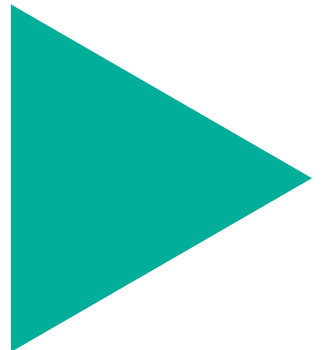
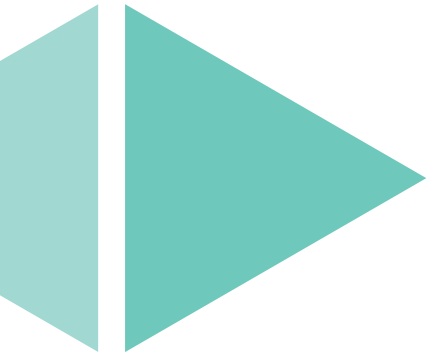


Ambition Southend



A Skills and
Labour Market
Strategy for
Southend
-on-Sea

2018–2023



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Councillor statement

I am very pleased to be introducing Southend-on-Sea's new Skills and Labour Market Strategy.

Working together with colleagues and stakeholders from across Southend, we have sought to develop a strategy that enables our Borough to meet the future skills needs and challenges of our residents and employers.

We have used the latest evidence available and have listened carefully to the views of our community. We have also examined current government policy and thought about what this means for our community in the future.

This Strategy is the beginning of a new joined-up approach to skills and jobs. It will steer the activities of the council and our partners in the future.

The implications of this strategy are far reaching and will require a new approach to skills from employees, employers, schools, colleges, universities and the Council. We will continue to listen, learn and adapt in order to improve skills outcomes for our community in the years to come.

As we progress towards developing an implementation plan for this strategy, our invitation is for you to play an active role in this process and to work with us to: develop ideas, assess progress, make decisions, monitor activity and ensure that Southend achieves its potential.

Together we will make a better Southend and I look forward to working with you all in the future.

Yours

Councillor James Courtenay,
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Growth
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

About this strategy

This strategy has been produced as a result of research, evidence, and wide consultation. It is intended to provide a blueprint for positive change and to be enacted by stakeholders across Southend-on-Sea, not just the Council. It is designed to cover a five-year term, from 2018 to 2023. It aims to enable an inclusive, efficient, effective labour market with clear, accessible career pathways for residents, which is able to respond to emerging economic risks and opportunities.

This strategy has been created to support and contribute to a new 'Southend 2050' vision. Similarly, the strategy has been drafted to work in harmony with other Council strategies (Economic Growth Strategy, Post-16 Learning Strategy, Tourism Strategy, Digital Strategy, etc.) and the forthcoming skills strategy from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

Throughout this document, the term 'skills' is used to mean: *'any form of personal ability or expertise, formed through education, training, experience or otherwise, that enables a person to actively participate in the labour market'*.

It applies to residents of all ages and is not limited to those of school age or similar.

Whilst this strategy acknowledges and explores the central and vital role that education plays within a local economy, this document is not intended to be, or to replace, an education strategy. Instead, it aims to consider the wider range of skills that enable all Southend residents to actively participate in the labour market. As such, this document can and should be read in conjunction with: 'Our ambitions for your child's education in Southend: Department for People Sept

2017', which details the Council's approach to education and schools in particular.

Using the latest evidence

This strategy, and the evidence base that underpins it, uses the latest available data from a variety of sources, including: the Office for National Statistics, the Department for Education and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Recent updates to national datasets have been incorporated where possible, so that figures and trends quoted are in-line with those in other Council strategies. A separate document that summarises the results of our research, 'Ambition Southend: Skills and Labour Market Review', has been produced and can be found at: www.southend.gov.uk.

Executive summary

The following represents a summary of the key findings of our research, strategic objectives, the proposed priorities and approach.

Key Findings

Key findings from our research and consultation include:

- ▶ There are multiple skills challenges and opportunities facing the borough.
- ▶ Southend-on-Sea has an open and growing labour market with low average productivity, attainment disparity and pockets of deprivation.
- ▶ Meeting future skills challenges will require agile skills provision that can quickly adapt to meet the needs of industry.
- ▶ Our residents will need better 'millennial' and enterprise skills to secure a productive life-long career.
- ▶ Despite some good practice, careers support is patchy and there is insufficient communication around vocational career pathways.
- ▶ Work experience has the capacity to reduce disengagement and better equip our residents for the labour market.
- ▶ There will be a significant number of opportunities stemming from the Borough's major regeneration projects in the future.

Objectives

Five strategic outcomes have been identified:

- ▶ Raised productivity
- ▶ Jobs growth
- ▶ Meet the current and future skills needs of employers
- ▶ Increase skills attainment and wages of lowest earners
- ▶ An inclusive workforce

Areas of focus

In order to achieve the strategic outcomes, future activity will focus on the following areas:

- ▶ Convene leadership amongst key skills stakeholders and enable effective advocacy and internal communication across the borough.
- ▶ Develop a 'life transitions' approach that targets skills support at the key junctures in residents lives and addresses spatial and social inequalities in the borough.
- ▶ Improve the agility of skills provision to rapidly adapt to the requirements of local industry.
- ▶ Facilitate experience of the workplace for residents, to better equip our future workforce and reduce disengagement from the labour market.
- ▶ Better utilise assets and networks to maximise the number of skills development opportunities available for residents and engage a wide range of stakeholders in supporting our future workforce.

Resilience

To ensure this strategy remains relevant and practical in the face of change, it includes a framework through which future decisions can be steered. Key considerations will include:

- ▶ Contribution to job creation
- ▶ Contribution to meeting the needs of local industry
- ▶ Contribution to workforce inclusivity

Next steps

Once this strategy is formally adopted by the Council and its partners, stakeholders will develop a 'Skills Strategy Implementation Plan' document that will include details of the specific activities, projects, timescales, targets, objectives and measures of success.



The current skills support landscape

This strategy represents a new approach to supporting skills for the Council. We propose to work collectively with stakeholders from across the borough, to develop a shared vision and approach and to maintain and develop these links for the benefit of our residents.

Many of the key stakeholders involved in Southend's skills support services are illustrated in the diagram below. These include: schools, FE colleges, universities, business partnerships and central government departments. Although not individually listed, local businesses are also important providers of skills development activity in the borough.

BEST Growth Hub	Essex Chambers of Commerce	Essex Employability & Skills Board	Federation of Small Businesses	Institute of Directors	SAVs	South East LEP	Opportunity South Essex
Southend Business Partnership	Dept. for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Dept. for Education	Dept. for Work and Pensions/Job Centre Plus	National Careers Service	Skills Funding Agency	Career Ready
Connexions	Essex Provider Network	Federation of Essex Colleges	Southend Education Board	The Careers & Enterprise Company	A Better Start Programme	Essex County Council	Thurrock Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	Anglia Ruskin University	Independent training providers	PROCAT	SEEVIC	South Essex College	Southend Adult Community College	University of Essex
Belfairs Academy	Cecil Jones Academy	Chase High School	Kingsdown School	Lancaster School	PLT Southend Academies	Shoeburyness High School	Southchurch High School
Southend High School for Boys	Southend High School for Girls	Southend YMCA Community School	St. Bernard's High School	St. Nicholas School	St. Thomas More High School	The Eastwood Academy	The St. Christopher School
Westcliff High School for Boys	Westcliff High School for Girls	Barons Court Primary School and Nursery	Blenheim Primary School	Bournemouth Park Primary School	Bournes Green Infant School	Bournes Green Junior School	Chalkwell Hall Infant School
Chalkwell Hall Junior School	Darlinghurst School	Earls Hall Primary School	Eastwood Primary and Nursery School	Edwards Hall Primary School	Fairways Primary School	Friars Primary School and Nursery	Hamstel Infant School and Nursery
Hamstel Junior School	Heycroft Primary School	Hinguar Community Primary School	Leigh North Street Primary School	Milton Hall Primary School and Nursery	Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School	Porters Grange Primary School and Nursery	Prince Avenue Academy and Nursery
Richmond Avenue Primary and Nursery School	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School and Nursery	St. George's Catholic Primary School	St. Helen's Catholic Primary School	St. Mary's Church of England Primary School	Temple Sutton Primary School	The Federation of Greenways Schools	The Westborough School
		Thorpedene Primary School	West Leigh Infant School	West Leigh Junior School			

Southend-on-Sea labour market analysis summary

An analysis of the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to Southend-on-Sea's labour market has been undertaken, which is summarised in the diagram below. The analysis is based on information we received from local

stakeholders during our consultation period and the strategy evidence base. A separate document that summarises the results of this research, 'Ambition Southend: Skills and Labour Market Review', has been produced and can be found at: www.southend.gov.uk

Southend-on-Sea Skills & Labour Market SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ High economic participation▶ A growing population & workforce▶ Increasing workplace earnings▶ Strong average school performance▶ Some local FE/HE provision▶ Connectivity to London/Europe▶ Increasing levels of employer engagement▶ High levels of entrepreneurialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Low and declining productivity▶ Low jobs growth▶ Increasingly aged and dependent population▶ Recruitment difficulties & skills gaps▶ A net exporter of skills▶ Limited HE offer▶ Lack of housing affordability▶ A less well-qualified workforce▶ Attainment disparities between schools and neighbourhoods▶ Comparatively high youth unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ The Apprenticeship Levy▶ Strong local voluntary sector▶ Growth of London Southend Airport▶ Strong regeneration plans▶ BREXIT▶ A growing skills provision infrastructure▶ Strong future labour demand▶ A strong and willing stakeholder base	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Confusion over apprenticeships▶ Reductions in school funding▶ Lack of clear career pathways for all residents▶ Reported lack of enterprise skills in young people▶ BREXIT▶ Central education policy that focuses on qualifications attainment▶ Lack of resources for industry awareness and work experience▶ A confusing skills support system

Key findings

The following provides detail on some of the key findings of our research and consultation:

There are multiple challenges and opportunities facing the borough.

A key advantage for the borough is that it has a range of established, successful education and training providers.

The strategy consultation exercise revealed that, amongst stakeholders, there is a broad awareness of key challenges and potential solutions.

Addressing Southend's skills challenges and opportunities will require strong leadership, effective co-ordination and joint working among stakeholders. A shared, inclusive vision that builds on the commitment and knowledge present in the borough, is needed to maximise opportunities and benefits for residents.

There will be strong demand for labour in the future.

The need to replace retiring workers will create labour demand across all types of jobs. The *Working Futures* forecast has predicted that job openings will be in a wide range of industries and occupations, particularly reflecting the need to replace retiring workers. For example, jobs in administrative occupations in the South East of England are forecast to contract by 30,000 jobs between 2012 and 2022, but with 158,000 retirements estimated for the same period, there is still likely to be a net requirement for 128,000 workers.

Driving up productivity and meeting industry's future skills requirements are key challenges for the borough.

Raising productivity is a difficult challenge facing the borough and the UK. Tackling this issue in Southend will require: employers to shift towards higher value-added economic activities, organisational development and capital investment in skills. As such, the benefits of change must be realised by local businesses and be supported by market demand.

Further, for local industry to maintain a competitive advantage, the labour force must be able to rapidly adapt to and meet the needs of local employers.

Southend-on-Sea has an open labour market.

Labour moves freely in, out and around the borough without regard to administrative boundaries. Further, the South-Essex and London labour markets are closely linked to Southend's with a high proportion of workers regularly crossing boundaries to travel to and from workplaces. Plans to improve the local skills system should be cognisant of the employment opportunities for residents that exist outside of the borough, and the many local employers reliant on a workforce that commutes in from outside the borough.

Southend-on-Sea has significant disparities in deprivation and educational attainment.

Southend-on-Sea has spatial concentrations of deprivation, with some impoverished ward areas scoring highly on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Milton, Victoria, Kursaal). Other ward areas have low levels of deprivation and high average earnings (Leigh, Leigh West, Thorpe).

Further, there is a wide range of performance between schools in Southend. The percentage of pupils achieving a 9-4 grade including English & Maths at KS4 varies between schools from 100% to 36%.

There is a common ‘millennial’ skillset needed by residents.

The ‘millennial’ skills challenge means that high levels of technical skills, soft skills, communication skills, project management and entrepreneurial skills need to be developed by our residents in order to equip them to play an active role in the labour force. These skills will enable local employers to compete effectively in their marketplaces and trade profitably in the future.

Similarly, many local employers highlight ‘employability skills’, such as: a positive attitude to work, time-keeping and a suitable appearance; as being important to the operation of their organisations.

There will be opportunities stemming from the major regeneration projects scheduled to take place in the borough over the next 15 years.

Amongst key regeneration projects, such as the Airport Business Park Southend and The Better Queensway project, an estimated £1billion will be spent in Southend-on-Sea over the next 10 years.

Accordingly, there will be a significant number of new jobs created in the area connected to new buildings, their occupiers and supply chains. It is important that action is taken now to ensure that the employment opportunities are made accessible to residents.

The apprenticeship levy.

The apprenticeship levy is an opportunity for employers to pool resources and tailor an apprenticeship system that better responds to the needs of the local economy.

There is a need to ensure that the quality and value of apprenticeships is not diminished, and that all apprentices learn a range of transferable core skills and competencies - such as digital, customer management, communication, literacy, numeracy, problem solving and project management. That will, in turn, help us ensure that the local workforce can meet future industry skills requirements.

Meeting employer workforce requirements, requires an agile skills infrastructure.

Creating a system that can consistently adapt to the changing skills needs of local employers is a significant challenge for Southend.

In order to inform skills provision, it is important for employers to be part of the infrastructure that supports skills development and to maintain an open dialogue between employers and the education providers in the town.

Sources of capital investment for skills development need to be identified in order to ensure that local providers can continue to train using industry standard kit and equipment.

Further, by collaborating across sectors, employers can achieve the critical mass of demand to enable specialist skills provision, attracting niche training to the locality, or saving costs on off-site delivery.

Current promotion of local industry career pathways is patchy and not sufficiently resourced.

Although there are a number of good initiatives that link employers with learners, there is no consistent approach to building residents awareness of local industry career choices and pathways.

Southend-on-Sea's schools are responsible for providing careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) to school-age residents (except NEETs). However, schools are becoming increasingly independent in terms of their management, finance and operations, and this introduces new challenges in terms of aligning school IAG with the needs of the local economy.

Evidence suggests that participating in a work experience placement has a positive impact.

Studies show that work experience is a 'potentially effective' activity for young people to undertake. It has been shown to have a positive impact on employability skills, motivation in education, career-decision making and knowledge of the world of work.

According to the Careers and Enterprise Company Ltd, 'young people are 86% less likely to be unemployed (or NEET) if they have 4 or more, meaningful interactions with an employer during their schools years'. At present, there are insufficient quality, local work experience opportunities for most residents to achieve this benchmark.

There is a lack of communication and integration for effective careers advice and guidance.

There is insufficient communication and joining up of career pathways and careers information for residents.

Our consultation feedback showed that pathways for vocational careers are often

unknown or poorly promoted, and that there is a need for better communication between parents, students, providers and employers.

Southend on Sea's transport infrastructure links are critical in enabling businesses access to local and national labour markets.

Southend's international airport, nine rail stations and key arterial highways play a vital role in bringing workers in, and enabling commuters to work outside the borough. Protecting and developing these links is crucial to maintain a productive local workforce and to continue to generate wealth for local residents. In particular, ensuring provision and affordability of public transport for residents, is crucial in supporting an effective and mobile workforce.

BREXIT.

The UK's exit from the European Union may create a shortage of skilled workers in the short-term and a subsequent requirement for investment in local skills infrastructure in the medium to long-term.

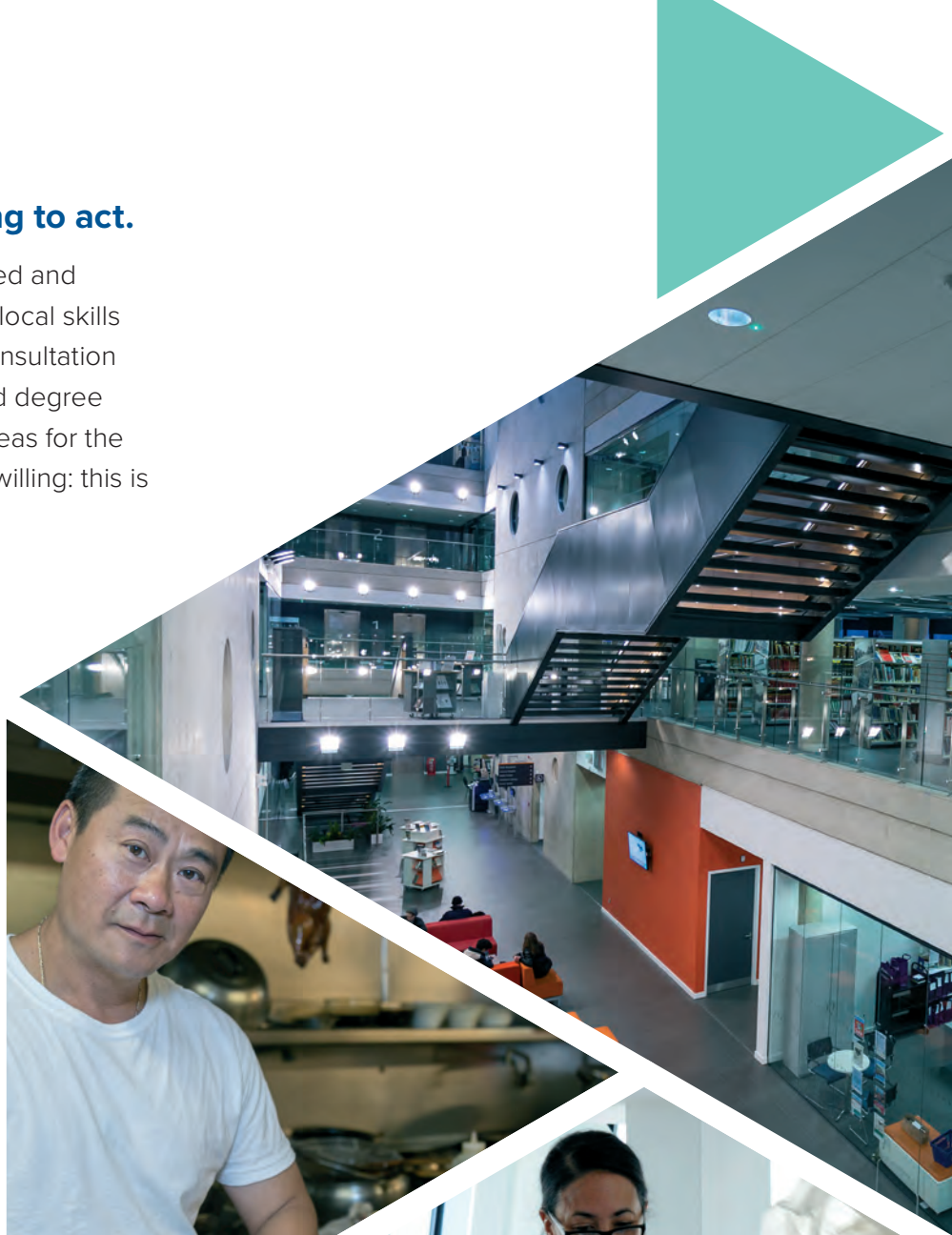
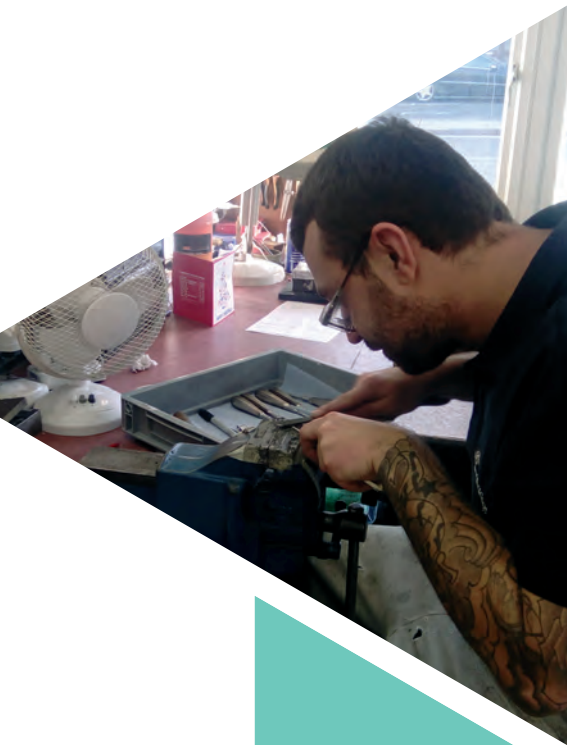
With a growing local population, Southend is well situated to fill future workforce gaps in a range of industries. Accordingly, working collectively with stakeholders to attract future investment should remain an ongoing activity.

An established and growing skills support infrastructure exists.

Southend has been the location of a number of projects to expand the skills support infrastructure in recent years (South Essex College, The Forum, Southend Adult Community College, Building Schools for the Future, University of Essex). There is an opportunity to build on existing progress and make Southend a hub for this type of development in future years. This would improve the borough's ability to meet future workforce requirements and bring significant benefits to local residents.

A strong and committed stakeholder base is willing to act.

Key stakeholders are well-informed and ready to support improvement in local skills systems. Throughout the early consultation and workshops, there was a good degree of well-informed feedback and ideas for the future. There is a coalition of the willing: this is a significant local advantage.



Objectives and outcomes

The following objectives have been identified through an extensive process of analysis, supported by a public consultation process. The agreed objectives are:

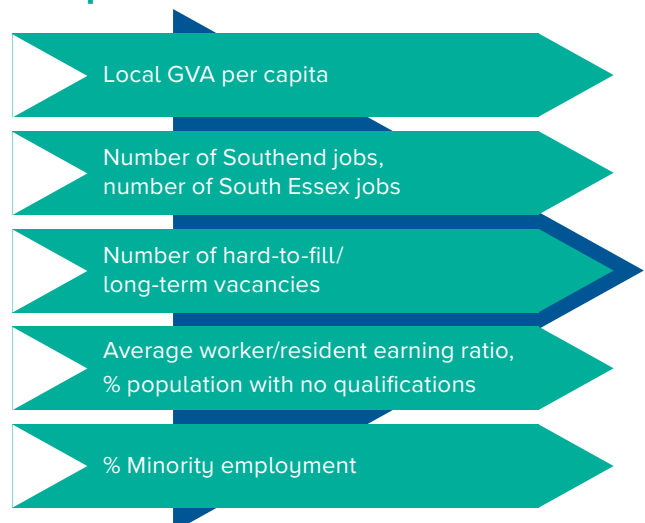
- ▶ **Raised productivity:** Raised productivity will increase the economic value generated per unit of labour used in the local economy. In turn, increased productivity will lead to increased international competitiveness, increased organisational efficiency, higher levels of employment and increased average salaries.
- ▶ **Strong Jobs growth:** Strong growth in the number of jobs available in relation to population size, will reduce unemployment, increase the number of employment opportunities available to residents and maximise the level of locally created wealth.
- ▶ **Meet the workforce needs of employers:** For local employers to operate successfully, generate local wealth and employment opportunities for residents, they need an adequate supply of appropriately skilled labour. Meeting this current and future requirement is a key objective of this strategy.
- ▶ **Increasing the skills attainment and wages of the lowest earners:** Improving average skills attainment helps the economy by developing a more productive workforce. It helps individuals by developing their transferable skills, increases household income and reduces the number of hard-to-fill vacancies.
- ▶ **An inclusive and diverse workforce:** An inclusive and diverse workforce helps to build a healthy, sustainable community and reduce economic disparities. This objective seeks to make employment opportunities available to all residents, regardless of age, socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, culture or disability. This will maximise the skills and capabilities available to employers, and builds and maintains sustainable communities.

The outcomes and objectives are detailed within the diagram below along with a proposed basket of metrics that could be used to monitor progress and achievement against the objectives.

Outcomes



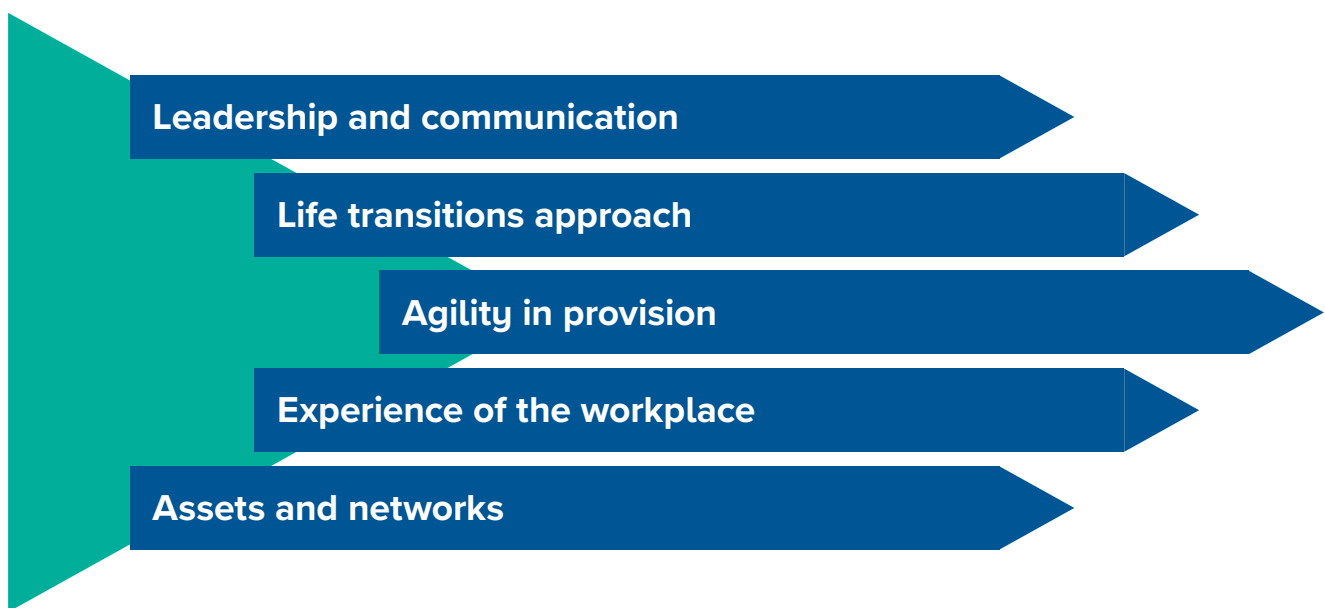
Proposed Metrics



Developing a strategy

To develop this strategy, key findings and insights have been analysed and organised into a coherent response. The five key areas are detailed within the diagram below.

Ambition Southend strategic areas of focus:



These areas of focus will form the core of the Council's approach to improving the Southend Skills and Labour Market system. The following chapter describes the strategy based on the five key areas of focus.

Ambition Southend:

(A) Leadership and communication

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1) Convene a skills leadership group.

Convening effective leadership across the borough is particularly important to facilitate positive change in the local skills and labour market system.

The principal functions of a leadership group are to:

- ▶ Convene the borough's business, education and community leaders to champion skills.
- ▶ Agree a shared vision for skills across the borough.
- ▶ Encourage commitment from stakeholders (this could form the basis of a commitment or pledge tailored to different stakeholders).
- ▶ Create and monitor an implementation plan for this strategy, detailing the roles, responsibilities, actions and objectives of relevant stakeholders.

2) Communicate the strategy and how to access support.

There is a need to ensure and establish clear information for individuals and employers on skills, opportunities and career pathways. To achieve this, effective communication between stakeholders and employers is essential.

A range of activities will contribute to positive change in this area, including:

- ▶ Develop positive, forward-looking messages about the local economy
- ▶ Highlight and communicate future local labour market needs and opportunities
- ▶ Provide a single, coherent information portal for skills and careers

- ▶ Offer tailored information for students, employers, parents, and education providers

RATIONALE:

Improving the Southend skills and labour market system is a significant challenge that requires collaboration and communication.

Leadership and engagement needs to be owned across public and private sector partners. Business leaders and skills exemplars are well-placed to be champions for the agenda, and should be used to lobby for investment and change.

Enhancing communication at all levels will improve the efficiency of the system and facilitate positive change.

The Southend economy is diverse, with mostly small businesses as well as some large corporates.

Southend-on-Sea has a relative advantage in high-tech sectors such as aviation and engineering, cultural and creative industries, specialist manufacturing and specialist construction. Micro-businesses employing between one and nine staff dominate the local economy. Marshaling these industries and employers to create a coherent and integrated approach to skills will require cogent leadership.

The perception exists that the skills landscape is cluttered and uncoordinated.

The research and consultation process revealed a number of different skills initiatives operate locally often in an environment of constant change caused by political and funding dynamics.

There is scope for improving clarity, continuity, coordination and coherence of skills support.

Some consultees felt that a one-stop-shop or information brokerage service for skills would be helpful.

There was also reported confusion amongst employers in terms of the new apprenticeship levy.



Ambition Southend:

(B) Life transitions

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1) Develop a 'life transitions approach' to supporting skills

Develop an implementation plan that seeks to provide skills support at crucial points of life transition for local residents; shaping delivery to target specific key stages, including:

- ▶ Early years (0-4)
- ▶ Primary school age
- ▶ Transition to high school and subject/option choice
- ▶ The transition from school to work
- ▶ Work-experience part-time work/volunteer opportunities from 14+
- ▶ University to work
- ▶ Parents – new parents, returners, role as influencers
- ▶ Transition to and from caring
- ▶ Overcoming adversity
- ▶ Joining/leaving armed forces
- ▶ Ex-offenders/Prison leavers
- ▶ Redundancy/career change
- ▶ Up-skilling of existing employees, especially those with low wage, low productivity positions
- ▶ Returning to work (at any stage or for any reason)
- ▶ Pre-retirement

This approach would involve establishing some key resources and initiatives for each stage.

2) Focus on deprived neighbourhoods and families

A focus on specific areas of known deprivation and poor educational attainment will contribute to community cohesion, reduce economic disparities and maximise the productivity and potential of the local workforce.

The wards with the highest levels of deprivation are located within the centre of the borough with Kursaal, Victoria and Milton being ranked the highest on the IMD (2010). 1 in 4 children live in poverty in these wards, compared with 1 in 5 across England.

Several key projects that specifically target areas of deprivation, such as the A Better Start Southend programme, have begun to show positive results. Introducing a targeted approach to new projects and initiatives will yield further positive results in the future.

External funding, involving local collaborations, should be pursued to tackle these specific issues.

RATIONALE:

A life transitions approach builds on the key intervention activities currently delivered by the Council and other key stakeholders.

The current approach taken by the Council and other stakeholders fits well with a life transitions approach, as many existing activities are targeted at these specific transitional stages.

Many consultees advised that whilst the transition from education to work was a key juncture for many that required specific

support, increasingly, due to the changing nature of careers, support was also required at many other points in our residents' lives.

Analysis and consultation shows that skills and labour market disadvantage is spatially concentrated in the borough. In addition, it was recognised that there are pockets of multi-generational unemployment in specific areas.

Consultees advised that common skills and labour force needs often presented in these areas, including:

- ▶ Work readiness
- ▶ Attitude and motivation
- ▶ Presentation and communication skills
- ▶ Self-reliance and problem solving
- ▶ Practical business and office IT skills
- ▶ Core Maths, English, and ICT skills

Parent workers and returners to work are an important resource

Returners to work can offer useful flexibility to employers that are not seeking to employ a full-time member of staff. Many of the town's employers in retail, banking and the care sector already recognise the important contribution of returners, but more can be done to communicate the benefits of this type of employment.

New 30-hour childcare provision for working parents will further support parents back into work and increase flexibility of the workforce.

Consultees reported that direct intervention with neighbourhoods and families was needed

The influence of parents and guardians was also cited as being critical in school performance and career choice.

It was identified that direct intervention to engage disenfranchised families and communities would be beneficial; such as targeted counseling or support to enter the workforce. Community-based initiatives often work best with these groups.



Ambition Southend:

(C) Agility in provision

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1) Build capacity for industry-led skills provision.

Stakeholders will work collectively to build the capacity of existing skills providers in the borough. Specifically, they will work to attract investment in the borough's training capacity (revenue investment) and training equipment, buildings and infrastructure (capital investment).

Crucially, opportunities will be pursued and supported on the basis of their ability to meet the needs of local industry.

Where possible, initiatives should be shaped to add flexibility and agility to the skills delivery system.

2) Develop transferable “millennial skills”: future-proofing skills and labour market provision.

Stakeholders will act to support the development of residents transferable “millennial skills”. Specifically:

- ▶ providers will be supported to maximise the inclusion of millennial skills within the constraints of education policy, and;
- ▶ employers will be supported to develop their corporate and training practices to enhance the millennial skills of the local workforce.

RATIONALE:

The capacity of education and training provision will need to be increased to deal with future skills requirements in the borough

There are a number of critical future skills requirements, including: construction projects, (e.g. Airport Business Park Southend, Better Queensway, etc.), increasing social care requirements, digitalisation and technological advances. Currently, government funding is too rigid and does not enable providers to be agile in meeting these future requirements.

The nature of work is changing, with a greater need for workers to consistently adapt to new roles, employers and sectors.

Residents today need a range of transferable, core skills to succeed in their lifetime careers. In particular: technical, communication, digital and entrepreneurial skills have been identified as being crucial in enabling long-term labour market engagement in the future.

The Southend-on-Sea economy is reliant on micro and small businesses

There is a significant challenge in achieving enterprise growth and ‘scaling-up’ SMEs to become the large employers of the future. Increasing the level of enterprise skills present in our local workforce will support sustained economic growth in the future.

There are some successful initiatives operating in the borough on which to build

Careers advice services, such as Connexions, are currently optional for schools.

Pressures on education budgets, combined with the national curriculum, can mean that careers support is low on the list of competing priorities for some schools.

Whilst the existing Connexions service and initiatives that involve employers and work experience were widely praised by stakeholders, it was acknowledged that more needs to be done.

Digital skills are a big opportunity

Digital skills are a significant opportunity for the borough. In combination with infrastructure developments, such as the Gigabit broadband network, strong digital skills provision can act as a significant attractor of investment and sustained economic growth in the future.



Ambition Southend:

(D) Experience of the workplace

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1) Increase the quality and availability of work experience for residents.

Stakeholders will work collectively to:

- ▶ improve the quality of experiences of the workplace, and;
- ▶ increase the number of experiences of the workplace available.

Specifically, stakeholders will seek to guide employers on the best way to maximise the value of the work experience for both employer and the subject of the placement.

Further, stakeholders will encourage employers to increase the number of placements on offer to residents as well as acting to reduce the burden on providers of identifying and securing placements.

RATIONALE:

Evidence suggests that participating in a work experience placement has a positive impact.

Studies show that work experience can have a positive impact on employability skills, motivation and engagement in education, career-decision making and knowledge of the world of work.

Work experience can help inform subject and career choice for individuals, and also impart useful soft skills and an appreciation for the world of work.

For employers, placements can enable positive engagement with young people, give back to the local community, gain new or specific skills

for their business and to identify new potential employees.

The quality of local work experience placements can vary significantly.

Consultees and students reported a wide variance in the quality of work experience placements available to residents. Whilst it was acknowledged that 'some work experience' is typically better than 'no work experience', ensuring that every resident has access to a fair and valid experience of the world of work is an important objective to achieve.

Employers have consistently reported a lack of work readiness in young people.

Many local employers have cited 'lack of work readiness amongst young people' as a significant barrier to their business. Lack of work experience or engagement with employers at school-age can lead to a mismatch between an individual's and employers' expectation of work.

Volunteering can provide valuable experience for workers.

Voluntary work within the local community is often overlooked as a source of training for our local workforce. Key skills can be developed through volunteering that will prove highly valuable to employers in an industry setting.

Schools' ability to engage with employers has been reduced.

Employers and the needs of the local economy have become less of a focus for schools in

recent years. To a large extent this has been driven by educational policy and changes to school organisational structures. There are isolated examples of productive engagement between local schools and employers, but this is not consistent across the Borough.

Work experience could support recruitment into key local growth industries.

Human health and social care, education, cultural and creative industries, specialist manufacturing and specialist construction are all growing local industries with significant future labour demand. Provision of quality local work experience opportunities can encourage a greater pool of future talent to fuel those industries locally.

Demand for work experience placements is set to rise.

As part of Central Government's plans for new 'T-Level' vocational qualifications, there will be an increase in the quantity of required work experience that students must undertake to gain qualification. If supply is not increased, this will contribute to a critical shortfall in the availability of local work experience opportunities, making it harder for our residents to succeed in their chosen career.



Ambition Southend:

(E) Assets and networks

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

1) Lever hard assets and infrastructure

Stakeholders will seek to encourage the use of hard assets to provide training and employment opportunities for residents.

The existing capital assets (buildings, equipment, etc.) of public and private sector stakeholders are significant. Many of these assets could be used to provide 'live' skills training and employment opportunities to local people.

This is particularly relevant to the construction sector but is also possible for any employer processes that use industry standard equipment to train staff.

2) Lever soft assets and digital opportunities

Stakeholders will seek to encourage the use of soft assets, networks and lobbying to improve local skills and labour market outcomes.

From the business networks and political relationships that already exist, to the skills experience and networks of workers who commute to London – there are a wide range of human assets, knowledge, advocacy and connections that could be used to improve the skills and labour market outcomes in the local economy.

RATIONALE

Significant development projects will be delivered in the borough.

The Thames Estuary area has been identified as a key site for building and infrastructure

development over the coming 15 years. Where appropriate, opportunities from private and public development must be identified with a view to maximising the positive skills and employment outcomes for residents.

Continuing to develop a virtual academy for skills and employment.

Specifically related to the Better Queensway Project, initial work to develop a vehicle to support resident opportunities through job and skills brokerage for major regeneration projects, known as The Virtual Academy for Skills and Employment (VASE), has been undertaken.

The potential for this initiative will be further explored by the newly convened Skills leadership group. This will be specifically in regards to further developing delivery and exploring new industries to support.

Developing national and international networks.

The borough is developing new national and international links, via road, rail, air and digital connections. Many of these links may yield significant skills and employment opportunities for residents.

Support skills development in niche industries

Leigh-on-Sea is home to a unique and nationally important cockle fishing industry. Key industry skills are at risk of being lost if new workers are not identified and trained. Communicating the key potential of this industry could be key to its survival in this area.

The borough's heritage is also an asset that can be used to create opportunities for residents

Key cultural and heritage projects, such as the iconic poppies installation at Barge Pier Shoeburyness or the proposed Thames Estuary Experience, can be valuable sources of training opportunities. In particular, projects such as these lend themselves to the development of customer service and tourism industry training that can support local employment and industry.

Untapped pools of mentoring support should be explored.

Consultees observed that a range of latent mentoring resource present in the local retiree community was underemployed. Overseas projects that link young and old community members in tackling social issues, have showed that benefits are often realized by the mentee and mentor as well as creating greater community cohesion and wellbeing.



A decision making framework

Future decision making

This strategy must remain dynamic and resilient in the face of change. During the last ten years, the UK economy has experienced many unprecedented changes, and there is little evidence to say that the economic uncertainty and volatility is not set to continue for some time into the future.

Accordingly, it is important to consider how the priorities developed in this strategy can adapt to future market conditions and currently unforeseen changes.

Therefore, three key considerations are proposed to support future decision-making.

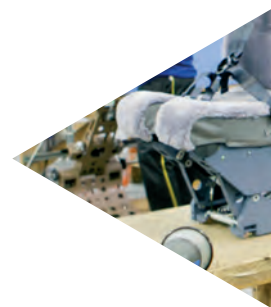
These are:

1. The contribution to the creation of new jobs
2. The contribution to meeting the requirements of local industry
3. The contribution to developing a diverse workforce

This framework will be used when unforeseen events require diversion from the key priorities identified within this strategy.

Examples of unforeseen events may include: unanticipated investment opportunities; development of new national policies; external funding opportunity announcements; future budget and funding constraints; dramatic shifts in the economy.

In these instances stakeholders will utilise the framework to assess the impact of opportunities/constraints and to steer activity, ensuring the greatest net benefit is realised for the local area.



Next steps

Once this strategy is formally adopted, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council will seek to engage with employers, education and training providers and stakeholders to develop a 'Skills Strategy Implementation Plan' document that will include details of the specific activities, timescales, targets, costs, objectives and measures of success.

Through a skills leadership group, stakeholders will monitor the delivery of this strategy to ensure that each decision we make will maximise the benefit to our community.

The Skills Strategy is very much the beginning of a new approach that will provide a joined-up approach to skills and jobs.

The Council will continue to listen, learn and adapt in order to improve skills outcomes for our community in the years to come.

Our invitation is for you to be a part of this process and to work with us to: develop ideas, assess progress, make decisions and ensure that Southend achieves its full potential.




A summary of this publication can be provided in alternative formats such as Braille, audio-tape, or in large print and translated into alternative languages.

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