West Northamptonshire	6. Deliver quality employment sites/premises aligned to investment sectors	10. Increase levels of innovation & productivity
3. Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers	7. Curate thriving mixed-purpose town centres	11. Reduce carbon emissions amongst businesses
4. Increase numbers of people ready for and sustaining fulfilling work	8. Unlock infrastructure for sustained growth	12. Increase the number of ambitious growth businesses

KPI's will be developed further to ensure these are ambitious, with a set target to deliver and sufficiently detailed to measure against priorities once the strategy has been adopted and the Economic Growth Board has been established. A range of KPIs has been identified against each priority within this strategy, to be worked up further. It is recognised that by successfully delivering our strategy, we will achieve the following:

- Levels of productivity above national levels (as measured by GVA per filled job)
- Increased employment in investment sectors
- Levels of specialisation in investment sectors in line with national averages
- Increase net business formation rate
- A skilled workforce aligned to business needs (measured by incidence of skill gaps)
- Improved life chances for children and young people (measured by progression into positive destinations of education, employment and training at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5)
- Reduction in inequalities and deprivation (measured by the index of multiple deprivation)

The priorities and actions identified for the next five years will enable us to deliver these outcomes.

Existing Activity

We will ensure that West Northamptonshire is a great place where people are skilled, active, confident and empowered to live prosperous and fulfilling lives.

The action plan will build on existing and planned activity underway in West Northamptonshire supporting quality of life and the prosperity of people in West Northamptonshire, including:

- West Northants Employment Support Service: West Northamptonshire Council provides a free employment support service to residents and employers to enable them to access the support and training needed to find local employment and grow their business.
- UKSPF People and Skills Funding: West Northamptonshire allocated £1.58m of UKSPF funding towards people and skills investment which will conclude in March 2025, with the prospect of a further allocation for 2026. This funding demonstrates West Northants commitment to upskilling residents and increasing employment, supporting activities including skills for communities, work, and growth with the aim of reducing levels of economic inactivity and supporting local areas to fund gaps in local skills provision and support people to progress into work. Further investment has been delivered through a £1.9m Multiply funding allocation aimed at addressing the challenges of low adult numeracy rates.
- Adult Learning provision: adult learning courses are run by North Northamptonshire Council aimed at supporting residents to acquire qualifications which can improve job prospects, undertake learning opportunities to build confidence, acquire new skills, and deepen expertise. Existing provision includes essential skills, family learning, learning for wellbeing.
- ESOL provision: supporting people to provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with free provision aimed at those who are unemployed, in receipt of benefits or low-income earners.
- South Midlands Careers Hub: the South Midlands Careers Hub aims to support the education system to connect to the world of work and build an intelligence led careers provision that supports career development and builds a talent pipeline for industry. Provision is informed by the Gatsby Benchmarks and initiatives such as Cornerstone Employers facilitate business involvement.
- DWP provision: providing support to enable people to look for and secure work, including specific support for disabled people and people with health conditions. Initiatives such as RE: Start are supporting young people aged 16-25 years who live in Northamptonshire and need additional support with navigating mental health services through the transition from childhood to adulthood. The Connect to Work scheme is currently being rolled out which will provide a supported employment programme targeting the economically inactive, complementing other existing provision including WorkWell and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) provision.

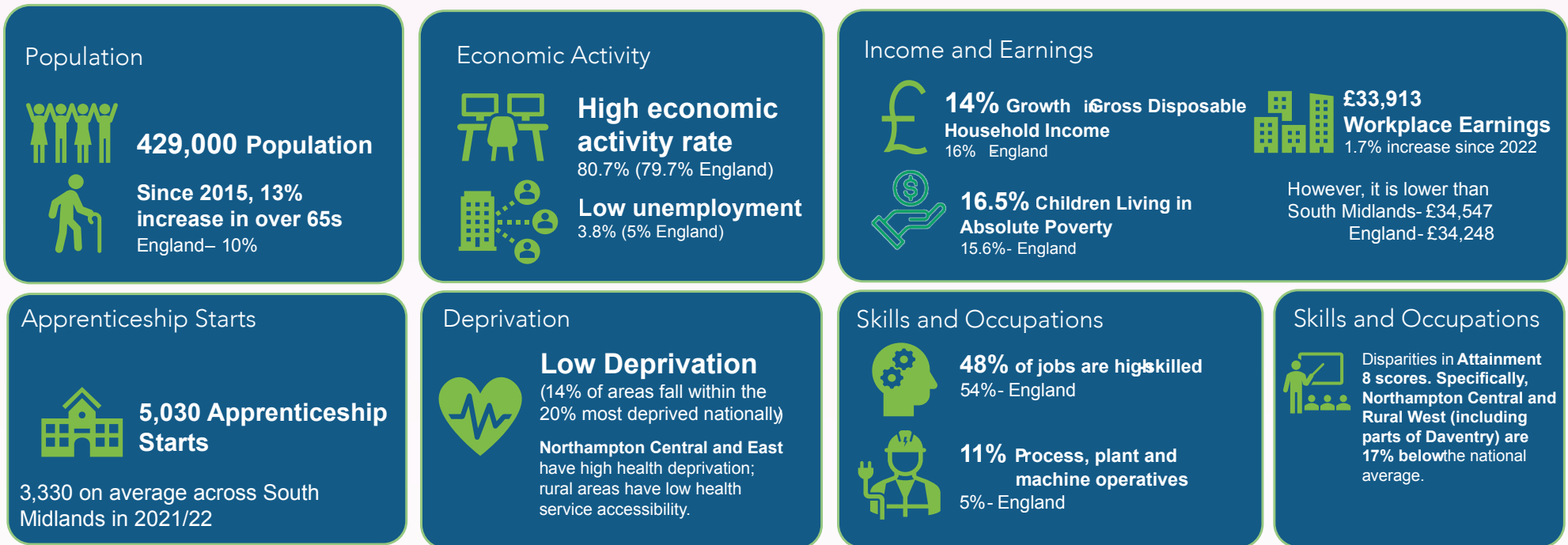
Existing Activity

- Family Hubs: established in 2024, Family Hubs provide a valuable digital resource for families, carers, professionals, and children in West Northamptonshire. These hubs offer support to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 19, expectant parents, and young people up to the age of 19. The Family Hubs aim to create a connected community, providing resources and assistance to help families thrive. A further commitment of £2m has been made towards the creation of new family hubs in Daventry and Northampton, providing essential services for families.
- Health and Wellbeing provision: including Health and Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) aimed at understanding needs and priorities at local levels to inform plans and initiatives.
- Enhancing support opportunities for care leavers: The Care Leavers Local Offer provides personalised assistance for accommodation, finances, emotional support and education to ensure care leavers can be helped to thrive in adulthood. This includes support to care leavers to progress into education, training and employment at 16 years of age. In addition, the Council is delivering a new multi-million-pound investment programme to provide housing for children and young people in care.
- Community larders across West Northamptonshire provide access to affordable, nutritious food, easing the burden on household budgets during the cost-of-living crisis. This initiative aims to help those facing acute needs and challenges, fostering a sense of community support and resilience.
- Household Support Fund offers essential assistance with food, utilities, and money and debt advice, helping residents transition from crisis support to long-term financial wellbeing. Funded by the UK central government, the £2.4m scheme will run through winter until the end of March 2025.

Local Context

The Case for Intervention

West Northamptonshire's People



West Northamptonshire is currently home to 429,000 people and this has grown by 8% since 2015 representing an increase of 31,000 residents. This rate of growth is significant and represents a population expanding at a rate that far surpasses the national rate (4%). Currently, 271,000 people (63%) are of working age and this cohort has been growing over time, providing a valuable source

of labour to fuel the economy. Looking ahead, it is projected that the population will continue to grow but the population will increasingly age. This demographic shift points to a tightening supply of labour to meet the needs of our economy, and will have implications for service provision including health, care and leisure aligned to the needs of an older population.

Local Context

Whilst there are many positive attributes supporting our economic growth in West Northamptonshire it is vital that this is achieved in an inclusive and sustainable way. There are pockets of deprivation within the area, particularly within Daventry and Northampton, and there are specific domains of deprivation that are areas of concern. This includes 20% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) featuring in the 20% most deprived in England on the education and skills domain. There is a qualification gap at the higher levels (37% of the population hold Level 4+ qualifications relative to 45% in England) and this impacts on earnings and prosperity. The Gross Disposable Income per head of population across West Northamptonshire is 3.3% below the national rate.

The health of the population in West Northamptonshire is also an area to improve. 17% of LSOAs feature in the 20% most deprived in England on the health domain, including Northampton Central and Northampton East. Poor health impacts on quality of life and is a barrier to participating in the labour market. There are 18% of 16–64-year-olds in West Northamptonshire who are currently economically inactive, of which 25% are long term sick, accounting for 11,200 people. Whilst this is below the national average, this is a significant number of working age people experiencing poor health. Furthermore, residents in rural areas have low accessibility to health services, with 32% of LSOAs ranking poorly on the Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards Index.

In response to the issues stated earlier in this document, we have identified the following priorities. We want to:

- Increase the skilled workforce to meet the needs of investment sectors;
- Increase prosperity for all with a fairer and more inclusive West Northamptonshire;
- Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers; and
- Increase numbers of people ready for and sustaining fulfilling work.

Priorities and Actions

Priority 1: Increase the skilled workforce to meet the needs of investment sectors

Alignment to other strategies and initiatives: this priority aligns with the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, the South Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and the One West Northamptonshire Plan 2030.

Rationale: the current skills and occupational profile of West Northamptonshire points to a qualification and occupation gap relative to the national average. This includes an 11-percentage point gap between the proportion of residents in highly skilled occupations, and an 8-percentage point gap holding RFQ 4+ qualifications. This deficit could impede economic growth, earnings potential, and the area's ability to attract knowledge-intensive industries. The SEMLEP Business Survey 2023 identified that 11% of businesses in West Northamptonshire identified skill gaps in their existing workforce. Furthermore, 12% of businesses that had vacancies reported that they had found at least one of these vacancies hard to fill. Occupations that businesses have had trouble recruiting include hospitality, health and/or care, science, engineering and production, and information technology.

The South Midlands LSIP identifies sectors with high growth potential and significant skill gaps such as digital technology, healthcare, green industries, and construction. The LSIP highlights the imperative to tailor skills development programmes to address the specific needs of these sectors.

Aim: this priority seeks to align skills supply with demand through a responsive skills system which ensures that the current and future workforce are equipped with the skills and competencies required by employers in West Northamptonshire. This will support productivity growth, increase earnings and facilitate inward investment and business growth.






Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Increase in the number of working age residents and % of total population
- Increase in the qualification profile of working age residents by RFQ level 3 and 4+
- Increase in the occupational profile of working age residents by level (high, medium)
- Decrease in the % of businesses reporting skill shortage vacancies
- Decrease in the % of businesses reporting skill gaps in the existing workforce
- Decrease in the % of businesses reporting at least one vacancy as hard to fill (total and by sector)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 1: Increase the skilled workforce to meet the needs of investment sectors

Over the next five years West Northamptonshire will deliver the following actions:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	1.1: Develop relevant qualifications and skill pathways to facilitate progression and productivity growth aligned to important and growing sectors of the economy. We will connect career provision in schools and colleges to the needs of the local economy. We will work with partners to map existing and planned skills provision to enable identification of gaps and the development of qualifications and skills pathways in response. This action will ensure alignment with local needs and capabilities including those identified in the LSIP.	South Midlands Careers Hub/ WNC, South Midlands Authorities Group, training providers, Northampton-shire Chamber	Short	Low
 Work with partners	1.2: Work collaboratively with employers to drive demand-led provision. We will work partners to understand current and future skill requirements to ensure skills provision meets current and future skill needs. This action will raise awareness of existing provision to communicate the current offer and encourage take up e.g. through a skills assets and capabilities dashboard/prospectus, inform curriculum design, and encourage employer participation in career inspiration activity including experience of the workplace, the provision of apprenticeship opportunities and graduate placements.	South Midlands Careers Hub/ WNC, South Midlands Authorities Group, training providers, Northampton-shire Chamber	Short	Medium
 Work with partners	1.3: Secure capital investment in skills infrastructure. We will engage with providers and employers to understand existing deficiencies in our post-16 skills infrastructure and growth opportunities. This action will identify capital investment needs for both equipment and estates. This will deliver improved learner experience and meet business needs. This can be facilitated through exploring opportunities for external funding, proactive lobbying and casemaking for investment. Identifying a pipeline of projects with associated technical detail will enable a swift response when funding opportunities emerge.	WNC/ UoN, Northampton College, Moulton College, LSIP partners including Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, DfE	Short-Medium	High
 Work with partners	1.4: Horizon scan for future growth opportunities and identify skills required by important sectors. We will continually horizon scan to identify drivers and disruptors of change, including growth in our investment sectors and major projects with associated skill requirements. We will work with the Business Intelligence & Population Insights (BIPI) team at WNC, employer intermediary organisations and employers to gather up-to-date market intelligence and work with FE / HE providers to tailor provision to support growth in these sectors. This action will inform curriculum planning and skills provision to facilitate a proactive response.	South Midlands Authorities Group / WNC, LSIP partners including Northampton-shire Chamber of Commerce, UoN, Northampton College, Moulton College	Short-Medium	Low – Medium
 Work with partners	1.5: Engage with employers collaboratively to respond to green economy opportunities through investment in skills. This action will support knowledge transfer of what 'green' and 'decarbonisation' means for business and raise awareness of green economy opportunities and green skill requirements. Close engagement with providers will facilitate a responsive skills system to meet emerging demand and encourage participation.	South Midlands Authorities Group/ WNC, LSIP partners including Northampton-shire Chamber of Commerce	Short-Medium	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 2: Increase levels of prosperity in an inclusive West Northamptonshire

Alignment to other strategies and initiatives: this priority aligns with national policies such as the Get Britain Working White Paper (2024), the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and the West Northamptonshire Partnership's SEND Alternative Provision Strategy. It also aligns with the West Northamptonshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 and the Council's Active Lives Strategy.

Rationale: there are significant disparities across West Northamptonshire with pockets of deprivation in some urban areas such as the Local Area Partnership (LAP) of Northampton Central and around the Daventry Rural West LAP. Health deprivation is a particular issue, with 17% of West Northamptonshire's LSOAs in the 20% most deprived areas in England on this domain. Rurality is a barrier to provision, with poor access to health services experienced by 32% of LSOAs falling within the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England with least access to health services as measured by the Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards Index. West Northamptonshire also has a large, growing and rapidly ageing population which emphasises the importance of ensuring that population-driven services are aligned to these needs, including education, health and wellbeing provision that meets the needs of a changing demographic.

Labour market disparities exist for certain groups. In 2021, individuals with disabilities had an unemployment rate of 7% relative to the local authority average of 4% and an economic inactivity rate of 65% compared to a 34% average for the district as a whole. Those who are disabled are significantly more likely to hold no qualifications (27%) compared to those who are not (15.3%).

Aim: this priority aims to support residents and businesses to prosper and thrive in West Northamptonshire through a fair and inclusive approach. This will support quality of life, equity of access to opportunities, and encourage 'good' employment' taking into consideration pay, working conditions, progression, work life balance and the employee voice*. This will deliver improved health and wellbeing, support social mobility and enhanced life chances, and access to good quality employment.




Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Decrease in the number of jobs paying below the Living Wage
- Decrease in the number of economically inactive who are long term sick (aged 16-64)
- Increase in the Gross Disposable Income per Head of Population (£)
- Decrease in the number of LSOAs in the 20% most deprived by domain including education and health (including % change in decile ranking over time)
- Increase in the number of apprentices employed by anchor institutions (including change over time)

* Good work has been defined by the LGA as follows: Good Work Project | Local Government Association. It is work that can provide decent pay and security; where people have control, a voice and good relationships; and that gives employees the opportunity to use their skills and to develop new ones. It is good for people, the economy, local communities and places. It can be supportive of good health and wellbeing, raise incomes and reduce poverty, support stronger economies and better business, and help build more inclusive communities.

Priorities and Actions

Priority 2: Increase levels of prosperity in an inclusive West Northamptonshire

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	<p>2.1: Promote and support healthy and active lifestyles to help tackle health deprivation. We will work with partners to encourage and provide opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles to support preventative action that supports wellbeing and mitigates health and wellbeing inequalities experienced by residents. This will align with the new West Northants Active Lives Strategy which encourages behavioural change, creates and sustains environments to encourage activity, and creates better opportunities for people to participate. This action will also promote use of the WNC Workplace Wellbeing Toolkit. Welcoming spaces/community hubs will be used to support delivery in priority neighbourhoods.</p>	WNC/Northamptonshire ICB, NICP, VCSE sector	Short-Medium	Low-Medium
 Work with partners	<p>2.2: Encourage participation by anchor institutions in the Northamptonshire Anchor Institution Charter We will encourage collaboration between anchor organisations supporting community building goals to participate in the Northamptonshire Anchor Institution Charter. This seeks to improve collective wellbeing and create strong, safe, resilient and inclusive communities. The Charter sets out how anchor institutions can work together to empower the next generation, including enhanced relationships between employers and education providers for pathways into role/skill shortage areas; reducing disadvantage for the next generation by providing opportunities for skills, education and career development; and providing positive employment opportunities (including inclusive practices and developing solutions to tackle unemployment and inactivity in groups most affected by inequalities and reduce recruitment gaps).</p>	Members of the Anchor Institutions Network / WNC, other anchor institutions based in West Northants	Short	Low
 Lead	<p>2.3: Supporting inclusive employment practices We will support residents and workers to be aware of their employment rights and encourage them to seek quality employment opportunities through information, advice and guidance. This will support access to fair work, opportunities for career development, and a supportive workplace culture.</p>	WNC/ Citizens Advice, CLS, trade unions, employment support agencies, Age UK, VCFSE	Short-Medium	Low
 Lead	<p>2.4: Ensure transport provision supports travel to work and travel to learn patterns We will engage with learners/skills providers and employees as well as employers to identify transport barriers to participation. The new Local Transport Plan (LTP) identifies how WNC will work collaboratively with education providers to encourage sustainable travel and raise awareness of available transport choices to support access to education.</p> <p>This action aligns with Action 8.1 (under the place theme) but broadens this to focus on travel to learn. This action will inform the delivery of the LTP to improve provision, identify initiatives to address identified issues, supports lobbying and securing investment to implement identified interventions.</p>	WNC/ Transport operators, skills providers, employer intermediary bodies	Medium	High

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)
Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)



Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 3: Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers.

Alignment to other strategies and initiatives: this priority recognises national reforms are underway. The Get Britain Working White Paper (2024) sets out several policy commitments including a Youth Guarantee scheme and creating a new jobs and career service. This priority aligns with the WNC Anti-Poverty Strategy aimed at supporting everyone to live their best life, prosperous and fulfilling, free from poverty and inequality. It also aligns with the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy which commits to 'starting well' with ambitions including 'best start in life' and 'access to best education and learning'.

Rationale: we want young people to reach their potential, with children given the best start in life. We want all young people to grow up qualified and inspired to succeed. The proportion of children living in absolute poverty in West Northamptonshire is increasing and currently sits above the national average, impacting on the life chances of children and young people. Around 2.2% of 16–17-year-olds in West Northamptonshire in 2022 were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or their activity was not known. Social mobility can be improved by creating opportunities for young people to develop their skills and advance their careers.

The University of Northampton plays a key role in nurturing talent and has a high success rate in attracting and retaining talent to the region, with 68% of resident graduates continuing to still live in the area after achieving their qualifications. Northampton College is one of the largest Further Education (FE) colleges in the region and West Northants is home to other specialist provision such as Moulton College. These institutions provide key strengths upon which to grow and retain talent in the region.





Aim: this priority seeks to improve educational outcomes at all key stages and inspire young people to progress to positive and sustained careers through investing in the skills, advice and guidance they need to progress into careers that provide them with quality jobs in West Northants.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Decrease in the Child Poverty rate (% of children aged 0-15) living in households with income below 60% of the median income
- Decrease in the number and % of 16 and 17 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- Increase in the % of Key Stage 4 pupils with sustained positive destinations

Priorities and Actions

Priority 3: Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers.

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	3.1: Develop an integrated strategic response to the provision of education and skills. We will support the delivery and transformation of education and learning through early years, school to post-16 provision by developing an All-Age Skills Strategy in partnership with strategic partners. This will ensure everyone has access to high quality education and skills needed to achieve success and build pathways to positive destinations	WNC/ South Midlands Authorities Group, Post-16 and HEI providers, employer representative groups	Short	Low
 Work with partners	3.2: Work with the Careers Hub to develop employability skills in children and young people from an early age. We will work with the Careers Hub and partners to develop employability skills in everyone from a young age. This includes developing emotional intelligence, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective communication skills. This can be achieved through enhanced provision and increased access to extra-curricular and enrichment activities. This action aligns with the Anti-Poverty Strategy which aims to improve life chances and support social mobility by raising skills and improving access to diverse employment opportunities. We will map existing employability skills provision, consult with employers to understand skill gaps, identify supply and demand mismatches, and develop initiatives and secure funding to implement.	South Midlands Careers Hub / WNC, employer intermediaries and employers, Skills providers, VCFSE sector	Short-Medium	Medium
 Work with partners	3.3: Inspire ambition amongst young people. We will work in partnership with the Careers Hub to ensure that young people are aware of all education, employment and training pathways and can make informed and good decisions about future careers to progress into positive destinations. This includes raising awareness of careers aligned to West Northamptonshire's investment sectors. This requires an evolved careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) offer that meets the aspirations of learners and the needs of employers. This will support participation and progression into work. This action includes delivery of inspirational two-week experiences of the workplace for Year 7-11 pupils.	South Midlands Careers Hub / WNC, employer intermediaries and employers, Skills providers, VCFSE sector	Short-Medium	Medium
 Work with partners	3.4: Tailored CEIAG provision for specific groups. Building on the broad offer provided in action 3.3, tailor support for young people with additional needs and/or vulnerabilities, including those with SEND, disadvantaged, from minority groups, English as an Additional Language, those living in rural areas, and care experienced young adults.	South Midlands Careers Hub / WNC, employer intermediaries and employers, Skills providers, VCFSE sector	Short-Medium	Medium

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)



Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 4: Increase numbers of people ready for and sustaining fulfilling work

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the Get Britain Working White Paper (2024). This includes reforms to employment support, new local Get Britain Working Plans and a youth guarantee. It also aligns with the new Connect to Work supported employment programme. This priority also aligns with the WNC Anti Poverty Strategy.

Rationale: a significant number of people in West Northamptonshire face barriers to participating in the labour market. There are 8,700 people in West Northamptonshire claiming benefits, 4.1% of all economically active residents aged 16+ which is slightly below the England average. This rate has been increasing since 2023. Furthermore, 9.9% of 18–21-year-olds are on Universal Credit.

Fulfilling work is also about providing good quality jobs with good pay levels. Of all employee jobs in West Northamptonshire, 14.2% of employees were earning below Living Wage Foundation hourly rates in 2024 (26,000 jobs). Whilst this is below the England benchmark of 15.9% it highlights a high proportion of workers who are on low wages. Encouraging employers to provide a fair pay that meets employees' everyday needs and follow good employment practices will support good work and employee wellbeing in West Northamptonshire.




Aim: this action seeks to break down barriers to participation and support people to participate and stay in work. It recognises that increasing the number of people ready for and sustaining fulfilling work has numerous benefits including enhanced productivity, economic growth, personal wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Decrease in the Claimant Count (% of claimants in working age population)
- Decrease in the number of jobs paying below the Living Wage
- Decrease in the number of economically inactive residents aged 16-64
- Decrease in the number and % of 16 and 17 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 3: Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers.

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	4.1: Encourage employers to invest in workforce wellbeing and skills development. We will support employers to promote and increase access to good employment opportunities for local people. This includes raising awareness of what being a ‘good employer’ means in practice and showcasing positive role models. This action includes encouraging businesses to participate in existing initiatives to demonstrate their social responsibility towards West Northamptonshire residents and workers, for example, engaging with the CEC Employer Standards to open up new pathways and opportunities for young people, encouraging take up of the Workplace Wellbeing Toolkit which will help to ensure local businesses provide a supportive environment for employees, and signing up to the Disability Confident Scheme to encourage inclusive recruitment and help employees with disabilities to sustain work.	WNC / Members of the Network based in West Northants, employer intermediaries and employers	Short	Low
 Lead	4.2: Boost core skills and employment prospects. This action will boost core skills and employment prospects through the provision of numeracy, literacy, ESOL, digital and employability courses and support. We will coordinate and deliver provision in line with identified need and target groups, working in partnership with the VCFSE sector to ensure the hardest to reach are engaged and encouraged to participate.	WNC / VCFSE sector, DWP	Short-Medium	Medium
 Work with partners	4.3: Tackle the digital skills gap through responsive training provision. We will tackle the digital skills gap working with partners to amplify existing activity tailored to local needs and opportunities in the West Northants economy. This will ensure delivery of responsive digital skills provision which is accessible and flexible, aligned to business needs and identified new and future technologies. This can be facilitated through the creation of a West Northants equivalent to the UK’s Digital Skills Programme, bringing together public, private and VCFSE organisations to increase digital capabilities. We will work with the Careers Hub and our employers to inspire more young people to consider digital career pathways.	South Midlands Authorities Group / WNC, training providers, LSIP Partners including Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, employers, VCSFE	Short-Medium	Medium
 Work with partners	4.4: Increase economic activity through targeted support to the inactive. We will work with partners to overcome specific barriers to labour market participation. This action includes coordinating support to the economically inactive, working in partnership with funding authorities to develop and deliver tailored initiatives, including the new DWP funded Connect to Work scheme and continuation of UKSPF initiatives.	Strategic funding authority / WNC, DWP, VCSFE sector	Short-Medium	High

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)






Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)



Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 3: Increase numbers of young people prepared for meaningful careers.

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	4.5: Tailor skills provision to the needs of an older workforce. We will engage with older working age residents to understand barriers to labour market participation, including those who are economically inactive due to retirement. Where a lack of skills is identified as the issue, we will work with partners to provide information, advice and guidance to encourage participation in education and training. We will work with partners to ensure that skills and training providers are tailoring their courses to the needs of the older workforce to support reskilling and upskilling.	South Midlands Authorities Group / WNC, Employers, training providers	Short-Medium	Medium
 Lead	4.6: Reduce the risk and likelihood of NEETs through effective interventions. We will work in partnership to review the Council's NEET strategy aimed at helping young people who are not in education, employment or training and identify areas of focus, map current interventions to identify gaps, and develop interventions in response. This will build on existing initiatives such as Future Toolbox to improve employability skills of young people aged 16+ who are at risk of becoming NEET and improve their chances of finding employment.	WNC / South Midlands Careers Hub, VCFSE sector	Short	Medium
 Lead	4.7: Ensure that developer contributions are used to support the skills and employability of our local people. We will work with developers to ensure that developer contributions support local employment and skills development. This will ensure that there is policy conformity with the new Local Plan and Developer Contributions SPD as well as the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP).	WNC / Developers, training providers	Short	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)
Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)
Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Existing Activity

We will showcase West Northamptonshire as the perfect location to work, live, visit & invest.

The action plan will build on existing and planned activity underway in West Northamptonshire, including:

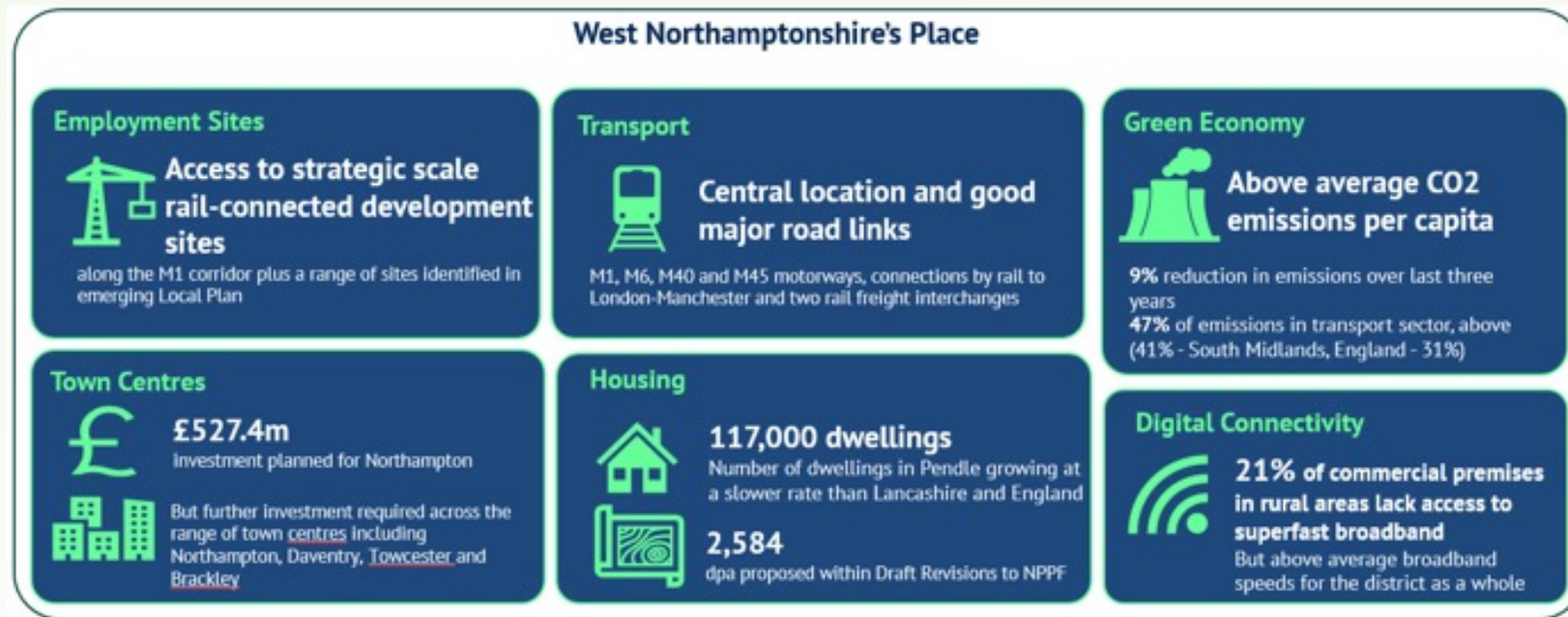
- Regeneration Projects in Northampton Town Centre's: our 'We are Northampton' brochure sets out the huge potential for development within the town centre. This aligns with the Northampton Town Centre Masterplan which focuses on key sites:
 - Over £12 million of funding from the Government's Towns Fund has already been invested in Northampton's Market Square to provide new seating, lighting and events space. A two-day event celebrated the opening of the new square in October 2024. This forms a key project funded by the Government's Towns Fund, with the council securing £25 million in total to support projects in Northampton.
 - Our plans to regenerate the Greyfriars regeneration area within Northampton have also moved a step closer with a new Development Management Services Agreement (DMSA) signed. This will allow us to develop more detailed strategies ahead of entering into a Development Agreement. The area covers 25 acres and our current proposals include the provision of new homes, restaurants, shops as well as business and cultural space.
 - The Waterside Enterprise Zone in Northampton is a key opportunity in Northampton. Covering 120 hectares of brownfield land along the River Nene, there are over 20 sites within the Zone. Work is expected to begin on four waterside in 2025 following a partnership between the council and developer Cityheart. The development will include a new hotel, office spaces and "high quality" Homes.
- Capital Investment: we have outlined an ambitious £100 million capital programme for 2025/26, rising to £155 million over the next four years. This will allow us to invest in housing including temporary accommodation and roads amongst other expenditure. Our recent successes include:
 - Active Travel Routes: the Delapre active travel route links Far Cotton with Brackmills across more than a kilometre of traffic-free pathways, and is open to cyclists, walkers, and wheelchair users. The scheme, funded by Active Travel England, aimed to encourage walking, wheeling, and cycling. The Abington Active Travel scheme further improves connectivity and accessibility in the Abington Park area, linking Rushmere to Wellingborough Road.
 - Bus Service Improvements: enhancements to bus services include new evening and weekend journeys, as well as increased frequency and additional stops. In collaboration with Stagecoach Midlands and with financial support from the Department for Transport, these additional bus services will improve access across the district for commuters, learners, and visitors.
- The Northamptonshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership has been recently created and brings together partners from across the sector as well as both West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire local authorities. It aims to strengthen and build on the area's visitor economy through strategic Destination Management and Destination Marketing. Discover Northamptonshire is the county's established tourist information brand and through continued development will become the overall information authority drawing more visitors to our attractions and towns. There are numerous successful initiatives such as Heritage Open Days (free access to historic sites), and Small Business Saturdays (annual shopping day to encourage people to shop local).

Case Study: English Cities Fund Partnership in support of the Greyfriars Regeneration Area

"ECF and West Northamptonshire Council have developed an exciting and dynamic partnership to drive the regeneration of Greyfriars, creating new homes, workspaces, retail, and public spaces. Backed by the combined strength of Muse, Homes England, and Legal & General ECF will be a long-term delivery partner for West Northamptonshire. It's a place which has huge potential, along with an ambitious and visionary local authority which wants to drive growth and create opportunity."

English Cities Fund (ECF) via Muse

Local Context



West Northamptonshire is perfectly located at the heart of the UK transport network, with excellent road connections and mainline rail connections between London and Manchester. There are also two rail freight interchanges which are of national and international significance.

West Northants offers the perfect blend of urban and rural areas, from the many market towns and the urban centre of Northampton, providing an attractive and desirable place to live and work for all. Attractive villages and towns such as Towcester, Brackley, and Daventry offer a high quality of life, blending picturesque countryside with modern amenities. These locations strongly appeal to families, professionals, and businesses alike, supporting workforce retention and local investment.

Local Context

West Northamptonshire boasts the provision of strategic scale rail-connected development sites on the M1 corridor, together with a diverse range of employment sites surrounding the rural market towns which serve to attract well regarded businesses to the area.

We have significant plans for housing growth, which will allow us to attract and retain working age residents and support economic growth. There are also clear plans to invest in our town centres, and significant investment is already underway with the recent transformation of market square as well as ambitious plans for the Greyfriars development area.

We are also dedicated to continuous improvement to ensure that West Northants remains an attractive place to live and do business. We want to build on our excellent transport connectivity to further increase public transport links both within rural and urban areas, which will improve access to jobs. Improved digital connectivity in rural areas will also improve levels of business productivity.

We recognise the need to invest in and improve Northampton as the largest town in West Northamptonshire. The town has suffered from under-investment in recent years, and experiences a number of social and environmental issues. Greater levels of investment in Northampton has the potential to improve the performance of West Northants as a whole, and be a catalyst for investment elsewhere including Brackley, Daventry and Towcester town centres.

We will also work more closely with businesses to address our environmental impact. With CO2 emissions per capita above national and sub-regional levels, there is more we can do to help reduce our environmental footprint. Furthermore, with 47% of these emissions concentrated in the transport sector, well above regional and national levels, we need to understand how we can tackle this issue.

In response to the issues above, we have identified the following priorities. We want to:

- Increase and improve quality of housing for all
- Deliver quality employment sites and premises aligned to investment sectors
- Curate thriving mixed-purpose town centres
- Unlock infrastructure for sustained growth



Priorities and Actions

Priority 5: Increase and Improve Access to Quality Housing

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with West Northamptonshire's Emerging Local Plan which sets out aspirations for housing growth and a development plan including housing allocations. It also aligns with the West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy 2022-25, the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and the Council's Developer Contributions SPD.

Rationale: access to the right homes will support local recruitment and reduce the need to travel outside of the area to work. We want to work with partners to deliver more homes. We have plans to deliver over 2,500 homes per annum and we want to ensure that a range of housing is delivered to support our aspirations for economic growth. This must include better quality homes as well as social housing. Issues such as homelessness can have a negative social impact and can reduce the attractiveness of the area. We also need sustainable, energy efficient and intelligent homes which can have a positive impact on supporting our wider sustainability goals.

The delivery of new homes will help to deliver good quality social infrastructure and amenities, such as education, health and green space, all of which are essential in providing a positive sense of place. We want to create attractive places across the whole of West Northamptonshire where people want to live and has the necessary infrastructure for every resident to live their best lives.

Aim: this priority focuses on increasing and improving the quality of homes for all people. It aims to ensure that a wide range of new homes are delivered to support employment growth alongside the right social infrastructure to create a positive sense of belonging where people wish to live and work.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Residential completions against Local Plan target
- Change in house price to earnings ratio

Priorities and Actions

Priority 5: Increase and Improve Access to Quality Housing

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	5.1. Work with developers to bring forward key housing sites. We will work with developers to ensure that housing is in the right location to support employment growth and that the right type of housing is delivered to attract new people to the area. We need good quality homes which are capable of supporting the investment sectors we wish to attract. This action recognises the important role which housing has in supporting economic growth and the need to deliver the right mix of housing. Sites need to be attractive and well connected across West Northants, including sufficient connectivity to employment areas. We need affordable as well as sustainable and energy efficient homes to achieve our goals	WNC/ developers, Housing Associations	Ongoing	Low
 Lead	5.2. Ensure that developer contributions are used to create attractive places where people wish to live. We will work with developers to ensure that developer contributions deliver good quality social infrastructure such as education, healthcare and green space. This will attract people to the local area by creating a sense of place. This will need to ensure that there is policy conformity with the new Local Plan and Developer Contributions SPD as well as the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP).	WNC/ developers, LEA, Integrated Care Board	Ongoing	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 6: Deliver Quality Employment Sites and Premises aligned to Investment Sectors

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with West Northamptonshire's Emerging Local Plan which will set out a clear plan for housing growth. It also aligns with the West Northamptonshire Light Industrial and Workspace Demand Study, the Northamptonshire Innovation Ecosystem Analysis and the Council's Assets Strategy.

Rationale: good quality employment sites and premises are essential in attracting new businesses and supporting existing firms. There is already a good range of employment sites across West Northamptonshire, with the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone targeting specific types of industries such as High Performance Engineering, and Silverstone Park providing an advanced engineering campus. At the same time, the Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT) and the Northampton Gateway both serve an important role for logistics firms. We need to ensure that we continue to support the delivery of the right type of sites and premises to meet the needs of new and existing businesses, particularly for the investment sectors we have identified. We are committed to supporting business growth and improving our survival rates, and ensuring the right type of sites and premises is one element of achieving this goal.

Aim: this priority focuses on delivering the right type of employment sites and premises in the right location to support new and existing businesses. It aims to ensure that employment sites and premises which come forward are of the right type and quality to attract investment sectors identified in Section 3 of this strategy, and that they are delivered in the right location.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:



- Change in employment floorspace completed (ha)
- Change in employment floorspace completed (ha) for investment sectors



Priorities and Actions

Priority 6: Deliver Quality Employment Sites and Premises aligned to Investment Sectors

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 <p>Work with partners</p>	<p>6.1. Identify and deliver quality sites and premises to support the growth of investment sectors. We will ensure that the emerging Local Plan includes a range of sites to offer choice to existing and new businesses. A range of larger out of town sites will be required to support the investment sectors we have identified, together with good quality town centres sites (for example supporting the creative and digital sector). Good connectivity and access to the right infrastructure will also be important.</p> <p>The Council will also consider whether intervention is required to bring forward certain types of premises. These will need to support the growth of our investment sectors as well as the foundational and experience economy. This can be considered when preparing Sector Action Plans (Action 9.3). The council will consider the potential to explore whether it could use its property portfolio where there is a market failure argument to intervene. We will also consider the potential to identify funding to deliver necessary sites.</p>	WNC/ developers, businesses,	Short-medium	Low-medium
 <p>Lead</p>	<p>6.2. Consider the potential for specific workspace to support SME's, including affordable space. SMEs often have specific needs for space and these can vary for different sectors. We will ensure that we continue to monitor requirements for different types of space for SMEs and work with partners to help bring forward additional space where appropriate.</p> <p>The council will also help to take forward the actions set out in the West Northamptonshire Light Industrial and Workshop Demand Study which identified a requirement for additional units between 500 and 5,000 sq ft. The provision of affordable workspace (such as Vulcan Works) is also important for SMEs and the council will support the provision of new affordable space.</p>	WNC/developers, private sector, South Midlands Growth Hub, Chamber of Commerce, FSB, FE and HE Providers including UoN, BIPC	Ongoing	Low to medium

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 7: Create Thriving Mixed-Purpose Town Centres

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with West Northamptonshire's Emerging Local Plan as well as the Northampton Masterplan and the emerging Daventry Masterplan. It also aligns with the Council's anti-poverty strategy.

Rationale: West Northamptonshire is home to attractive towns with potential for growth, but they are at risk of losing out to neighbouring centres as locations for work and leisure given recent investment in nearby places such as Milton Keynes or Rushden Lakes. Competition from other areas has the potential to hold back West Northamptonshire's ability to attract new businesses and residents. Our urban centres are vital to the core economy that people use every day. They are also critical to maintaining a positive sense of pride and identity for the area and as such need to be a focus for investment and growth.

Aim: this priority focuses on curating thriving mixed-purpose town centres. It aims to ensure that West Northamptonshire's urban centres have a strong business base creating jobs for local people and delivering services that help encourage residents to move to and stay in the area.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through the following KPIs:




- Increase in footfall at Daventry, Towcester and Brackley
- Increase in vacancy levels at Daventry, Towcester and Brackley
- Increase in crimes per head of the population



Priorities and Actions

Priority 7: Create Thriving Mixed-Purpose Town Centres

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	7.1. Prioritise investment in regeneration sites identified in West Northamptonshire. We will work with partners to bring forward key Regeneration projects. We are currently underway with many of the projects identified in the 'We are Northampton' brochure within Northampton town centre. However, we also want to support investment in Brackley, Towcester and Daventry town centres.	WNC/ investors, developers, businesses, including Town Centre Partnerships or BIDs including Northampton Town Centre Task Group	Ongoing	Medium-High
 Lead	7.2. Support projects which help to ensure that West Northamptonshire's town centres are thriving and relevant. We will work with partners to ensure the success of West Northamptonshire's town centers by supporting a wide range of uses. In particular, we will ensure that masterplans and development frameworks promote a range of uses, that these are kept up to date and that there is effective monitoring of progress against our aims and objectives. We will also identify opportunities for funding which will allow us to invest in resources and activities which can help diversify and enhance our town centres.	WNC / Town Centre Partnerships or BIDs including the Northampton Town Centre Task Group	Ongoing	Low-Medium
 Work with partners	7.3. Address issues around crime, particularly within town centres. We will work with partners to help address issues around crime, including within town centres. Levels of crime are highest in Northampton town centre and as such this will be a particular priority. This action will help to improve the attractiveness of the area to businesses and enhance the quality of life for local people.	WNC / Northamptonshire Police, West Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership	Ongoing	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 8: Increase Connectivity to unlock Infrastructure for Sustained Growth

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the Local Transport Plan for West Northamptonshire and the emerging Local Plan. It also aligns with the West Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy.

Rationale: public transport connecting our key employment sites is sometimes poor which often means local people struggle to access jobs at these locations. Delivery of the right utilities (electricity, gas, water) is often a barrier to the development of housing and employment sites. We need to continue to invest in good quality transport infrastructure (particularly public transport) as well as the right utilities and broadband to support economic growth. We want West Northamptonshire to become the beating heart of the county's technology revolution which requires significant investment in transport.

Aim: this priority focuses on unlocking infrastructure for sustained growth. It aims to ensure that we invest in good quality transport and the right utilities and broadband to support development at key employment and housing sites to secure economic growth.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:




- Change in employment floorspace delivered (ha)
- Number of residential completions against Local Plan target
- Change in coverage of gigabit broadband connectivity



Priorities and Actions

Priority 8: Increase Connectivity to unlock Infrastructure for Sustained Growth

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	<p>8.1. Support key priorities in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) which support inclusive economic growth. Objective 5 of the Local Transport Plan for West Northamptonshire sets out an aspiration to reduce inequalities through better transport connections to key employment and education opportunities, to support local socio-economic growth. A further objective is focused on maximising the benefits to communities and businesses through the use of technology and innovation. The plan sets out a series of projects to meet these objectives which align with the aspirations in this strategy to support economic growth and will therefore be supported. This action aligns with 2.3 which confirms WNC will work collaboratively with education providers to encourage sustainable travel. . This may also include investment in community transport where this supports inclusive economic growth.</p>	WNC/ local transport providers	Ongoing	Low-High
 Lead	<p>8.2. Lobby government to provide better and more frequent rail services in West Northamptonshire. Despite the size of West Northamptonshire, there are few rail stations with only Northampton, Long Buckby and Kings Sutton. Furthermore, rail services to London from existing stations have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. We want to improve our rail services to improve the attractiveness of the area to new and existing people and to support our economic growth. Over the next five years the council will lobby government to improve rail services across West Northamptonshire, starting by increasing the frequency of services and reducing, or at least sustaining commuter journey times to London, Birmingham and Coventry. We will also explore the potential to deliver new rail stations to support economic growth.</p>	WNC/ Network Rail, Department for Transport	Short-Medium	Low- High
 Work with partners	<p>8.3. Encourage businesses to develop Travel Plans. We will work with employers to encourage the preparation of Travel Plans which discourage single occupancy car use and maximise the potential for sustainable transport opportunities. We will encourage all new major developments to agree Travel Plans with the Council as part of the planning process. We will also encourage existing employers to prepare these particularly where they are located in more rural areas. Travel Plans should set out opportunities to increase EV charging infrastructure, park and ride, pooling of vehicles and encourage walking, wheeling and cycling.</p>	WNC/ businesses and business associations	Ongoing	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)






Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 8: Increase Connectivity to unlock Infrastructure for Sustained Growth

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	8.4. Ensure that new and existing employment sites are well connected particularly by public transport. We will work with developers seeking planning permission for employment schemes to ensure that they consider and offer good connectivity to urban areas by public transport. We will also work with businesses at existing employment sites where there is poor public transport connections to explore the potential to improve this, in partnership with bus operators. This could include exploring partnerships between businesses to fund or co-create transport solutions, such as shuttle services. Other options could include extending micro-mobility options such as scooters or shared bikes to industrial areas or expanding public transport services to match shift patterns at key employment hubs.	WNC/ businesses, developers	Ongoing	Low-high
 Work with partners	8.5. Improve planning for utilities. We will continue to work with the National Grid and UK Power Networks amongst other partners as necessary to improve planning for utilities. This will ensure that planning for utilities (including gas, electricity and water) does not constrain new development or become a barrier to economic growth.	WNC/ National Grid, UK Power Networks	Ongoing	Low-high
 Lead	8.6. Continue to improve access to broadband in rural areas. We will identify opportunities to improve access to superfast broadband and fibre to the premises, particularly in rural areas. We will seek funding to invest in new projects where possible.	WNC/ BDUK, DCMS	Ongoing	Low-high

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)



Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

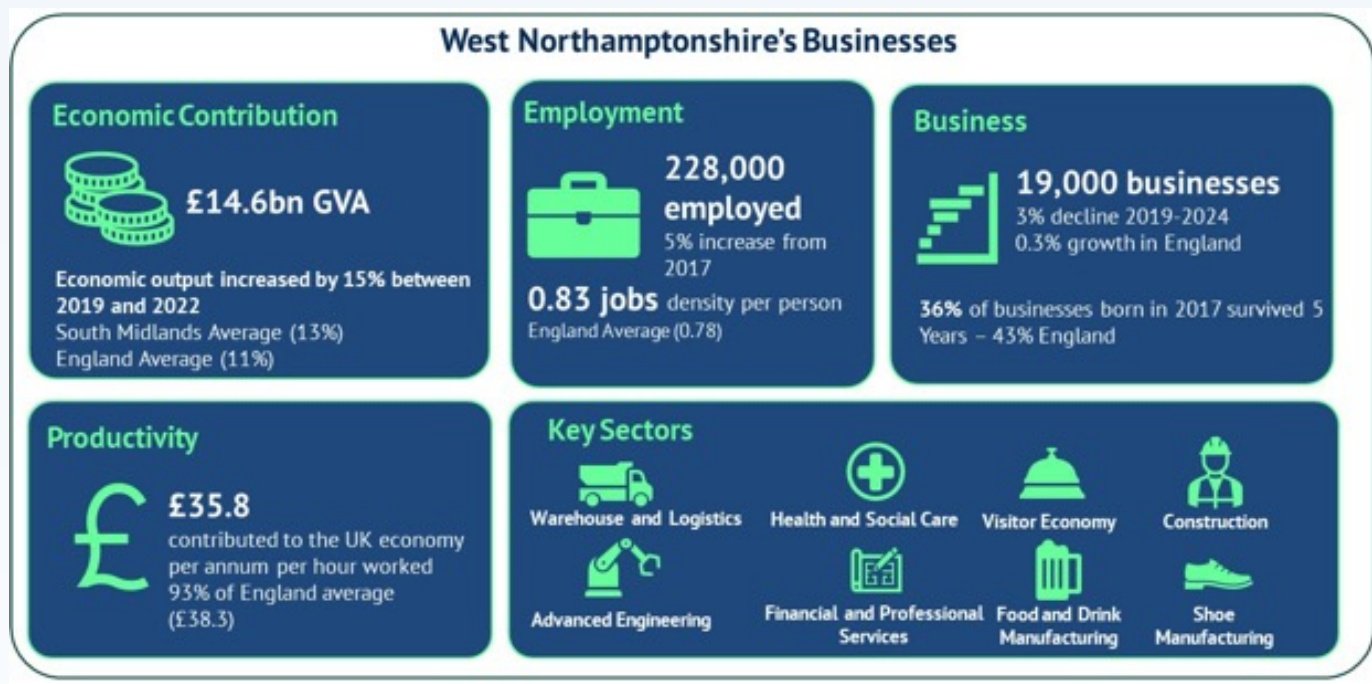
Existing Activity

We will build on our strong and dynamic business base to secure higher levels of economic growth across West Northamptonshire. A number of existing and planned activities to support businesses are already underway in West Northamptonshire. West Northamptonshire Council often works with partners including the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and the federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to deliver business support programmes such as these. Examples are provided below and whilst funding for some of these may cease, successful programmes may continue in other forms:

- The Business and IP Centre (BIPC) Northamptonshire supports entrepreneurs, inventors and small businesses throughout their business journey. BIPC runs workshops, webinars and information and advice sessions on self-employment and intellectual property. 1-2-1 business advice sessions are available and businesses have the opportunity to talk to experts in residence about branding and design, business management, and growth.
- The BIPC is currently delivering a UKSPF funded programme called Build Your Business which is aimed at small businesses, entrepreneurs or anyone thinking of starting their own business. It includes a series of 1:1s, webinars, workshops and access to specialist business databases as well as mentoring and networking. It is currently due to close at the end of March 2025.
- West Northamptonshire Council is also the host for the South Midlands Growth Hub. The hub provides free business advice and guidance to businesses and charities. Operating across the whole of the South Midlands, the hub provides business intelligence, with a full breadth of advice from business advisors; support to access funding or grant opportunities; resource provision including workshops, seminars and online tools as well as networking opportunities.
- Towards A Net Zero West Northamptonshire (TANZ) is a UKSPF funded project being delivered in partnership with the University of Northampton to help SMEs to understand and embrace the concept of "Net Zero". It aims to guide businesses towards concrete actions that will help to achieve the Council's target of achieving net zero by 2045. The programme is due to cease in March 2025.
- Net Zero West Northamptonshire is a grant programme which will provide financial support to local businesses to transition to net zero. Interested businesses arrange a meeting with a Net Zero Adviser to receive advice and develop a plan to reduce their carbon footprint. Firms can then apply for grants to fund projects like LED lighting and solar panels amongst other projects. The programme is due to cease in March 2025.
- Northampton Sustainability Accord / Sustainability Local Innovation Partnership is a member and stakeholder organisation who participated in the 2023 and 2024 University of Northampton Sustainability Summit. The partnership seeks to collaborate with the university, commit to shared sustainability goals and practices while disseminating research, enterprise and knowledge exchange between partners.
- A New Business Growth Service has been announced by the Government. The service will make it easier and quicker for SMEs to find government advice and support all under one roof. It is being developed and will work in partnership with small businesses as well as local and devolved governments across the UK. The service will be an integral part of the Government's Small Business Strategy that will be published shortly.

Local Context

The Case for Intervention



West Northamptonshire had a £14.6billion economy in 2022 and makes a major contribution to the regional and national economy. The latest data on economic output and employment suggests that both of these indicators have been increasing, making it clear that West Northamptonshire is an attractive place to do business.

The area is home to a large business base of 19,000 businesses, and there is a high jobs density of 0.83 jobs per person, above the national average. This confirms that the area is an important provider of jobs for people both living in West Northamptonshire and those from further afield who travel to the area to work.

Local Context

- West Northamptonshire is a place where businesses thrive and the location of choice for many well-known employers including Barclaycard, Carlsberg, Silverstone, Cosworth, Prologis, Avara Foods along with many more.
- Despite these strengths, the whole economy has undergone a period of intense change. Recent years have been characterised by unique events such as Covid-19, and challenging economic conditions. This is impacting on businesses who are facing rising energy and materials costs, increasing National Insurance contributions as well as having to adapt to regulatory and climate changes.
- Within West Northamptonshire itself, levels of productivity could be improved. Whilst productivity levels have been increasing in recent years, they still remain 8% below the national average. There is also a significant level of employment in sectors typically associated with lower value employment opportunities such as wholesale and retail, human health and social work, as well as transport and storage.
- The business base in West Northamptonshire has also shown some trends to monitor. Over the last five years (2019-2024) there has been a decline in the business base of 3%, which has been at odds with the national trend. The decline is even greater if we look at the period between 2019-2023. It is also clear that the decline is occurring in high value sectors such as Professional, Scientific & Technical and Information & Communication sectors, which are the type of sectors West Northamptonshire Council is seeking to attract.
- West Northamptonshire's business base is largely reflective of England's with 99.5% of the business base made up of SMEs and micro businesses compared to 99.6% nationally. However, the number of business births has been declining over the last 10 years. Whilst the number of net business births remained positive before 2021 (indicating a higher number of business starts than closures), the significant increase in business deaths during 2021 and 2022 has resulted in a negative outcome in the last three years. The net birth result in 2022 was also seen at the national level. These trends underscore the ongoing impact of the pandemic on business resilience and the need for targeted support to foster growth and stability in the region. West Northants, with Northampton in particular, has boasted an extremely high level of entrepreneurialism and West Northants Council want to nurture this and ensure local residents are supported to start and sustain new businesses.
- Business survival rates in West Northamptonshire also appear to be worsening. For instance, 39% of businesses formed in 2015 survived into their fifth year, whereas only 36% of those started in 2017 achieved the same milestone. This contrasts with national and regional rates which have improved over the same time period.
- We want to create more high growth businesses in West Northamptonshire and increase levels of productivity and innovation. We want to attract more businesses in high value sectors whilst ensuring that businesses make a positive contribution to wider social and environmental objectives.

In response to the issues above, we have identified the following priorities. We want to:

- grow investment sectors to encourage higher value employment
- increase levels of innovation and productivity
- reduce carbon emissions amongst businesses
- increase the number of ambitious growth businesses

Priorities and Actions

Priority 9: Grow investment sectors to encourage higher value employment

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the Government's Industrial Strategy.

Rationale: as noted above, levels of productivity in West Northamptonshire remain below the national average. Furthermore, only 48% of the area's residents are employed in high-skilled occupations, notably below the national average of 54%. This is likely to reflect the sectoral composition of the area, with employment focused on lower value sectors, and lower levels of employment in high value sectors such as professional, scientific and technical or finance and insurance. We need to ensure that we are attracting those sectors at the forefront of the national and global economy. We need to attract more technology businesses to support economic growth and create opportunities for local people.

Aim: this focuses on growing the investment sectors identified in Section 3 of this Strategy. It aims to build on the area's existing sector strengths and align with the government's priority sectors to encourage higher value employment. This will deliver good quality employment opportunities for local people, increase levels of productivity and boost the local economy.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Increase in jobs in our investment sectors
- Levels of specialisation in our investment sectors
- Increase in the number of businesses in our investment sectors
- Increase in GVA per hour worked





Case Study: Horiba UK Ltd

HORIBA UK Limited is part of the global HORIBA Group, a leading precision instruments systems company, delivering cutting-edge measurement and analysis solutions for applications primarily in the Energy & Environment, Bio & Healthcare, and Materials & Semiconductor sectors. HORIBA UK consolidated its operations in Moulton Park where it now employs 200 people. The company's founder, Dr Maso Horiba chose West Northants because of its central location. Most of the UK's automotive industry are within an hour's drive and so too are many of the high-tech industries for bio and health and materials technology. There is a large pool of bright talent to select from and excellent road links.

Priorities and Actions

Priority 8: Increase Connectivity to unlock Infrastructure for Sustained Growth

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	9.1. Develop a Skills diagnostic for businesses. We will work with partners to develop a skills diagnostic approach (e.g. survey, consultations) to understand the specific skills needs facing businesses. We will work with local FE and HE providers to respond to these needs. This action aligns with Action 1.4 within the people theme which focuses on identifying the skills needs required by important sectors.	South Midlands Authorities Group / LSIP partners including Northampton-shire Chamber of Commerce, UoN, Northampton College, Moulton College	Short-Medium	Low-Medium
 Lead	9.2 Develop a West Northamptonshire Investment proposition. We recognise the importance of securing inward investment in supporting economic growth. We will curate an investment proposition to secure more good quality investment, focusing on the investment sectors to encourage a broad range of employment including higher value opportunities. The investment proposition will set out a USP for the area, building on this strategy. We will develop an inward investment brand, website and marketing materials to take to market. We will also have a dedicated resource to support inward investment and engage with employers and investors. In doing so, we will attract the investment we need to sustain West Northamptonshire's success into the future. By effectively showcasing the strengths of the area, it will enhance the profile of West Northants as a destination of choice to work, live, visit and invest.	WNC/ DBT, partners in the Oxford to Cambridge area, partners in South Midlands area	Short	Low-Medium
 Lead	9.3. Develop Sector Action Plans for investment sectors. This strategy has identified a number of sector priorities, which are important in securing economic growth. We are committed to securing the growth of these investment sectors and will seek funding to prepare Sector Action Plans to help these sectors grow. These plans will be wide ranging and set out barriers to growth and opportunities to grow the sector including through developing supply chains. The plans will set out clear and measurable actions to take forward. Further information on the sector action plans is provided below.	WNC / relevant businesses with each sector, FE and HE Partners, DBT	Short-medium	Medium
 Lead	9.4. Expand relationships with businesses. We will foster stronger relationships with businesses (including SMEs and larger firms) to help support economic growth. We will adopt a strategic account management approach to proactively manage and support relationship building with the local business community, particularly targeting large employers with the highest turnover and workforce to drive activities that benefit the community & economy across West Northants.	WNC/ BIPC, South Midlands Growth Hub, Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, FSB.	Short	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Sector Action Plans

It is recognised that not all plans will be complete within the next five years but the following are identified in order of priority:

Motorsports – a plan to grow the motorsports sector across West Northamptonshire will be a priority. We will work in partnership with major companies across the area to develop a plan for growth, exploring opportunities to introduce new technologies.

Advanced Logistics – we will work with key logistics companies locally to understand what they are doing to grow the advanced logistics sector and explore opportunities to expand upon this.

Clean Energy – we will work with key businesses locally who are investing in or have the potential to invest in clean energy to understand the potential to grow this sector and to identify what needs to be done to secure this growth.

Creative and digital – we will carry out an audit of existing businesses and assets within the creative and digital sector to understand the potential to build on these strengths and secure its future growth.

Life sciences – we will work with partners within the Oxford to Cambridge area to explore opportunities to build on existing assets and capitalise on Northampton's location within the centre of the partnership area. We will carry out further research to understand what existing businesses within the sector are located here and how to develop this further.

We will also explore the potential to develop Section Action Plans for the foundational and experience economies.



Priorities and Actions

Priority 10: Invest in innovation & productivity support

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the Government's Industrial Strategy and West Northamptonshire Council's Digital Technology & Innovation Strategy 2022-25. It will also build on the University of Northampton's Innovation Ecosystem Study.

Rationale: innovation is focused on developing and commercialising new products, processes and services. It is essential to achieving high levels of economic growth through increasing productivity levels. As identified above, whilst productivity levels in West Northamptonshire have been increasing, they remain well below the national average. West Northamptonshire performs reasonably well in terms of the proportion of businesses who are innovative as a percentage of the total business base. However, there is more that we can do to boost levels of productivity and economic growth in West Northamptonshire. Whilst existing programmes are being delivered locally to fuel the area's appetite for innovation, more can still be done. This is essential to achieve our overall vision to secure economic growth.

Aim: this priority focuses on raising levels of innovation and productivity. It aims to raise local business aspirations and ensure that they have access to the support they need to develop and commercialise new products, processes and services through the delivery of a first-class innovation ecosystem locally. This priority is also about enhancing the ecosystem whereby the workforce can work more effectively and efficiently, increasing productivity and performance.



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Increase in GVA per hour worked
- Increase in the percentage of "innovation active businesses" as a proportion of the business population

Priorities and Actions

Priority 10: Invest in innovation & productivity support

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	10.1. Develop specific innovation and knowledge exchange programmes to support high-growth businesses. The Council will work with innovation bodies such as Innovate UK and local business support organisations to help support innovation and knowledge exchange. We will explore, promote and seek opportunities for funding which can support innovation and knowledge exchange. We will examine ways to enhance levels of innovation locally, helping companies to grow through the development and commercialisation of new products, processes and services. This action may include developing productivity forums or collaboration with major employers which will allow them to share their best practice with smaller firms. We will encourage partnerships between businesses, educational institutions, and innovation hubs to stimulate productivity and knowledge sharing.	WNC/ UoN, BIPI, South Midlands Growth Hub, HE providers, local employers, Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, FSB	Short	Low to Medium
 Work with partners	10.2. Work with the University of Northampton to help implement the Innovation Ecosystem study recommendations. The University of Northampton commissioned an Innovation Study which explored Northamptonshire’s innovation capabilities and its potential for growth. This set out a number of actions, including creating an innovation leadership body and enhanced university-sector partnerships amongst others. We will work with the University of Northampton to help review and where helpful support the delivery of these actions to encourage greater levels of innovation across West Northamptonshire and more widely.	University of Northampton/ WNC and partners	Ongoing	Low

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)



Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Case Study: TotalSim

TotalSim is a group of companies based around aerodynamics and fluid mechanics. They started in Brackley in 2007 with 7 people and the company now employs 65 people worldwide with offices in Silverstone, Daventry, Japan and USA. TotalSim is currently a partner in the development of the Catesby Tunnel, a 1.7 mile enclosed track for testing vehicles. This project includes a 4 acre science park where they are working towards building a community of technical companies associated with vehicle development and testing. At Silverstone, they are building a unique swim test lab facility including a £4m flume.

West Northants is considered a great location because of its close proximity to a large base of motorsport and automotive industries. That means TotalSim has good access to a broad range of relevant customers, suppliers and a highly skilled talent pool. It’s location within motorsports valley also supports strong collaboration on projects.

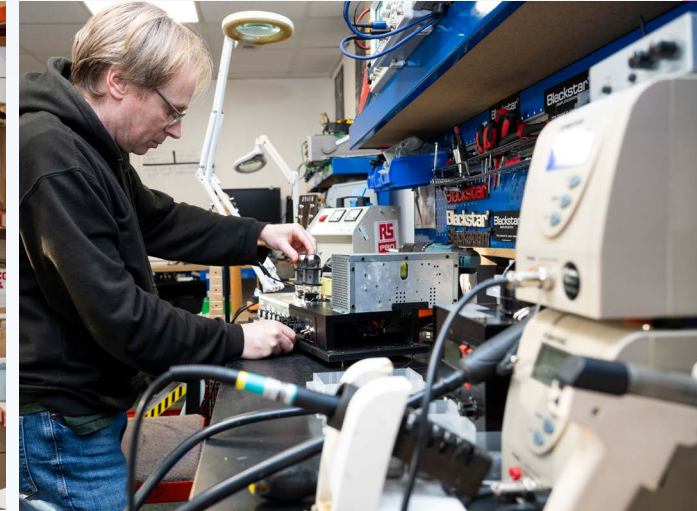
Priorities and Actions

Priority 11: Reduce carbon emissions amongst businesses

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the West Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy. It also aligns with the Environmental Policy 2024 and the Environmental Framework 2021.

Rationale: CO2 emissions per capita are above national and sub-regional averages and a disproportionate share of the region's emissions comes from the transport sector. It is widely acknowledged that we urgently need to act and reduce carbon emissions to limit further global warming, reducing its impact locally and across the world. The UK government's current aspiration is to reach a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and West Northamptonshire Council has set out a target to reach net zero (for residents and businesses) by 2045. Whilst a number of programmes are already being delivered locally to raise awareness amongst businesses of the need to work towards these environmental goals, it is recognised that a lot more could and should be done to support businesses in reducing their carbon emissions.



Aim: this priority focuses on raising awareness of the concept of net zero and supporting businesses in their journey towards achieving net zero. It aims to reduce carbon emissions amongst West Northamptonshire businesses to help meet the Council's aspirations to reach net zero by 2045.



Priorities and Actions

Priority 11: Reduce carbon emissions amongst businesses

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Work with partners	11.1. Support businesses to reduce their carbon emissions. We will build on existing programmes to work with businesses to raise awareness of the need to reduce carbon emissions and to support them in implementing actions which can support this goal. We will work with partners to help businesses develop carbon reduction plans, encouraging them to invest in renewable energy, improve energy efficiency or funding carbon offsetting. We want to offer clear guidance and incentives to help businesses transition to greener practices, minimises any financial burdens.	WNC / HE providers including UoN, BIPC, South Midlands Growth Hub, Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, FSB	Short	Low to Medium
 Work with partners	11.2. Work with businesses to develop new technologies which can help to reduce carbon emissions. We will work with partners to support businesses to develop new technologies which can help to reduce carbon emissions. This could include clean energy generation, networks and storage which benefit local businesses and communities.	WNC/ business support intermediaries (as above)	Medium	Medium

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Priorities and Actions

Priority 12: Increase the number of ambitious growth businesses

Alignment to other strategies: this priority aligns with the Government's Industrial Strategy. It will also need to align with the Government's Small Business Strategy which will be launched shortly.

Rationale: the number of business births in West Northamptonshire has been declining over time and there has been an increase in business deaths over the last few years, resulting in negative net business births over the last two years. Business survival rates in West Northamptonshire also appear to be worsening and some have suggested that there is a need to encourage greater levels of ambition locally. It is also important to recognise the wider challenges facing local businesses, not least the increasing rates of National Insurance adding to their financial burden. All of these trends underscore the importance of providing the right type of targeted business support to foster growth and stability in West Northamptonshire.

The Council and other partners already lead a number of successful business support schemes. Nevertheless, we are committed to ensuring that there is a strong and dynamic business support ecosystem locally and that we can encourage more high growth businesses locally.

Aim: this priority focuses on business support provision locally, focusing particularly on micro firms and SMEs. It aims to encourage local business retention and increase the number of ambitious growth businesses in West Northamptonshire. This will help to create a thriving and prosperous local economy for all.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): we will monitor our progress towards achieving this priority through KPIs which will include the following:

- Increase in GVA per hour worked
- Increase net business formation rate
- Increase in 5 year business survival rates

Priorities and Actions

Priority 12: Increase the number of ambitious growth businesses

Over the next five years, West Northamptonshire Council will:

WNC Role	Action Plan	Lead/Potential Partners	Timescales	Resources
 Lead	<p>12.1. Work with the South Midlands Growth Hub to identify barriers to business growth and develop a plan to respond. The Council will draw on West Northamptonshire’s bi-annual business survey as well as conversations with businesses to understand business needs. It will also map existing business support to understand what is currently available and determine the extent to which this is responding to local needs.</p> <p>A Business Growth Strategy will be developed which sets out a clear plan to support business growth amongst SMEs. This will cover a wide range of issues such as access to finance, sites and business support. This will specifically consider the potential to provide enhanced targeted support for high-growth businesses.</p>	WNC/ West Midlands Growth Hub, BIPC, FE/HE providers including UoN, Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, FSB	Short-Medium	Low-Medium
 Lead	<p>12.2. Carry out further research to understand the declining business formation rate. We will work with the Business Intelligence & Population Insights (BIPI) team at West Northamptonshire to understand the reason why rates of business formation are declining and whether there are any barriers to business start-ups. In response to this, we will form a plan to help mitigate this issue and ensure that West Northamptonshire is the place to start and grow a business.</p>	WNC/ BIPI	Short- medium	Low-Medium
 Work with partners	<p>12.3. Continue to invest in a strong entrepreneurial system to support existing SMEs and start-ups through mechanisms such as the BIPC and the Growth Hub. There is already some good business support provision within West Northamptonshire. However, there is a need to continue to invest in a strong entrepreneurial system to support business start-ups and SMEs. The Council will explore opportunities to secure additional funding to invest in business support and examine ways to improve existing provision. We will encourage delivery partners to work more closely to deliver business support.</p>	WNC/ South Midlands Growth Hub, BIPC	Short to medium	Low-Medium
 Work with partners	<p>12.3. Provide opportunities for the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Explore the potential to strengthen the local voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector to provide inclusive supported work opportunities. This could include the development of a specialist business support programme. One suggestion is that the business sector could help the VCFSE sector with a training plan using skills around business development, growth and marketing.</p>	WNC/ VCFSE organisations	Medium	Medium

Key

Timescales: Short (next 2 years), Medium (3-5 years), Long (6-10 years)

Cost implication: High (£500k +), Medium (£50-500k), Low (Below £50k)



Lead: Lead (where statutory responsibility and funding allows)

Work with partners: Work with partners to deliver (influence)

Our role

We have set out a clear approach to deliver and monitor progress towards the vision, including the Council's role and the Governance and Delivery Arrangements.

West Northamptonshire Council will be the lead organisation responsible for the implementation of this strategy. We recognise that delivery of the strategy can only be achieved by working in partnership with a wide range of organisations. As the lead partner, we will:

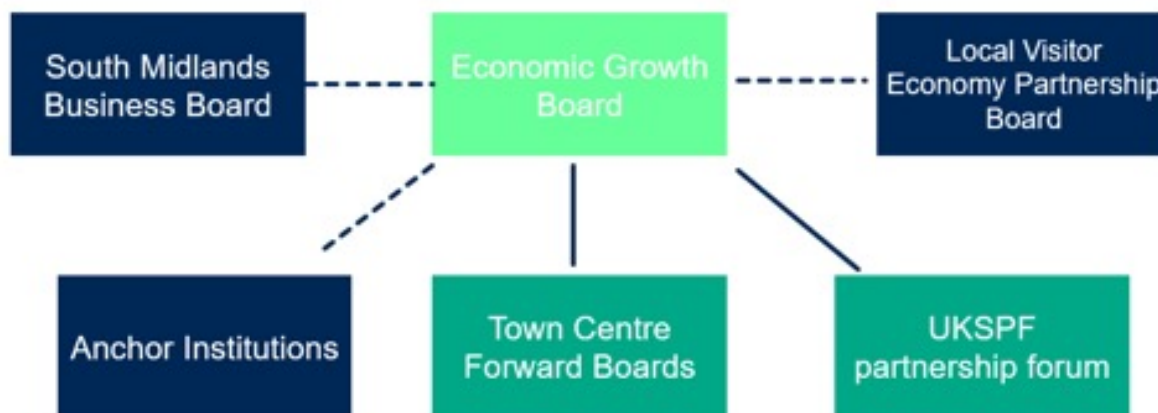
- Provide strategic direction to help secure economic growth and prosperity
- Influence decision makers (including the Government, partners within the Oxford to Cambridge area, the South Midland Authorities amongst others) to work towards our goals
- Work in partnership and convene organisations (national, local regional and sub-regional) who can facilitate delivery of our strategic priorities
- Harness and build on the good work already being delivered locally to build on strengths and address areas of need where necessary
- Deliver projects and programmes to promote economic growth and seek additional funding where necessary to support these
- Promote the borough and its economic benefits to government, other parts of the UK, the private sector and potential investors into the region
- Learn from other parts of the country, including our neighbours in the South Midlands

Governance and Delivery Arrangements

The overall management of the Strategy will be the responsibility of the Economic Growth and Investment (EGII) Service within the Communities and Opportunities Directorate of West Northamptonshire Council.

In order to ensure collaboration and effective delivery, the EGII Service will establish an Economic Growth Board with representatives from stakeholder organisations and businesses across the area. The Board will oversee delivery of all actions and input into strategic design-making.

The Council will ensure that the Board aligns with existing forums (as summarised below) to encourage a holistic approach to economic development spanning the local area and the wider region.



Monitoring Progress

We will monitor our progress towards achieving our vision and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions identified within this strategy. The Council will develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each priority as part of a delivery plan. We are also committed to preparing an annual implementation plan to review progress.