

Economic Development Strategy 2006-2011

East Cambridgeshire District Council

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The District Council's vision for the economic development of the District is:-

“As one of the fastest growing Districts in the country to achieve an economy which is prosperous, diverse, dynamic and sustainable, helping to balance housing growth with employment growth, offering quality job opportunities and equality of access to local training opportunities.”

This strategy has been prepared in response to a number of factors:-

- The need to update the previous economic development strategy which was last reviewed in 2000.
- The need to take into account changes in the local economy which, over the last few years, has been experiencing significant population and housing growth.
- Increasing concern that employment growth is lagging behind population growth, resulting in increased out commuting
- The development of the East Cambridgeshire Community Strategy in 2004 which has identified economic development and closing the skills and education gap between and within different sections of the community as two of the key priorities for action within the District.
- Commencement of work on the Local Development Framework, the key planning document which will replace the current Local Plan for the District and provide the guidelines for local development in the period up to 2021.

Context

The strategy review has also had to take into account policies at regional and sub-regional levels.

The draft East of England ‘Regional Spatial Strategy’ (RSS) sets out the regional strategy for planning and development in the East of England to the year 2021. It covers economic development, housing, the environment, transport, waste management, culture, sport and recreation, and mineral extraction.

The RSS policies provide a development framework for the next 15 to 20 years that will influence the quality of life, the character of places and how they function, and inform other strategies and plans. A major feature of RSS is that it identifies the significant investment that will be needed in social, environmental, economic and transport facilities (‘infrastructure’). That investment will come from a variety of sources, including central and local government funding and private developer funding. The RSS also proposes total jobs growth across the region of 421, 500 during the period 2001 - 2021. 17% of this jobs growth is anticipated for the Cambridge sub-region.

The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) is the regional development agency charged with setting the strategic direction for economic development in the region and ensuring that the East of England remains one of the UK's top performing regions. EEDA is currently adopting a new way of working which emphasises their role as regional leader and catalyst and which will help to influence government spending in the East of England. Their challenge is to deliver sustainable economic growth with a budget which equals only 0.1% of the region's gross domestic product. They are increasingly acting as principal advocate for development of the region as well as strategic 'navigator' influencing major strategic change.

EEDA have recently produced a revised economic development strategy that sets out the long-term vision for the sustainable economic development of the East of England. The strategy has eight strategic goals:

- A skills base that can support a world-class economy.
- Growing competitiveness, productivity and entrepreneurship.
- Global leadership in developing and realising innovation in science, technology and research.
- High quality places to live, work and visit.
- Social inclusion and broad participation in the regional economy.
- Making the most from the development of international gateways and national and regional transport corridors.
- A leading information society.
- An exemplar for the efficient use of resources.

At sub-regional level the **Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)** was formally established in 1998 as a broad based group of stakeholders from across the Cambridgeshire sub-region which includes the private sector, public sector and community/voluntary sector interests and East Cambridgeshire District Council is a partner in this. The GCP's aim is to encourage and facilitate a balanced framework for structural, economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Greater Cambridge area. Although the high tech sector faltered in the early part of the current decade, growth in this sector has resumed and the GCP still see this as a key driver for future economic growth in the sub-region. They have identified the infrastructure issues which are restricting growth and the need for ensuring that people who live across the region are able to contribute to and benefit from its economic growth, including the market towns and rural areas. The GCP has recently reviewed its own strategy and identified 5 priorities for the sub-region:-

- Encouraging global success in entrepreneurship, research and development and business growth across the high-tech cluster.
- Encouraging business growth and economic development which will underpin a growing and sustainable Sub-Regional economy.
- Developing a skills base to support a world class economy.
- Benefiting all across the Sub-Region.
- Creating a high quality place to live and work.

In terms of workforce skills, the Cambridgeshire Learning and Skills Council plays a key sub-regional role in setting strategic priorities and ensuring resources are directed to the areas most in need. They also have recently completed a major review of education, learning and skills in the Eastern region, identifying issues such as an

increasing focus on achieving Level 2 qualifications and First Steps Learning and addressing funding pressures on adult and community learning activities. This work has helped to inform the development of strategy for East Cambridgeshire.

Interdependence between East Cambridgeshire and the wider Cambridge Sub Region.

East Cambridgeshire plays an important role as a services provider in the wider Cambridge sub-region and as such is key to the functionality and character of Greater Cambridge as a whole. The interdependence between East Cambridgeshire and the wider Cambridge sub-region is also reflected in current commuting patterns. 18,300 people commute out of the District daily compared with 6,000 who commute in - a net deficit of 12,300. Commuting is a policy issue for a number of reasons; the net outflow of residents is detrimental in environmental terms and also represents a daily loss of skills in the local economy. However, the ability of people to commute and therefore to take up alternative opportunities of employment and learning is part of a vigorous economy and active labour market. The East Cambridgeshire economy cannot therefore be viewed in isolation as it plays a wider supporting role and complements the current growth of the Cambridge sub-region.

Review Approach

The review of the East Cambridgeshire Economic Development Strategy has been led by an Economic Development Member Working Party, comprising members of the District Council's Community Services Committee, which was set up in September 2004. It has undertaken an in depth review of the various economic activities undertaken by the District Council including employment land availability, inward investment, the E Space Business Centres developed in 2001/2, business start-up support and the work of the Market Town's partnerships. The Working Party has also been informed by a number of research studies carried out during 2004-2005:-

- An Economic Audit of the District
- An Employment Land and Labour Market Study carried out by SQW Consultants March 2005.
- A Retail Study carried out by consultants Roger Tym & Partners Summer 2005.
- A Review of the E Space Business Centres carried out by Robinson Property Consultants May 2005.
- Consultation with over 35 local businesses carried out Jan-March 2005.

This strategy document represents a summary of the findings of this work and the research studies which have been analysed and from which a series of strategic priorities has been identified for the future direction of the District Council's economic development activities. Copies of the individual documents are available on request from the District Council's Economic Development team. The employment land and labour market study is also available on the District Council's website www.eastcambs.gov.uk.

There are also a number of related District Council strategies and plans that will run in parallel with the economic development strategy, such as the leisure, tourism and social inclusion strategies, and the emerging Local Development Framework. This document should therefore be read in conjunction with these.

2. ECONOMIC AUDIT OF THE DISTRICT

A detailed audit of the available economic statistics for the District was carried out in Autumn 2004 and revised in 2005. The full report is available as a separate document on request from the District Council's Economic Development Team but the key 'headlines' from this research are set out below.

- **Population:** Between 1991 and 2001, East Cambridgeshire had the fastest growing population in the region (20% increase). East Cambridgeshire is still currently one of the fastest growing districts in the UK with a projected 16.8% population growth between 2001-2021. The population of the District is expected to reach 83,000 by 2021. Much of this population growth will occur in the main market towns and population figures for the three market towns for 2006 are as follows:

Ely	17,380
Littleport	8,370
Soham	10,240

One of the big challenges facing the District is how to match this population growth with employment growth.

- **House Prices:** Overall house prices in East Cambridgeshire are currently higher than the national average (£196,734 compared to the national average of £161,900). With the exception of terraced properties, the average prices of houses in East Cambridgeshire have all risen considerably over the past five years. The overall average house price has risen by £70,842 since 2001, and by £17,536 over the past twelve months.
- **Gross Value Added (GVA):** Gross Value Added gives an indication of the level of goods and services being produced in the local economy. East Cambridgeshire has the lowest GVA/head total in Cambridgeshire.
- **Value Added Tax Stocks (VAT):** The number of companies within the area that are registered for VAT. VAT stocks provide a good account of the health of a local economy. East Cambridgeshire has experienced growth in its VAT stocks of 5.7% between 1997 and 2002.
- **Unemployment:** East Cambridgeshire's unemployment rate is currently lower than the regional and national averages. The unemployment rate in East Cambridgeshire as at September 2005 is 1.2 %. East Cambridgeshire does however, have a higher percentage of people unemployed aged 50 and over compared to regional and national averages. As at September 2005, there were also 1900 residents who were claiming incapacity benefit/severe disability allowance and 1300 claiming income support.
- **Deprivation:** Whilst overall on the national 2004 Index for Multiple Deprivation (IMD) East Cambridgeshire ranks as one of the Districts with low levels of deprivation this does hide specific small pockets of deprivation in certain areas. Twelve of East Cambridgeshire's 47 Super Output Areas (SOAs) rank in the national bottom 20% of the IMD Barriers to Housing and

Services domain. This domain considers difficulty of access to owner occupation, access to a post office, a primary school, a GP and food shops. In terms of education, skills and training, six East Cambs SOAs fall into the top 25% of the most deprived in the country (Ely North, 2 in Littleport East, 2 in Littleport West and Sutton).

- **Labour Market:** East Cambridgeshire has high economic activity rates compared to the national average. 82.6% of the District's population aged 16-69 is economically active (i.e. employed or actively seeking work.) compared to the regional average of 81.7% and the District has an estimated workforce of 19,870. East Cambridgeshire had 1,576 hi-tech jobs at the start of 2004, accounting for just 3.3% of all hi-tech employment in Cambridgeshire.
- **Education and Skills:** In 2003-2004, the percentage of pupils in East Cambridgeshire achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C was 57.5%. This was above the national average of 53.36%. In 2004, 38.8% of working age residents in East Cambridgeshire possessed an NVQ3 (A Level) and above equivalent qualification. 25% possessed an NVQ4 (First Degree) and above. 8.4% of the workforce did not hold any qualifications. As a general comment, skills levels are changing rapidly in the District, in line with demographic changes.
- **Adult Learning:** The provision and take-up of adult learning opportunities in the District is low compared to the County average. Male participation rates are particularly low. East Cambs has the fewest number of age 60+ resident learners in the county (16%) and the smallest percentage of males (16%) taking part in learning provision.
- **Out-commuting:** Out-commuting is a significant feature in the area with 49.4% of employed residents commuting out of the district for work. Only 2 wards in the district have net in-commuting. Ely East has the highest number of people commuting into the area (3019); followed by Fordham villages (63). All other wards have out-commuting. Burwell has the highest rate (-1671), followed by Haddenham (-1602). Ely East has the highest percentage in the District of people who live and work in the ward (41.28%).
11% of the District's working population currently work from home.
- **Sectors:** Key employment sectors are business services, manufacturing, retailing, wholesaling and haulage. Agriculture, health and social welfare and transport support services are in decline in the District. Industries that employ the most people in East Cambs include:-

Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles – 15.86% of people aged 16-74 in employment.

Manufacturing - 15.4% of people aged 16-74 in employment.

Real Estate renting and business activities – 13.9% of people aged 16-74 in employment.

It is also important to recognise the contribution that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) makes to local employment and economic growth. Although no figures are available for East Cambridgeshire or the County nationally it is estimated that the VCS makes an estimated £7.2 billion contribution to GDP and that there are approximately 569,000 employees in this sector.

- **Knowledge based industries.** East Cambridgeshire has been identified as an area on the cusp of the knowledge economy currently focused around Cambridge. The knowledge economy is defined as one directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information. It encompasses the exploitation and use of knowledge in *all* production and service activities; not just those sometimes classified as "high-tech" or "knowledge-intensive". Knowledge-based industries include a range of services such as education, financial, creative industries and other business services and communications. They also include high-tech manufacturing and emerging industries such as such as biotechnology. Currently 30% of the businesses within the District are in knowledge driven sectors.
- **Market Towns:** The research undertaken in 2005 focused on retail market indicators based on rents, yields, vacant floorspace levels and retailer demand for representation in the market town. The research identified that retail rents in Ely are increasing and there is a steady demand from multiple retailers for representation in the town, suggesting a relatively buoyant retail economy. Vacancy rates in Ely are dropping and are currently 4% (compared to national average of 8%). In contrast retail rents are much lower in Soham and Littleport with little demand for representation. Vacancy rates in Littleport are 6% and in Soham 17%, indicating more significant problems in Soham.
- **Vitality Indicators** researched related to the mix of retail uses and level of representation by national multiple retailers. Again Ely was identified as having relatively good vitality indicators, with some 65 national outlets and 10 key attractors (shops which attract people to a centre), and a retail mix of 26% convenience shops and 45.8% comparison shops (compared to 16.8% and 53% respectively national average). Soham in particular has a high focus on convenience shopping at 32% and both Littleport and Soham have much lower national outlet representation.
- In Ely 57% of shoppers travel by private car, 29% walk. Few shoppers travel more than 20 minutes to the centre. In Littleport and Soham the percentage of people walking to the shops was much higher. The market towns are used by shoppers primarily due to proximity and ease of access from home/work rather than for attributes such as quality of shops or environmental aspects. In respect of convenience shopping Tesco and Waitrose, not unexpectedly, dominate the market taking over 90% of market share. However in respect of comparison shopping the research suggested that some 42% of available expenditure is spent outside of the district in Greater Cambridge.

3. CONSULTATION

A key element in the review of the District Council's Economic Development Strategy was consultation with the business community to identify their views and concerns about the local economy.

A number of approaches were used for this consultation work, including:-

- Presentations and discussions with a number of key local business and strategic groups, including the East Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership, Soham Association of Commerce and Trade, Littleport Business Group, City of Ely Perspective, the Local Management Development group, East Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership and an informal grouping of the local businesses on the Cambridgeshire Business Park.
- Consultation through the District Council's Business Update newsletter.
- Detailed interviews with over 35 local companies, carried out between January and March 2005.
- A telephone survey with past and present tenants of the E Space Business Centres.

Company Survey

As part of the consultation process in depth interviews with 35 companies from across the District, from various sectors and of different sizes, were conducted. Using a structured questionnaire, the aim was to gather information about why the company was located in the District and where they see themselves in five years time, their opinion of East Cambridgeshire as a business location, any skills, workforce or ICT issues they have and their views on 'green' policies and local business support available.

Why located in East Cambridgeshire and where they see themselves in 5 years time

The majority of the companies interviewed were based in the District for historic reasons i.e. always been here or previously worked from home, or staff/owner live here or nearby

77% of businesses expected to grow and take on additional staff in the next 5 years, suggesting a high level of business confidence in the area.

Six businesses planned to move in the next five years, most expressing a wish to stay in East Cambridgeshire area but also reporting difficulties in finding suitable sites.

Those looking to move/expand stated that they would be looking for B1 accommodation from 2,000 sq.ft./0.5 acre in size.

Opinion of East Cambridgeshire as a business location

Strengths – good strategic infrastructure and location, with links to M11, A14, Midlands and ports.

Weaknesses - local infrastructure, particularly congestion on the A10 to Cambridge and at Ely rail crossing; lack of sufficient local business hotels; high business rates; shortage of available units/offices – although a number were not aware of the employment allocations in the District and the information available from the District Council.

Opportunities - improvements to roads; more support from central/local government and more co-ordination between planning and economic development sections within the District Council; the District Council to be more proactive in letting companies know what support is available to businesses; greater promotion and branding of the District and the E-space Centres to attract new businesses to the area.

Skills and workforce issues, ICT, green policies and local business support

Approx 50% of companies reported difficulties in recruiting staff either because they are unable to compete with salary levels in Cambridge or because they are unable to find specialist skills needed e.g. lorry drivers, people with engineering skills.

33 of 35 companies interviewed reported that they offer training to their staff and did not experience any difficulties providing this. The training provided is either in house or on the job, some companies also attend Business Link and the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce training and events. For those who do not provide training, the main reason for not doing so was the costs involved.

ICT – most companies utilized ICT to some extent and access to ICT and broadband was not seen as a problem.

Green Issues - lack of recycling infrastructure is a key issue.

While most were aware of Business Link and the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce and the support they offer, there was less awareness amongst those interviewed of local business networks. By those who were aware of them, they were seen as being for small shop keepers rather than larger firms.

E Space Centres – Tenants Survey

In Spring 2005, a survey was carried out with current and former tenants of E Space North and South, two business/incubator development centres in the District run by the District Council in association with Business Link. 50% of the respondents were growth companies of which 25% were classified as high growth firms. 47% of respondents were either hi-tech firms or provide support to high tech firms. 70% of respondents were previously working from home or had no previous premises before moving to E Space. If the E Space facilities had not been available almost 30% of respondents reported that they would have located outside East Cambridgeshire. 75% of respondents that had moved on from E Space into larger facilities had stayed within East Cambridgeshire. 58% of respondents that had left the E Space centres reported that E Space had been helpful for the development of their business. Important ingredients had been the quality of accommodation, flexible short-term leases and ability to move in quickly. The survey noted a lack of good quality small business space in the 100-1,000sq ft range and a shortage also in the 1,000-3,000 sq ft size range in the Ely and Littleport areas and that these centres were meeting a gap in the market.

Main Messages from the Business Consultation

Overall, the most common issues raised were:-

- the level of business rates.
- congestion on the roads locally.
- lack of affordable housing for employees.
- lack of business premises/small serviced plots/ premises in the 1,000-3,000 sq ft size range.
- a desire for the District Council to be more proactive in advising on the business support services and grants available locally.

4. KEY CHALLENGES

During the research and consultation work carried out a number of key economic development challenges and issues have emerged as important for the District.

Fundamental Issues include:

- The need to achieve a better balance between the rapid population growth and lower business growth.
- Concern about the high levels of out commuting – over 49% of the working population commute out of the District – and the impact of this on road congestion and quality of life.
- How to address the estimated requirement for an additional 4,500-5,000 new jobs to be created in the District in the period up to 2021.
- How to encourage the further development of the knowledge economy.

In addition to these underlying issues, a number of specific key challenges have been identified:

Key Challenge 1 : To improve communication about the business services, grants and employment sites available.

- Consultation work has indicated a desire for the District Council to be more proactive in letting businesses know what services and grants are available.
- There appears to be very low awareness amongst local companies of the employment sites allocated in the Local Plan.
- There is no local focus for business support agencies working in the District.

Key Challenge 2 : To encourage the supply of available business premises on good quality business parks.

- During the consultation work with local businesses concerns were raised about the lack of availability of industrial and business units in the size range 1,000-3,000 sq ft.
- This concern was reiterated by local businesses in the E Space units who were experiencing difficulties in “moving on” from the incubator units to larger premises. This is also impacting on turnover in the incubation units.
- Sites allocated in the Local Plan for employment use are not being brought forward for development by the private sector. The SQW Employment Land and Labour Market Study identifies that whilst there should be sufficient market demand for commercial development in Ely and the southern part of the District, elsewhere commercial viability is marginal. Their assessment of the property market is that there is a case for public sector intervention to help bring forward development of employment sites in the more marginal areas.
- The lack of development on allocated employment sites is creating pressure for the release of unallocated sites in inappropriate locations with lower agricultural land value.
- Evidence from the research with past and present tenants of the E Space Business Centres suggests that these centres are an effective means of supporting new firm starts and growth.
- A demand identified for small serviced plots for owner occupation and a limited availability of B1 office space.

Key Challenge 3 : To encourage improvements to the local infrastructure to meet business needs.

- The consultation with local businesses highlighted significant concerns about poor local infrastructure, in particular congestion on the A10, Ely Station Bridge, lack of affordable housing and lack of sufficient business class hotel accommodation. As a result there is a continuing need to promote the use of public transport, improve access to services wherever possible and to lobby for infrastructure improvements.
- ICT will play a significant role in encouraging the shift in the local economy towards a services orientation/knowledge based economy. The majority of the District now has access to broadband but it will be important to ensure businesses take advantage of the opportunities it offers. The District Council can be seen as a role model by developing its own E Government and website information on District economic and planning statistics and data.
- The East Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership needs to play a key role in lobbying for local infrastructure improvements. There is an increasing focus on partnership working, with various public sector initiatives such as the ODPM's growth area funds and Local Area Agreements which seek to bring different funding streams together so that they can be used more efficiently and effectively.

Key Challenge 4 : Working with others to help raise the skills of the local workforce.

- An educated, skilled and flexible workforce is one of the single most important factors for economic growth and development of the knowledge economy.
- The Greater Cambridge Partnership anticipate that the hi-tech sector, whilst subject to global influences, will continue to be a key driver for future economic growth in the sub-region. Businesses in East Cambridgeshire can play a key local service support role to this sector.
- Whilst skills and qualification levels amongst the East Cambridgeshire workforce are above the national average they are lower than the County average. 8.4% of the resident workforce have no formal qualifications and there is a low level of adult male learners, although amongst the younger age groups the level of qualifications achieved is above national averages.
- Local businesses are reporting recruitment difficulties, particularly in transport, construction and engineering.
- There is evidence of an increasing number of migrant workers in the area, particularly in the haulage industry as well as agriculture. Further research is being undertaken by regional organisations to identify the issues arising as a result of this trend.
- There are a range of learning providers operating in the District, both private and voluntary sector – however, their work appears to be fragmented and uncoordinated. The East Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership could undertake a valuable co-ordination/communication role helping to draw together and focus the work of these agencies in the District.

Key Challenge 5 : Strengthening the role and competitiveness of the District's Market towns.

- Whilst population growth within the District has assisted local retail businesses, proposed significant retail extensions in Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough over the next 10 years will create greater competition in the future. Ongoing monitoring will be required.
- Some 42% of the District's total comparison expenditure is estimated to be spent in Greater Cambridge rather than within the District. There is potential for more of this to be retained within the District.
- In terms of current vitality, Ely is relatively buoyant but Soham in particular is still displaying signs of decline. The loss of retail floorspace to food/drink or residential uses is impacting particularly on the smaller centres.
- The local market town partnerships have carried out valuable work over the past few years to stem the spiral of decline in their communities. There are still significant issues to address such as the assimilation and integration of the recent rapid population and housing growth which each of the market towns has experienced. However, the market town partnerships have been dependent upon external funding. As funding and support resources for their work have become more restricted, a key challenge is how the market town partnership work will be taken forward in the future.
- There is a continuing trend of loss of retail shops in the smaller villages.

Key Challenge 6 : Encouraging corporate social responsibility amongst local businesses.

- National Government is placing an increasing emphasis on "social responsibility policies" for example in the areas of energy efficiency, renewable resource use and recycling as a result of climate change concerns.
- The role of social firms is increasingly being recognised as an important sector in the local economy, particularly those which have a focus on training and skills development and assist in helping disadvantaged groups back into the workforce.
- Consultation with local companies identified a low level of involvement in many of these initiatives, apart from energy efficiency/recycling where financial benefits are more apparent.
- The District Council can undertake an awareness raising role in respect of the benefits of these initiatives.

5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Six strategic priorities have been identified to guide the District Council's economic development work over the time period of this strategy. The following pages indicate in more detail the types of activities and actions which will be undertaken under each of these priorities.

1. Promote the District as a Business Location

To raise awareness of the business opportunities and employment sites available in the District and to raise the profile of the East Cambridgeshire area as a high quality location for business.

2. Increase Business Start up, Business Growth and the Knowledge Economy

To stimulate new firm starts and encourage the shift in the local economy towards the service sector and knowledge economy.

3. Build Competitive Businesses

To ensure local access to appropriate business support services and networks provided by other agencies.

4. Work with others to help close the Skills and Education Gap between and within different sections of the community

To work in partnership with other agencies to seek to draw in their expertise in the learning field to encourage the development of an educated, skilled and flexible workforce.

5. Strengthen the role and competitiveness of the District's Market Towns as service and retail centres

To develop the role of the market towns, to enable them to retain their unique character whilst responding to the challenges of an increasingly competitive trading environment.

6. Encourage corporate social responsibility

To raise awareness of the economic, social and environmental impacts of business activities and the potential benefits of 'corporate social responsibility' in terms of competitive advantage and sustainability.

Strategic Priority 2	Objectives	Policy Approach	Indicative actions
<p>Increase Business Start up, Business Growth and the Knowledge Economy</p>	<p>To develop the role of the East Cambridgeshire economy as a key local service support provider for the high tech cluster in Cambridge.</p> <p>To seek to balance the rapid population growth in the District with greater employment growth.</p> <p>To support the process of commercialisation of R & D/ related high value manufacturing via business centre provision for small growth companies.</p> <p>To stimulate new firm starts and encourage an entrepreneurial culture in the District.</p> <p>To encourage development of ‘move on’ units of 1000-3000 sq ft and small serviced plots in the District.</p> <p>To safeguard provision for office space in the District.</p>	<p>Target support for indigenous micro businesses and knowledge based companies which have the greatest potential for growth.</p> <p>ECDC to take a direct role in the provision of incubator/business growth centre units and seek to extend existing provision if external funding becomes available through partnerships with other agencies.</p> <p>Encourage adult education and establishments to deliver practical training at the trade skills level.</p> <p>Seek to promote development of employment sites allocated through the Local Development Framework to enable existing firms in the District to expand and provide the follow on space required for developing growth companies.</p>	<p>Explore the potential for further developing and consolidating the support services of the Cambridge Enterprise Agency in the District.</p> <p>Support developmental initiatives such as the successful “How to come up with an idea for a Business” course in partnership with other agencies.</p> <p>Develop a tenancy policy for the existing E Space Centres which focuses on start up and growth companies.</p> <p>Work with Ely Business Centre to simplify the current management structure, provide a clear vision and a long-term strategy to enable the centres to become self supporting.</p> <p>Work more closely with local agents/developers to promote local employment sites.</p> <p>Develop a database and promotional information on available employment sites.</p> <p>In conjunction with the LDF process, seek to encourage development of Ely Business Park, identified as a key strategic site for the District.</p> <p>Investigate, in conjunction with external agencies, the feasibility of the SQW recommendation for the establishment of a public fund through which partnerships can be formed with local site owners to bring forward marginal schemes.</p>

Strategic Priority 3	Objectives	Policy Approach	Indicative actions
<p>Build Competitive Businesses</p>	<p>To reach out into the community to deliver complementary seamless services to businesses.</p> <p>To ensure local access to appropriate business support services and networks, particularly for start up companies and small growth companies.</p> <p>To ensure that the physical provision of employment sites and business units is backed up by appropriate business support services and networks.</p>	<p>Through an advocacy role help to improve business access to services available from sub-regional business support agencies.</p> <p>Develop opportunities for the business sector to influence debate on wider strategic issues such as affordable housing and infrastructure.</p> <p>Encourage, in conjunction with the Council's E Government Strategy, interactive business access to District economic and planning information and statistics.</p>	<p>Expand, develop and promote the role of the E Space Centres as the key District focus for services from business support agencies, acting as rural business enterprise hubs.</p> <p>Explore and encourage opportunities for Business Link, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Network, Cambridge Technopole and other existing business networks to carry out outreach work in the District</p> <p>Operate an enquiries management system and signposting service for business related enquiries from the general public.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Council's Customer Relations Management strategy seek to provide a single business account approach for businesses contacting the Council.</p> <p>Develop and assist appropriate business consultation mechanisms in relation to the Local Development Framework process</p> <p>In conjunction with the Local Strategic Partnership arrange an annual business seminar to advise local businesses on strategic initiatives and encourage feedback.</p> <p>Provide a comprehensive and informative business section on the ECDC website including the availability of local premises and industrial units, and information on the local economy with interactive facilities.</p> <p>Work with the new agricultural support mechanisms to address the issue of achieving sustainable agricultural diversification and to ensure maintenance of the attractive landscape.</p> <p>Ensure Council procurement opportunities are included on the ECDC website to enable local businesses to bid for Council contracts.</p> <p>Investigate and develop a concordat with local businesses re procurement.</p> <p>Develop seminars/workshops to promote business e commerce.</p> <p>Circulate timely electronic news updates to local businesses.</p>

Strategic Priority 4	Objectives	Policy Approach	Indicative actions
<p>Work with others to help close the Skills and Education Gap between and within different sections of the community</p>	<p>Seek to draw in resources of agencies working in the learning field to encourage an educated, skilled and flexible workforce.</p> <p>Focus on specific sectors which match the skills needs of local businesses.</p> <p>Focus on adult learning where East Cambridgeshire has a significant skills and education gap.</p> <p>Encourage qualification levels which will help to enable the shift towards a more service based knowledge economy.</p>	<p>Undertake an enabling, coordination and signposting role to draw in agencies and training providers who can help raise skills levels, with a focus on specific sectors which match the skills needs of local businesses.</p> <p>Encourage management skills training for SME's that equip businesses to grow.</p> <p>Encourage employers to offer structured occupational training.</p> <p>Promote the lifelong learning concept for adult learners and encourage lifelong learning programmes in the District by appropriate providers.</p> <p>Encourage the progression of young people leaving school to further education and occupational learning.</p> <p>Reduce barriers preventing some women and single parents from entering the labour market.</p>	<p>Continue to support the co-ordination and functioning of the East Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership or its replacement</p> <p>Working in partnership with other business support agencies encourage the provision of effective training across the district e.g. sector specific courses (agriculture, construction, transport, tourism, engineering).</p> <p>Assist access to funding sources such as Global grants and Learning and Skills Council funding for voluntary sector agencies working in this field.</p> <p>Develop an easily accessible database of local training opportunities available locally, and include on the ECDC website.</p> <p>Promote the management development network service provided by Business Link.</p> <p>Pilot a retail skills training initiative which will signpost participants on to further training initiatives with Business Link.</p> <p>Promote the Investors in People and similar programmes to local businesses</p> <p>Promote the Skills for Life programme offered by the Learning and Skills Council and similar initiatives.</p> <p>Seek to maintain the sustainability of the East Cambs on Line project.</p> <p>Explore with the Learning and Skills Council and Connexions the opportunities for them to develop apprenticeship programmes in the District, encouraging links with local companies, particularly in the sectors where there are identified skills shortages.</p> <p>Promote initiatives such as the Care and Education Partnership work to encourage new childcare initiatives and Business Link's flexible working toolkit.</p> <p>In partnership with Job Centre + deliver relevant vocational training to the local economy via the workforce of the future initiative.</p>

Strategic Priority 5	Objectives	Policy approach	Indicative actions
<p>Strengthen the role and competitiveness of the District's Market Towns as service and retail centres</p>	<p>To position the market towns in East Cambridgeshire so that they are able to withstand increasing competition from retail developments in the larger towns of Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Peterborough.</p> <p>Seek to retain a greater proportion of retail expenditure in the District.</p> <p>Prioritise regeneration support to Soham which is still displaying signs of decline.</p> <p>Prioritise support to small retailers in village locations.</p>	<p>Develop and promote town centre strategies for each market town which promote their distinctive character whilst ensuring an easily accessible and attractive environment for shopping, leisure and services.</p> <p>Support market town regeneration work for Soham which is lagging behind other centres in the District in terms of vitality and viability.</p> <p>Coordinate Council Services which contribute to the aim of providing an easily accessible and attractive environment for shopping and services.</p> <p>Develop marketing, events and branding programmes to promote the retail offer in each of the market towns.</p> <p>Develop an advice and support service for retail premises in the smaller communities.</p>	<p>Enable coordination with the emerging Local Development Framework so that the market town strategies and LDF reinforce and complement each other.</p> <p>Liaise with each of the town centre forums, providing a strategic input into their work programmes for community based market town regeneration and integration of new development.</p> <p>Provide a funding/project management advice service to the town centre forums and parish/town councils to assist them in their implementation and delivery of market town projects.</p> <p>Prepare an annual town centre performance report and include on ECDC website.</p> <p>In partnership with other agencies, actively pursue opportunities for external funding for regeneration initiatives in Soham and its surrounding area.</p> <p>Liaison with other Council services as appropriate e.g. tourism, works services etc.</p> <p>Maximise the benefits of available S106 funding for town centre improvements.</p> <p>Develop promotional programmes and events such as 'best dressed windows' in conjunction with key stakeholders (eg retailers, town partnerships).</p> <p>Undertake programmes to maintain the vitality and sustainability of Ely Markets in view of the significant contribution which they make to the diversity of the shopping offer in Ely.</p> <p>Explore opportunities with external agents to develop advice and information programmes for retailers in smaller communities.</p>

Strategic Priority 6	Objectives	Policy approach	Indicative actions
<p>Encourage corporate social responsibility</p>	<p>To raise awareness of the economic, social and environmental impacts of business activities and the potential benefits of ‘corporate social responsibility’ in terms of competitive advantage and sustainability.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of the role of social firms in the local economy, particularly those with a focus on training and skills development and which assist disadvantaged groups back into the workforce, and seek to support their development</p> <p>Raise awareness of sustainable business practices, environmental management in line with a proactive approach towards managing the impact of climate change.</p> <p>Raise awareness of corporate social responsibility initiatives</p>	<p>Work with the Greater Cambridge Partnership, local business support agencies and social enterprise networks to provide a supportive environment for the creation and development of social enterprises across the district.</p> <p>Ensure that the Council’s procurement strategy includes access for social firms</p> <p>In partnership with Business Link for Cambridgeshire and the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce, promote environmental management initiatives across the district.</p> <p>Encourage the District Council to act as an exemplar /champion in initiatives such as green travel plans, within available resources.</p> <p>Investigate the potential for working with Business in the Community to develop corporate social responsibility programmes such as Pro Help (business mentoring to voluntary sector), Business in the Environment, Business action in Rural Communities.</p> <p>Encourage the District Council to act as an exemplar /champion in initiatives such as Investors in People.</p>

6. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

This economic development strategy will need to be monitored to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and to adjust the priorities if appropriate. The following performance indicators will be adopted to monitor progress, measured on an annual basis.

1. Promote the District as a Business Location

Key Indicators:

Number of marketing and promotional initiatives undertaken annually (*baseline 2005 – 3 initiatives*)

Number and value of re-locations and re-investments annually as a result of inward investment.
(*baseline 2005 – 1*)

2. Increase Business Start-up, Business Growth and the Knowledge Economy

Key Indicators:

Occupancy figures at E Space North and South
(*baseline 2005 E Space N=75%, E Space S = 80%*)

Number of new business start-ups supported in the area.
(*baseline 2004/5 Participants Counselling sessions 102, Starting in Business Seminars 75, Starting in Business Workshops 278*)

The proportion of all businesses in “knowledge driven sectors.”
(*Baseline 2004/05 – 30.02%*)

3. Build Business Competitiveness

Key indicators:

Number of hits on relevant sections of the ECDC business website/Enquiries received annually
(*Baseline Jan-July 2005 – 7156 hits*)

Number of VAT registered businesses
(*Baseline 2003 - 3085 VAT registered businesses*)

4. Work with others to help close the Skills and Education Gap between and within different sections of the Community

Key Indicators:

Number of partner organisations participating in the East Cambridgeshire Learning Partnership.

(Baseline 2005 - 27)

% of working population with Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 qualifications

(baseline 2004/05 - No qualifications = 8.4%, Level 1 = 80.9%, Level 2 = 60.7%, Level 3 = 38.8%, level 4 = 25.1%)

5. Strengthen the role and competitiveness of the District's Market Towns as service and retail centres

Key indicators

Vacant shop premises

(baseline 2005 - Ely 4%, Littleport 6%, Soham 17%).

Pedestrian footfall in the town centre

(baseline 2005 - Ely 12.80, Littleport 1.60, Soham 1.91)

6. Encourage Social Corporate Responsibility

Key Indicator:

Number of business awareness raising initiatives around corporate social responsibility with particular emphasis on energy efficiency.

(baseline 2005 – 1)