

DATE: 13 September 2023
MY REF: Cabinet Executive – Supplemental
Agenda
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To Members of the Cabinet Executive

Councillor Terry Richardson (Leader)	– Leader of the Council
Councillor Maggie Wright (Deputy Leader)	– Finance, People & Performance Portfolio Holder
Councillor Nigel Grundy	– Neighbourhood Services & Assets Portfolio Holder
Councillor Les Phillimore	– Housing, Community & Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
Councillor Ben Taylor	– Planning Delivery and Enforcement & Corporate Transformation Portfolio Holder

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **CABINET EXECUTIVE** will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Narborough on **MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2023** at **5.30 p.m.**. Please find attached a supplemental item that is required for the meeting and is in addition to the agenda and report pack that has already been circulated.

Yours faithfully



Louisa Horton
Corporate Services Group Manager and Monitoring Officer



SUPPLEMENTAL ITEM

10. Economic Development Strategy for Blaby District (Pages 3 - 30)

To consider the report of the Business, Partnerships and Health Improvement Group Manager (enclosed).

Blaby District Council

Cabinet Executive

Date of Meeting	18 September 2023
Title of Report	Economic Development Framework 2023-2026 This is a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan.
Lead Member	Cllr. Terry Richardson - Leader of the Council
Report Author	Business, Partnerships and Health Improvement Group Manager
Corporate Priority	All Priorities: A Place to Live; A Place to Work; A Place to Visit; People Strategy; Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 To agree the Economic Development Framework for Blaby District 2023 to 2026 which supports the district to have a strong and prosperous local economy that ensures the well-being and security of our residents, businesses and communities and attracts new investments.

2. Recommendation(s) to Cabinet Executive

- 2.1 To agree the Economic Development Framework 2023-2026 for Blaby District.
- 2.2 Give delegated authority to the Business, Partnerships & Health Improvement Group Manager in consultation with the Leader to monitor progress against the priorities in the framework and make any changes needed to ensure delivery of it.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 Delivery of the framework can commence and action plans supporting the five key priorities can be developed.
- 3.2 To monitor progress against the framework and make decisions that are required to keep the document on track.

4. Matters to consider

- 4.1 Background
The previous Economic Development Strategy ran from 2016 to 2019. Work commenced on updating the strategy, but this was paused during the covid pandemic. There has been significant change in the economy post pandemic and it is now timely to update the document and ensure it is relevant to the current economic position for the district. The Community, Business, Work & Skills Team along with the external consultant have gathered extensive evidence and data to inform the content of the

framework. At the same time, key Blaby District Council documents have been considered including the Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Commercial Strategy, and the Tourism Growth Plan.

4.2 Proposal(s)

The new Economic Development Framework has been developed after extensive consultation with our businesses, key stakeholders, members, and Senior Leadership Team. It presents a vision, three overarching objectives and five priority areas. The vision for the framework is:-

“For Blaby District to be a great place to live, work and visit, with a strong, successful economy where everyone can build great businesses, careers and lives, supported in a green and environmentally friendly way, with superb connectivity.”

Our overarching objectives are;

- ✓ We will focus on attracting higher and better paid jobs, making sure our residents are equipped to access employment in a diverse and green economy
- ✓ We will support innovative and enterprising ideas, and make sure businesses of all sizes receive the support they need to thrive and grow
- ✓ We will maximise investment and opportunities by encouraging partnership working and appropriate developments that support sustainable growth

Underpinning these three objectives are five priority areas;

- Supporting local businesses and innovation
- Shaping our work and skills agenda
- Growing our green economy
- Building pride in place
- Identifying investable propositions

For each of the priority areas an action plan will be developed detailing the actions required to support delivery of the priority. For each priority there will be an identified lead officer within the council who will be responsible for monitoring the progress of the action plan.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

During the development of this framework extensive consultation has been undertaken with businesses and key stakeholders including the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. Sessions have also been held with SLT and cabinet to input into the framework.

As previously mentioned, to underpin the priorities listed in the document individual priority action plans will be developed. On the 20th September officers will be attending scrutiny to engage and develop the content of the action plans.

4.4 Significant Issues

There are no significant issues. Additional resource will be required to deliver elements of the framework, it has already been agreed by Cabinet Executive that this will in part be met from the year 2 and potentially year 3 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

5. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

5.1 The costs to develop and deliver the framework are detailed below.

Activity	Cost
Development of the Framework	£35,000
Development of the Priority Action Plans	Nil
Delivery of the Action Plans	Subject to the content of the Action Plans

The criteria within the UKSPF fund matches the priority areas within the framework therefore this can be used as a source of funding to deliver the action plans.

6. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

6.1 The key risks and the mitigating actions to reduce the risks are detailed below.

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
That the Economic Development Framework is not agreed by cabinet.	Workshop sessions have been undertaken with both SLT and Informal Cabinet to gather their input into the framework
That we do not have the budget required to deliver the Framework.	Funding has been agreed from the UKSPF to support the five key priorities within the framework and provide additional temporary resource for the Community, Business, Work & Skills Team.
The Economic Development Framework is a standalone document and does not link to other key strategy documents.	Key strategy documents have been used to inform the development of the framework and our referenced at the back of the document.
That staff within the team do not have the skills to deliver the ED Framework Action Plans	All staff have undertaken Economic Development Training and further training is planned in this area.

7. Other options considered

- 7.1 It could be decided not to have an Economic Development Framework for the district, but this would mean the Council would not be supporting Blaby District to have a strong and prosperous local economy.

This could potentially have an impact on other documents which links to and supports the achievement of business growth including the Council's Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Tourism Growth Plan and Commercial Strategy 2022-2027.

8. Environmental impact

- 8.1 One of the priorities in the Economic Development Framework is growing our green economy this will support the Council's ambition to be net zero by 2030, and the district net zero by 2050. This priority seeks to grow our economy by ensuring any growth should be carbon neutral and sustainable wherever possible.

9. Other significant issues

- 9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.

10. Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A – ED Framework – To follow

11. Background paper(s)

- 11.1 None

12. Report author's contact details

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Economic Development Framework

September 2023



Foreword



Cllr Terry Richardson –
Leader of Blaby District Council

I am pleased to introduce the **Economic Development Framework**. This is a vital document that coordinates our efforts to bolster the economy of **Blaby District** in the coming years. A strong and prosperous local economy not only ensures the wellbeing of our residents, businesses, and communities, but also attracts new investments.

This strategic framework presents our vision, **four overarching objectives**, and **five priority areas** to focus our attention on. It paves the way for us to **maximize the benefits of economic growth and development**, fostering a vibrant environment where both businesses and residents can flourish.

The success of this framework hinges on **partnership and collaboration**. We understand the significance of aligning with our key partners and stakeholders to fully leverage the **economic advantages** for our residents and businesses. Hence, it is important that we build upon existing initiatives, focus on our core ambitions, and work closely with our public and private sector partners to **effectively implement this framework**.

Introduction

The Economic Development Framework sets out the aspirations of the Council and provides a framework that brings together all economic development activities that are occurring within the district and considers how they complement each other to maximise the benefits for our residents, businesses and visitors.

The framework aligns closely with other key strategies including the Blaby District Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Business engagement survey, the tourism growth plan and the commercial strategy (as shown below).

Blaby District Plan

Live, Work, Visit



Blaby District Plan

This framework has been prepared to sit beneath the Blaby District Plan, and incorporates the priorities to create a district with thriving vibrant communities, where people are happy to live, work and visit:

- **Live** – Strong, healthy, safe, sustainable communities where the most vulnerable are supported
- **Work** – A thriving, prosperous, innovative local economy with a skilled and healthy workforce contributing to the local community
- **Visit** – A strong leisure and visitor economy with well maintained and accessible attractions available in the local area encourage visitors to the district

Blaby District Tourism Partnership's Tourism Growth Plan 2020-25

This plan sets the vision for the district:

"By 2025, Blaby District will be one of Leicestershire's leading and most welcoming and sustainable tourism destinations attracting staying and day visitors from across the UK".

There are three key ambitions in order to achieve this:

- Grow the value of tourism by £50m
- Increase the number of visitors by 1.3m
- Increase the number of tourism jobs by 40%

There are a number of drivers for growth identified:

- **Products & Experiences** – In line with market needs and opportunities, create and develop new and existing products and experiences targeted at the needs and expectations of current and future visitors.
- **Marketing & Promotion** – Promote Blaby District’s image and offering to local, domestic and international visitors to attract a larger share of existing and new, year-round markets.
- **Business & People Skills Development** – Support tourism operators to develop the business & people skills needed for the industry to be more competitive and innovative in a competitive marketplace.
- **Visitor Experience** – Develop a seamless visitor service excellence culture, capacity, and capability by providing an exceptional visitor experience that creates lasting positive memories and compels visitors to return and recommend Blaby District to others.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration** – Strengthen the role of the Blaby District Tourism Partnership building new kinds of partnership working across public and private sector tourism interests to deliver the Growth Plan’s ambition and targets.

Commercial Strategy 2022-27

This strategy sets out the aspirations of the Council and provides a framework that brings together commercial activities that are being pursued across the Council, whilst retaining the clear focus on the customers we serve. The strategy sets out the following vision:

“To place Blaby in a secure financial position; ensuring services are delivered effectively, efficiently and income generation provides for Blaby District to be a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit”.

This will be achieved by:

- Embedding a commercial culture and ethos – ensuring that all services operate effectively & efficiently; strengthening service provision and generating income.
- Maximising Income but still retaining the status as ‘the safety net for the vulnerable’.
- Maximising the Blaby Pound – encouraging those who reside, work or trade in the district to spend within the district and support the local economy and their community.
- Being proactive in identifying opportunities for commercial investments.
- Focusing resources on initiatives that will drive financial or social benefit.
- Encouraging communication and access to services with residents and customers through digital channels and continuing Blaby’s reputation for delivering quality services.
- Reviewing chargeable Non-Statutory Services and income generated.

The business engagement survey, completed by Heartflood, identified a number of shared policy priorities that require further consideration. A range of secondary research was conducted including reference to economic datasets and a review of the local, regional and national policy landscape. Furthermore, Heartflood also reviewed the empirical data, which was gained from surveys of both businesses and stakeholder organisations and was followed up through focus groups which drew out a broad range of qualitative information. This range of research was then synthesised to create a number of key strategic and tactical recommendations which are aimed at developing the District economy.

Each year, the Council agrees a list of specific actions and priorities for the year ahead. These actions link closely to the overarching strategic objectives outlined in the Blaby District Plan. They provide further focus for the Council's staff, in addition to the core 'business as usual' work carried out by each team. This helps to establish previous and current priorities, as well as being a mechanism for highlighting future priorities identified as part of the Economic Development Framework.

The district of Blaby is located in Leicestershire County, southwest of Leicester City. Covering an area of 13,047 hectares (50 square miles), it is home to a population of 101,526 individuals, with 11.5% identifying as part of a Minority Ethnic Group ^[1]. The district comprises approximately 43,440 households, and the average house price is £249,050 ^[2].



Blaby is ranked as the 281st least deprived district out of 317 in England ^[3], and the current unemployment rate is estimated at 3.9%. Fosse Park, a vibrant out-of-town shopping centre, attracts an impressive 11 million shoppers annually and serves as the district's primary retail hub with Grove Park and Meridian as the District's primary economic hubs.

The district enjoys excellent transportation connections. The M1 motorway runs north-south through the area, providing convenient access, while the M69, M6, and M42 offer easy connectivity to Birmingham, Wales, and the South West. The Narborough train station, just one stop away from Leicester, provides a swift 10-minute journey to the city. Leicester is situated on the East Midlands Railway line, connecting London St Pancras and South Yorkshire. The district is also conveniently located within an hour's travel of the East Midlands International Airport. Additionally, the Grand Union Canal runs along the district's eastern boundary, serving as a vital link between London and Birmingham (as depicted by the green route on the plan above). Blaby serves as the main town within the district and is accompanied by 24 other towns and villages of varying sizes. The northernmost part of the district primarily exhibits an urban character, with five settlements – Glenfield, Braunstone Town, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, and Glen Parva – adjoining Leicester City and sharing a strong functional relationship. These settlements form part of the 'Principal Urban Area' of Leicester. To the south of the city boundary, several larger villages with populations exceeding 5,000 exist, namely Narborough, Enderby, Blaby, Countesthorpe, and Whetstone. These villages maintain a solid functional connection with the city and offer a wide array of services and facilities. In contrast, the southern region of the district is predominantly rural, housing several villages with stronger links to Hinckley.

Strategic Direction

The Vision

Through adoption of our Economic Development Framework, we will support our residents and businesses to expand in a sustainable manner to increase the reasons for visitors and tourists to visit and create the environment for further investment into the district. The framework will ensure we are a council that continues to ensure economic growth is sustainable and benefits all our residents.

"For Blaby District to be a great place to live, work and visit, with a strong, successful economy where everyone can build dynamic businesses, careers and lives, supported in a green and environmentally friendly way, with superb connectivity."

Overarching Objectives

To achieve this vision, there are four overarching objectives that will need to be further considered:

- We will focus on attracting higher and better paid jobs, making sure our residents are equipped to access employment in a diverse and Green Economy
- We will support innovative and enterprising ideas, and make sure businesses of all sizes receive the support they need to thrive and grow
- We will maximise investment and opportunities by encouraging partnership working and appropriate developments that support sustainable growth
- The Local Plan will allocate additional employment land to enable growth of the economy over the next 20 years

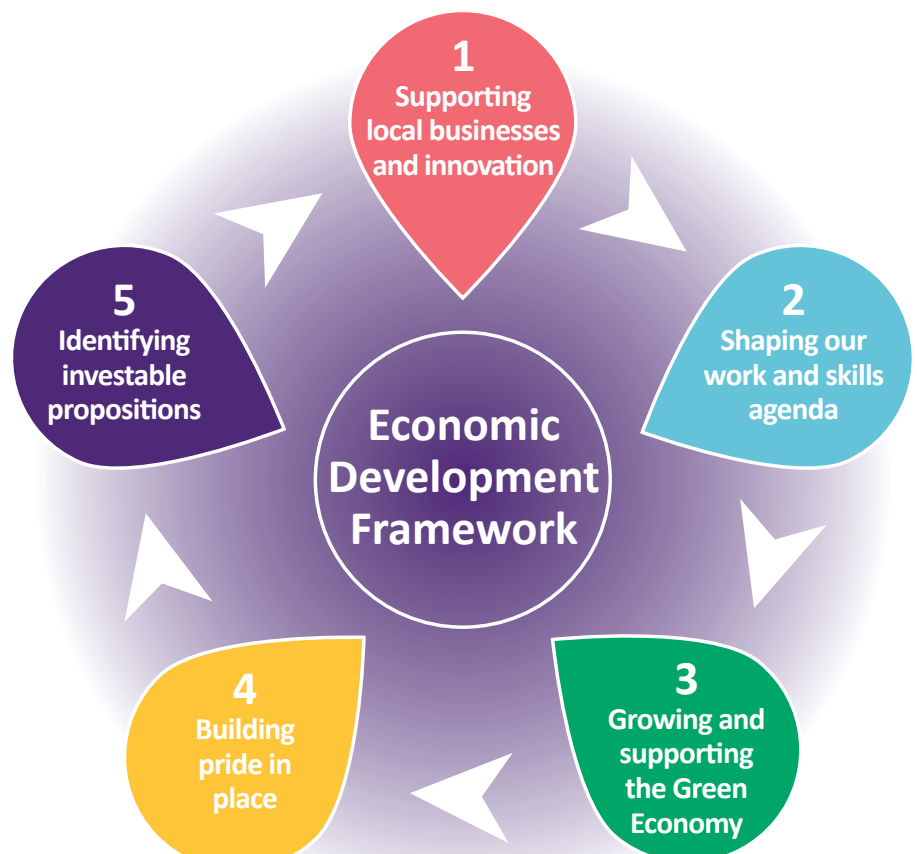
Priority themes

Our Framework includes five priority themes:

- **Supporting local businesses and innovation** – 90% of businesses within the district employ 10 or less people (micro business) and are more likely to fail in their second year than the regional average. This priority is seeking to ensure that local businesses receive the support they need to expand and grow to create a diverse job market and are well placed to ensure long term success.
- **Shaping our work and skills agenda** – Blaby is ranked 281st least deprived district in England (out of 317) with residents earnings nearly 20% higher than those who work in the District (i.e. workplace earnings). This priority is seeking to ensure that businesses within Blaby District have better paid and higher skilled jobs. This would encourage people to both live and work in Blaby District.
- **Growing and supporting the Green Economy** – The ambition is for the Council to be net zero by 2030, and the district net zero by 2050. This priority seeks to grow our economy by ensuring any growth should be carbon neutral and sustainable wherever possible. Focus will be on those businesses seeking to embrace the commercial and social opportunities the Green Economy can bring.
- **Building pride in place** – 9.1% of the total visitor days to Leicestershire were spent in Blaby District. This priority seeks to build pride in Blaby, for our residents, workers and those who visit. We are already committed to raising the number of visitors to the district by 1.3m, increasing the number of visitor economy jobs by 40% and growing the value of the visitor economy by £50m by delivering cultural and visitor interventions and projects. This theme also seeks to improve the sense of place and pride its residents and workers feel about the district.
- **Identifying investable propositions** – The district has good transport links to M1, M69, with train links to Birmingham and Leicester and is within easy travelling distance to two major airports. This priority addresses the need for securing more investment for the redevelopment of vacant/underused sites, building of more affordable homes, and infrastructure improvements required to support the success of Blaby's economy.

Priority Themes

Our Framework includes five priority themes



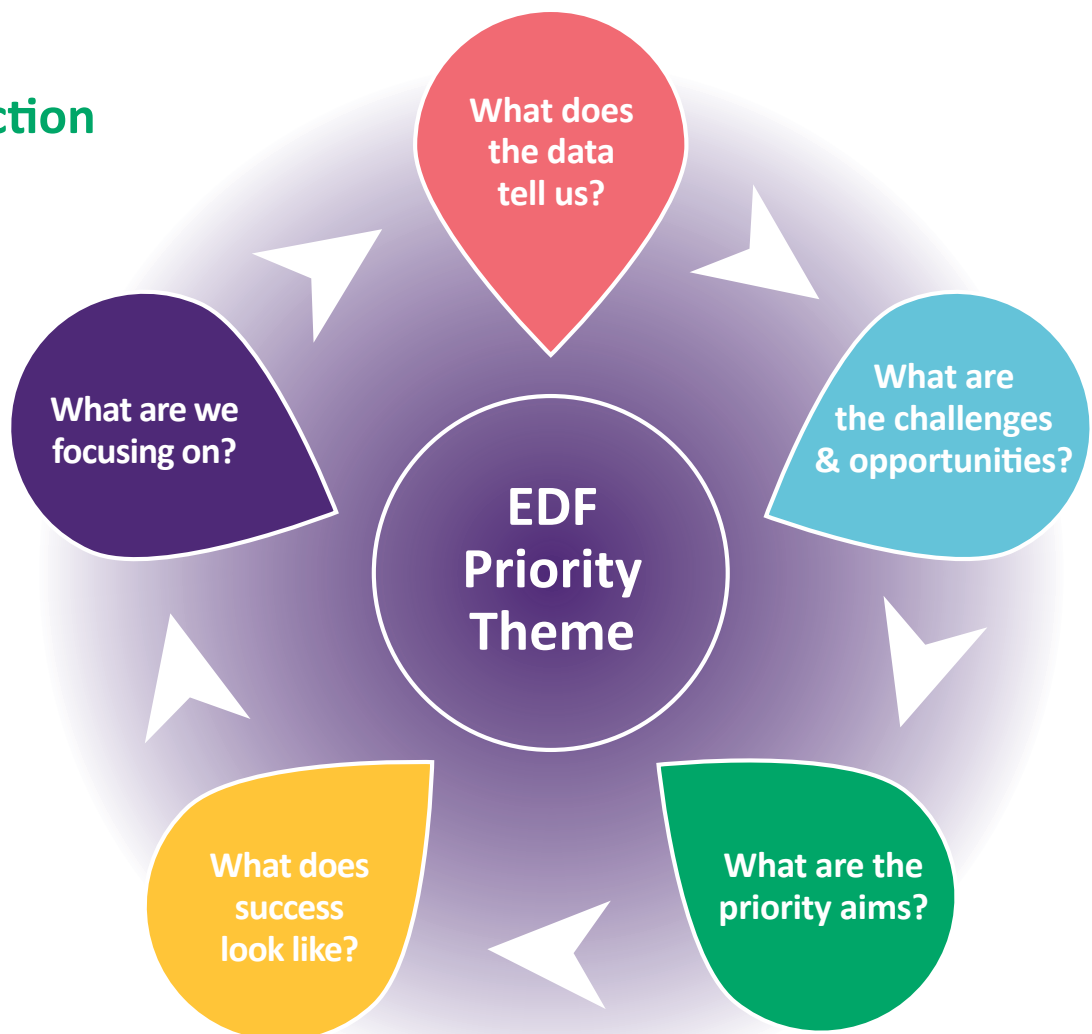
The Approach

In order to establish what each priority theme will seek to address, we took a staged approach. This can be summarised as follows:

- What does the data tell us? In order to identify main opportunities and challenges, a range of data was analysed, all the policy documents (as detailed previously) reviewed, as well considering the findings from the recently completed Heartflood business engagement survey.
- What are the challenges and opportunities? This stage allows for any other challenges and opportunities, not contained within the data sets previously, to be considered.
- What does success look like? After considering these first two stages, this section sets our specific targets and achievements that need to be met, in order for this framework to have been of success.
- What are the priority aims? This part is to identify what needs to be done, as a priority, to allow for the best chance for us to succeed.
- What are we focusing on? This summary provides a succinct explanation of why this priority theme is important and the main objective we are seeking to address.

For each priority theme, there is an expectation that there will be an action plan which sits underneath and provides further detail on how success will be achieved.

Priority Action Plans



Priority Theme 1

Supporting local businesses and innovation



Priority Theme 1

Supporting local businesses and innovation

What are we focusing on?

90% of businesses within the district employ 10 or less people and are more likely to fail in their second year than the regional average. Blaby District also has a number of large businesses (250 employees or more) and Head Quarters for statutory services based within our locality. The value of these large employers is being able to offer a wide range of jobs with varying qualifications and skills sets.

This priority is seeking to ensure that local businesses receive the support they need to expand and grow to create a diverse job market and are well placed to ensure long term success.

What does the data tell us?

- **Micro businesses** – nearly 90% of Blaby’s businesses are micro businesses (employing less than 10 people), with 0.5% being large companies ^[4]. This is higher than the LLEP area and national averages, which are set at 89% being classed as micro businesses ^[5]. This presents opportunities to support these local, small businesses which are likely to require more tailored support than the big national companies.
- **Stagnant business base** – the growth of enterprises within the district has been fluctuating over the last few years, while other District/Boroughs have seen a steady increase since 2011 and the district has seen an overall smaller increase of only 25.3% between 2011-20 (whereas the regional figure is 30.6% and 34.3% nationally) ^[6].
- **Second year survival rates of new enterprises** – whilst the survival rate of newly born enterprises is around the regional and national average, there is a significant drop (compared with the regional and national averages) in Year 2 ^[7]. The average length of a business life in the district between 2007 and 2022 was 5.5 years but was dramatically lower when considering the 2020-22 time standing at 1.3 years ^[8] (mainly attributed to the impact caused by the Pandemic).
- **Over representation of certain business sectors** – professional, scientific, and technical (21.7%), retail (16.7%), public administration and defense (7.5%), and construction (6.7%) are significantly overrepresented within the district, compared with the national average (7.1%, 14.4%, 4.6% and 4.9% respectively) ^[9].
- **Stakeholder Feedback** – the feedback from the stakeholder consultation groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Framework identified the need for:
 - Green business initiatives
 - Schemes to reduce the cost of business overheads
- **Focus Group feedback** – the feedback from the focus groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Framework ^[10] identified the need for:
 - Better relationships are required between the public and private sectors, especially the local planning authority
 - More joined up thinking needs to be employed to link the region and create a collective collaborative environment for business growth
 - More signposting is required for areas such as funding for business growth, business support, green grants, and apprenticeships

- **Business Feedback** – the feedback from the business consultation groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Framework ^[11] identified the need for:
 - Schemes to reduce the cost of business overheads
 - Financial advice and support
 - Business growth advice and support

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** – funding to deliver a range of supporting local business initiatives, including these interventions:
 - **Tailored business support provision** – known third party providers operating outside the district, but within the potential to shape a bespoke offer for the district’s businesses, with a focus on supporting those businesses most likely to succeed
 - **Innovation support** – to provide support for local businesses to innovate and increase their competitiveness in the market
 - **Generic support and membership** – provide opportunity for networking and support through external partnerships and forums, such as the Federation of Small Business and Chamber of Commerce
 - **LLEP Growth Hub** – The Business Gateway Growth Hub is an umbrella organisation which already brings together business support delivered by multiple agents. Further funding has been awarded to allow continued provision, but with opportunities to shape the support and target areas
 - **Leicester & Leicestershire Key Account Management Programme** – The Leicester & Leicestershire Key Account Management (KAM) Programme will deliver a bespoke package of support, tailored to businesses located in our region considered to be key strategic businesses

What does success look like?

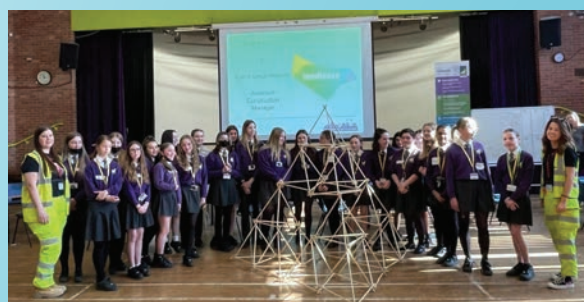
- Successful businesses employing more people and surviving for longer than the current average (1.3 years) and closer towards the previous average (5.5 years)
- Established business support offer
- Planning advice streamlined to support new and growing businesses

What are the priority aims?

- Develop a programme and initiatives to support innovation and enterprise, that are well signposted
- Focus on helping our SMEs to grow and provide a steady source of employment
- Consider ways to encourage a diverse range of employment opportunities for our residents

Priority Theme 2

Shaping our work and skills agenda



Priority Theme 2

Shaping our work and skills agenda

What are we focusing on?

Blaby is ranked as the 281st least deprived district in England (out of 317) with resident earnings nearly 20% higher than those who work in the district (i.e. workplace earnings).

This priority is seeking to ensure that businesses within Blaby District have better paid and higher skilled jobs. This would encourage people to both live and work in Blaby District.

What does the data tell us?

- **Earnings** – there is a difference in earnings between those who live in the district and those that work here, but this is an improving picture. In 2020, the median resident earnings for Blaby District were £675.70. The England average was £589.80. Between 2014 and 2020 in Blaby District, median resident earnings grew by £142.70 (which was much quicker than the national average of £66.20). In comparison, those who work in the Borough (i.e. workplace earnings) had median earnings of £579 (similar to the English average of £589.90). Between 2014 and 2020 Blaby District median workplace earnings grew by £92 (and as the national growth was £66.40) ^[12].
- **Jobs breakdown by Sector** – Experian identify a current total workforce of 69,500 across Blaby District, which represents approximately 68% of the total population of the area. Professional services and retail are the two major employment sectors in Blaby, representing a combined total of approximately one third of all jobs in the area ^[13].
- **Pockets of deprivation** – Blaby is ranked as the 281st least deprived district in England (out of 317) ^[14] with pockets of stark deprivation (tend to be closer to the conurbation).
- **Lower than average paid workforce** – the median resident earnings for Blaby District were £675.70 in 2021, which is higher than the national average of £589.80 ^[15]. This is different to those that work in Blaby District and earn £579 a week (similar to the national average).
- **Employment ages** – There is a higher percentage of older (over 65s) people than average (20.3% vs 18.4% nationally ^[16]), and low unemployment at 2.0% ^[17]. However, there is an increasing level of youth unemployment hotspots of 21.6% between 2020 and 2022 (185 in March 2020 rising to 225 April 2022). This is also proportionally worse than others in the region as Blaby fell from 12th lowest constituency in the region to 20th ^[18].
- **Low unemployment rates** – only 1.7% of economically active people are unemployed in the district, compared with 3.6% across Great Britain ^[19].
- **Self-employment** – 16.6% of males are self-employed in the district, whereas less than 1% of women are (compared with 12% and 6.7% in Great Britain respectively) ^[20].
- **Skilled workforce out migration** – there are low levels of the population with no qualifications (22.6% versus regional average of 24.7%) and higher levels of residents with degree qualifications (24.7% versus 23.6% regionally) ^[21].

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** – funding to deliver a range of supporting local business initiatives, which identified a number of priority interventions:
 - **Improve people’s life chances to succeed** – chance to refine, influence and shape the Employment and Skills training provision to better suit and place our residents to succeed
 - **Community, Work and Skills** – work with partners to overcome barriers and provide training, careers advice, apprenticeships and T levels and to help set up a business
 - **Workplace Digital Skills** – the LLEP established a Digital Skills Partnership (DSP) in 2021 and has convened over 70 local partners including all districts. The core funding to support a DSP would be a contribution towards an area-wide co-ordinator and contribution towards a grant scheme for local businesses and local skills delivery partners.
- **Multiply funding** – the current allocation for Multiply funding at the County provides a refreshed basis to work with education and training providers for bespoke training schemes within the district.
- **Focus Group feedback** – the feedback from the focus groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Development Framework ^[22] identified the need for:
 - An understanding is required over what skills are needed and what skill gaps exist within the local economy
 - Businesses need to better understand why people choose their employment to help them improve recruitment and retention

What does success look like?

- Improved employability skills for Job Seekers through collaborative working
- Improved access to employment and reduce the variability in the provision of employment opportunities for young people
- Promote employment opportunities to ensure that there is a capable workforce which meets the requirements and expectations of employers
- Increase awareness of training and development opportunities to ensure there are increased career opportunities for the current workforce and planned opportunities for the workforce of the future

What are the priority aims?

- Understand what is meant by “better paid” jobs – what are these and how can this be achieved?
- Develop Pathway Model, with a menu of resources
- Increase work experience opportunities and voluntary and community sector placements
- Increase partnership with providers, schools and higher education facilities
- Identify and deliver a range of communications campaigns
- upskilling workforce of the future.

Priority Theme 3

Growing and supporting the Green Economy



Priority Theme 3

Growing and supporting the Green Economy

What are we focusing on?

The ambition is for the Council to be Net Zero by 2030, and the district Net Zero by 2050.

This priority seeks to grow our economy by ensuring any growth is Net Zero and sustainable wherever possible. Focus will be on those businesses seeking to embrace the commercial and social opportunities the Green Economy can bring.

What does the data tell us?

- **Commitment to being Net Zero** – the ambition is for the Council to be Net Zero by 2030, and the district Net Zero by 2050 ^[23] and therefore there is political support for low/no carbon initiatives.
- **Adult physical activity** – physical activity amongst adults within the district tends to be lower than the national average (27.3% versus 28.8%) ^[24]. In England 27% of journeys are taken by active modes, in Leicestershire this is 15% and in Blaby District, it is only 10%.
- **Under-provision of outdoor sports facilities** – there are significant shortfalls across the district for football grass pitches, 3G pitches, cricket ground, rugby union pitches and tennis courts ^[25].
- **Health pressures** – due to the higher percentages of over 65s, there will be increasing pressure on the health service, with a 62.3% increase expected in dementia and 53.0% increase in mobility problems over the next 20 years. There is also a very high proportion of hip fractures from the over 80s (18th highest in all the English Councils) – with 1,826 per 100,000 compared with the nation figure of 1,426 ^[26].

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** – funding to deliver a range of supporting community and place initiatives, which identified a number of priority interventions/research work.
 - **Narborough Station Sustainable Transport** – feasibility study to support the work being undertaken to establish the options for sustainable transport at Narborough Station
 - **Rural EV Infrastructure** – as part of the existing FLEX D project to fund pilot 7 solar canopy EV Charge Points across Leicestershire, we are proposing to install public rural chargers and help fund community run EV Car clubs
 - **Mental Health Plans** – new Neighbourhood Mental Health Plans will be created at hyper-local level so our residents can access mental health support from within their local community and communities becoming ‘mental health friendly’
 - **Social Prescribing Project** – Social Prescribers play a key role in supporting vulnerable residents to find non-clinical services available in the local community Funding will extend and develop the Social Prescribing service in partnership with our local Primary Care Networks (PCN’s). There are other projects that could be linked to this, such as increasing active referrals and blue prescribing projects on the canal
- **Levelling Up Funding** – potential funding streams which are available that could be secured for the district

What does success look like?

- An emerging and growing Green Economy, where businesses are encouraged to be innovative and creative to reduce their carbon emissions
- Blaby is considered a leader in low carbon developments
- Increase in jobs within the Green Economy, adding extra value to the district's economy
- Projects in place to support people achieve longer and healthier lives, such as increased cycleways
- Reduction of Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the District as a result of an overall improvement of air quality

What are the priority aims?

- Develop a programme and initiatives to support businesses within the Green Economy sector
- Consider way to encourage further innovation and creative ideas to reduce the Council and district's carbon emissions
- Consider the increasing demand for low carbon, environmentally friendly experiences and the potential opportunities these bring

Priority Theme 4

Building pride in place



Priority Theme 4

Building pride in place

What are we focusing on?

9.1% of total visitor days to Leicestershire were spent in Blaby District. In 2022, there were 3.01 million visitors to Blaby District, 2.67 million were day visitors and 0.34 million were overnight visits.

This priority seeks to build pride in Blaby, for our residents, workers and those who visit. We are already committed to raising the number of visitors to the district by 1.3m, increasing the number of visitor economy jobs by 40% and growing the value of the visitor economy by £50m by delivering cultural and visitor interventions and projects. This theme also seeks to improve the sense of place and pride its residents and workers feel about the district.

What does the data tell us?

- **Visibility** – The central issue for Blaby District is its comparative lack of visibility in the visitor economy marketplace, linked to limited levels of visitation and spend (of the 37.65 million visitor days to Leicestershire, 9.1% visited Blaby District) ^[27].
- **Economic impact** – the visitor economy generates £190m for the districts economy and provides 1,908 jobs for people ^[28].
- **Reliance on day visitors** – 89% of all visitors (3.01million) in 2022 were day visitors and they contributed towards the £190m visitor spend ^[29]. There has been a 26.3% increase in visitor spend from 2021 to 2022.
- **Accommodation** – There are only 13 hotels within the district, four B&Bs, two self-catering accommodations and two camping/caravan sites ^[30]

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- **Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025** – aims to increase the number of visitors to the district by 1.3m by 2025, increase the number of tourism jobs by 40% and to grow the value of tourism by £50m by delivering cultural and visitor interventions/projects ^[31].
- **Visitor economy jobs** – known issues that the type and quality of employment created by many visitor economy businesses are low value and seasonal.
- **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** – funding to deliver a range of community and place related projects, in which the visitor economy and tourism was identified as a key priority for intervention, including
 - **Tourism Build Back project** – to drive forward a number of tourism projects which will support the sector and wider local economy to recover and thrive
 - **Business Support Coordinator** – full time officer (2 year post) to be appointed to support the town centre and high street businesses across the district
 - **Sustainable visitor economy campaign** – to deliver a sustainable visitor economy campaign that supports tourism and hospitality businesses to reduce their carbon footprints and promote a greener visitor economy offer in line with local and national climate targets
 - **Taste the Place scheme** – this scheme is designed to highlight the area's food and drink reputation by showcasing sub-regional food and drink both to eat, drink, buy, see in production and experience through activities and events

- **Levelling Up Funding** – potential funding streams which are available that could be secured for the district.
- **New and existing developments** – such as Fosse Park and Everard Meadows which attract visitors to the area.
- **Accommodation review** – to understand the demand and market for increased quantity and quality of accommodation to help increase the length of visitor stay within the district. This should help to reduce the reliance on day visitors.
- **Role of technology** – consider the opportunity to create a visitor digital journey to enhance the visitor experience and increase the length of their stay.
- **Connectivity** – the district is well connected (with Narborough train station and the M1) and there is a significant catchment area within a short drive.
- **Challenges with perception** – includes no consistent narrative about the area and a lack of sense of place

What does success look like?

- Blaby will be a Great Place to **Live, Work and Visit**
- The economic value of Blaby District's visitor economy will have grown by 40% in 2025 ^[32]
- The number of visitors will have grown by 1.3m in 2025 ^[33]
- The number of visitor economy jobs will have risen by 40% in 2025 ^[34]

What are the priority aims?

- To develop new and improve existing products / experiences, which are targeted at the needs and expectations of current and future visitors
- To promote Blaby District's image to local, domestic and international visitors
- To support visitor economy operators to develop the business and people skills needed to compete and innovate
- To develop a seamless visitor service to create an exceptional visitor experience
- To develop and implement future campaigns and initiatives to increase pride in place

Priority Theme 5

Identifying investable propositions



Priority Theme 5

Identifying investable propositions

What are we focusing on?

The district has good transport links to M1, M69, with train links to Birmingham and Leicester and is within easy travelling distance to two major airports.

This priority addresses the need for attracting more inward investment (especially focusing on the redevelopment of vacant/underused sites), building of more affordable homes, and infrastructure improvements required to support the success of Blaby's economy.

What does the data tell us?

- **Well connected** – good transport links to M1, M69, Railway Station with routes to Birmingham and Leicester, and easy travelling distance to two major airports, with opportunities to improve more local rural connections.
- **House price rise** – a 53% rise in house prices over the last ten years, with very low levels of affordable housing is resulting in a 175% increase in under 35s renting privately and a 46% decrease in people purchasing their own home ^[35]. This is all causing significant pressure on the Council's provision of temporary accommodation ^[36]. Of all the homeless applicants, 55% were registered as unemployed and with no source of income.
- **Stakeholder Feedback** – the feedback from the stakeholder consultation groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Framework identified the need for:
 - Access to vacant or underused business sites
- **Focus Group feedback** – the feedback from the focus groups held as part of the preparation for the Economic Framework identified the need for:
 - Better relationships are required between the public and private sectors, with a particular improvement required with the local planning authority
 - Transport and parking improvements are required to allow businesses to grow

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- **Commercial Strategy 2022-2027** – the Council formally documented the commercial approach to be adopted as a mechanism to address the financial gaps and ensure the Council remains financially sustainable. "This strategy sets out the aspirations of the Council and provides a framework that brings together commercial activities that are being pursued across the Council, whilst retaining the clear focus on the customers we serve" ^[37].
- **UK Shared Prosperity Funding** – funding to deliver a range of supporting local business initiatives, which identified a number of priority interventions:
 - **Priority Investment Areas Feasibility** – feasibility money to create action and masterplans for the main priority investment areas. This includes Braunstone town centre and Glenfield
 - **Blaby Civic Buildings Review** – To undertake a review of the civic buildings (but could be extended to include sport, community centres and village halls) and to explore the option of a new Enterprise Hub. The work will identify practical priorities to be taken forward and can be used as a tool to support investment decisions and external funding bid

- **Levelling Up Funding** – potential funding streams which are available that could be secured for the district.
- What does success look like?
- Gain inward investment through business growth
- Secure further external funding for the district
- Be proactive in identifying opportunities for further investments (in line with Commercial Strategy 2022-27)

What are the priority aims?

- To prepare a clear understanding of the investable opportunities
- To position the council to secure external funding opportunities and inward investment if/when they arise
- To focus on partnership working where there are potential inward investment and commercial opportunities on brownfield and/or underused sites
- To encourage development which is well considered, sustainable and brings economic benefits to the district
- Align aims to aspirations within the Local Plan

Footnotes

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| <p>[1] ONS 2019 est</p> <p>[2] HM Land Registry: January 2021</p> <p>[3] DHCLG: English Indices of Deprivation 2019</p> <p>[4] ONS Claimant Count: February 2021</p> <p>[5] Source: Inter Departmental Business Register</p> <p>[6] Source: Warehouse benchmark report 2023</p> <p>[7] Source: ONS UK Business Counts 2020</p> <p>[8] Source: ONS Business demography tables, November 2021</p> <p>[9] Source: Draft Business Life Cycle Report, Logistics & Distribution 2023</p> <p>[10] Source: LLEP Annual Economic Profile 2022 with data provided by ONS</p> <p>[11] Economic Development Framework by Heartflood 2023</p> <p>[12] Economic Development Framework by Heartflood 2023</p> <p>[13] Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2020</p> <p>[14] Source: Experian 2022</p> <p>[15] Source: DHCLG: English Indices of Deprivation 2019</p> <p>[16] Source: Annual survey of hours and earnings 2021, ONS</p> <p>[17] Source: Experian Report 2021</p> <p>[18] Source: ONS Claimant Count: April 2023, LLEP contained within the Labour Market Profile</p> | <p>[19] Source: LLEP Business and Economic Intelligence Update May 2022</p> <p>[20] Source: LLEP Annual Economic Profile 2022 with data provided by ONS</p> <p>[21] Source: LLEP Annual Economic Profile 2022 with data provided by ONS</p> <p>[22] Source: ONS 2021</p> <p>[23] Source: Economic Strategy by Heartflood 2023</p> <p>[24] Source: Blaby Climate Change Strategy (2020-30)</p> <p>[25] Source: Sport England 2020/21 – doing less than 30mins activity a week criteria</p> <p>[26] Source: Blaby District Council Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2020)</p> <p>[27] Source: POPPI and Demographic Projections 2019</p> <p>[28] Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>[29] Blaby STEAM trend report 2022</p> <p>[30] Blaby STEAM trend report 2022</p> <p>[31] Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>[32] Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>[33] Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>[34] Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025</p> <p>[35] Source: Blaby Housing Strategy 2021-25</p> <p>[36] Source: Blaby Housing Strategy 2021-25</p> <p>[37] Source: Commercial Strategy 2022-2027, page 4</p> |
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