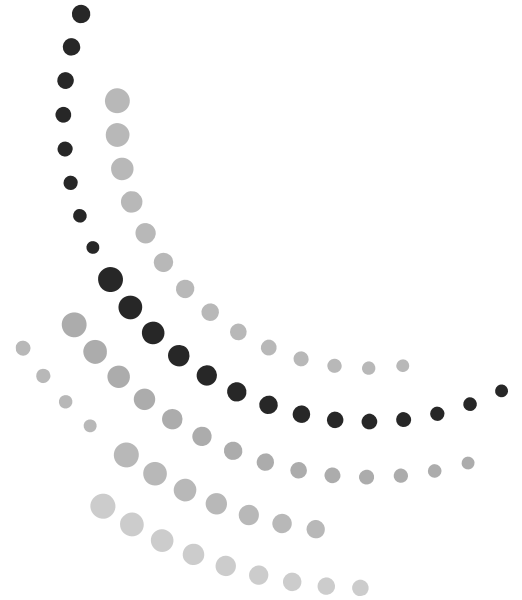




Rutland
County Council



Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group

Version & Policy Number	Version 1.1
Guardian	Councillor A Brown, Chair Jane Narey, Scrutiny Officer
Date Produced	August 2023

Approved by Scrutiny	
Approved by Cabinet	
Approved by Council	

Summary of document

To present the recommendations from the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group for amendments to the Economic Development Strategy following the meetings held with the Strategic Director of Places, the Head of Sustainable Economy and Place and the Director of Metro Dynamics.

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1.0 CHAIR'S STATEMENT

- 1.1 As Rutland moves forward towards the middle of the 21st century with all the uncertainty not only Rutland but the whole country faces, it is vital we have an economic strategy to ensure the future prosperity of our residents. Ultimately our economic strategy affects not only Rutland County Council but also everyone in Rutland, so it is vital we get it right.
- 1.2 As the Chair of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group, I have found it refreshing to see how elected members and council officers have worked closely and collaboratively to form this document. It is an example of just how beneficial task and finish groups can be when they are properly scoped and have clear and realistic objectives, which are both timely and time limited.
- 1.3 The group has been led by Members who understood the need for the strategy and brought a wide range of differing business experience and knowledge that has helped shape the final product. The positive questioning and constructive criticism have meant we have produced a document of which we can be proud. It is now up to Rutland to embrace the strategy and work towards greater prosperity in the future. This can only be done with greater co-operation with neighbouring Local Authorities, businesses and organisations.
- 1.4 My thanks go to the members of the group and to the supporting council officers without whom this document could not have been produced.



Councillor A Brown JP
RCC Chairman and Chair of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In order to capitalise and benefit from the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), Rutland County Council needed to have a new and clear economic development strategy.
- 2.2 This new strategy would replace the Economic Growth Strategy 2014-21, which expired in 2021.
- 2.3 The process to create the new strategy had started in early 2020 but was halted by the COVID pandemic and subsequent lockdown.
- 2.4 Economic development was a critical component for the future of Rutland. It would drive economic prosperity in the area, create new job opportunities and most importantly facilitate an improved quality of life, which included increased access to opportunities for existing and future residents.

3.0 TASK AND FINISH GROUP

- 3.1 The formation of a task and finish group was discussed by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee as it was seen to be a good opportunity for members to help develop policy.
- 3.2 The creation of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group and its scope (Appendix 1) were formerly approved at the meeting of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 5th October 2022.
- 3.3 The members of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group were confirmed as follows:
 1. Councillor A Brown – Chair
 2. Councillor P Ainsley
 3. Councillor E Baines
 4. Councillor N Begy – Vice Chair
 5. Councillor G Waller
- 3.4 The membership of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group was amended following the May 2023 election and this was formerly approved at the meeting of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 15th June 2023.
- 3.5 The members of the Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group for the last two meetings (held in June and August 2023) were as follows:

1. Councillor A Brown – Chair
2. Councillor N Begy – Vice Chair
3. Councillor K Payne
4. Councillor R Ross
5. Councillor L Stephenson

3.6 Officers assisting and supporting the Task and Finish Group were confirmed as follows:

1. Penny Sharp, Strategic Director of Places
2. Ingrid Hooley, Head of Sustainable Economy and Place
3. Jane Narey, Scrutiny Officer

3.7 Rutland County Council had commissioned Metro Dynamics to produce the new Economic Development Strategy on their behalf and the company's representatives (including their Director, Alex Gardiner) attended meetings of the Task and Finish Group to support members as part of the review.

4.0 PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Councillor A Brown had an initial meeting with the Strategic Director of Places on the 4th November 2023, where it was agreed that the main aim of the Task and Finish Group would be to help identify what (if any) evidence was missing from the new Economic Development Strategy.

4.2 It was also agreed that the Task and Finish Group should, following analysis of the evidence, identify what information required clarifying within the strategy and what key messages had been identified.

4.3 Meetings were held on the following dates and were noted by the Scrutiny Officer:

- 5th December 2022
- 21st February 2023
- 12th April 2023
- 26th June 2023
- 7th August 2023

4.4 All the meetings (except the last meeting) consisted of a presentation from Metro Dynamics regarding the latest version of the draft Economic Development Strategy for Rutland.

- 4.5 This was then followed by a discussion where the members of the Task and Finish Group suggested recommendations for amendments to the draft strategy and agreed upon any actions for completion.

5.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The following recommendations for amendments to the Economic Development Strategy were approved by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 13th July 2023 and were presented to Cabinet on the 15th August 2023 for their consideration:

- The county of Northamptonshire should be included as one of Rutland's neighbouring authorities as well as Nottinghamshire, Greater Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Cambridgeshire.
- The strategy should include a statement communicating Rutland's unique selling point, identifying why businesses should locate in Rutland and what the benefits would be.
- The strategy needed to identify what companies were actually looking for when they were thinking about locating their business to a particular location/county.
- Explanations within the strategy should be less technical so that the information would be more easily understood by Cabinet and the general public.
- Rutland County Council's role in the delivery of the economic development strategy needed to be identified.
- The phrase 'What could Rutland's economy look like in 2040?' should be amended to state, 'What should Rutland's economy look like in 2040?'
- The strategy should identify Rutland County Council as an exemplar for other areas as a sustainable rural economy.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The Economic Development Strategy would identify what the issues were for Rutland's economic development and what the Council's priorities should be.
- 6.2 The next stage would be to use the strategy to create an implementation plan to identify what Rutland County Council would do to resolve the issues. The implementation plan would make definite recommendations on what actions needed to be completed to make Rutland's economy grow.

APPENDIX 1

Rutland County Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Economic Strategy Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

1. Topic

1.1 Economic Development, levelling up and devolution. These issues are inextricably linked but the scope of this review will be economic development.

2. Purpose

2.1 The aim of this review is to analyse available data and experiences of other authorities to recommend key focus areas to be considered in the production of an economic development strategy.

2.2 This strategy needs to align with other plans within Rutland such as the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy so we can effectively deliver the communities 'Future Rutland' vision we have endorsed as a council.

3. Members (Identify Chairperson)

- Councillor A Brown – Chair
- Councillor P Ainsley
- Councillor E Baines
- Councillor N Begy
- Councillor G Waller

4. Portfolio Holder:

- Councillor Lucy Stephenson

5. Officers

- Penny Sharp – Director – Places
- Ingrid Hooley – Head of Sustainable Economy and Place

6. Rationale

6.1 The Government's Levelling Up agenda is predicated on improving economic prosperity. In order to capitalise and benefit from Levelling Up investment and opportunities Rutland needs to have a clear economic development strategy. Economic development is a critical component for the future of Rutland. It drives economic prosperity in the area, creating

new job opportunities and most importantly facilitating an improved quality of life, which includes increased access to opportunities for existing and future residents.

- 6.2 The main objective of the review, therefore, will be to recommend key focus areas that will be considered in the production of an economic development strategy.
- 6.3 We will all have opinions on what the economy in Rutland should look like and what issues developing our economy might address. However we need to ensure the economic development strategy is built on a strong evidence base, as this might suggest a different approach on matters such as business sector development, skills and employment support, transport or housing. We need to understand what the data is telling us, identify key areas that the strategy development can explore and ultimately provide actions to address. This will ensure we develop targeted policies which not only deliver what our current residents want, but also what future residents may need.
- 6.4 The opportunity this review offers is to 'join-up' key policies.

7. Background

- 7.1 Our role as a council is to develop programmes, policies or targeted interventions that seek to improve the economic well-being for *all* of our community. Economic development priorities vary, economic development strategies often aim for common, positive results, such as increasing economic productivity and prosperity or quality of life (especially for distinct groups), getting more skilled workers living in our community, retaining businesses, and attracting or growing new ones.
- 7.2 The new strategy will be replacing the Economic Growth Strategy 2014-21. A new Economic Strategy was due to be developed during 2020, however, it was decided to put this on hold due to the pandemic.
- 7.3 Much has happened since the Economic Strategy was originally published. A new Government in 2019 set new priorities and the global pandemic and rising fuel prices has impacted on businesses however large or small. It is essential therefore that a new strategy is developed to take into account this changed landscape.
- 7.4 The increased pressure for local authorities to join together as combined authorities, and the Government's levelling up agenda means that if RCC is to receive benefits from these initiatives the Council needs to be clear what benefits it might want and developing a data driven economic strategy

will aid this. The strategy should also provide the platform to inform which partners the Council should proactively engage with to achieve the identified outcomes e.g. Local Enterprise Partnerships.

- 7.5 It is important that current employers, and interest groups of employers such as Discover Rutland inform the strategy as well as local and regional educational institutions who are nurturing future employees and residents more widely.

8. Timetable

8.1 The initial data review will be concluded by December 2022

8.2 To be completed by March 2023

9. Methodology/Approach

9.1 The initial work will be a desk top review of data and consideration of economic development policies adopted by authorities similar to Rutland and the impact these have had. Discussion with officers will also form part of this process as will consideration of research already undertaken, for example by the LGA [Rural recognition, recovery, resilience and revitalisation](#) | Local Government Association

9.2 As the work progresses this group might undertake interviews with key stakeholders but as the primary purpose is to identify potential options it would be at the stage of choosing options that such discussions would be most useful.

10. Evidence Sources

10.1 Independent research articles and papers

10.2 Data provided by RCC

11. Witnesses

11.1 This will be considered once the desk based work is nearing completion.

12. Other Considerations

12.1 None at this stage.

**A large print version of this document is
available on request**



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