

# **TAMWORTH AND LICHFIELD BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (BEP)**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2014 – 2018 (FINAL)**

## **GLOSSARY**

LEP – Local Enterprise Partnership

EU – European Union

BEP – Business and Economic Partnership

NVQ – National Vocational Qualifications

IAG – Information, advice and guidance

IT – Information Technology

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

BIS – Department for Business Innovation and Skills

GBSLEP – Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

SSLEP – Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

MAS – Manufacturing Advisory Service

UKTI – UK Trade and Investment

HS2 – High Speed (rail) 2

SPRG – Spatial Plan for Regeneration and Growth (GBSLEP)

DoT – Department of Transport

BDUK – Broadband Delivery UK

MISS – Make It Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire

ESB – Employment and Skills Board

## FOREWORD AND WELCOME

*On behalf of the Business and Economic Partnership I'd like to introduce our revised and updated strategic plan for 2014-18.*

*The Business & Economic Partnership (BEP) represents businesses, public sector bodies, voluntary organisations and post-16 educational institutions that operate in or have an influence or impact on the local economy of Tamworth and Lichfield, their local environment and communities. The BEP is business driven. With the full support of Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District Councils it recognises the value of all its partners & stakeholders contributing to the economic development, vibrancy, social environment and well-being of the whole area*

*We work as a collaborative partnership, cognisant of our Councils' shared service strategy for local economic development, with the aim of reducing any tendencies to work in "silos" and fostering an effective, efficient and integrated approach to improving the local economy.*

*This strategic plan recognises those things that can and need to be undertaken to make a real difference and clearly articulates the role and function of the BEP in achieving this, building on its achievements in moving forward the 20011 Economic Strategy.*

*The plan is based on sound economic evidence, informed by five pieces of work completed in 2013; the Tamworth Business Place Marketing Strategy; the southern Staffordshire Investment & Growth Prospectus; the Tamworth Jobs & Growth Plan; the Lichfield Draft Local Plan and the Southern Staffordshire Skills Plan. These, together with input from businesses in the area and our Partnership representatives, have developed the BEP's strategic themes and priorities.*

*Our plan supports and compliments the Lichfield and Tamworth Strategic & Community Plans, helping to ensure that they have a business perspective. BEP partners have influenced, and continue to shape the work of the Greater Birmingham & Solihull and Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnerships – ensuring that the importance and contribution of our economy is not ignored!*

*Throughout my Chairmanship my ambition has been, and remains, to enhance the impact of the BEP through "additionality", that is stimulating and supporting things which improve our local economy which otherwise may not have happened and acting where the Partnership can have an effect by influencing and facilitating. I see the strengthening & cohesion of communications across the Partnership and within the wider business community as crucial to meeting our aims so that we are all "Working as One".*

*The challenge over the next four years is to influence & assist with the delivery of the prioritised aims identified under each of the four themes defined in this strategic plan. Thematic action plans to achieve these are being finalised and incorporate specific & practical issues raised by businesses through the Business Network Forum, the BEP4Business & Councils' websites and your BEP Board representatives. To be successful these activities need to be underpinned by information sharing, business support mechanisms and good communications across the whole Partnership and the wider business community are key if we are to truly "Work as One".*

*The Partnership is about people and I'd like to thank all our individual partners and business representatives for their support and input into the BEP, and especially our Partnership Board members for their commitment, hard work and ongoing enthusiasm. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the support of Jeff Marlow of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership for his role in coordinating the writing of this Strategic Plan.*



*Deb Baker, BEP Chairman, Summer 2014*

**BUSINESS ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP**

The Business Economic Partnership (BEP) was established in 2009 as voluntary coming together of local businesses, the Business Network Forum (formerly Economic Forums in Tamworth and Lichfield), Lichfield District Council, Tamworth Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Support Staffordshire (formerly the Community and Voluntary Service), South Staffordshire College, The Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.

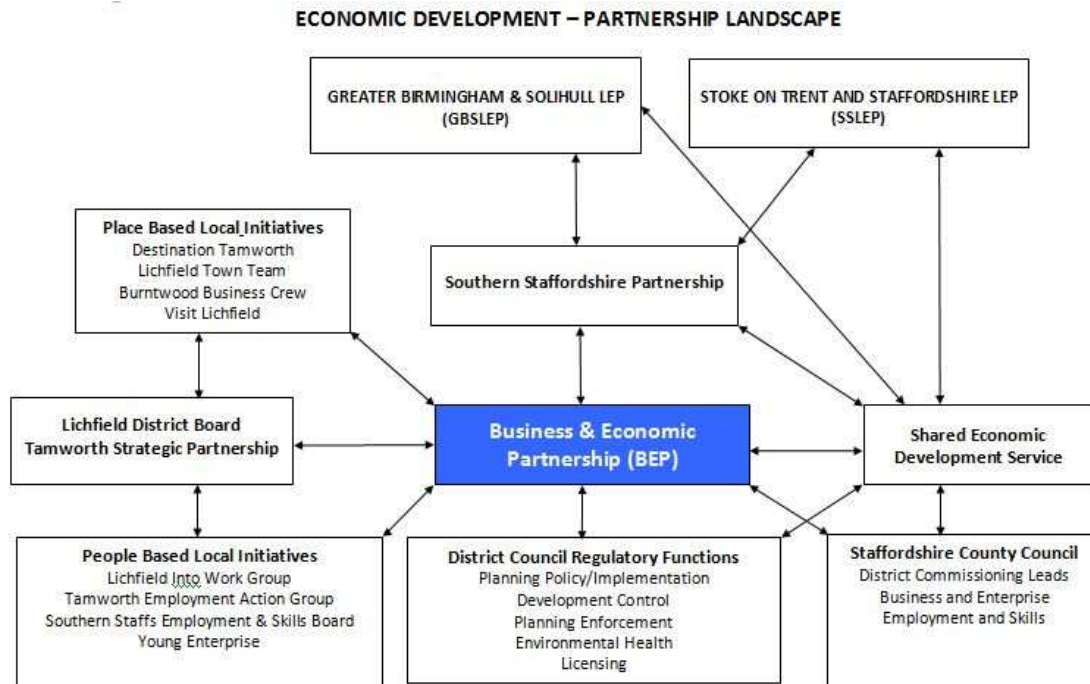
The BEP's aim is to facilitate and support sustainable economic growth and it seeks to achieve this by focusing on activities where additionality can be proven through three different approaches .....

1. **Influencing, lobbying and monitoring** the strategies and actions of local businesses, public bodies and partnerships
2. **Coordinating communication and engagement** activities with local businesses, public bodies and partnerships
3. **Commissioning** useful products and services to the business community

We recognise that growth and wealth creation lies in the hands of the private sector. The BEP does a lot to influence those in the public sector that can facilitate and support private sector growth and also has a clear tangible offer to business ....

- Fast track to local economic partnership and regional growth opportunities
- Business networking and business opportunities
- Direct line to local government – voice can be heard
- Mutual support and knowledge exchange from diverse business base
- Signpost to relevant business support activities (trade, investment, growth, enterprise, innovation, finance)
- Supporting inward investment opportunities
- Providing and disseminating market intelligence, opportunities
- Early and unique access to information about Tamworth and Lichfield, and current/ planned developments

## THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH BEP OPERATES



Over the past 3 years the environment in which economic development is delivered has been fundamentally changed and has become more complex. This has been largely driven by the fact that well resourced, and central government backed ‘Regional Development Agencies’ and ‘Business Links’ have disappeared. Business led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) have been set up, with the BEP sitting within the geography of 2 LEPs, Greater Birmingham and Solihull and Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. The LEPs are now gaining some momentum and political buy in, with each having developed ‘Strategic Economic Plans’ which will drive the delivery of significant government and EU funding over the next 6 years.

The BEP seeks to influence the LEPs’ agendas through the Southern Staffordshire Partnership (SSP), which brings together 3 districts (Tamworth, Lichfield, and South Staffs) in the south of the county, the College, University and Chamber, to discuss strategic economic development matters. The Director of the SSP has developed comprehensive connections with both LEPs through sitting on a wide variety of Executive, strategic and operational groups in both LEPs. In addition, officers from the Shared Service in Economic Development between Lichfield and Tamworth, which facilitates the operation of the BEP, also directly represent their respective councils within both LEPs and seek to articulate the issues raised through the BEP by its partners and businesses.

Locally, the BEP is well connected into other partnerships with an economic development and business remit, both in terms of place and people based initiatives, as well as both Local Strategic Partnerships. It is also liaises closely with council functions at district and county levels, both directly through direct representation on the BEP Board from appropriate council representatives, as well as through the Shared Economic Development Service.

Sitting at the heart of this partnership landscape, with extensive connections into the variety of partnerships that exist at different spatial and thematic levels, the BEP is well placed to fulfil its mission as outlined above of influencing, commissioning and communication, both on behalf of its partners and the local business community.

## **BEP VISION**

Our vision is ***“to improve on the excellent location, communication links and local skilled workforce, to promote the area as a dynamic place to live and do business”***

This will see the securing of new skills, promote aspirations and new jobs, and improve our competitiveness in the labour market. Our businesses will grow, be enabled to develop new niche products and secure new markets. They will provide increased employment opportunities and be globally competitive. Our towns will be ones that attract investment, and are seen as great places to live and work in.

**Our role** is to influence, to advocate, and where appropriate directly commission activity that will drive economic growth.

This document sets out the approach we will take to provide that influence, advocacy and delivery. Importantly it shows how through interventions to support business and our third sector employers, to develop our people, and to enhance the quality of our living and working environment we can grow our economy and make it more resilient. We have a strong evidence base to support the programme of activities outlined ahead built from a wealth of information across a range of partners, primary and secondary research and economic data sets.

## **ECONOMIC PROFILE**

Tamworth and Lichfield District are quite different from each other in terms of economic profile and their specific local offerings. However, they have successfully provided economic stability through the Borough Council and District Council’s shared Economic Services and together their ‘complementarity’ of offer is potentially one of our area’s unique strengths. Our towns are well placed within the ‘southern Staffordshire Enterprise Belt’ connected locally and national via the A5, A38, M42 and M6Toll. There are strong economic ties in the belt around Birmingham from the Black Country (Walsall), South Staffordshire (Cannock) and East Staffordshire (Burton) down to North Warwickshire and Solihull. In addition to our three towns (Lichfield, Burntwood, Tamworth) we have a substantial rural geography, which contributes significantly to the quality housing, tourism and leisure offer. Therefore, we also need to address issues of accessibility, broadband provision and support for rural enterprise and economic diversification.

We have a growing population and in 2011 it stood at 177,000, and is expected to reach almost 200,000 by 2033. Almost 25% of our residents are qualified to NVQ4 (though this figure falls to 15% for the town of Tamworth, and rises to 31% for the District of Lichfield. Unemployment is now at historic low levels for both districts, with claimant count rates down to 1.2% for Tamworth and 1.1% for Lichfield (July 2014), representing falls of 32% and 15% respectively from levels seen in January 2008.

We are home to almost 7,300 enterprises. Since 2003, both Districts have seen growth in the ‘business & professional services, with Tamworth developing a role as a base for financial and

insurance services; and Lichfield building a reputation for business and professional services. Retail, tourism and building technologies are also key sectors for both Districts. Manufacturing (and fabrication) also feature here.

Analysis of business rates data in terms of rateable values reveals that both districts have seen significant falls in the levels of unoccupied commercial floorspace since the recession, falling to just 8.7% for Tamworth (10.6% in December 2012) and 5.0% in Lichfield (9.3% in December 2012) as a proportion of total rateable values. This suggests that levels of business investment and confidence in the Tamworth and Lichfield area have recovered well since the recession, placing the area on a path to what should be reasonable levels of sustainable economic growth over the coming years.

More detailed economic profiling data on the Tamworth and Lichfield area is available if required via our website at [www.bep4business.co.uk](http://www.bep4business.co.uk).

## SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE LICHFIELD AND TAMWORTH ECONOMY

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive environment/Quality of Life factors that support economic growth <b>TC1 TC2 INF3 INF4*</b></li> <li>• Immediate access to the heart of the national highway network <b>INF4</b></li> <li>• Good history of sub-regional cooperation through Southern Staffordshire Partnership <b>BS1</b></li> <li>• Relative low cost of business space</li> <li>• The area is relatively more entrepreneurial compared to Birmingham, Staffordshire or the Country in terms of the number of businesses present and the creation of businesses <b>INF1 INF2 INF4</b></li> <li>• Visitor economy offer <b>TC3</b></li> <li>• Good range of employment sites mostly with good access <b>INF1 INF4</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of local HE presence and interventions <b>BS3</b></li> <li>• History of fragmented business support and engagement <b>BS1</b></li> <li>• Disconnect of area to wider place marketing initiatives and lack of profile <b>TC3</b></li> <li>• Business leadership and management skills issues <b>WD1 WD2 WD3</b></li> <li>• Lack of incubation units and support <b>TC1 BS3</b></li> <li>• Lack of engagement of local businesses into sub regional, regional and national sector based networks and support programmes <b>BS2</b></li> <li>• Poor fabric of and accessibility to some of the older industrial estates <b>INF2 INF4</b></li> <li>• Low level of school/business engagement, and provision of IAG <b>WD1</b></li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to the conurbation's assets</li> <li>• Develop the Tamworth and Lichfield Business Economic Partnership (BEP) model as a District based approach to engaging companies into accessing business support <b>BS1 BS2</b></li> <li>• Develop peer to peer innovation networks <b>BS3</b></li> <li>• Link strong visitor economy offer to the conurbation offer</li> <li>• Develop edge of city micro science parks/innovation hubs <b>INF1 INF4</b></li> <li>• 30 development opportunities providing a broad range of employment, housing, retail and leisure <b>TC1</b></li> <li>• Steward and develop the environmental assets <b>TC1</b></li> <li>• Development of rural economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pockets of low deprivation/worklessness not being addressed because actual scale to small though impact significant</li> <li>• Cross LEP collaboration weak and LEP overlap causes duplication and confusion. <b>BS1</b></li> <li>• Out commuting of those with higher skills <b>WD3</b></li> <li>• A one size fits all approach to business support <b>BS1</b></li> <li>• Poor levels of IT literacy, and access to IT support programmes and equipment <b>WD1 INF4</b></li> <li>• High number of adults with no qualifications and low number of adults with L4 and above <b>WD1 WD2</b></li> <li>• Limited economic development resource at District level</li> <li>• Dominance of urban area prioritisation</li> </ul>

\*These codes reference our four priority themes and programmes

**BS**=Business Support

**TC**=Town Centre and Place

**INF**=Infrastructure

**WD**=Workforce Development



## PRIORITIES AND DELIVERY

We have identified 4 key priority themes....

- Business Support (BS)
- Infrastructure (INF)
- Place and Town Centres (TC)
- Workforce Development (WD)

Within these there are 13 priority programme areas. We are focused on where the BEP can provide added value, and we have specifically avoided replicating the vast level of activity delivered directly by partners. Importantly we recognise that one of the key routes to successful outcomes is influencing and lobbying others, in particular the LEPs who are rightly seen as the key strategic 'Economic Development' bodies. Our SWOT has identified specific challenges and opportunities – however our programmes do not respond to each of them, nor when they do are they the only response. We seek to intervene through this strategy where we believe our partnership working can **add value and address gaps in provision**. In carrying out a SWOT it is important that we show that this both informs the strategic plan, and that we have the right responses in place. Equally we need to be aware that in some cases responses can and do come direct from partners. So whilst this is a BEP strategic plan it is important that we show how each of the threats and weaknesses are being addressed, and how each of the strengths and opportunities are being maximised. There is a full commentary on this contained in the appendices, and in presenting such it informs our responsibility for coordinating, communicating and monitoring all those interventions that will support growth in our economy.

### **Business Support**

*Our wealth creating businesses will deliver the growth, and we will facilitate this by ensuring businesses are plugged into a coherent business support offer.*

Evidence has shown that those businesses that access business support are the ones more likely to grow, innovate and create jobs. Our businesses, like others nationally, now face a challenging situation where a comprehensive, well-resourced business support infrastructure is no longer available. We have been ahead of the game in recognising the changes that were taking place early on, working with both LEPs in developing a new business support offer, and establishing a local access point and engagement programme for our businesses through work with our local councils – a service unique to Tamworth and Lichfield. The recent development of 'Growth Hubs' by both LEPs, with funding from central Government, now complements our local initiative.

***We will continue to develop our response ensuring that the gap in provision is plugged, that all local businesses can access new and relevant support programmes, and that we regularly engage with them to understand their issues. We will work with the emerging 'Growth Hubs' and related business support infrastructure to ensure that as many of our businesses are aware of and can access the support available; and we will develop a local infrastructure that can attract and support growth in key niche sectors. The BEP will provide additionality through local coordination and facilitation.***

Our key business sectors include retail, business & professional services, leisure & tourism, building technologies and manufacturing. We must look at our economy in the round and recognise that there must be opportunities for entry jobs and progression for all. Whilst we will work to further restructure the economy we must ensure that those sectors that do provide a significant proportion of our employment, namely traditional manufacturing, retail, education, professional and business services and transport continue to have access to the support, sites and labour market that they need today. In doing this we will be mindful of how these sectors are changing both in terms of employment numbers but also in terms of product and service production and delivery mechanisms.

***We will develop a better understanding of, and relationships with, key businesses in our priority sectors***

Economic Gardening is an economic development model that embraces the fundamental idea that entrepreneurs and innovators drive economies. It seeks to create jobs by supporting existing companies and individuals in a community; connect businesses/entrepreneurs/innovators to all available resources; encourage the development of the essential 'soft' infrastructure such as physical and virtual networks to ensure relevant information is accessible; and provide the 'safe space' whereby ideas can develop, grow and take off – or indeed fail.

***To do this we will seek to identify the key assets, who owns them, what their potential is; and then work with businesses and their networks to facilitate their access to the assets. It complements the environmental accelerator programme by ensuring we make best use of the 'growth assets' in our community, many of which are underutilised at present.***

#### **Priority BS1 (Business engagement)**

We will liaise closely with both LEPs to shape the delivery of Growth Hubs and related business support in Tamworth and Lichfield; we will promote the established "Tamworth/Lichfield 4 Business" Programme as a long term local solution; we will aim to add value to the sub regional, regional and national offer, and work to identify and address any duplication and confusion in the market place and facilitate access to the appropriate support

*External partners are BIS and the GBSLEP/SSLEP*

#### **Priority BS2 (Sector intelligence)**

We will commission desk based research into our key priority sectors, undertake a programme of strategic relationship building with key businesses, and provide the conduit for local businesses to regional and national sector based networks.

*External partners are MAS, UKTI, BIS, and the GSBLEP/SSLEP*

#### **Priority BS3 (Economic gardening)**

We will commission research to identify, value and market the 'growth assets in our community'; and identify ways in which they can be made more accessible and available to the local business community. This will be supported by facilitating the further development and engagement of business led networks so value can be taken from and added to the assets.

*External partners are other public sector bodies, property owners, major employers*

**Successful Outcome** Our local businesses regularly accessing relevant business support and advice; and being supported by an imaginative use of the existing asset base in the Districts

## **Infrastructure**

*The public sector has key role in creating the conditions for growth – we will facilitate this by identifying and encouraging investment in appropriate facilities; commercial buildings and the physical environment; in housing; in transport links; and in communication and utilities*

The quality of the local infrastructure plays a key role in supporting the growth of established business, and attracting inward investment. In terms of business space, Lichfield District and Tamworth contain a number of large warehousing & distribution sites e.g. Fradley Business Park in Lichfield and, together with North Warwickshire and Birmingham, form part of what the property market refers to as the 'Golden Triangle' of logistics development formed by the M1, M6 and M42.

The provision of new office accommodation in the short – medium term will be key in attracting inward investment to the Lichfield area. There is a shortfall of suitable land for manufacturing to attract investment and accommodate growth in the longer term.

In Tamworth there are issues with the existing stock of employment areas in particular an oversupply of small units, although market evidence suggests there is still sufficient demand at the majority of the employment areas. In terms of quality, this varies across the Borough, with some areas suffering from issues such as a poor quality environment and inadequate security measures while other areas offer an excellent surrounding environment with sufficient contemporary security measures. These variations in quality occur at various scales both between employment areas and within employment areas with marked differences in quality.

***We will work with both our Councils, developers and property owners to encourage the provision of suitable employment land and enhancement to our existing commercial premises and sites***

There will also be pressure to accommodate significant new housing, and to support the related transport, school and service provision. The availability of a mixed range of affordable and high quality housing will be a key aspect of the area retaining one of its strengths as part of the Enterprise Belt.

***We will work with our Councils and developers to encourage provision of a housing mix and availability that will underpin continued sustainable economic growth***

Whilst we also see our location as an advantage in terms of accessibility to the national highway and rail network we are mindful that new development and growth puts pressure on the existing capacity, and leads to demand for new connectivity. We will also work to secure good connectivity and economic benefits from HS2 and mitigate any negative impacts.

***We will work with key partners, and in particular the LEPs to secure investment for our key transport schemes***

Sitting outside of the conurbation, and having a rural hinterland, securing a better broadband provision is key to supporting our business community and public sector service provision.

***We will continue to lobby for the necessary enhancement and provision, providing evidence of need and impact where necessary***

A new, long-term Spatial Plan for Recovery and Growth (SPRG) is being prepared by the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) in parallel with the 'Strategy for Growth' and will look at the level and distribution of growth across the LEP over the next 20 years and help support the statutory development plan-making taking place in the GBSLEP's nine local authority areas.

***We will seek to ensure that this Plan properly takes into account the needs of the area and facilitate consultation and feedback from the business community***

**INF 1 (Land and property requirements linked to new employment opportunities)**

We will explore requirement identified for flexible/managed work-space and home hubs to serve rural areas/home-workers, support business start-ups and micro-businesses; achieve a better understanding of sectors with specific requirements, identify emerging sectors needs; and support research into market demand for available land and premises

*External partners – MAS, property owners, Enterprise Agency*

**Priority INF 2 (Identify and address the quality and suitability constraints of existing commercial units and available development land)**

We will encourage investment to upgrade the quality (and safety) of existing premises and sites

*External Partners – Land owners, property agents, local business*

**Priority INF 3 (Promote improvements to the rail, bus and road network serving the area)**

We have identified a number of key priorities which include

- Upgrade to facilities at our key stations; enhanced rail services between Tamworth and Birmingham & Lichfield and the north-west and south-east; and suitable levels of connectivity to HS2
- Securing long term future of bus routes linking Tamworth, Lichfield and Burntwood respectively with the conurbation; and improved junctions on the A38 at Swinfen and Fradley and on the A5 at Wall Island and Muckley Corner
- Linking rural communities with centres of employment through improved public transport offers
- Development of the Anker Valley Link Road Tamworth; and the implementation of transport packages serving Lichfield City and Ventura Park & Gungate in Tamworth.
- Explore the scope for re-opening the Lichfield-Burton Line including station facilities serving the National Memorial Arboretum

*External partners - Centro, Network rail, London Midland, Highways Agency, DoT, local bus companies, Staffordshire County Council; and the GSBLEP/SSLEP*

**Priority INF4 (Secure better Broadband, wifi and 3G provision in Lichfield and Tamworth)**

We will seek to maximise support from Staffordshire County Council, Local Broadband Plan (LBP) and BDUK Funding; feed local requirements into emerging LBP, including access to superfast broadband for (relatively) high number of home-workers/micro-businesses; liaise with infrastructure providers re broadband plans; encourage BT to prioritise completion of work to business premises; and build on outcomes of rural master-planning consultation

*External partners – Utility companies, and the GSBLEP/SSLEP, Town Teams*

**Successful Outcome** A consistently good quality of business related infrastructure that directly supports the needs of the local business community and its workforce, and underpins the sustainability that is needed for growth

## **Place and Town Centres**

*Private sector investment will change our Districts – we will facilitate this by building confidence in our centres and creating the conditions for investment across our Districts.*

Tamworth, home to Tamworth Castle and Moat House, has a town centre in need of investment and a major edge of town sub regional retail park , Ventura Park. There is a commitment to strengthen the links between and develop the complementarity of the these two parts of Tamworth.

Lichfield City's retail experience is quite unique; it offers a wide range of shops, from high street chains to independent outlets and original boutiques; the diversity of its independent shops is one of its distinctive strengths.

Burntwood is the smallest of the three towns in terms of population but still represents a significant urban area and centre of population within Lichfield District. Although it has recently strengthened its retail environment and now also has an active 'Town Team' (the Burntwood Business Crew), it nonetheless still needs to create more of a commercial centre and focus.

***We have a range of investment opportunities in our town centres, we will seek to create a broader stronger offer for investment, promoting the range of opportunities in our town centres – one in which the constituent parts present a broad and complementary offer.***

We know that changes in retailing methods and shopping habits, as well as the impact of the recession have led to a reduction in the number of high street retailers in our town centres. Whilst we need to diversify the offer available in the centres, recognising them as cultural, entertainment, leisure, and creative hubs; we also need to maintain their attractiveness to major retailers through the provision of quality premises, parking, security and quality streetscape.

***We will seek to better understand what drives decision making amongst our town centre customers, occupiers, and property owners***

In 2013 we commissioned a place marketing strategy to better understand the drivers of inward investment in order to deliver a co-ordinated approach to promoting the two areas, with a view to help existing businesses expand while attracting new investment. A key focus was to engage the views of local business, and understand their rationale for relocating. The study showed that whilst our two main urban centres have some differences around business and profile and demographics, they nevertheless have strong business, economic, social, cultural and physical linkages, which together would underpin a persuasive joint marketing offer.

***We will assist in implementing the place marketing strategy recognising the unique role and distinctiveness of our key urban centres***

We also recognise the unique contribution that our rural settlements and landscape make to our place offer.

***We will work with a range of partners to ensure the sustainability and attractiveness of the rural areas***

### **Priority TC1 (Town Centre Investment and Reputation)**

We will assist the Councils 'shared service' to facilitate a coordinated approach to attracting investment in our town centres; and to actions to improve the reputation and image of our centres locally, regionally and nationally.

*External partners – Property Developers, Destination Tamworth, Lichfield Town Team (BID Development Team, Burntwood Town Crew and the GSBLEP/SSLEP*

### **Priority TC2 (Town Centre Intelligence)**

We will secure better intelligence on the town centre land and property ownership; and on the needs of town centre businesses, independent retailers and their customers.

*External partners – businesses and retail customers*

### **Priority TC3 (Place Marketing)**

We will implement the 4 recommendations in the Place marketing strategy namely - raise profile with local inward investment partners; develop on and offline marketing collateral; engage routes to market with value propositions; improve visibility and reach with digital and social media

*External partners – MISS, Marketing Birmingham, and the GSBLEP/SSLEP*

**Successful Outcome** The town centres will provide a distinctive environment and offer that complements rather than competes with the out of town parks and online retailing leading to collaboration across the towns; and proves attractive to investors, visitors and local residents.

### **Workforce Development**

*With increasing autonomy within our education system, a large number of private sector training providers, and still too few businesses accessing the training support and funding available we recognised that we have a key role in leading local partnership working, engaging with those bodies that deliver training support, raising awareness within the business community, and articulating the benefits of a well educated, well trained workforce. People are the engine of economic growth – and we will facilitate this through raising aspirations across our community, making learning accessible, and showing the economic value of training, workforce development (e.g. Leadership and specific business and technical skills) and qualifications.*

Whilst there is a reputation for a strong work ethic there remains a poor level of formal qualifications and a lack of aspiration. It is recognised that it will be through developing the skills, and aspirations, for work in current growth sectors that we will underpin the potential for increased economic prosperity in Tamworth. Whilst the attainment rates for key NVQ indicators are growing year on year they remain relatively low, below the regional and national average. Almost 2 in 5 of the adult population lacks an NVQ 2 and little over 1 in 5 has an NVQ4 (degree equivalent). It is also important that skills development and training provides the transferrable skills which tend to be well valued by employers.

In Lichfield there is a good level of formal qualifications though a leakage of a number of those more highly qualified to jobs outside the area. More than 1 in 4 of the population has an NVQ4 (degree equivalent), higher than the County or the regional average. The proportion of residents with no qualifications is lower than both the regional and the County average.

***This will be better understood and acted upon by improved (access to) data on the jobs opportunities, competencies, and skills required in tomorrows economy***

The distinctiveness between the 2 Districts will drive a degree of focus on what we see as local priorities. An Education and Skills Board (ESB) at the Southern Staffordshire level provides a direct link to support from the GBSLEP. The ESB has also commissioned work to produce a Skills Plan for southern Staffordshire and this will inform some of the work we do at the local level. An Education Trust has been set up in Staffordshire and Stoke to promote a more inclusive and joined up approach to the skills agenda. Both LEPs have a common priority to improve the relationship between the education/training providers, and the business community.

***We will work to improve dialogue between the supply and demand sides***

The need to promote improvements in basic skills, particularly in terms of numeracy and literacy will be important for the local economy, both in respect of helping individuals to progress through the different levels of skills and qualification attainment but also in providing for the skills base to support the needs of more elementary occupations to meet the demand for replacements to existing staff. The UK Workforce survey revealed that in Staffordshire employers considered that more than one in four school leavers were poorly or very poorly equipped for work. Yet again, poor attitude and lack of motivation were cited ahead of core skill competencies as reasons why employers stated this.

It is evident that the training and skills agenda is a large and complex area, hard for businesses to understand; and the skills needs of local businesses are varied and hard to identify and define. It is important that we identify and understand the real and perceived barriers to employment, and to recruitment.

***A clear and easily accessible system for businesses to receive information on the training offer and access or develop the skills they need is a gap in need of plugging***

**Priority WD1 (Improve dialogue between the supply and demand side)**

We will support measures to improve the level and format of engagement between schools, training providers, and businesses

*External Partners – School, Further Education Institution, Trade Associations*

**Priority WD2 (A clear and easily accessible system for employers to receive information on the training offer and skills they need)**

We will encourage Government, LEPs and providers to make their offer as transparent as possible; and we will act as a clearing house to disseminate relevant information

*External Partners – Sector Skills Councils, BIS, Support Staffordshire, GSBLEP/SSLEP*

**Priority WD3 (Improved data on the jobs opportunities, competencies, and skills required in tomorrow's economy)**

We will commission, collate and share data that will increase partners understanding of the changing profile of those sectors key to the local economies

*External Partners – Sector Skills Councils*

**Successful Outcome** A motivated and capable workforce with the right work ethos, access to the right training and the skills to support their development and the needs of the local business community

## **BUILDING ON SUCCESS**

While this Strategic plan looks ahead to 2018 and on we also recognise the solid foundations we have put in place through our Partnership working to date which has had a number of notable successes including:

- *secured a place on the Development Board of the GSBLEP and significantly shaped its work programme particularly around business support*
- *established the Tamworth and Lichfield 4Business programmes providing local access to business advice and support*
- *Business Brief – regular update on local business news – now superseded by the BEP4Business website*
- *provided a unique forum to allow the business community to directly engage with and influence key public sector bodies*
- *provided written responses to GBSLEP/ SSLEP and local consultation exercises on behalf of the Partnership and wider business community through the engagement of our Business Networks Forum*

We believe the Tamworth and Lichfield Business and Economic Partnership continues to be a credible and successful Partnership; one that has provided a good working model for the Local Enterprise Partnership. If our Strategic plan is to lead to change and contribute to an uplift in economic performance we must now be focused on its implementation.



## **NEXT STEPS: Implementation and Appendices**

### Delivery Plans

For each of the 13 priority areas we are currently developing summary action plans which will guide the activity of the BEP and drive the delivery of our Strategy. For each of the four thematic headings we have a lead officer. These Delivery Plans will be available on the BEP website at [www.bep4business.co.uk](http://www.bep4business.co.uk) at a later date.

### BEP Resources

We can identify resources at a number of levels

#### Partnership

Each partner brings considerable resource either through organizational budgets, or through relationships with/influence on the wider business community. A key role of this strategy is to influence how these budgets are spent, and how the business sector invests and engages.

Details of the BEP members to be appended

#### External stakeholders

A range of regional and national organisations make up our external stakeholders and often these have budgets focused on specific areas of activity. We will work with these stakeholders to develop our local knowledge and to exert influence on their prioritisation of regional and national programmes. The details of these and particularly how they contribute to addressing the factors identified in our SWOT are to be appended

#### Local Enterprise Partnerships

Through our District Councils we have membership of both the LEPs that cover Tamworth and Lichfield, and officers who are very much involved in their individual workstreams. The LEPs are the key strategic partners and bring with them significant resource. Over the period 2014-20 they will direct between £28m and £56m of EU funding into southern Staffordshire. Each LEP will also be bidding on a competitive basis for a share of the £2bn of Local Growth fund that is being made available on an annual basis through to 2020. Partners in the BEP have contributed significantly to the writing of the GBSLEP and the SSLEP Strategic Economic Plans, and have promoted specific projects for Local Growth Fund and EU funding support. Both District Councils have a seat on the GBSLEP Board, and are represented at the SSLEP Board through the Southern Staffordshire Partnership

### Southern Staffordshire Enterprise Belt

A key strength of the area is its locational, entrepreneurial and environmental asset base – as evidenced in research and analysis by Birmingham University. The ‘Belt’ is recognised in both the GBSLEP and the SSLEP Strategic Economic Plans, and a summary is available on the BEP website at [www.bep4business.co.uk](http://www.bep4business.co.uk).

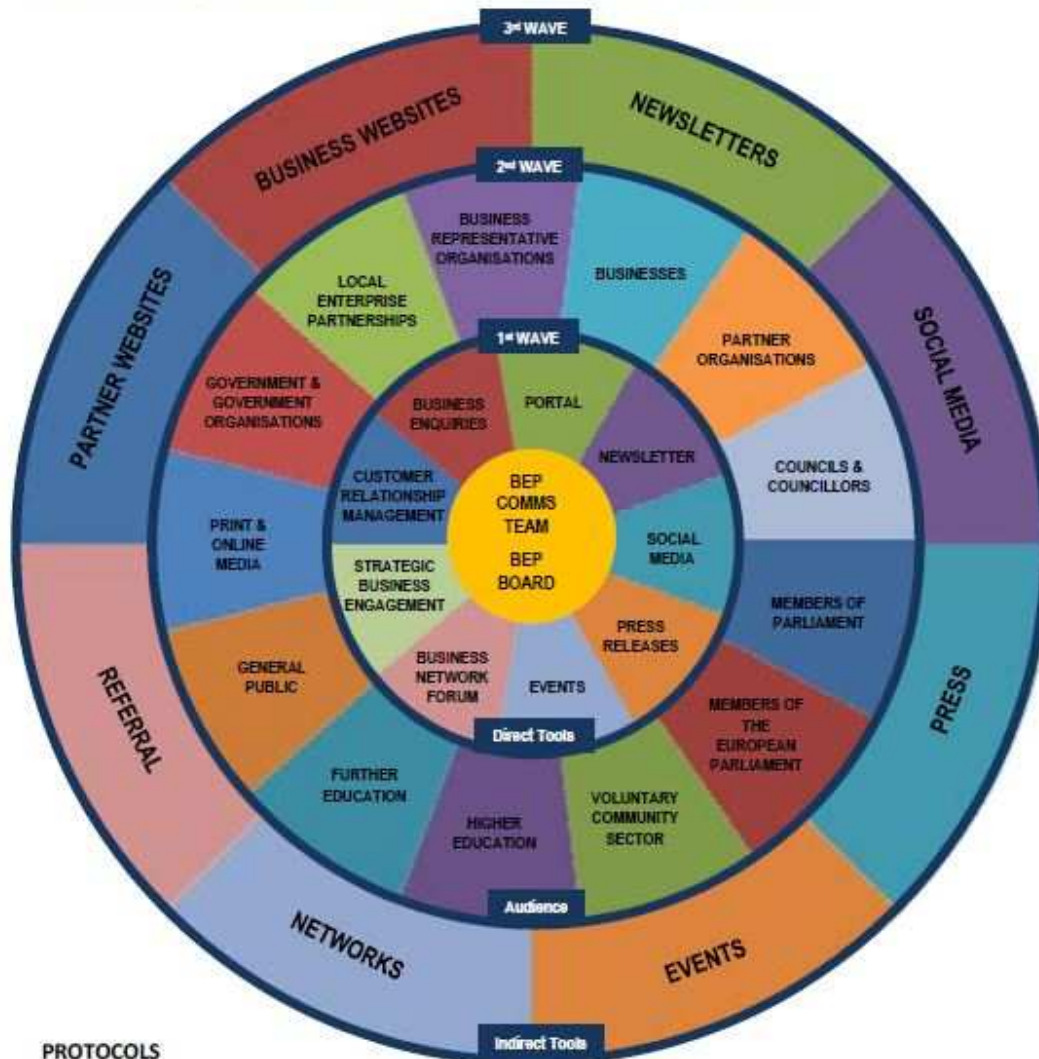
### Communications

We have developed a detailed Communications Plan to support this Strategy, which is schematically represented in the diagram on the following page. This Plan shows the BEP as the originator and recipient of key communications messages, which it then disseminates via the various ‘tools’ at its disposal (1<sup>st</sup> wave), which then reach a variety of audience groups (2<sup>nd</sup> wave), who are then encouraged to utilise the tools at their disposal (3<sup>rd</sup> wave) to further disseminate messages. Like the ripples on a pool, this then maximizes the spread of the BEP’s communications, with feedback coming in the other direction. Communications will be managed overall by the BEP Board, with a dedicated Core Team operated by the councils’ Shared Economic Development Service.

## BEP COMMUNICATIONS PLAN - DELIVERY

### OBJECTIVES

- To underpin the BEP Role, Purpose & Effectiveness
- Avoid unnecessary overlap – eliminate or reduce duplication
- Filter out “noise” to improve focus
- Reduce “silos”
- Foster 2-way communications between BEP and its partners and audiences.



### PROTOCOLS

- Core communications team of selected BEP members reporting to BEP and elected members
- Controlled & moderated - clear, consistent, cohesive and timely communications
- Channel-led – communications focussed to avoid duplication or “scatter-gun” dissemination
- Appropriateness – items that impact local businesses & economy
- Blended use of traditional and digital media
- 2-Way – dissemination and collation of feedback and fostering consultation
- “Completing the Circle” – receiving feedback and informing partnership of OUTCOMES!

PRODUCED BY: Deb Baker – *Partnership Chair*  
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