Colchester’s Economic Prosperity Strategy 2007 to 2010

Colchester Borough Council June 2007
Contents

Chapter 1- Where is Colchester today?

1. Overview
2. Vision and Objectives
3. The strategic context
4. The role of the Economic Prosperity Strategy
5. Some major economic trends likely to impact upon Colchester 2007 to 2010
6. Key sectors in Colchester

Chapter 2 – What does Colchester aspire to be?

7. Key themes and key priorities of the Strategy

Chapter 3 – How do we achieve this 2007- 2010?

8. Funding and resources for the Strategy
9. Measurement and Monitoring
10. Delivery Plan
Chapter 1 – Where is Colchester today?

1. Overview

Colchester is a diverse and growing Borough with a vibrant town centre and a buoyant local economy. It is becoming increasingly recognised as a place where things are happening, a successful place; an old historic town, but increasingly a young city in the making, one receptive to new ideas and challenges. The next three years to 2010 represent a unique opportunity to fully capitalise on this momentum and firmly position Colchester as a regional centre spearheading sustainable economic growth and prosperity for its wider catchment area.

The Borough of Colchester lies in a key gateway location between the UK and Europe, with access to Europe via the nearby Ports of Harwich and Felixstowe to the east and Stansted Airport to the west. To make the most of this locational advantage, Colchester has – with neighbouring Essex and Suffolk authorities – been pivotal in developing the Haven Gateway Partnership which, through targeted infrastructure programmes, business development and employment training initiatives, is forging a prosperous and sustainable future for the sub-region.

Colchester is also playing a leading role in Regional Cities East – a strategic network of six key expanding towns and cities. Ipswich, Peterborough, Luton, Southend, Norwich and Colchester working together to overcome shared challenges in improving infrastructure, place marketing, enterprise activity, skill and employment levels to meet the needs of current and future citizens. The Strategy will maximise the opportunities afforded by partnership working through raising local and wider engagement and participation by Colchester's residents and businesses.

In common with many other UK towns employment has moved away from manufacturing and agriculture to the service sector. Colchester has a solid bedrock of major employers such as the Garrison and the University of Essex together with an impressive array of SMEs (Small and Medium Size Enterprises) which give the Borough a sound and sustainable basis for future economic growth.

Whilst economic growth has benefited the majority of residents and unemployment remains below the UK average, there are still significant pockets of deprivation in both the urban and rural areas. This strategy in conjunction with other Council and partner plans intends to address and alleviate this variation in prosperity.

In rural areas and small towns and villages, economic activity has shifted from agriculture towards a more diverse range of small enterprises and tourist related business. Specific rural initiatives will be implemented in order to maximise the economic benefits of such diversification.
The opportunities and challenges of realising an ambitious economic growth agenda also need to be considered in the context of the current Comprehensive Spending Review which will ultimately help shape the future funding and direction of local government. This linked with actions arising from the overarching Lyons Review of the role of local government and reviews undertaken by Barker (Land Use Planning), Leitch (Skills), Eddington (Transport) and Stern (Climate Change) will greatly influence the future economic prosperity of the UK, the Eastern region and ultimately - Colchester.

2. Vision and Objectives

The shared vision of Colchester 2020 Local Strategic Partnership is to develop the Borough as a prestigious regional centre which is:

- a centre of excellence and innovation for culture, education and learning recognised regionally, nationally and internationally
- a preferred destination for visitors, for business location and for investment
- a sustainable environment in which people will continue to enjoy high levels of health and wellbeing, but with modern health and social care services for those who need them

This vision underpins the aspirations and direction of this Strategy.

The inter-linked strategic objectives to realise this vision are:

1) To generate sustainable economic growth through business creation, business growth and business retention;

2) To work in close partnership with key organisations to address the skills and employability issues in the Borough;

3) To ensure that Colchester residents and businesses benefit from closer working and influencing of the sub-regional and regional agendas through agencies such as the Haven Gateway partnership and Regional Cities East

3. The strategic context

The Economic Prosperity Strategy forms part of the integrated strategic approach described in the LSP’s Community Strategy. The Community Strategy has
adopted the Regional Spatial Strategy’s (RSS) job creation target of 14,200 additional new jobs in the Borough by 2021. Meeting this target will fall principally within the remit of the Economic Prosperity Strategy. It will also be embedded in the Core Strategy that sets out the overall direction for the Local Development Framework that will guide spatial planning and steer future development and investment in Colchester up to 2021.

This Strategy will also be consistent with the following Council strategies and associated projects:

- Renaissance Programme
- Life Chances
- Community Development
- Visitor Development
- Marketing
- Welfare Rights

The Strategy is aligned with the Local Area Agreement (LAA) - Economic Block. The priority targets set by the LAA form part of the Strategy Delivery Plan.

At a much wider level the Strategy exists in a policy context which flows down from the European Union and National Government policies on employment, business support, innovation, skills and learning and investment, through Regional agencies to the sub-regional and local Borough levels. The challenge for Colchester is to ensure that the Borough receives sufficient funding and resources at the right time to meet its own needs and aspirations.

4. The role of the Economic Prosperity Strategy

The next three years are crucial for Colchester. Through this Economic Prosperity Strategy, the Council seeks to set out a framework to steer the activities of the Council and other organisations over this period. We set out the action that needs to be taken to contribute to achieving a sustainable strong economy beyond 2010, fostering the conditions for growth and capturing the benefits for local people and businesses. However, Colchester Borough Council cannot achieve this goal through its own efforts alone. The Strategy provides a shared vision and framework for partnership working with key organisations which have an important role in helping to shape and grow the Colchester economy.

The Economic Prosperity Strategy 2007 – 2010 will be used for the following purposes:

- To provide an overarching vision for all economic development activity in Colchester
• To provide a framework of action for the Council and other local organisations to achieve the vision
• To provide a framework for co-ordination and leadership by the Council
• To assist in determining priorities for the allocation of resources of the Council and other organisations
• To identify priorities for economic development funding
• To assist the development of partnerships
• To avoid duplication and achieve the best use of available resources
• To set targets and provide a framework for monitoring and evaluation
• To plan the economic development work of the Council
• To meet the Council’s responsibilities for promoting economic development under the Local Government Act 2000

5. Some of the major economic trends likely to impact upon Colchester 2007 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/trend</th>
<th>Implication</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing population</td>
<td>Basis for further economic development</td>
<td>Expansion of economically active population; potential to increase local employment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing relative affluence</td>
<td>Heavily influenced by out-commuting incomes but provides wider range of local businesses and activities</td>
<td>Significant opportunity to develop tourism, leisure, retail and cultural sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing business base</td>
<td>VAT stock has risen since 1994 at higher rate than regionally and nationally. However, VAT businesses per 10,000 resident pop. Have been in decline since 2000</td>
<td>Opportunity to encourage more of the growing population to enter self-employment and for existing small businesses to grow and register for VAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon reduction</td>
<td>Public and private sector organizations are significant energy users</td>
<td>Practical solutions to reduce carbon emissions; Foster the growth of environmental industry cluster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/trend</th>
<th>Implication</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatively high use of Internet</td>
<td>A key competitive advantage</td>
<td>Opportunity to increase regional, national and global</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Declining industrial sector | Need to address re-/upskilling of former employees and reuse of former industrial sites. Maintain where possible former industrial sites as employment land. | Rate of decline in Borough’s manufacturing jobs is slower than regional or national drop – potentially more resilient?

Growing globalisation of economic markets | Greater downward price pressures on goods and services produced within the Borough. | Opportunity for local businesses to address global market opportunities, capitalising on Borough’s location and connectivity.

Low and reducing claimant unemployment | Improved quality of life and life-chances for residents but restricts recruitment opportunities for expanding businesses. | On-balance a positive message as reinforces economic health of Borough. Creates pressure on employers to broaden their recruitment to “economically inactive” groups in the local population, potentially raising overall employment rate.

6. Key Sectors in Colchester

The following section provides the context for the Economic Prosperity Strategy 2007-10 in terms of key employment sectors. Colchester’s economy is markedly Service-dominated with 85% of all employee jobs in this broad activity area. Selection of key employment sectors is based on a combination of projected growth to 2021 and their relative contribution to the Colchester economy which currently stands at £17 billion.

The future performance of these sectors together with emerging business clusters will help drive economic growth in the Borough. The strategy will target interventions at the following sectors:

- Manufacturing
• Construction
• Retail
• Finance, IT and other business activities
• Public administration, education and health
• Tourism

6.1 Manufacturing

Although in decline, manufacturing is still an important sector within the Borough, employing around 6,300 people in 480 firms (ABI 2005). In fact, the rate of contraction of Colchester’s manufacturing sector has been less than half that experienced across the Region and the UK in the past decade, shrinking by some 15%. Clearly, local manufacturing offers strengths.

The role of the public sector is to assist the potential for firm recruitment and training needs to be adequately met and to encourage participation in networks of collaboration and innovation where market opportunities can be identified and accessed.

6.2 Construction

There will be significant levels of construction activity arising from new developments taking place in Colchester, the sub-Region and Region during the next ten years. This will create significant growth in jobs and new contract opportunities for local construction businesses and in the supply of construction materials.

However, there are difficulties in ensuring that skills shortages throughout the Construction sector are filled. Existing training provision does not always prepare people to undertake their trade at the speed required by the employer. To address this and get more local people onto local construction sites, work is underway to provide significantly more “on the job” accredited training.

Secondly, almost three-quarters of Colchester’s 1,057 construction sector companies are small, having less than 50 employees and consequently lack the profile to win large construction contracts. A way forward is to encourage more of a partnership approach integrating local firm expertise and encouraging developers to use more local firms.

6.3 Retail

Retail is an important sector in the Borough which is a major Regional shopping centre. With 780 firms and 10,900 employees, retail firm size is strong in both small, medium and large enterprises. Moreover, retail is growing: since 1998
some 2,500 extra jobs have been created in the sector with the growth being strongest among those selling new goods in non-specialised stores, especially the major national grocery chains. The casualties of this expansion have been mainly independent food retailers. Yet, a particular strength of the Borough is its small, specialist shops with the Town Centre having some 200 independent traders and only 100 multiples the reverse retail pattern of Chelmsford and Ipswich.

Actions for the Council and partners are to progress the redevelopment of the Town Centre to expand goods shopping in the St Botolph’s regeneration project. With an increase in retail space of 350,000 square feet across a range of shop sizes, the attraction and balance of the Town Centre should be maintained and increased, supporting wider benefits for the Borough. Similarly, the Council continues to support the Colchester Town Partnership and the Business Improvement District plan for the Town Centre. With its partner organisations, the Council is addressing place-marketing issues and working to put in place shared training and recruitment opportunities for local employers.

6.4 Finance, IT, other business activities

This sector is set for the second greatest level of future job growth with a projected expansion of 25%, or 3,100 employees, to 2021.

While financial services have been in decline over recent years, falling to below 3,000 employees in 160 firms, there are prospects to encourage more insurance and pension firms to relocate from London to the Borough. The Council will be pursuing these opportunities, working to market Colchester’s advantages, ensuring adequate employment land, encouraging suitable office development and brokering training and recruitment support.

A positive growth is also likely for IT businesses, an area in Colchester which has a strong presence with 340 firms employing around 600 staff. The Council is working with providers offering next-generation broadband infrastructure to enable this sector. Also in partnership with the University of Essex and ExDRA an innovation network to support development in ICT and related areas is being developed.

Other business activities, essentially what is known as Business2Business services, are an area in which Colchester has particular strengths. Key sub-sectors are the legal and accounting firms and the advertising and recruitment agencies. The markets for these firms’ services are not simply driven by growth in other sector areas but increasingly by their penetration of regional, national and international marketplaces. The role of the Council here is to support wider market awareness of these local areas of expertise through external promotion and place-marketing of the Borough.

6.5 Public administration, education and health
Health and education (public and private sector) is set for the highest forecast level of job growth with an estimated additional 4,200 jobs by 2021 representing a 20% increase.

While public administration will decline slightly, the role of Colchester as a Regional centre for public sector health jobs means that NHS services are likely to expand further together with increasing private sector care employment to meet the needs of an ageing population. The role of the Council is to work with the health and social care sector to develop pre-recruitment training and employment initiatives which address staffing needs for entry-level positions.

Progressive expansion of the University of Essex, planned re-development and expansion at Colchester Institute and the need for many more school places mean that Education (lecturing, teaching and ancillary) posts will also increase. There are opportunities for Further and Higher Education to offer new courses which meet still further the needs of employers in the Borough and the sub-Region; the Council will be working to broker these needs and opportunities.

6.6 Tourism

The latest figures for Tourism (2005) show that Tourism was worth £189.6m to the economy of the Borough as in the same year more than 4.8m visitor trips were made to Colchester. This industry also supports 5,400 jobs within the Borough, with this number having increased by over one third in the past ten years.

However, several barriers such as the traffic and capacity issues in the town centre and gaps in accommodation provision could hold back growth, especially if they have an effect on the opportunities that could come to the town via 2012 and the prestige that this could bring to Colchester. By overcoming these barriers we will be able to increase the number of visitors and jobs.

Chapter 2 – What does Colchester aspire to be?

7. Key themes and priorities of the Strategy
In the light of the research and analysis underpinning this Strategy four major themes have been identified. The thematic approach has been adopted to give greater clarity around the proposed actions and interventions in the delivery plan which can be measured by performance indicators (see section 9).

Underpinning the four major themes of the Strategy are a number of key priorities which will form a plan of action through which the Strategy will be delivered.

7.1 People

To develop and grow the skilled workforce needed to compete. At the same time to help address the barriers that may prevent people from accessing employment and improving their skills.

7.11 Tackling barriers to employment

Getting into or back to work can be especially difficult for many people for a range of reasons. There may be extra costs associated with childcare or the tax/benefit position which may remove the financial incentive to move off benefit income. More generally, lack of recent work experience reduces confidence and, over time, lack of work reduces motivation. Providing information, advice and guidance on the above is an important intervention.

7.12 Raising skill levels

Colchester’s people need to be increasingly skilled to compete for jobs, retain them and to progress within the workplace. There are still unfilled vacancies because of a lack of applicants as well as potential employees who are not yet “job ready”. To overcome this employers need to be able to better describe their individual and sector recruitment needs, now and in the future, in order that the public sector can help close the gap.

The approach to be taken requires two actions. First, more employers need to undertake workforce planning which can be shared with the public sector to generate sector specific training packages; adults will undertake training if there is a guaranteed job interview on completion and the training is practical, accredited, includes transferable skills and is brief. Secondly, employers need to encourage more of their existing staff to train and to develop training plans for their enterprises. There is considerable evidence that an employee who receives training supported by their employer is an added-value member of the workforce.

7.13 Improving employment prospects for hard to reach groups
People with disabilities can suffer discrimination in entering the world of work; this is not only a waste of human resource, it is unjust. Many people on Incapacity Benefit have a mental health problem and those that do not, a physical disability; lone parents are often restricted in the type of work they can take because of employer attitudes and inflexible working patterns. In all cases, successfully bridging employer and employee needs brings dividends to both parties and creates more job opportunities than previously.

Adults who are 50 and above are another group which can be hard to reach and who experience labour market discrimination. While recent legislative changes have promoted a more positive view of older workers, there is a need for employers to actively encourage people in this age group to apply for opportunities and to support their skills and training needs.

Another group which, initially, can often encounter labour market disadvantage is newly arrived members of the Colchester workforce from, for example, the European Accession States. For foreign nationals with a right to reside and work in Britain, a key step towards acquiring stable employment is gaining fluent language skills. Key areas for action are to facilitate the delivery of English as a Second Language as well as information and guidance on employability.

7.14 Improving life chances and addressing the impacts of concentrations of disadvantage

As noted earlier, some of Colchester’s wards contain areas of economic and income deprivation which place them among the most disadvantaged 20% in England. This profile of disadvantage is closely related to the prevalence of social housing which has, due to housing market changes, become the tenure of least choice. In turn, local concentrations of disadvantage reduce life-chances for their residents, creating a negative spiral. Until the housing market provides a greater range of affordable accommodation and reduces the concentration effect of social housing, there is a need to increase employment opportunities and welfare advice outreach to these areas.

7.2 Enterprise

To develop existing and new ways of helping businesses to start, grow and prosper. By fostering a supportive and business friendly environment built on a strong entrepreneurial culture and demonstrating that Colchester is open for, and to, business.

7.21 Increase business start ups and survivability

The creation and survival of new businesses is vital for the future of the Colchester economy. Colchester currently has over 2,200 new businesses
starting up every year. Over 60% of these businesses survive beyond the critical 3 year phase.

However, there are ongoing problems with finding sufficient premises with around 500 businesses each year struggling to obtain suitable and affordable accommodation. Similarly, there is also an identified shortage of “grow on” accommodation for well established businesses which needs to be addressed if local enterprises are to remain in the Borough.

7.22 Improve the provision and delivery of business support

There is a plethora of business support organisations able to provide a wide range of advice, support and practical assistance to companies. Currently the Council have 9 key partners providing business support. This can cause confusion for businesses about who and which agency to approach for assistance.

The Council has a role in helping to improve both the signposting and delivery of support to existing and prospective Colchester businesses and will be working with Business Link and partners to achieve this.

7.23 Improve the supply of land and business premises

The Haven Gateway Employment Land Study 2005 identified that whilst Colchester has 98 Hectares of employment land in the Borough, only 2 Hectares could be classified as being of good quality.

For the future desired economic growth targets to be achieved it is vital to ensure the supply of good quality accommodation for businesses. The Enterprise Team will continue to work with other council services to allocate sufficient suitable employment land in the new Local Development Framework.

7.24 Develop and foster business clusters

Colchester has a number of significant business clusters such as ICT, creative companies, printing and environmental industries. Clusters are characterised by the physical proximity of mutually dependent businesses. This can enable companies to improve their competitive performance through direct and indirect collaboration, the sharing of resources, customers and inputs. New information technology also provides an opportunity to develop ‘virtual clusters’. Identifying and supporting existing and new clusters is an important strand in proactively increasing economic prosperity.

7.25 Ensure business retention
Ensuring that Colchester retains and grows its existing business base is key to its ongoing economic prosperity. Wherever practicable the Council will intervene with or without a partner organisation to retain and/or grow a business in the Borough. In circumstances where businesses do reduce their workforce there is an effective ‘redundancy protocol’ in place with partner organisations to mitigate the effect on the individuals affected and as far as is possible reduce unemployment.

7.26 Support the development of a vibrant town centre

The town centre is an important source of employment and provides opportunities for local businesses. The creation of a successful Business Improvement District (BID) will help to create and maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and beyond in the lifetime of this Strategy.

7.27 Support Rural Initiatives

The rural areas of the Borough need assistance to encourage diversification and the relocation of new businesses. A recent mapping exercise of redundant buildings has indicated the potential to bring some redundant buildings back into commercial use. The Council will continue to use web-based and targeted marketing to enhance its support to the rural areas, encouraging grant applications and developing further initiatives to assist local enterprises.

7.28 Develop Social Enterprises

Social Enterprises are businesses which operate with a non-profit making purpose but which aim to generate surpluses which, together with their direct employment benefits, deliver social, economic and environmental improvements. Examples are credit unions, housing associations, community development trusts which own property or land, environmental training organisations and trading co-operatives. The “sector” employs 5% of the UK workforce and has a combined turnover of £27 billion and, through recent Government encouragement (eg Community Investment Company legislation) is poised to grow further. A local example of a social enterprise is the Mercury Theatre.

Initiatives will be created to facilitate the growth of existing social enterprises in Colchester and the formation of new ones where there is a business case for such assistance which will in turn deliver wide-ranging sustainable economic and community benefits.

7.3 Marketing and Promotion

Marketing and promotion is an increasingly important component of economic growth activity. Colchester needs to promote itself to its own people and
businesses, not only to boost spending and investment but also to develop a sense of civic pride and commitment. The engendering of a strong and positive self-image is proven to reap substantial economic benefits for both residents and businesses.

7.31 Ensuring clarity of what Colchester has to offer

The overall promotion of Colchester by all organisations both public and private is currently rather fragmented and potentially confusing to the target audiences. Market feedback suggests there are widely differing perceptions of Colchester’s attractiveness. This is an issue for many towns and cities in the UK including London. Whilst Colchester’s traditional image is well established there is a pressing need to promote Colchester as being open for and to business with a clearly differentiated proposition that stands out from the competition.

7.32 Developing the Colchester message

Efforts to develop the Colchester message should play on Colchester’s strengths – based on what Colchester has to offer as a destination for business. This will need to combine the quality of business location (premises, people, gateway position) with quality of life (culture, countryside, education facilities) to form a really compelling proposition.

7.33 Promoting Colchester as a place

Like any successful company Colchester needs a marketing strategy that delivers a range of targeted messages, reinforcing one another and building a positive and coherent image. In short, Colchester needs promoting as a place, to people and as a place for people to do business.

7.34 Effective marketing through co-ordination

The need for greater cooperation, co-ordination and partnership working is particularly pertinent to marketing and promotion. The buy-in to the Colchester proposition is needed not just by the public sector but crucially by the private sector. Extensive evidence supports the view that developing and communicating a positive image and raising the profile of a place will deliver economic benefits far in excess of the initial investment. In short effective marketing and promotion works.

7.4 Leadership

To provide the leadership and co-ordination of local organisations and external initiatives which ensures local people and businesses receive the best possible assistance and the resources are used to achieve maximum effect.
7.41 Effective leadership for promoting and delivering Economic Prosperity

Strong leadership requires the Council to have good communication and consultation mechanisms to listen to, and involve local businesses and organisations.

This role also extends to representing Colchester’s interests at the sub-regional, county, regional and national and European levels where policies and decisions impact upon the economic success of the Borough.

7.42 Effective co-ordination of local organisations and initiatives

A variety of economic prosperity initiatives are delivered in Colchester by a number of different organisations. Each one has a key role to play. However, it is important that these organisations share the same objectives to achieve the maximum impact and benefits for local people and businesses. It is the role of the Council with the Colchester2020 Local Strategic Partnership and the Haven Gateway Partnership to provide the leadership and co-ordination to realise this.

Chapter 3 - How do we achieve this 2007- 2010?

8. Funding and resources for the Strategy

Key to achieving much of this ambitious Strategy requires the Council to add significantly to its own limited capacity by securing external resources. For example, EU and Government funds for economic development generally require competitive bidding processes if they are to be drawn down to the Borough. Similarly, staff of economic development partner organisations can potentially be engaged to assist in delivering aspects of the Strategy.

The Council has a track-record of success in the above areas and will work where it can to obtain further resources to enhance its own limited budget and so deliver more over the life of this Strategy. Specific sources of funding which will be targeted for support where appropriate to achieving our economic prosperity targets are listed below.

8.1 LABGI

The Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) delivers annual financial rewards directly to local authorities that promote the greatest levels of continued economic growth in their local areas by allowing them to retain increases in revenue derived from business rates. The money is genuinely additional and encourages local authorities to maximise local economic growth, providing an incentive to boost jobs, growth and enterprise and promote long-
term economic sustainability across their areas. For Colchester, this funding provides a significant source of additional revenue support to spend on the priorities set out in this Economic Prosperity Strategy, and, not least, a source of "match-funding" for European and other competitive bidding funding streams.

8.2 Investing in Communities

Investing in Communities (IiC) is a programme developed by EEDA and managed by the Haven Gateway Partnership which focuses on improving the skills, employability and employment of economically disadvantaged individuals and groups of working age across the Gateway sub-region. Colchester Borough Council has already benefited through initial bid funding from IiC and intends to bring forward further relevant project ideas for potential support where these meet both local and broader needs and objectives. IiC runs until 2011.

8.3 European funding

In terms of potential finance from the EU Structural Funds to support the Economic Prosperity Strategy over its life, two main sources of Region-wide competitive funding exist: the Regional Competitiveness Operational Programme (RCOP); and the European Social Fund (ESF).

RCOP is focused upon three enterprise-related priorities: promoting innovation and technology transfer with the intention of improving productivity; stimulating enterprise and supporting successful business by overcoming barriers to business creation and expansion; and, ensuring sustainable development, production and consumption. Accepted projects require a minimum of 50% "match funding" from non-EU sources to qualify for financial support.

The second, and complementary, EU source of funding is ESF which is, similarly, Region-wide but focuses on contributing to sustainable economic and social inclusion by extending employment opportunities and by developing a skilled and adaptable workforce in line with the Lisbon agreement. There are two main priorities for ESF: tackling "worklessness", that is, extending employment opportunities to those without work; and developing workforce skills – supporting a skilled and adaptable labour force.

Accessing funding from ESF requires a bid to meet the (as yet) unpublished Operational Guidance. Match-funding will be available for accepted projects from Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.

8.4 Partner organisations

Working with partner organisations is key to delivering the economic development agendas of these agencies in the Borough to maximum effect. The Council helps its target community of local businesses, employees and jobseekers in two ways from working closely with partners: indirectly, by promoting programmes and targeted actions run by partners; and, more directly,
through bidding for and/or influencing the direction of spend of other monies held by these organisations.

Key organisations for the Borough in terms of support and funding for this Strategy, are:

- EEDA – the Regional Development Agency
- East of England Business Support Limited – the local Business Link partner
- Jobcentre Plus – the working age employment and benefits agency
- Learning and Skills Council (Essex)
- ExDRA – Essex Development and Regeneration Agency
- Connexions – the careers and education agency for 13-19 year olds
- Colchester Institute – the local Further Education provider
- University of Essex

Other significant delivery partners are:

- Colchester Business and Enterprise Agency
- Signpost Resource Centres
- Colchester Learning Shop
- The Princes Trust
- Enterprising Women
- Greater Essex Prosperity Forum

A key opportunity for the Borough will be to continue to strengthen working relationships with the above organisations to deliver the Strategy. In some cases this will take the form of developing formal memoranda of understanding; in others – where the Borough is a funding body - continuing to develop Service Level Agreements to guide and influence partner delivery. In all instances, the Borough will seek to work productively with its economic development partners to achieve mutual goals.

9. Measurement and Monitoring

Putting in place a robust methodology for measuring and monitoring the delivery of this strategy is vital. The Audit Commission has produced a suite of performance indicators to measure economic performance at local level. These indicators have been successfully piloted by 17 local authorities. The intention is to use the lessons from this pilot to produce a series of performance indicators which are specifically tailored to the delivery of the Colchester Economic Prosperity Strategy.
The following performance areas will be covered. An example of a potential performance indicator is shown in brackets:

- Employment ( % of the working age population who are claiming Job Seekers Allowance)
- Earnings and Skills ( % of population qualified by NVQ level)
- Economic Vitality ( Growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) per head of local population)
- Deprivation (Proportion of Super Output areas (SOAs) in the local authority that rank within the most deprived 20% of SOAs in the country
- Town centre economy ( pedestrian footfall to the town centre – survey)
- Workforce development and employability (% of employees and self employed that have received job-related training in the last ‘x’ weeks)
- Investment (jobs created and/or safeguarded to which the authority’s inward investment promotional and support activity has made a significant contribution)
- Business and social enterprise support ( number of new business start-ups supported in the local area per 1,000 VAT registered businesses)

These, and other, performance indicators (with targets) will inform action on the ground. Actions can then be reviewed and, if appropriate, changed to ensure that targets are met.

The delivery of the Economic Prosperity Strategy measured and monitored by performance indicators is intended to provide rigour and transparency on economic growth in the Borough.

10. Delivery Plan

This Strategy will only be a success if its ideas and objectives are implemented on the ground, making an identifiable, positive difference to Colchester and its people. Ensuring that the Strategy is delivered effectively will require us to do the following:

- Make the best use of resources available to support Colchester economic growth
- Develop effective and inclusive partnerships by identifying shared priorities and co-ordinating activities for maximum effect
- Ensure there is leadership to explain the direction of economic change in Colchester and its opportunities and implications
What follows is a delivery plan which takes the key themes and priorities and translates these into actions and stretching target outcomes. The plan also identifies resources in terms of people and funding streams which are currently available for delivery. It also identifies potential resources, yet to be secured, which would enable the delivery of additional economic benefits for Colchester.