



Test Valley Borough Council

Economic Development Strategy

2024 - 2029

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Foreword

Test Valley is a great place to live and work and Test Valley Borough Council is committed in its support for business and creating the conditions for economic growth.

We have always prided ourselves on the support we provide to business, which has been recognised by multiple Federation of Small Business Awards. We are proud of our strong manufacturing base which accounts for 13% of Hampshire's manufacturing GVA. We are fortunate to be home to national and international companies such as Le Creuset, Chemring Group, Stannah Lifts, Simplyhealth, Rich Products, Euronics and Ordnance Survey.

We have exciting plans for our town centres. With the benefit of Levelling Up funding from the UK Government, we will create a multi-purpose theatre at the heart of Andover town centre. In Romsey, we have exciting plans for the south of the town centre. These projects are testament to our commitment to making sure that our town centres are attractive places to visit and to supporting our high street businesses.

The Test Valley has two main towns, Andover and Romsey, but is characterised by large rural areas. This strategy is place-based, recognising that support needs to meet the specific needs of our varied business community. I'm pleased that this strategy clearly puts the rural economy at its heart with a range of actions that will help us best support our rural communities.

We know that we cannot do all of this in isolation. We will work with our partners and communities to deliver this strategy, constantly listening and learning to inform future actions. We want to play a key role in sub regional economic development through working with the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board.

Our economy will face challenges over the next few years as the impacts of recent economic shocks are fully understood. We know our demographic is aging and we need to ensure that our communities have the skills they need to flourish. We are also moving into a net zero economy which will bring opportunities and challenges.

This strategy clearly outlines our ambition and will deliver a range of initiatives, from continuing our popular small grants programmes through to a host of new proposals that will support our economy to flourish.



Cllr Phil North

Leader of Test Valley Borough Council

Bourne Valley Ward Councillor

County Councillor for Andover South

Economic Development Strategy – Executive Summary

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the country. Test Valley benefits from good transport infrastructure and links to London, Southampton, the Midlands and the West Country. We have market towns, villages and rural areas. Commercial and industrial spaces are available. And we have thriving businesses in sectors from manufacturing and technology to professional services, tourism, food and agriculture. These attributes make Test Valley an attractive location for businesses – existing and potential – and this Economic Development Strategy considers how best the Council can support them.

This Strategy is published in 2024, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and in a challenging economic climate. It has been developed in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan for 2023-2027: *A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive* which identified the five strategic priorities of **sustainability, connection, prosperity, inclusion and environment** through extensive community engagement across the Borough. While economic development links most obviously

to prosperity, our business community plays an important role across all priority areas. The strategy has been informed by economic data, the Council's Thriving Communities Workshops, and our daily engagement with local businesses, stakeholders and business organisations.

The Council can play a key role in facilitating networks across organisations, within sectors, between education providers, employers and potential employees, and between entrepreneurs and those with greater expertise. We can also support start-up businesses and businesses embarking on their journey to net zero. And over the next five years, we will manage significant transformations in Andover and Romsey town centres as our regeneration plans take shape. Connections with business are vital to us – they allow us to listen, to understand the issues that most matter to our business community, and to develop solutions in partnership.

Priority Areas

The data, our wide-ranging consultations, and the everyday intelligence that we collect from our local business community and stakeholders have led us to identify six priorities for this Economic Development Strategy:

- **Supporting key sectors including advanced manufacturing, green technologies and tourism to grow**
- **Building a climate in which entrepreneurs, and small and medium sized businesses can thrive**
- **Supporting businesses in their transition to a low carbon economy**
- **Regenerating Andover and Romsey town centres**
- **Promoting upskilling and raising qualification levels to meet future economic needs**
- **Reflecting the changing workforce and new life stages.**

Across these priorities, we will be proactive in seeking funding opportunities. We will also work strategically with partners in the region to secure inward investment and support companies that establish themselves in Test Valley.

We recognise the diversity of our Borough. Accordingly, in each of our priority areas, the Strategy highlights specific place-based priorities. These include the manufacturing sector in Andover, jobs fair support in Romsey, the village shops network, rural grant funding, the transport and storage sector in the south of the Borough, and the opportunities offered by the University of Southampton Science Park at Chilworth.

The Role of the Council

Some of the work outlined in this Strategy will fall to the Economic Development team directly, whereas some projects such as the regeneration of the town centres are managed by their own dedicated teams. Our vision across the Council is to promote prosperity in a sustainable way which improves the quality of life of our residents and communities.

Economic development is promoted by the Council through a number of routes:

- **Direct actions, such as approving sites for economic development, managing the regeneration of our town centres, approving planning applications, registration and licensing services, setting business rates, and providing grant funding and business support.**

- **Enabling support, such as through sector-based networks, and by facilitating community and town centre events, discussions and connections.**
- **Partnership activities, such as through work with education and skills training providers, and collaboration with Hampshire County Council's Prosperity Partnership Board and business organisations to promote Test Valley as a vibrant place to do business.**

Action Plan

The Strategy is accompanied by a rolling Action Plan that will be reviewed annually. The current plan identifies clear actions for the period 2024 – 2026. The reviews will inform specific actions that will be developed over the lifetime of the Strategy.

Introduction

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful part of the country. Test Valley benefits from good transport infrastructure and links to London, Southampton, the Midlands and the West Country. We have market towns, villages and rural areas. Commercial and industrial spaces are available. And we have thriving businesses in sectors from manufacturing and technology to professional services, tourism, food and agriculture. These attributes make Test Valley an attractive location for businesses – existing and potential – and this Economic Development Strategy considers how best the Council can support them.

This Strategy is published in 2024, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and in a challenging economic climate. It is informed by a study commissioned by Test Valley Borough Council from Oxford Economics¹, a key adviser to corporate, financial and government decision makers and leaders. The Oxford Economics report and data are wide-ranging, covering growth, economic productivity, employment, key industrial sectors, demographics, characteristics of the labour market and quality of life. They compare the characteristics of Test Valley with those of Hampshire, the South East and the UK as a whole, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are identified and explored.

1 Oxford Economics. (2023). Test Valley Economic Assessment and Forecasts.



Importantly, this Economic Development Strategy has been developed in the context of the Council’s Corporate Plan for 2023-2027: A Place for Everyone – Supporting our Communities to Thrive. The Corporate Plan was born out of extensive community engagement across the Borough, and identified five strategic priorities:



Sustainability



Connection



Prosperity



Inclusion



Environment



From the corporate priorities, economic development links most obviously to **prosperity**. However, the Economic Development Strategy recognises the important role of our business community across all the priority areas. Business solutions will help to mitigate against climate change and the threats to our environment to create a **sustainable** future. **Inclusive** businesses will seek to utilise the skills and experiences of all in our communities. And businesses that forge **connections** to share best practice increase their chances of success.

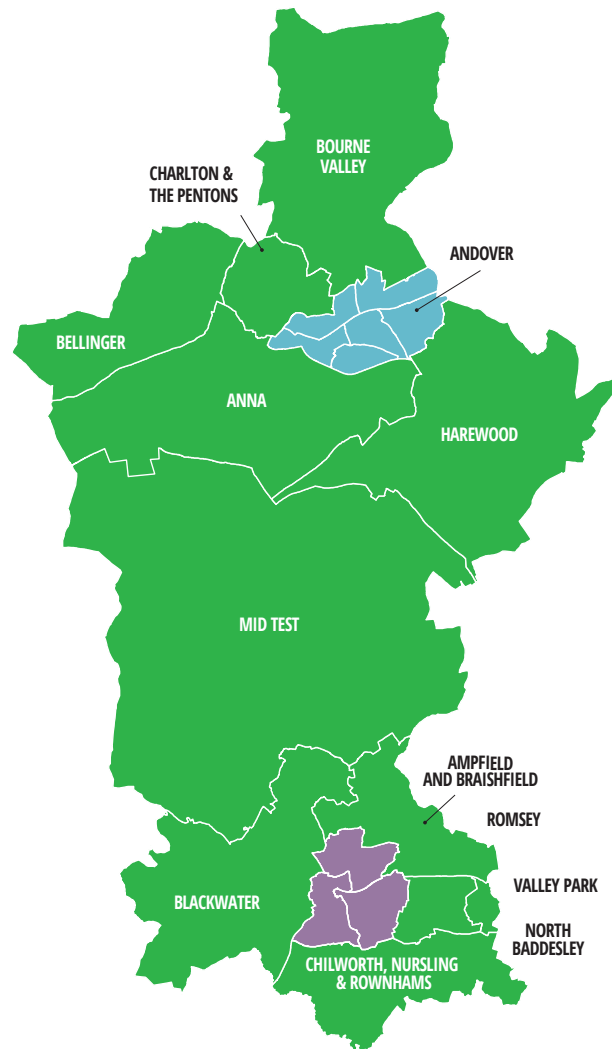
Following the public consultations for the Corporate Plan, the Council facilitated Thriving Communities Workshops across the Borough, inviting residents, organisations and businesses, in recognition of the fact that we must work in an ever more place-based way. We recognise too that economic development is not and cannot be an isolated function within the Council, and therefore representatives from across the Council's services have met together internally to discuss their roles and contributions. Moreover, members of the Council's Economic Development Team listen to businesses and engage with business organisations on a daily basis. Therefore, this Economic Development Strategy, does not rely on data alone, but is informed by the views and lived experiences of businesses, residents and representatives from across the Council.

The Council can play a key role in facilitating networks across organisations, within sectors, between education providers, employers and potential employees, and between entrepreneurs and those with greater expertise. We can also support start-up businesses and businesses embarking on their journey to net zero. And over the next five years, we will manage significant transformations in Andover and Romsey town centres as our regeneration plans take shape. **Connections** with business are vital to us – they allow us to listen, to understand the issues that most matter to our business community, and to develop solutions in partnership.

Evidence Base

We have summarised below some of the key facts and data that were considered in drawing up our Economic Development Strategy.

Test Valley has two main towns – Andover and Romsey – but is also characterised by large rural areas. The rural geography links us to our neighbouring authorities, Winchester, East Hampshire and New Forest, which, combined, create a rural belt across mid Hampshire separating Southampton and Portsmouth to the south and Basingstoke and Farnborough to the north. The rural economy brings different



challenges, both for land based and non-land based businesses around productivity and connectivity. We will work with the new Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board at Hampshire County Council on the rural economy and its importance to the Hampshire economy.



70,400
jobs in Test Valley



£3,4 billion
economy in 2022

Test Valley accounted for 70,400 jobs and its economy was worth £3.4 billion in 2022. At a macroeconomic level, the Test Valley economy grew relatively slowly in the decade from 2009-2019 at an average of 2% per year, compared with 2.2% for the UK as a whole and 2.4% in Hampshire. In contrast there was rapid growth in employment, particularly in professional services, transportation, and administration and support services, at an average of 2.3% in Test Valley compared to less than 1% in Hampshire, the Enterprise M3 area and the Solent. Together, these explain the lower productivity found in Test Valley compared to other areas. The pace of growth in the Borough is forecast to remain below regional and UK averages in the period to 2040.

The Borough's largest sector is wholesale and retail, but there is also a notable concentration of manufacturing activities, particularly around Andover, and a high proportion of jobs in professional, scientific and technical activities, particularly around Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams, North

Baddesley and Valley Park. Transportation and storage are more significant in Test Valley than in the South East as a whole, particularly in Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams which occupy a strategic location for freight activities. Around one third of Test Valley's jobs in this sector are concentrated in the Nursling Estate alone.

Forecasts for the period to 2040 indicate that the professional, scientific and technical sector will create the largest number of jobs. Overall manufacturing employment is expected to decline within the Borough, although advanced manufacturing is identified as a growth sector.

The labour market in Test Valley is strong, with a high proportion of residents that are economically active, though many access higher paying jobs outside the Borough meaning that on average, residents' earnings are higher than those of Test Valley workers. Andover is the largest employment area in Test Valley with more than 26,000 workers and a high percentage of public sector jobs. The Romsey area has more than 10,000 jobs dominated by business services. Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams, North Baddesley, Valley Park account for around 11,000 jobs.

The population is older than that of comparator areas and demographics will become increasingly important for the local economy and labour force. Over recent years, migration into the Borough of younger families has increased the numbers of

children and of adults aged 25-34, but growth of the working-age population is forecast to be much lower going forward in comparison to that of retirees. The quality of life is high, although house price affordability is a key issue which may affect the attractiveness of the Borough to young families.

Priority Areas

The data, our wide-ranging consultations, and the everyday intelligence that we collect from our local business community and stakeholders have led us to identify six priorities for this Economic Development Strategy:

- **Supporting key sectors, including advanced manufacturing, green technologies and tourism, to grow**
- **Building a climate in which entrepreneurs, and small and medium sized businesses can thrive**
- **Supporting businesses in their transition to a low carbon economy**
- **Regenerating Andover and Romsey town centres**
- **Promoting upskilling and raising qualification levels to meet future economic needs**
- **Reflecting the changing workforce and new life stages.**

Within the report, we highlight the links to the priorities in the Corporate Plan and indicate where our Strategy will be tailored to the specific communities within our Borough.

The Council has had recent successes in securing funding. In addition to the £18.3 million Levelling Up Funding from the UK Government to deliver regeneration plans in the centre of Andover, we secured and are responsible for delivering £1 million of UK Shared Prosperity Funds (UKSPF)² and just over £500,000 of Rural England Prosperity Funds (REPF)³. We will use these successes combined with the knowledge and experience this has built within the Council to be bolder in our economic development approach across the various strands of our work.

Over the next 5 years, we aim:

- **to be more proactive in seeking funding opportunities;**
- **to work strategically with partners including Hampshire County Council and business organisations to secure inward investment and support companies establishing themselves in Test Valley.**

² For more information on UKSPF funding, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

³ For more information on REPF funding, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/>



Support Key Sectors to Grow

Test Valley has excellent transport links, a strong labour market, a growing science park and a critical mass of companies in a number of key business sectors. We must harness these attributes to promote the Borough as a great place to do business across all business sectors. We must also strengthen relationships with major employers in our area.

Manufacturing, transport and storage (which incorporates logistics), professional, scientific & technical services (including green innovation), and tourism are sectors of particular importance in Test Valley because of their size here, or their potential for growth. They will be areas of focus. Wholesale and Retail is also a key sector which will be supported by our work with business parks and the town centre regeneration activities.

Some 13% of Hampshire's manufacturing Gross Value Added (GVA; a measure of the value generated in the production of goods and services) is located in Test Valley, despite the Borough accounting for just 8% of Hampshire's total GVA. Manufacturing of food products is the largest manufacturing sub-sector and represents 40% of Hampshire's food manufacturing output.

The transportation and storage sector is relatively small in terms of output (5.6% of

the Borough's GVA in 2022) but accounts for a relatively large proportion of the local economy. The sector is estimated to have employed 5,500 people in 2022, representing 7.7% of Test Valley's total, a significantly higher proportion than in any other comparator area.

In the forecasts to 2040, the professional, scientific, & technical sector is predicted to create the largest number of jobs. Green innovation is an emerging growth area in this sector and will cut across other sectors. It links to the chapter in this Strategy on Supporting Businesses in their Transition to a Low Carbon Economy and the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan⁴.

Tourism is a relatively small but important sector right across the Borough. It attracts outside visitors – more than 4 million in 2019 – and contributes to the quality of life of our residents.

In order to support key sectors in the Test Valley economy, our focus will be to:

- **promote Test Valley as an attractive location for business and inward investment;**
- **identify suitable land for economic development;**

⁴ Test Valley Borough Council. (2020). Climate Emergency Action Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/corporatedirection/environmentandsustainability/climate-emergency-action-plan>

- **capture cross-Council interactions with key employers and develop Key Account Management activity;**
- **facilitate key sector networks to help businesses to connect and to facilitate collaboration and sharing of best practice;**
- **facilitate discussions on business premises;**
- **provide grants through the UKSPF;**
- **deepen collaboration with the University of Southampton Science Park.**

Across the Borough

An Employment Needs Study⁵ is informing the Local Plan 2040 for the whole Borough which aims to balance the needs for **sustainable** economic growth and development alongside protection and enhancement of the **environment** to provide lasting benefits for our communities. It aims to ensure sufficient commercial premises of the right types to meet demand in growth areas. We have an important role in providing for sufficient employment land in suitable locations, including for transport and storage, and manufacturing.

⁵ DLP Planning Ltd. (2023). *Test Valley Employment Needs Further Analysis Study.*

We are fortunate that Test Valley is home to some national and international companies such as Le Creuset, Chemring Group, Stannah Lifts, Simplyhealth, Rich Products, Euronics and Ordnance Survey. We must not take these existing key businesses for granted and need to ensure that we build relationships and communication with them. Inward investment activities are vital to bring more such businesses to our Borough and we will work in partnership with Hampshire County Council's new Prosperity Partnership Board to develop an inward investment offer to promote Test Valley.

As the landowner of Walworth and Portway business parks we have the ability to negotiate directly with potential tenants. In particular, where we have a landlord-tenant relationship, such as with Le Creuset, Stannah, Abel and Cole and Twinings, we have on-going engagement.

Some of our sectors are concentrated in specific areas of the Borough and will be discussed below. However, tourism is important across the Borough. Test Valley has thematic strengths in history and heritage; landscapes and nature, particularly in our beautiful rural areas; food and drink; and independent retail, particularly in Stockbridge and Romsey. We also have some notable family attractions.

We have recently conducted a strategic review of tourism in Test Valley. It highlighted the strength of the day visitor market and

the high average level of spend of these visitors. The close proximity to other tourist destinations in Winchester, the New Forest, Salisbury and Stonehenge suggests a growth opportunity for overnights in Test Valley to maximise spend.

We will chair a tourism group within Test Valley to promote **connections** between tourism businesses and we will promote these businesses through our dedicated [Visit Test Valley](#) website. We will work to increase overnight accommodation providers and better **connect** them to local attractions. Additionally, we will work in collaboration with partners across South Hampshire and Southampton to promote the wider area of southern Test Valley as a culture and tourism destination to promote **prosperity** in the area. Within the Council, we will ensure that the economic case for tourist developments is well-made when planning applications are considered.

Andover and the North of Test Valley

In recognition of the concentration of manufacturing in and around Andover, and the opportunities for growth in advanced manufacturing, we have established a 'Manufactured in Andover' group which meets quarterly at different manufacturers' sites to discuss important themes for

the sector. The Council is facilitating **connections** between businesses for the sharing of best practice, between education providers and manufacturing employers, and between our manufacturing group and outside experts. We expect these meetings to help companies think through their approach to strategic issues such as decarbonisation and AI, and they also provide a forum for companies to discuss their skills needs with education providers. Our draft Local Plan 2040 has identified new development allocations for employment land suitable for advanced manufacturing activities.

To support the transport and storage sector, we are over-allocating employment land in the north of the Borough in our draft Local Plan 2040, in close proximity to the A303 and A34 corridors, in order to facilitate growth where market demand exists. This will further the range and choice of sites to promote economic growth and potential inward investment. Test Valley offers cost advantages compared to sites in local authority areas along the M3 that are closer to London.



Southern Test Valley

There is a cluster of transport and storage companies at Nursling Industrial Estate, while Adanac Business Park houses University Hospitals Southampton Health and Innovation Campus.

There is a forecast need for further transport and storage in southern Test Valley. The Council is allocating land as far as is practicable given the sites identified, but there is a shortfall in the south of our Borough and so we will conduct a further 'call for sites' exercise to seek any further suitable sites. The draft Local Plan 2040 proposes to over-allocate sites in southern Test Valley for other employment use classes.

Romsey, Stockbridge and Rural Communities

We recognise the importance of the River Test and its tributaries to the local economy, particularly in and around Stockbridge, and we will seek to quantify its economic value.

Specific grant funding is available through the UKSPF and the REPF, both provided by the UK Government for rural areas of our Borough and the tourism sector in Romsey. The UKSPF provides for campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of areas local to Romsey, and the REPF provides small capital grants for the development and promotion of the visitor economy. This should lead to the creation or improvement of tourism, culture or heritage assets to further improve our tourism offer.

Chilworth

The University of Southampton Science Park at Chilworth in the south of the Borough is a great asset to the professional, scientific, & technical sector, and to emerging sectors such as green innovation and advanced manufacturing. Through the UKSPF, we are providing direct support to fast-track programmes targeted at innovation-led businesses. Early data indicate that these lead to the creation of jobs and increased investment of many times the value of the grant funding.

The Council has regular meetings with the Science Park and is represented on the strategy board for the Future Towns Innovation Hub based there; we therefore contribute to forward planning. Through our links, we can **connect** technology-based businesses with the resources and expertise at the Science Park.

We will establish a Test Valley Net Zero Innovation Network along the lines of the Manufactured in Andover group to bring together companies in this emerging sector that will be critical for **sustainability** and the long-term health of the **environment**. These are likely to be young companies who would benefit from **connections** and networking opportunities.



Conclusion

Test Valley is a great place to do business and by building strong relationships with the new Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board at Hampshire County Council, we can promote our Borough to attract inward investment. Strong open relationships with the business community and key employers will help us to understand their needs and resolve local issues.

The Council has a fundamental role in ensuring that there is sufficient and suitable employment land identified in the Borough in

the Local Plan to attract and retain businesses including in priority sectors such as transport and storage and advanced manufacturing.

We will establish sector networks to facilitate sharing of best practice in key sectors in our Borough such as manufacturing, the green economy, and tourism, and we will deepen our links with Southampton Science Park to promote collaboration among professional, scientific and technical businesses. We will learn from the tourism review and implement its recommendations, and provide grant funding to technology, rural and tourism businesses.

Build a Climate in which Entrepreneurs, and Small and Medium Sized Businesses can Thrive

As a Borough Council, we engage with a large number and range of businesses. This is an important role as we can support, influence and understand the issues that they are facing. We have contact with all our businesses via our Business Rates team. This gives an opportunity to communicate with our businesses as well as a lever that we can adjust to support them.

The data shows that Test Valley has a high share of self-employed workers and SMEs but that their numbers have declined in recent years. We will renew our efforts to support local enterprise, and the many small and medium sized businesses that start up and grow here. These are key to economic growth and delivering **prosperity**.



To create the right environment for small and medium sized business to thrive, we need to:

- **respond to business needs and challenges;**
- **liaise with local partners over business infrastructure requirements;**
- **provide timely information, advice, grants and support;**
- **create networks to enable businesses to connect.**

Across the Borough

We recognise the vital importance of infrastructure to all our businesses. We are in regular dialogue with South Western Railway about the train services to Andover, Romsey, Grateley and Mottisfont & Dunbridge, and with Hampshire County Council about physical infrastructure. We will strengthen our engagement with Hampshire County Council as Project Gigabit is developed to ensure that Test Valley businesses can have access to the digital capacity they require. We will establish relationships with commercial agents to help businesses to find suitable premises in suitable locations.

Our website provides information and signposting on grants, local training,

and networking events. It includes a comprehensive list of national and local organisations to help businesses to **connect** to comply with regulatory requirements and access the many free resources available to them. We produce a monthly *Business Matters* newsletter which highlights new funding opportunities and support as they become available. Our Planning team has a dedicated email address for enquiries, and our Housing and Environmental Health service provides business advice on environmental health, including food hygiene requirements, workplace health and safety, environmental protection, and animal welfare. We have a dedicated Licensing team that deals with regulated business sectors such as entertainment, alcohol, gambling, scrap metal dealers and taxis.

We want to nurture small businesses as they start-up and grow, to give them the best chance of long-term success. We currently offer a free Business Support Service to businesses across the Test Valley. This service provides health checks, mentoring and tailored 1-1 advice to entrepreneurs pre-starting up, and to start-up, early-stage and established businesses. An online 'Start Your Own Business in Test Valley' guide complements this with a step-by-step checklist to guide entrepreneurs through key practical elements of starting a business including business plans, cash-flow, funding, tax and marketing. The booklet then signposts to a wealth of further resources to

help business owners as their businesses develop and **prosper**. This online resource will be updated as required to ensure that it remains current.

To support entrepreneurs further, Business Incentive Grants of £750 are available for new full-time businesses across the Test Valley; the payment is made after the business has been trading for a minimum of six months. We will continue to support a diverse range of businesses from across the Borough through these grants over the period of this Strategy. By offering these grants to brand new businesses, we establish an early dialogue with them: we can support them at the outset by highlighting key issues that they need to consider, such as registration, health and safety, licensing and planning, and we signpost them to helpful resources; we also listen to them and improve our understanding of the issues that they face.

Villages and Rural Communities

Although the rural economy is small in absolute and relative terms, it is critical to those who live and work there, and we will work with partners such as Hampshire County Council and the Hampshire Rural Forum to ensure that this area is promoted and supported. We recognise from our



Thriving Communities workshops that rural areas have particular challenges such as connectivity and access to services. As reflected in our Corporate Plan, the Council will consider how best to support residents, communities and businesses and bring forward a strategy for our rural areas which will investigate a potential Rural Business Grant Scheme.

We have secured funding for our rural businesses and communities through the UK Government's UKSPF and REPF. Grants targeted at micro and small rural businesses will help them grow and adopt new technologies. Moreover, we will deliver grants to help support and grow the local social economy to deliver **sustainable** benefits for our communities.

We are aware of the vital contribution of village shops at the heart of our communities, but also of the difficulties that they face. We have formed a network to **connect** these shops across the Test Valley. We will facilitate visits to the range of shops in our villages to help shop managers to share best practice.

Andover and Romsey

The regeneration of Andover and Romsey town centres will increase footfall and improve the climate for all our town centre businesses. This is discussed in more detail in a dedicated chapter.

As the landowner of Portway and Walworth Business Parks and the owner of the Chantry Centre shopping centre in Andover, the Council is able to influence the ways in which these assets are managed and developed. At Walworth Business Park, the Walworth Enterprise Centre (WEC) offers easy in / easy out short-term licences for a range of business units and offices, and the Chantry Centre Management team and Estates team are available to discuss unit availability with potential tenants. The Council is the landlord for Basepoint Business Centres in both Andover and Romsey which offer a range of units for varying purposes; it also lets some office space in Romsey town centre.

We will deepen the cooperation between the Economic Development function of the Council and its Planning, Environmental Health, Licensing and Regulatory functions to ensure that the Council speaks with one voice and that businesses receive timely information.

Chilworth

We are in regular dialogue with the University of Southampton Science Park to understand their provision for business start-ups and scale-ups. Through the UKSPF, we are providing direct support to fast-track programmes targeted at early-stage innovation-led businesses.

Conclusion

The Council has an important partnership role in liaising with other authorities such as Hampshire County Council and with companies such as South Western Railway on infrastructure requirements.

We recognise the importance of the rural economy and will work with partners to develop a rural strategy to promote and support our rural areas.

We want to maximise the chances of success for Test Valley entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses. Accordingly, we will provide targeted support to these businesses through our Business Support Service, the *Start Your Own Business in Test Valley* guide, easy in/easy out licences at our own premises, regular and timely information, and small grants. We will also promote networking opportunities and share best practice.

Support Businesses in their Transition to a Low Carbon Economy

The Government has set the target to reach net zero by 2050. We know that the direct impacts of climate change on businesses can result in significant disruption from unpredictable weather events, including flooding to excessive heat. This has direct costs in terms of lost work hours, building reparations, and planning for increasing uncertainty. In addition, businesses will need to deal with new regulations relating to net zero, while meeting increasing expectations over environmental credibility to satisfy both customers and potential employees. Combined, these make moving to a net zero economy a challenge of our time.



1,150
green jobs
by 2030
(1.6% of all jobs)



1,800
green jobs
by 2050
(2.4% of jobs)

Alongside the challenges, there are opportunities. According to the Local Government Association (LGA), Test Valley is expected to have 1,150 green jobs by 2030, and 1,800 by 2050. Green jobs could therefore account for 1.6% of the Borough's jobs in 2030, and 2.4% of jobs in 2050. We have seen already that local businesses are employing **sustainability** experts to help them assess their carbon footprints and to then roadmap how to reach net zero. Growth is achieved through investment, technological change and innovation, which will be hallmarks of the green transition. As advantages of low carbon and **sustainable** approaches become clearer, additional jobs will be created to support transition and manage new operations and ways of working.

Our Corporate Plan has the ambition to ensure that Test Valley is a **prosperous** place to live but that economic growth is **sustainable** and improves our **environment**. Moving to a net zero economy will help this to be achieved.

In alignment with the Test Valley Borough Council Climate Emergency Action Plan, we need to:

- **support our businesses to decarbonise;**
- **support our green technology companies to flourish;**

- **encourage uptake of green products and technologies among residents;**
- **help to ensure that young people have the right skills and guidance to take advantage of the green jobs revolution, and that the existing workforce has access to training;**
- **facilitate the development of low carbon infrastructure;**
- **consider how our rural landscape is managed to mitigate the effects of climate change by working with farmers and landowners.**

Across the Borough

To achieve our aims, we will work in partnership with business organisations across the Borough, and with education providers. We will also embed net zero and **sustainability** within all our Economic Development networks and support programmes to facilitate the net zero transition. We will **connect** businesses and share best practice and success stories.

The construction sector presents a particular focus for the low-carbon transition and may be driven by Government regulations and incentives. There is an opportunity for the Borough to champion **sustainable** homebuilding and retrofitting. To deliver this, we will work with partners including Hampshire County Council and the Retrofit

Academy to understand the local skills gap and training demand for upskilling or reskilling the existing construction workforce, including plumbing and heating engineers, and electricians⁶. We currently work with the Construction Industry Training Board to request Employment and Skills Plans from developments of over 50 homes or 10,000/1,000 sqm and we will support their ambition to include more **sustainable** construction measures within the requirements.

Furthermore, given Test Valley's relatively high average income profile, it is realistic to expect demand for electric vehicles to grow faster here than elsewhere. This creates a business case for the accelerated delivery of residential and commercial charging points, and a need for training and upskilling of car mechanics. We will engage with the National Grid and partners to identify and find solutions to barriers that prevent infrastructure development.

⁶ Hampshire County Council. (2023, January). Hampshire Economic Strategy. Retrieved from <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/business/hampshire-economic-strategy.pdf>

Villages and Rural Communities

We will provide specific support to our rural businesses through the UKSPF-funded Rural Net Zero Business Service. This provides both advice and small capital grants to rural businesses whatever the stage of their net zero journey.

As part of the Rural Net Zero Service, there will be a pilot land-based demonstrator selected from bids to trial a new decarbonisation technology or process. The learning from this will be shared across similar rural businesses in our Borough and through partners such as the National Farmers Union.

Although average income levels are high in Test Valley, the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that more than a quarter of Test Valley Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) rank in the top 20% most deprived areas in the country for “indoor living environment”, which measures the quality of housing. These areas tend to be rural, where housing tends to be older and more energy intensive than in denser neighbourhoods and more reliant on heating oil as a source of fuel. Using the UKSPF grant from the UK Government, we will promote increased take up of energy efficiency measures through initiatives such as the Community Energy South's Leaky Homes roadshow in our villages.

Chilworth

Innovative low carbon businesses will spearhead the transition to a **sustainable**, green economy and will develop the technologies of the future to increase **prosperity** in our Borough. In Test Valley we are fortunate to be the home of a range of companies carrying out groundbreaking innovation, whether this be in solar technologies, alternative energy such as hydrogen, or building materials. Many are located in and around Southampton Science Park, which is the home of the Future Towns Innovation Hub, a centre for developing **sustainable** technologies. We will use our data sources to identify innovative green companies from across our Borough to form a Test Valley Net Zero Innovation Network. We intend to approach the Future Towns Innovation Hub at the University of Southampton Science Park to partner with us to host this. This would be the ideal location where these companies can **connect**, collaborate and share challenges and opportunities.

Business Parks

Our business engagement with the Manufacturing in Andover group has highlighted that there is an appetite from our businesses to invest in renewable energy but that they face barriers in knowing where to start and with connections to the National Grid. We will explore options for making data available on the feasibility and payback times for solar panels to companies on our larger business parks near Andover and in the south of the Borough including at Nursling.

We also need to explore the potential of developing low carbon infrastructure. As transportation and storage is a significant sector for Test Valley's economy, there is the potential to work with local transportation and logistics businesses to understand their requirements and to develop charging points at the major logistics and distribution centres along the A303 corridor and in the Nursling area. We will work with the Solent Cluster⁷ who bring together private, public and non-governmental organisations to collaborate on the decarbonisation of the Solent region and beyond through developing hydrogen production and carbon capture and storage technologies.

⁷ The Solent Cluster. (2024). Working together towards a lower carbon future. <https://www.thesolentcluster.com/>



Conclusion

The transition to net zero will pose a huge challenge over the forthcoming decades. The Council has recognised the scale of the challenge in declaring a climate emergency and will seek to inform, facilitate and enable residents and businesses to take steps to decarbonise.

Increased uptake of green products and technologies among businesses and residents will create demand and Test Valley has an emerging group of businesses at the cutting edge of green technology whom we will **connect** and support to flourish. Greener products and services will create green jobs and we will work with education providers to help ensure that college learners and the existing workforce have access to the right training.

We will make solar data available to companies on the large business parks in our Borough, and work in partnership on the supply of low carbon infrastructure and the development of greener supply chains. We will deliver UKSPF funded grants for Community Energy and the Test Valley Rural Net Zero Business Service. The Net Zero Service will provide practical help to rural businesses and share best practice from a land-based demonstrator.



Regenerate Andover and Romsey Town Centres

Attractive town centres draw people to live in the surrounding areas. They create a virtuous circle whereby more people use the town centre, the demand grows for transport links, businesses benefit from higher footfall, the local economy benefits, and the town centre becomes a more attractive destination for visitors and businesses. Yet we know that increasing digitisation has changed the way that people shop, and this was accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, retail businesses have suffered. Our long-term aim is to reinvigorate our town centres to meet the needs and wants of our communities for the future.

The Andover⁸ and Romsey⁹ masterplans developed over recent years acknowledge and embrace the changing nature of our town centres. They have been developed in consultation with our partner organisations and communities through Andover Vision and Romsey Future. Their ambition is to create **connected, sustainable, inclusive** and thriving town centres for people to visit, and within which people can work, live,

and spend time with their families. Then businesses will **prosper** and grow.

The Council has a vital role to play in town centre regeneration in:

- **managing the delivery of the masterplans;**
- **promoting our town centres;**
- **managing town centre assets such as the Chantry Centre shopping centre in Andover;**
- **working collaboratively with stakeholders;**
- **monitoring vacancy rates and footfall.**

As the regeneration work proceeds, we will prioritise measures to minimise disruption, support our existing town centre businesses and attract new traders. Within the town centres, we will continue to offer Independent Retailer Grants of up to £1200 for retail, hospitality and beauty businesses moving into premises that have been vacant for more than one month; two instalments of £600 are payable after a minimum of three and nine months of trading. We will also run and promote programmes of local events to increase footfall.

In both towns, we will improve dialogue with commercial agents and partner organisations to help businesses access suitable properties

⁸ Test Valley Borough Council, Hemingway Design, *New Master-planning*. (2020). *Andover Town Centre Vision and Masterplan*. Retrieved from <https://www.thinkandovertowncentre.co.uk>

⁹ Romsey Future. (2020). *South of Romsey Town Centre Master-plan Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.romseyfuture.org.uk/>

with the right consents. A car parking study will consider the parking requirements for Andover and Romsey moving forward.

Andover

We will work in partnership with organisations including the Andover Business Improvement District (BID), Andover Vision and Andover Town Council to deliver the ambitious regeneration plans for Andover, embed the place brand¹⁰, and make the town more attractive for visitors and businesses.

During the period covered by this Strategy, Andover will see the transformation of Western Avenue with the opening up of the river corridor to create a river walk along the western edge of the town. This will improve walking and cycling routes to the town centre and contribute to all of our strategic priorities: **sustainability, connection, inclusion, environment and prosperity.**

In parallel, with the benefit of Levelling Up funding from the UK Government, we will create a multi-purpose theatre at the heart of the town centre near the Guildhall. The new venue will provide a larger auditorium than the current Lights Theatre and have a larger and improved space for an array of activities. This will attract more people into

10 Test Valley Borough Council, Hemingway Design, New Master-planning. (n.d.). Andover Place Brand. Retrieved from <https://www.thinkandovertowncentre.co.uk/place-brand>



the town centre during both the day and the evening, to the benefit of retail and hospitality businesses. Footfall within our town centre will be further increased by the expansion of Andover College and the increased use of the Andover town centre health hub; these projects are being part-funded by UK Government through the UKSPF.

The Council bought the Chantry Centre shopping centre and some adjacent High St retail properties in 2019 and now manages the Centre directly rather than by using a management company. As the owner, we have greater flexibility to shape the Centre's development and use over the period of this Strategy. We have reduced service charges to businesses within the Centre at the same

time as improving maintenance and facilities. We are also making it easier for new businesses to operate in the heart of Andover by working directly with traders to provide the support they need, including through selling trading spaces in the malls, offering pop-ups of variable duration, providing easy in/easy out licences, and leasing units long-term.

The Council also owns office space in Chantry House and Portland House above the shopping malls. The IncuHive Group currently offers co-working space to entrepreneurs and small business owners on two floors of Chantry House. The remaining space in both buildings is let to other tenants.

London Road offers pubs, bars, and clubs.

We will work with the Andover BID and the local businesses to improve security in the evenings and to consider how best to develop the night-time economy in a **sustainable** way for the community.

We will build on our existing events in the town centre to create a more cohesive, **inclusive** and strategic programme, working closely with partners through Andover Vision. Current events such as the Christmas festival, regular Second Sundays markets and Four Fun Fridays will be continued, and the programme will be extended with events including specialist markets, a pride event and a well-being fair, to bring visitors into our town. Such events can provide a first step into business for a new trader.

Romsey

The regeneration of Romsey will focus on the south of the town centre and will encompass a new mobility and public transport hub, public realm improvements and enhanced community facilities. We will work with Romsey Future and the community to develop and deliver these plans. Footfall in the town centre will be increased by the better transport links and the more attractive gateway to Romsey from the south, driving **prosperity** in the town.

Urban realm improvements will be focused on Broadwater Rd and enhancing the area around Fishlake stream. The mobility hub will promote **inclusion** by improving access for buses, coaches, cyclists and pedestrians while ensuring that disabled visitors are catered for. Servicing for businesses with a frontage to The Hundred will be improved, and the hub will provide commercial spaces in ground-floor flexible units with larger floor areas than traditionally found in Romsey.

We have secured funding from the UKSPF for public realm enhancements, creation of and improvements to **sustainable** green and blue space to improve the natural **environment**, and campaigns to encourage visits to the local area. Guided by the Romsey Future priorities and the Romsey Masterplan, we will deliver these UKSPF projects in 2024 and 2025.

We will continue to work closely with Romsey Town Council and Romsey Future. We currently part fund the Town Centre Events and Business Engagement Officer in Romsey and we have worked collaboratively on tourism, employment and volunteering initiatives as well promoting local events such as the Romsey Food Fair, Antiques Fair and the Christmas lights switch-on, to draw visitors to the town centre.

Conclusion

The Council is managing the delivery of ambitious regeneration projects for Andover and Romsey town centres that will make them more attractive for residents and visitors and therefore for businesses. The plans include a riverside walk and new theatre for Andover, and a mobility hub and improved community facilities for Romsey. The plans are shaped by extensive consultations through Andover Vision and Romsey Future.

Within Andover, the acquisition of the Chantry Centre has given the Council opportunity to manage this asset in the interests of our local businesses and community groups.

Alongside the regeneration projects, we will continue to promote the town centres in collaboration with partner organisations through regular events, and we will provide grant support to businesses moving into empty premises in the town centres.



Promote Upskilling and Raise Qualification Levels

While the Borough has experienced recent jobs growth, there remains a productivity challenge to translate this into economic output and increased **prosperity**, which requires upskilling of the workforce, and adoption of new technologies and processes such as AI, digitisation, **sustainable** technologies and automation. Done effectively, digital connectivity can promote **inclusion**.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan for the M3 region¹¹ highlighted the important role that local authorities can play in improving information, advice and guidance; and facilitating responsive and **inclusive** curricula by building dynamic relationships and coordinating networks between Further Education providers and businesses.

Technological change creates challenges but also offers opportunities. As the UK seeks to decarbonise, companies in sectors including construction, engineering, manufacturing and land-based industries will need to adapt and upskill their workforces for long term **sustainability** and to safeguard jobs; those that embrace the changes stand to gain.

¹¹ Surrey Chambers of Commerce. (2023). EM3 (Including all of Surrey) LSIP Final Report. Retrieved from <https://www.surrey-chambers.co.uk/report/em3-including-all-of-surrey-lsip-final-report/>

The Council will play a partnership role in improving skills to meet economic need. Our focus will be to:

- **deepen our engagement and dialogue with Andover and Sparsholt Colleges, the Test Valley secondary schools, Jobcentre Plus, and skills advisers.**
- **use our business networks to provide intelligence on skills and training needs.**
- **develop the Test Valley Skills Zone group.**
- **play an active role in the development of Employment and Skills Plans.**

Across the Borough

We will build on the work done in the Local Skills Improvement Plan by hosting regular Test Valley Skills Zone meetings, **connecting** partners from the County Council, Colleges, Jobcentre Plus, schools, skills advisers and the voluntary sector to improve our understanding of skills provision and needs. To gain deeper insight into skills needs within industrial sectors, we will hold skills sessions within our Manufactured in Andover group and Test Valley Net Zero Innovation Group. Furthermore, we will engage with secondary schools within Test Valley to better understand the challenges

that they are facing and to support and promote their careers' fairs.

Across the M3 region there are high numbers of workers within the construction industry compared to the national average, but currently, too many learners on construction courses at Further Education Colleges do not progress into the industry. We will play an active role in the development of Employment and Skills Plans as larger industrial and residential developments are negotiated at sites within Test Valley, and seek to secure Section 106 agreements which include commitments to apprenticeships, T-levels and skills training in partnership with the Construction Industry Training Board. These will help to recruit new talent into the sector and retrain and upskill existing employees to improve retention. We will also facilitate co-operation between major construction companies such as Willmott Dixon and Morgan Sindall, and skills providers within Test Valley.

Our monthly Test Valley *Business Matters* newsletters will include a regular skills and employment section to highlight collaborative opportunities between businesses and skills providers, and signpost training and upskilling opportunities for employees.

Andover

Within Andover, we are strengthening our relationship with the College; there are regular discussions between Council officers and College staff over issues including careers, skills development and planning. We are aware of the challenges that the pandemic has posed for school pupils who are now embarking on further education. The College is catering for rapidly increasing numbers of students who have few if any GCSEs at levels 4 or above, and need Level 1, pre-GCSE courses.

We have secured funding of £240k from the UK Government through the UKSPF towards an extension of the Technology and Future Skills centre at the College. This continues long-standing support from the Council for the skills centre and will facilitate the expansion of their construction and automotive areas. Their experience is that Level 1 learners can re-engage with education through vocational courses in these areas. The expanded facilities will also cater for apprentices and for T-Level students who have achieved five or more GCSE passes and want to pursue a vocational path.

In recognition of the numbers of learners entering Andover College without five GCSE passes, we will discuss with the College and the local schools how best the Council can support with the re-engagement of learners to guard against the dangers of them

dropping out of education, employment and training. We will investigate digital platforms that could help learners to showcase vocational skills and consider how we can promote their visibility amongst our employer networks to promote **inclusion**.

We will continue to administer the Andover Skills Training Fund, agreed under a Section 106 Employment and Skills Plan when the Andover Business Park was built. This fund provides free skills training to Andover residents working in Andover businesses.

Romsey

GCSE attainment remains above the national average at the Romsey schools, but we will monitor this over the period of the Strategy. We also know that these schools have vulnerable learners at risk of dropping out of education, employment and training and will seek the schools' views to better understand the problem. We will engage with The Romsey School and The Mountbatten School through careers hubs; support careers' events; and invite colleges local to Romsey to our skills zone meetings.

Nursling

We will contribute to the Employment and Skills Plans agreed for developments at Adanac Park, and highlight to local schools, colleges and job centres the opportunities that they present for work placements, apprenticeships, undergraduates and training opportunities.

Conclusion

Test Valley is the home of six secondary schools and Andover College. Many of their students will join the local workforce and therefore we need to understand the problems they are facing and work in partnership to support them. In parallel we need to understand the skills needs and recruitment difficulties of our local businesses, particularly in key sectors, and we will gather this intelligence through our sectoral networks and regular communication.

We are in a period of fast technological change, and we can help to **connect** the College with employers to inform the development of new courses, such as T-Levels in engineering and digital skills. We can use our communication channels to highlight upskilling and reskilling opportunities to business, and opportunities for funding including through the Andover Skills Training Fund.



Through regular Skills Zone meetings we **connect** education providers, Jobcentre Plus and skills advisers. We are deepening our relationship with the Construction Industry Training Board and will seek to streamline processes for the development and monitoring of Employment and Skills Plans as part of Section 106 agreements.

Reflect the Changing Workforce and New Life Stages

We need to fully utilise the skills and experience of the residents in the Borough to maximise **prosperity** and **inclusion**. In line with national trends, our population is growing older, reducing the proportion of working age adults. Moreover, Test Valley has a higher proportion of older residents (>50 years and >65 years) than the UK as a whole, and a lower proportion of young adults (20-39 years). In particular, between 2012 and 2022, the number of residents aged over 75 grew by 40.9% in Test Valley compared to 30.8% across Hampshire and 21.2% across the UK. However, over the last decade, there has also been notable growth in Test Valley among the population aged 25-34 years old, and an increase in the number of children under 15.



40.9%
Increase in
people aged 75+



Increase
25-30 year olds
and children
under 15

Housing prices and housing growth are key factors in attracting workers into Test Valley. We know that housing has become less affordable in Test Valley since 2012, but that house price increases have been greater in the South East as a whole than in Test Valley alone. In the decade to 2022, the Council allocated land for the building of more houses than suggested by the demographic projections. This may have contributed to the higher numbers of young families living in the Borough over the last decade who contribute to the labour market.

Going forwards, the processes for determining the required levels of housing and commercial land involve, as the starting point, following Government planning policy methodology as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. However, we continue to have influence over the mix of housing types and the locations of housing and economic development sites. We work co-operatively with neighbouring authorities, infrastructure agencies, local communities and businesses and take a positive approach to growth and its delivery.

We know that the coming years will see a period of change in which people will have to work longer and many will change careers. The state retirement age is increasing, and cost of living pressures are keeping some workers in the workplace for longer. In the aftermath of the pandemic, there is greater

demand for hybrid working, but also a greater appreciation of the potential of hybrid working to improve **inclusion** across a range of sectors. The flexibility offered by hybrid working may suit older workers, primary carers and those with health conditions, and it may encourage retired individuals to return to work in some capacity.

As a Council, to help our residents and our businesses, we must:

- **promote participation in the workforce, particularly of older experienced workers;**
- **signpost to upskilling and reskilling opportunities to help those changing career or working in sectors that are experiencing significant change;**
- **work with partners to organise jobs fairs and promote volunteering opportunities;**
- **engage with employers and support organisations to promote inclusion.**

Across the Borough

We will consider how best to engage workers from across our communities to make the workforce more inclusive. In particular, we will consider how best to work with older workers and retirees to help them to understand their options and to harness their

expertise and life experience for the benefit of our communities. Maximising participation in the workforce will be increasingly important as the demographics of our Borough change.

According to the digital community Rest Less, nearly half of all self-employed individuals are over the age of 50, and one in five working people over 50 is self-employed¹². Through our free Business Support Service, we will provide advice to those who are self-employed or are considering taking that step. We will signpost hot-desking spaces and networking activities through our Start Your Own Business guide to help self-employed people remain **connected** to others.

New technologies and increasing digitisation will lead to the loss of some job roles while offering new opportunities. We will promote reskilling and courses through our networks and newsletters, such as the free courses offered through the Innovation South Virtual Campus on carbon literacy, digital marketing and cybersecurity, and the Skills Bootcamps and Multiply funded through Hampshire County Council.

Our Borough contains a number of military sites and sees military workers transition to civilian roles. The Council has set up a Civilian Military Forum to support military personnel, which holds specific careers

events aimed at the families of serving members of the military, and ex-military personnel. We will support and promote these events through our employer networks.

Andover and Romsey

The Council is an active member of the Andover Business Strategy Group, part of the Hampshire of Chamber of Commerce, and is part of the working group responsible for planning a jobs' fair for 2024. The intent is to pool the contacts of the various parties including those of the Andover Jobcentre Plus to attract a wide range of employers and candidates. We hope that this will become an annual event. We will promote the services that Jobcentre Plus offers to employers through our business newsletters, so building **connections**.

We know that Romsey residents are disadvantaged due to the lack of a local job centre. We are working with the Jobcentre Plus from Eastleigh (which covers Romsey) and Romsey Town Council to mitigate this issue by organising 6-monthly jobs' fairs in the town centre. The first of these in autumn 2023 attracted a high calibre of candidates leading to job interviews and job offers. We expect these jobs fairs to grow in popularity with both employers and applicants. We will consider how best to highlight the potential of workers with special needs and disabilities,

to promote **inclusion**. We will also explore opportunities with Romsey Freedom Church to promote careers, jobs services and training.

Alongside jobs fairs, we will promote volunteering opportunities. Many older people volunteer their time and expertise to the benefit of their communities, sharing knowledge and promoting **connections** across the generations.

Villages and Rural Communities

Our Business Support Service can help businesses who need to adapt and change to be **sustainable**. The small business REPF grants, financed by the UK Government as part of the UKSPF cater specifically for farm businesses looking to diversify.

Many of our village shops are community run. They offer a vital resource, friendship, and **connections** to residents and are a critical part of a thriving community. Importantly, they provide opportunities for local volunteers to contribute at the heart of their communities. We will continue to support them through our village shop network.

¹² Rest Less. (2023). Press. Retrieved from <https://restless.co.uk/press/nearly-one-in-two-48-self-employed-people-in-the-uk-are-aged-over-50/>

Conclusion

Increases in life expectancy are changing the demographics of our Borough and lowering the proportion of working age residents. It is therefore increasingly important that our workforce is **inclusive** and utilises the skills and experience of all. Older people play a vital role in communities as employees, self-employed workers, mentors and volunteers.

With the pace of change, it is critical that workers can access training, reskilling and upskilling opportunities throughout their working lives and explore new careers opportunities. We will work with partners to promote these opportunities and organise careers and jobs fairs.



Conclusion

We have outlined the role that the Council should play over the period 2024-2029, drawing from our Corporate Plan, the evidence base provided by Oxford Economics, our business networks and partners, and reports from sources including the former Local Enterprise Partnerships. In developing this Strategy, we have remained mindful that economic development must balance the drive for **prosperity** with the need for **sustainability**, a responsible approach to the **environment** and the need to **connect** with and **include** all in our communities. We have also considered the range of different places within our Borough and the support that may be specific to different areas.

Some of the work outlined in this Strategy will fall to the Economic Development team directly, whereas some projects such as the regeneration of the town centres are managed by their own dedicated teams. Our vision across the Council is to promote **prosperity** in a **sustainable** way which improves the quality of life of our residents and communities.

Economic development is promoted by the Council through a number of routes:

- **Direct actions, such as approving sites for economic development, managing the regeneration of our town centres, approving planning applications, registration and licensing services, setting business rates, and providing grant funding and business support.**
- **Enabling support, such as through sector-based networks, and by facilitating community and town centre events, discussions and connections.**
- **Partnership activities, such as through work with education and skills training providers, and collaboration with Hampshire County Council's Prosperity Partnership Board and business organisations to promote Test Valley as a vibrant place to do business.**

This Strategy covers the period 2024 – 2029 and outlines the strategic priorities for that timeframe. However, we know that actions to deliver those priorities will change or evolve over that time. Therefore, the Action Plan identifies on-going activity and clear actions for the period 2024 – 2026. These actions will be reviewed annually to inform specific actions that will be developed over the lifetime of the Strategy.



Action Plan

Priority Area	Action	Achieve by	Measure
Supporting key sectors to grow	• Host quarterly meetings of tourist businesses to promote connections and collaboration, and grow the group and increase number of businesses involved	On-going	No of meetings/businesses
	• Make the economic case for planning applications for tourist attractions	On-going	No of responses
	• Host quarterly meetings of the 'Manufactured in Andover' group to promote connections and collaboration and increase number of businesses involved	On-going	No of meetings/businesses
	• Establish a Test Valley Net Zero Innovation Network	Mar 25	Network established
	• Work in partnership with Hampshire County Council's new Prosperity Partnership Board to develop an inward investment offer promoting Test Valley	Mar 25	Inward investment offer finalised
	• Formalise a Key Account Management approach with key employers in the Borough	Mar 25	8 key accounts set up
	• Quantify the economic value of the River Test and its tributaries and connected economic sectors.	Mar 25	Indicative value with evidence base
	• Provide UKSPF and REPF grant funding in rural areas for the visitor economy	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	• Provide UKSPF grant funding for innovation-led businesses at the University of Southampton Science Park	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	• Develop destination management, marketing and development activities for Test Valley in line with the Tourism Review	Dec 25	New tourism model implemented

Building a climate in which entrepreneurs, and small and medium sized businesses can thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain dialogue regarding infrastructure with South Western Railway, Hampshire County Council Gigabit Project and the National Grid 	On-going	No of meetings held
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and signposting to small businesses directly, via the TVBC website, and via the monthly business newsletter 	On-going	Increased newsletter and website traffic
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Business Incentive Grants for new start-ups 	On-going	Increasing no of grants awarded
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a Test Valley Business Support Service and a free, downloadable Start Your Own Business in Test Valley booklet 	On-going	Updated yearly on website
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a comprehensive village shops network to provide networking and support 	Mar 24	Network established
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve dialogue with commercial agents for commercial premises in the Borough 	Mar 25	No of relationships developed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide UKSPF and REPF grants to village and rural businesses 	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate options to further support rural businesses, including pubs and shops, potentially through financial support / grant scheme 	Mar 25	Options developed

Supporting Businesses in their Transition to a Low Carbon Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support all businesses to become more sustainable through advice, signposting, and connections 	On-going	Increased traffic to net-zero webpages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners including Hampshire County Council, the Retrofit Academy and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub 	Mar 25	No of referrals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with education providers to ensure that the workforce has the skills necessary in green technologies 	Mar 25	No of training providers engaged
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the sustainability requirements in Employment and Skills Plans 	Mar 26	One case study per plan. New CITB guidance adopted
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form and host quarterly meetings of a Test Valley Net Zero Innovation Network to connect businesses at the forefront of green technologies 	Mar 25	Network established
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make solar data available to companies on large business parks 	Dec 25	Data available
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver the UKSPF funded Test Valley Rural Net Zero Business Service including a land-based demonstrator 	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with transportation and distribution businesses on infrastructure requirements 	Mar 26	Initial engagement with 2 companies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share success stories from companies within the Borough through our Business newsletter 	Mar 26	10 success stories published

Regenerating Andover and Romsey town centres	• Actively manage the Chantry Centre to maintain high levels of occupancy	On-going	Data showing occupancy levels
	• Meet annually with all major town centre commercial agents to help businesses access suitable properties with the right consents	On-going	Annual meetings held
	• Continue to attract businesses to the town centres through Independent Retailer Grants	On-going	No of grants awarded
	• Support and promote events in Andover to increase footfall	On-going	50 events annually
	• Support and promote events in Romsey to increase footfall	On-going	Increased footfall
	• Improve the urban realm in Romsey through UKSPF grants	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	• Agree a detailed design for a larger theatre in the heart of Andover town centre and start work	Mar 26	Design team appointed Planning permission granted Contractor appointed Work on site underway
	• Build a transport hub on the south side of Romsey town centre	Mar 26	Design team appointed Planning permission granted Contractor appointed Work on site underway
• Transform Western Avenue in Andover, creating a river walk	Mar 26	Design team appointed Planning permission granted Contractor appointed Work on site underway	

Promoting upskilling and raising qualification levels to meet future economic needs	• Host a quarterly Test Valley Skills Zone network	On-going	No of meetings/businesses
	• Ensure all sector groups discuss skills at least annually	On-going	Annual skills discussions held
	• Meet Test Valley's secondary schools at least annually and support their careers' fairs	On-going	Annual skills discussions held
	• Administer the Andover Skills Training Fund	On-going	Grant funding distributed
	• Highlight skills and training opportunities in the <i>Business Matters</i> newsletter	On-going	Monthly skills coverage
	• Streamline processes for the development and monitoring of Employment and Skills Plans as part of Section 106 agreements	Mar 25	New process in place
	• Support Andover College's Technology and Future Skills centre through the UKSPF	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed
	• Investigate options for engaging school leavers with limited academic qualifications	Mar 25	Feedback received from College/schools

Reflecting the changing workforce and new life stages	• Support those starting new self-employed ventures	On-going	Increased number of BIGs awarded
	• Promote reskilling courses through networks and newsletters	On-going	Monthly signposting
	• Support and promote careers events through the Civilian Military Forum (CMF)	On-going	No of events promoted
	• Support twice-yearly job fairs in Romsey	On-going	Jobs Fairs held /Increasing no of businesses involved
	• Promote volunteering opportunities and events	On-going	Newsletter and social media coverage
	• Work with partners to stage a job fair in Andover in 2024 as a template for annual events	Dec 24	Job fair held
	• Support rural businesses seeking to diversify through REPF grants	Mar 25	Grant funding distributed

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