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_____ Taking pride in our communities and town

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GROWTH 2013-18

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Slough Borough Council's Economic Development Strategic Plan, which emphasises the importance of economic development not only to the Council but to our partners and to our residents. The plan identifies the key themes, priorities and delivery mechanisms to achieve our long-term vision of being a prosperous, attractive and growth town in the South East.

Slough has always punched above its weight in terms of output. It has one of the highest Gross Value Added rates in the Thames Valley and has shown great resilience to the economic downturn both in terms of unemployment levels and businesses failures.

However, Slough must not become complacent, the Council must continue to work in partnership to maintain existing business strength and encourage growth and facilitate inward investment including from foreign investors. We will play an enabling role to ensure that the right infrastructure and conditions are in place for business to thrive.

This plan includes three key priorities which have been developed in response to an analysis of evidence about the local economy, the wider regional and national context and feedback from businesses and residents.

In addition to providing conditions to enable business to grow we are committed to ensuring the town continues to provide a high volume of jobs across all skills levels enabling local residents to access local employment. We want to raise the skills profile of local people so that they may obtain high value local jobs.

I look forward to working with all of the Council's partners and local people to ensure the vision and planned activities are a success, enabling Slough to be an economically vibrant and successful entrepreneurial town.

Councillor Sohail Munawar
Commissioner for Economic and Social Inclusion

SECTION 1 - ABOUT THIS PLAN

This document, Slough's five-year Economic Development Strategic Plan (2013 – 2018), sets out the proposed interventions and commitments which will represent the first phase towards achieving the borough's economic development vision for growth:

Slough is an economically vibrant and successful entrepreneurial town. It is a town where businesses and residents can grow and fulfil their potential, making Slough a great place to live and work.

Our ambition is to make Slough *the* location of choice for business, for those already based here and those who may choose Slough in the future, building on our proximity to London and Heathrow and our excellent transport links; for Slough businesses to thrive and grow, creating sustainable job opportunities for our residents and growth opportunities for our businesses; and for our residents to have the skills that they need - and businesses need – for them to succeed in the future.

By economic growth we mean **increasing productivity, innovation and jobs**. We will track measures of the health of the Slough economy:

- **Productivity**: an increase in the output of Slough businesses and workers;
- **Innovation**: an increase in new ideas that are successfully exploited to create economic, social and environmental value;
- **Employment**: an increase in the number of people in work
- **Prosperity**: an increase in the average earnings of our residents.

Of course, the health of the Slough economy will mainly be determined by a range of global and national drivers, but where we can make a difference we will do so.

By achieving our economic development vision we will also be able to fulfil our overall vision as laid out in the Wellbeing Strategy.

Slough's Joint Wellbeing Strategy (SJWS) was agreed in 2013, building on the former Sustainable Community Strategy originally drafted in 2008 and refreshed in 2011. It draws together the work of the many organisations in Slough, working in partnership, aiming to improve the wellbeing of local people of Slough. The overall vision as set out in the SJWS is:

“By 2028, Slough will be healthier, with reduced inequalities, improved wellbeing and opportunities for our residents to live positive, active and independent lives.”

The economic climate since 2008 has brought about a 'slow down' for the residents and businesses of the town. Although Slough has been fairly resilient to the climate and an economic crisis has not occurred, there has still been a level of unemployment, business failures, public sector cuts, lower rates of office occupancy, private sector restructuring and general low confidence in the economy.

The 2011 Local Economic Assessment carried out a thorough review of the state of the economy highlighting both the weaknesses and strengths. It provided a clear and independent evidence base which helped identify the priorities for economic development growth.

This Economic Development Strategic Plan identifies the activity required to move the borough towards achieving its vision and the vision of the SJWS with a particular focus on creating economic growth in the town.

The financial position for all local authorities continues to be challenging and will be so during the life of this plan. However, Slough Borough Council (SBC) will work with partners to ensure the planned activity brings economic buoyancy into the town.

This plan has been set within this context and is crucial in shaping and influencing a number of key developments that have a direct effect on Economic Development in Slough:

1. The formation of Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and its' economic plan for Growth in line with national objectives.
2. The Local Economic Assessment (LEA) which highlighted the gaps in Slough's economy and suggested areas of focus in order for improvements to be made. Many projects are already underway in response to the LEA. This Economic Development plan now provides a framework for more sustained and coordinated activity.
3. The formation of the Slough Wellbeing Board (SWB) and its priority around economy and skills in general.
4. The review of the Slough Wellbeing Strategy and key areas of focus for project delivery for the Skills Employment and Enterprise Priority Delivery Group (SEE PDG).

The economic development landscape is in a state of flux as the Local Enterprise Partnerships become more established in structure, publish their priorities for growth and draw down funding from central government. The delivery of local priorities will be closely related to priorities at LEP level and the available resources to deliver these.

SECTION 2 – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

2.1 Impact of the Recession

The impact of the recession on Slough has been mixed. Unemployment levels have risen and particular cohorts have been more affected than others. In particular the youth and fifty plus have found seeking sustainable employment particularly difficult. *See Appendix 1 Table 6 – Age breakdown of unemployed.* The Slough Trading Estate provides a strong focus for employment, but at the same time Slough town centre, along with all of the town centres in East Berkshire, has seen a marked contraction in employment. Slough has also had the problem around part time jobs. Contrary to the regional and national context the supply of part time jobs is currently low in Slough.

2.2 Gross Value Added (GVA)

Conversely a report by the Berkshire Observatory on the Gross Value Added contribution of the six unitaries that comprise Berkshire found that Slough's productivity (GVA per job) remained relatively consistent during the period 2001-2011 despite the economic downturn. Slough's total GVA is expected to increase by 65% by 2030 (to £6,500 million) outstripping the national projection of 57%. Slough's employment is expected to increase to 96,000 by 2030 (an 8% increase – three percentage points less than anticipated nationally).

2.3 Enterprise

Low rates of enterprise and survival in Slough are linked to financial barriers, dominance of large employers and availability of premises. Although Slough's economic performance is strong overall, the low levels of enterprise represent a key weakness that may eventually erode the economic success of the area. Enterprise policy should focus on understanding and responding to the enterprise barriers faced by Slough's residents and stimulating improved enterprise rates.

2.4 Employment

Levels of economic activity and employment are lower in Slough than averages sub regionally and regionally. Local economic inactivity and unemployment rates have also risen at a higher rate than average over the recessionary period. Economic inactivity rates are particularly high in Slough for females which may be a reflection of the cultural characteristics of some ethnic groups but also because of the inflexibility in many working patterns that businesses adopt. *See Appendix 1, Table 1- Employment.*

for economic inactivity rates see Appendix 1, Table 5- Economic Inactive in Slough who want to work.

Slough's local economy is also dependent upon the supply of highly skilled labour from surrounding local authority areas. Without the presence of this, the area would struggle to retain and attract investment. However, it is also important to note that the areas providing the highly skilled labour – areas such as the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) – are currently dependent upon Slough to provide suitable jobs for their residents. In the absence of these, highly skilled and mobile residents would move elsewhere. Conversely, a high number of lower skilled Slough residents commute out of the borough to work to locations such as Heathrow. As such, the future wellbeing of Slough and its residents is dependent upon the continuing provision of jobs in other areas. *See Appendix 1, Diagram 1 for in commuting and out commuting data.*

2.5 Skills

There is a clear gap between the skills levels of the resident population and the jobs available in the local area. Levels of skills in Slough are relatively low in comparison to those in neighbouring RBWM and across East Berkshire's functional economic area. This places Slough's residents at a considerable disadvantage and has real implications in terms of levels of economic activity and worklessness locally.

A relatively high proportion of residents have no qualifications and a relatively low level have NVQ Level 2 and below qualifications. This has implications in terms of the types of occupations that Slough residents are employed in – typically occupations requiring lower levels of skills than is average regionally. Significantly, the occupational and skills profile of Slough residents contrasts sharply with the profile of jobs available in the borough itself, typically requiring higher levels of skills. See *Appendix 1, Table 2 – Qualification Levels of Adult Population 16-64*.

This means that a skills mismatch exists in the town causing people with the required skills to travel into the town and residents without the skills, travelling out for lower skilled work. As a result, businesses employ people living a fair distance from their workplace.

However, at the other end of the skills spectrum of NVQ qualifications, analysis has shown a rapid growth in NVQ Level 4 and above. You will note that from 2008 to 2012 Slough's NVQ Level 4 level has increased by 10 percentage points. This is at a much faster rate compared to South East's 5.8% and Great Britain's 5.8%. see *Appendix 1, Table 3 – NVQ Level 4 data*

However, it is also important to note that Slough has a very high transitory population; it attracts communities from the Indian Sub continent, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe who are seeking a better way of life and are willing to take on a variety of manual and low skilled jobs. These communities are often lowly qualified or have qualifications from abroad that are not recognised in this country. These communities add to the number of existing low skilled communities and often worsen the figures.

2.6 Income levels

Income levels in Slough present a masked picture which needs uncovering.

The average worker that comes to Slough for employment at the higher skill level earns more than the average worker who is resident in Slough. See *Appendix 1, Table 4 – Income Levels*

2.7 Town Centre

Slough High Street has been in decline for over a decade which is reflective of town centres across the country. The retail offer no longer meets the needs of many of the Slough population causing some residents to shop in other town centres or more popular regional shopping areas. Retail lettings have been slow and the existing High Street brands often struggle to perform. Other brands do not consider locating in Slough due to its negative image and poor performance as a retail area.

2.8 Transport and Communications

Slough's success is often attributed to the key communication links that run through the town as well as its close proximity to Heathrow Airport. For this success to continue the Council must continue to invest in local roads, and work with local businesses and residents to develop public transport and other options to ensure that congestion does not adversely impact on the town's economic viability. At the same

time the Council must continue to attract new business to the town in order to enable growth, prosperity and opportunity.

Slough needs to make full use of the schemes of Western Rail Access to Heathrow and Crossrail. Good access to Heathrow Airport has always been a big factor in attracting businesses to Slough.

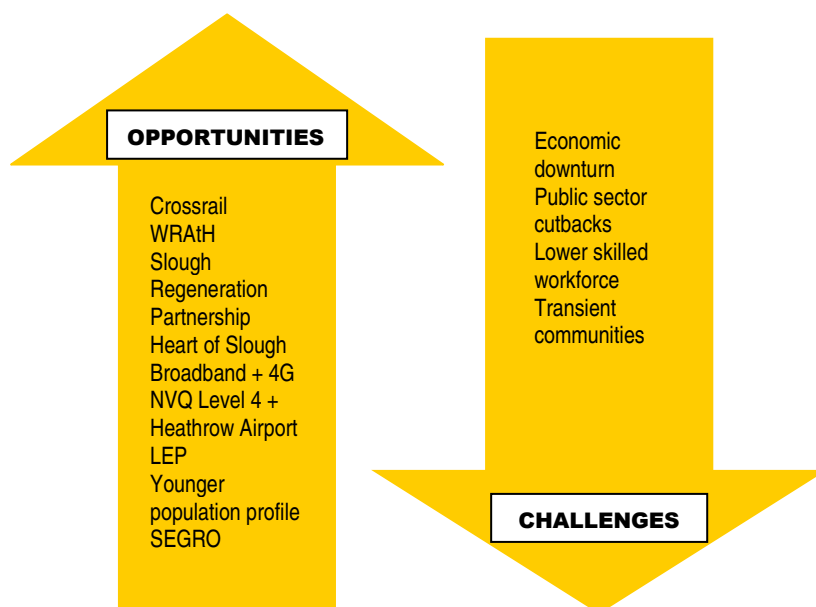
2.9 Slough Borough Council's Assets

Asset Management is an integral part of the Council's overall forward planning process. It is an essential element of business planning and good financial performance and has a direct impact on levels of borrowing and the ability of the Council to maintain essential services against a background of reduced funding from central government. Asset Management planning identifies the location and condition of assets, who owns them, links to strategic initiatives, their fitness for purpose and long-term sustainability. It reflects the Council's Corporate Plan and ensures that assets are used in an effective and efficient manner to support financial, social and economic development related objectives.

The challenge of asset management is that whilst it takes time to determine accurately property requirements and then to procure and provide them cost effectively, the corporate and service needs for organisations are changing as demands for services change and expectations of performance increase. SBC will be reviewing its assets and reviewing whether they should be redeveloped for alternative uses, sold or maintained for maximum cost benefits.

2.10 Localised Business Rates

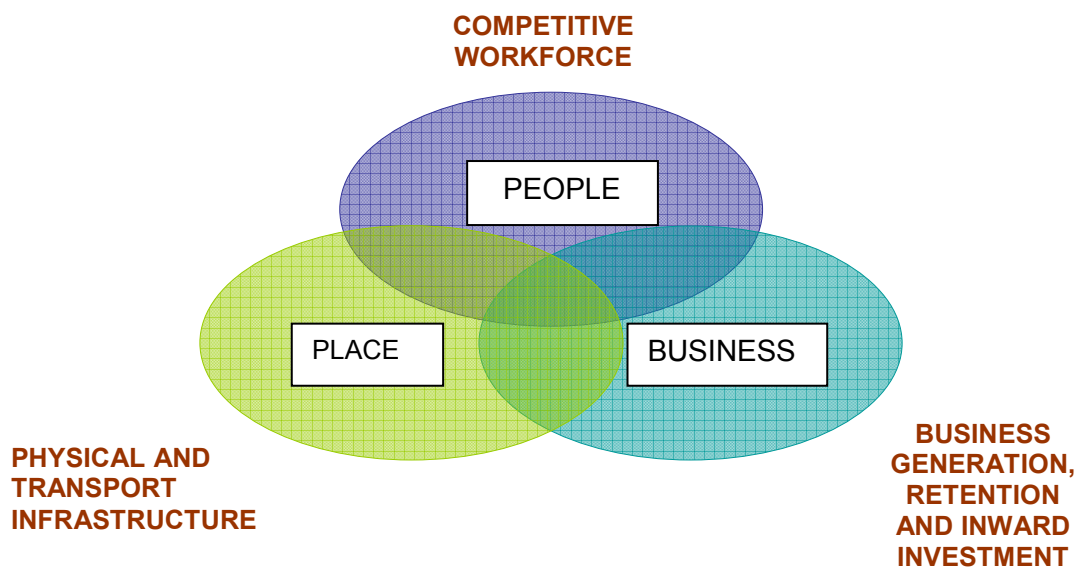
Since 1st April 2013, the Council receives a proportion of the any additional business rates generated within the town, but is also liable for any losses in Business Rates generated. In light of this, it is imperative that the Council is actively encouraging new businesses to locate to the area and also create the conditions for business to thrive in the area and so retain and growth its existing businesses. In the current climate of significant reductions to the Council's overall financial resources, ensuring that strong local economic conditions are in place will be vital to the continued success of the Council to achieve its corporate objectives



SECTION 3: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The evidence base in the previous section leads the Council to prioritise three key areas of focus ensuring internal staff, external partners and key stakeholders work towards these priorities.

People, Place and Business form the core components of the town which are regarded as the wealth of the town. Any Economic Development Priorities set must impact on all these three in a positive way and provide for growth.



SBC makes a clear distinction between what is going to support local residents and businesses to maintain its current economic position and what will actually create the growth that the Town needs and support the region and country out of the economic recession.

These priorities are:

- 1. Competitive Workforce**
- 2. Business Generation, Retention and Inward Investment**
- 3. Physical and Transport Infrastructure**

The Economic Development priorities penetrate all the components of People, Place and Business, ensuring that all parts of the town are supported to grow economically and achieve the vision. A particular consideration has been given to these priorities as they will create the growth needed to lift the town out of a 'slow down' as oppose to anything else that will require intense resources but produce disproportionately, lower levels of growth.

1. COMPETITIVE WORKFORCE

To ensure growth comes from activity associated with a competitive workforce, it will be important to focus on improving employability skills for people currently in the labour market as well as out of it. Evidence from the LEA and Economic Inactivity Report both point to the fact that Slough has a larger number of residents in comparison to the South

East and Great Britain, that are qualified below NVQ Level 2 including no qualifications at all (*Appendix 1 table 3 Qualification Levels of Adult Population 16-64*). Also that there are approximately 5,000 people who are economically inactive but would like to enter the labour market. (*Appendix table 5: Economic inactive in Slough who want to work*). This would provide for greater productivity levels.

It is also important to consider those that are already in the labour market but who would need retraining or up skilling so that they can undertake jobs that require higher levels of skills thus producing higher levels of productivity. Those that are looking for work will need to ensure they are able to compete with other job seekers ensuring the right attitudes, approach and experience can be illustrated to potential employers. *In Table 1 Appendix 1* figures highlight Slough unemployed rates are very similar to Great Britain but higher than South East rates whom residents will more realistically compete with for local jobs.

2. BUSINESS GENERATION, RETENTION AND INWARD INVESTMENT

Economic growth will be achieved by (a) generating more start up businesses, (b) supporting current businesses to retain and grow profit levels and (c) attracting new businesses to the area. Activity and infrastructure will need to enable all this to happen. The regional economic strategy has identified key growth sectors in the region that have grown in the last 10 years but projected growth is now very slow. This is typical for IT Services and Legal and Accounting. However the regional economic strategy highlights that non routine activities that cannot be automated such as innovation, leadership and sales will become more important in the future. Creativity will be the most important leadership competency for successful businesses. Intelligence, agility and responsiveness will be the key characteristics of successful business performance. If businesses are supported in these skills then the ambition of growth can occur.

For an analysis of our sectors see *Appendix 1 Table 7 – Sectors of Slough*. The data illustrates the size of our broad sectors in the town based upon the number of enterprises, total number of jobs that exist in that sector and the percentage of employment it represents. The table also highlights the largest of these sectors based upon the percentage of employment it represents.

The information here can be used to support activity around business to business within sectors enabling networking. It can also be used to build partnerships and understand what further is needed to grow that particular sector. For inward investment purposes it can be used to target and attract businesses of specific sectors into our area. SBC will work with partners to develop projects and enable growth to take place in the most substantial sectors of Slough.

3. PHYSICAL AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Growth can be promoted in the town by physical regeneration and enabling businesses, communities and stakeholders to improve use of the physical space and infrastructure. Slough Borough Council has established a local asset based vehicle (LABV) a partnership which will bring £1billion pounds of investment into the town. Morgan Sindall Investments will build a new library and cultural centre, leisure facilities, schools and homes to Slough. The Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV) has been named Slough Regeneration Partnership with the council and Morgan Sindall Investments each holding 50 percent of the new company. There is also a big push to attract a Higher Education Institution in the town which will not only provide for skills in the town but will also generate aspirations for enterprise, knowledge economy support structures such as research and development and links to other universities and major employers.

In terms of transport, Crossrail and Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH) will not only change the infrastructure of Slough, they will also provide huge economic benefits. A commuter in Slough will be able to reach Heathrow in 6 minutes and into East London in less than 30 minutes. SBC needs to ensure the town is best placed to take advantage of these improvements, including the potential for inward investment and growth.

Superfast Broadband will enable greater connectivity to the world wide web. To compete on an international scale Slough will need to facilitate connections with 4G and 5G which is the future of faster downloads, connections with people all over the world and more productive business to business processes. A multiple of hubs across the town with this facility will enable greater flexible working in locations away from an office base.

In delivering this plan we will ensure that we set our work in the context of these physical and transport infrastructure changes to take advantage of the opportunities they provide.

SECTION 3 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND ACTION PLAN 2013 – 2018

The priorities for economic development are based upon the state of the economy as originally assessed in the Local Economic Assessment and the Strategic Response that followed it. Furthermore, they are based upon the impact of the recession on Slough and in relation to the LEP agenda; these priorities will help stimulate prosperity and achieve economic growth in the town.

The following section looks at the key actions necessary for each priority to be fulfilled. Each of the Priorities will be championed and led by a key stakeholder partner organisation and will ensure a task group is set up to deliver a set of measureable targets. The monitoring and evaluation of the task groups will be assessed by SEE PDG and ultimately the Wellbeing Board. All the actions will contribute to the growth agenda of the LEP.

3.1 Competitive Workforce

Aims To raise skills levels of Slough residents at all NVQ Levels making them competitive and productive in the labour market
Issues Skills and learning issues cut across all generations. There are young people who are not in employment, education and training and graduates who are unemployed. Many residents do not have the skills required by local employers. Some young people are choosing not to take the university route but still need quality employment. Apprenticeships opportunities are limited in number. Some people in mid career (45-60) have re-training needs and women who aspire to enter the labour market. Many residents that have low aspirations. Our newly arrived communities need language support and basic literacy and numeracy. Older people will have to work longer due to the higher retirement age and pension pressures. These issues are exacerbated by the adverse economic and job outlook in Britain.
Actions <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Link SEE PDG to the Employment, Enterprise and Skills Group of the LEP to ensure regional priorities are filtered down to the local level.2. Work closely with Aspire and support it to deliver regional employment and skills priorities in Slough.3. Ensure provision and reach meets the needs of all unemployed cohorts including the 'hidden unemployed'.4. Deliver City Deal regional priorities in Slough with a focus on the town's individual needs.5. Understand Employer Skills needs to inform local skills delivery and careers guidance.6. To keep the NEETs levels low and ensure that there is provision to support those that are not in education, employment and training.7. To maintain and develop partnership working with Heathrow Airport Limited's Academies model ensuring Slough residents have employment opportunities for retail, aviation and construction work.8. Support employers with providing Apprenticeship opportunities9. To work closely with internal planning department to be aware of new businesses coming into the town so that opportunities of local recruitment can be maximised.
Delivery Group: SEE PDG via particular tasks group of Apprenticeships and Job Outcomes Group
Measures of Success: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greater number of Apprenticeship opportunities2. Higher number of residents with NVQ Level 2 and above qualification3. Lower number of young people on the NEETs register4. Higher number of people that are economically active
Targets: Targets to be set in consultation with SEE PDG

3.2 Business Generation, Retention and Inward Investment

<p>Aims Enable economic growth in the town by supporting start ups, business growth amongst established businesses and attracting new businesses to the town.</p>
<p>Issues Start Up provision in the town is limited. Access to Finance has been a barrier to business development and not all business are receiving the LEP's message of financial support. The competition for inward investment and reinvestment across the globe is very bullish. Mainland Europe is seen as an attractive alternative to UK investment. Slough must develop a sound proposition for its area so that national and international companies choose Slough as their base.</p>
<p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Provide business start up advice and support2. Enable business incubation space in collaboration with partners3. Facilitate networking amongst key sectors to promote knowledge and business development4. Review internal SBC processes to ensure they are 'open to business'5. Ensure SBC business pages on main website are accessible, relevant and up to date.6. Facilitate 2 - 3 business events a year on topics of interest to the business community.7. Celebrate the success of local businesses by showcasing an annual 'Community and Catering Business Awards event'.8. Present www.sloughmeansbusiness.co.uk website as a showcase of the town and monitor its effectiveness in relevance and interest from interested parties.9. Build upon membership of Link to China and promote Slough amongst Chinese businesses.10. To support Heart of Slough and work closely with Morgan Sindall and other Slough Regeneration Partnership partners, ensuring economic prosperity is maximised for all residents and local businesses11. Ensure SBC procurement processes are open and accessible to local and small businesses.12. Maintain strong relationships between the Council and other agencies and existing businesses of strategic impact.13. In partnership with other agencies establish a team to welcome and support inward investment inquiries
<p>Delivery Group: SEE PDG via particular task group of Business and Enterprise Development task group</p>
<p>Measures of success:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Greater number of business start ups and survival rates2. Companies reinvesting in the town3. New investments in the town4. Strategic clusters and supply chains amongst key growth sectors
<p>Targets: Targets to be set in consultation with SEE PDG</p>

3.3 Physical and Transport Infrastructure

<p>Aim By 2028, Slough will be an accessible location, competitive on the world stage and a transport hub for road, rail and air. It will provide quality commercial, leisure and residential facilities that will attract investment from all over the globe.</p>
<p>Issues The focus of Crossrail is on central London, but its completion will bring benefits for rail travellers from Thames Valley Berkshire to the capital, and will require co-ordination with our aspirations for Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH). We seek to ensure that these improvements can be achieved without detriment to existing services. Superfast broadband will be available to all businesses and residents alike but is this enough to provide for business needs and create economic growth? Economic growth brought by increased infrastructure will require associated development to support it for sustained success including housing and schools can Slough provide for this? Slough has no Higher Education institution in the town which limits knowledge economy developments or links with research in the companies based in the town.</p>
<p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue working closely with the Department for Transport and aviation authorities to mitigate the negative impacts of Heathrow on Slough's communities e.g. through congestion, noise disruption, air pollution etc. 2. Adopt a pragmatic approach to future expansion of capacity at Heathrow airport, believing that given the choice, expansion of Heathrow in any form is preferable to closure. 3. Work closely with TVBLEP's transport forum to ensure wider transport issues are addressed which continually enhance Slough's communications and transport infrastructure. 4. Prepare for the impact of Crossrail and WRAtH and maximise its benefits to create growth in the town 5. Continue to push for WRAtH to be delivered on the earliest possible date 6. Ensure all developments completed as part of the Slough Regeneration Partnership are fit for purpose and provide facilities that will support business growth 7. Develop a Smart City programme for the town 8. Agree a political direction to support new economic growth and sustain existing economy, including housing, schools and that implicit in other SBC Strategies. 9. To work with Slough businesses (including SEGRO) to use these strengths to deliver smart economic growth and local employment, i.e. in ways that mitigate or minimise impact on the transport network, and share understanding of the potentially negative impacts of growth.
<p>Delivery Group: Strategic Infrastructure Group chaired by Director of Regeneration, Housing and Resources SBC WRAtH Stakeholder Steering Group</p>
<p>Measures of Success:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Smart City status 2. 4G hubs in the town accessible to all 3. A Higher Education Institution with strong links to local business

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Transport Infrastructure fit for purpose 5. Assets that are profitable and adding value to the town
<p>Targets: Targets to be set in consultation with SEE PDG</p>

Monitoring and Evaluation

3.4 Key measures of success:

- **Productivity:** an increase in the output of Slough businesses and workers;
- **Innovation:** an increase in new ideas that are successfully exploited to create economic, social and environmental value;
- **Employment:** an increase in the number of people in work
- **Prosperity:** an increase in the average earnings of our residents.

3.5 Next Steps

SEE PDG and its Task and Finish Groups namely;

1. The Apprenticeships Group
2. The Business and Enterprise Skills Development Group
3. The Job Outcomes Group
4. Strategic Infrastructure Group

Will all be setting their own indicators and targets to measure progress of the task groups and achievements as agreed against the priorities. This will all be developed as part of their action planning process. Delivery will be focussed around this and will commence as soon as possible. Regular reports will also be made to the Slough Wellbeing Board on implementation of the Economic Development Strategic Plan.

SECTION 4: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This section considers the guiding vision and core themes behind Slough’s strategic approach to economic development. It begins with an overview of economic development functions – what Slough can do locally and sub regionally. This is a time of ‘policy flux’ as the Government implements its agenda for localism in the provision of public services and the new Local Enterprise Partnerships get underway as business led economic development agencies.

4.1 The scope for action

The scope for English local authorities to influence economic development in their areas is set out in the Government’s White Paper ‘Local Growth – Realising Every Place’s Potential’ (October 2012).

As a unitary authority, Slough can strengthen the borough’s local economy through planning, housing, infrastructure, supply of business premises, employment support, careers guidance advice, adult community learning and other areas of action. Importantly, by taking the lead and working in partnership with businesses, other public sector organisations and the community and voluntary sector, the Council has a direct and indirect influence on Slough’s economic development agenda.

Slough is a member of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP). This organisation is playing an increasingly important role in enabling economic growth to take place in Berkshire.

As a result of The 2012 Heseltine Review ‘No Stone Unturned’, Government has committed to devolving greater powers and funding to England’s 39 LEPs in a bid to free local areas from Whitehall control and give businesses and local leaders the power and funding to do what they feel is necessary to realise their economic potential.

As a result, LEPs are set to play a greater role in defining economic and growth priorities for their area whilst being afforded greater accountability for delivering their economic growth potential.

The emphasis on addressing planning, economic development and investment issues at a strategic (rather than local) level introduces a new dimension to how local authorities approach their related activities.

The role of the local authority	The role of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVBLEP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership and coordination to set out a framework for local development • Supporting growth and development through supply of land that supports business growth and a housing supply that meets the borough’s needs • Using land assets to leverage private funding to support growth • Directly and indirectly influencing investment decisions via the use of statutory powers, particularly through the planning system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To produce strategic multi year plans outlining where the focus will be • Skills – tackle skills gaps, skills for growth sectors, graduate retention and champion apprenticeships • Infrastructure – identify key requirements and formulate delivery plans • Transport – develop a Berkshire wide transport strategy based on understanding of critical business needs • Superfast broadband

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting local infrastructure which is a key enabler for growth • Support for local people and businesses providing high quality services that directly support business investment confidence maintaining trading standards to keep markets fair • Leading efforts to support and improve health and wellbeing of the local population to ensure that all individuals have the maximum opportunity to benefit work and contribute to the local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inward Investment – promote Thames Valley Berkshire to potential inward investors • Business retention and aftercare – develop client centred approach, networking and business in community approaches • Business support and enterprise – remove barriers to innovation and growth, business rate flexibility • Advocacy, strategic leadership and efficiency – champion Berkshire economy and coordinated delivery to reduce duplication of functions
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The above shows the additional influence the Council can exert through its membership of the TVBLEP.

The TVBLEP will concentrate its efforts on delivering business growth across the whole of the sub region by promoting innovation, enterprise, skills, infrastructure, lobbying and coordinating local policies and funding. Slough has a significant stake in the future success of the TVBLEP as both develop and define their strategies.

Direct funding for economic development has always been relatively scarce and over the life of this strategic plan discretionary funding will be even more limited. Therefore, SBC and the TVBLEP will depend on their ability to influence decision making in all sectors and persuade people to work together across boundaries. Aligning and targeting available funding and resources more intelligently will be vital. Scanning the horizon for UK and EU funding opportunities will have to go hand in hand with discovering innovative funding solutions for economic development projects.

4.2 Single Local Growth Fund

The Government has created a Single Local Growth Fund that LEPs can bid into. Whilst Government expects that every LEP would receive something from the fund, monies will be allocated through a competitive process in order to ensure that funding delivers the greatest benefits across the country. Slough will work closely with the TVBLEP and other partners to ensure local initiatives can be delivered using allocation from this fund that will bring about growth.

Any allocation of funding will be dependent on meeting aims and objectives set out in strategic plans. The aim of the LEP is ‘to grow the economy of Thames Valley Berkshire and stimulate growth in the rest of the UK.’ Their strategic objectives are to:

- Grow the economy of Thames Valley Berkshire and increase the return to the exchequer
- Lead and coordinate economic development activities across Thames Valley Berkshire for all stakeholders
- Continue to invest public and private money in growth and maximise return on investment
- Increase the skills base for the economy

TVBLEP have prioritised the following activities:

Strategic Infrastructure	Reliable Transport, Digital Infrastructure, Land Use Development
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Next Generation Business	Access to Finance, Business Growth Hubs, Business Support Eco-system, Inward Investment and Exporting, New Growth Sectors and Technologies, Public Sector Procurement
Employability and Skills	Blueprint for Education, Apprenticeships, Increasing Business Skills, Social Investment, Sector Skills Development
Promoting Thames Valley Berkshire as the best place to live, invest and do business globally	

4.3 Skills, Employment and Enterprise Priority Delivery Group (SEE PDG)

This is one of the delivery groups of the Wellbeing Board and is responsible for delivering key activities to promote the economy. The group is made up of representatives from the Council, local Further Education sector, private sector and is chaired by the local MP. Its role is strategic, so for this reason has established a number of task and finish groups that focus on delivery and specific aspects related to the uplifting of the local economy.

The Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group is chaired by East Berkshire College and focuses on increasing the number of apprenticeship opportunities in the town by working with employers, also to promote apprenticeships amongst young people and their parents as a viable alternative to more academic routes to further education.

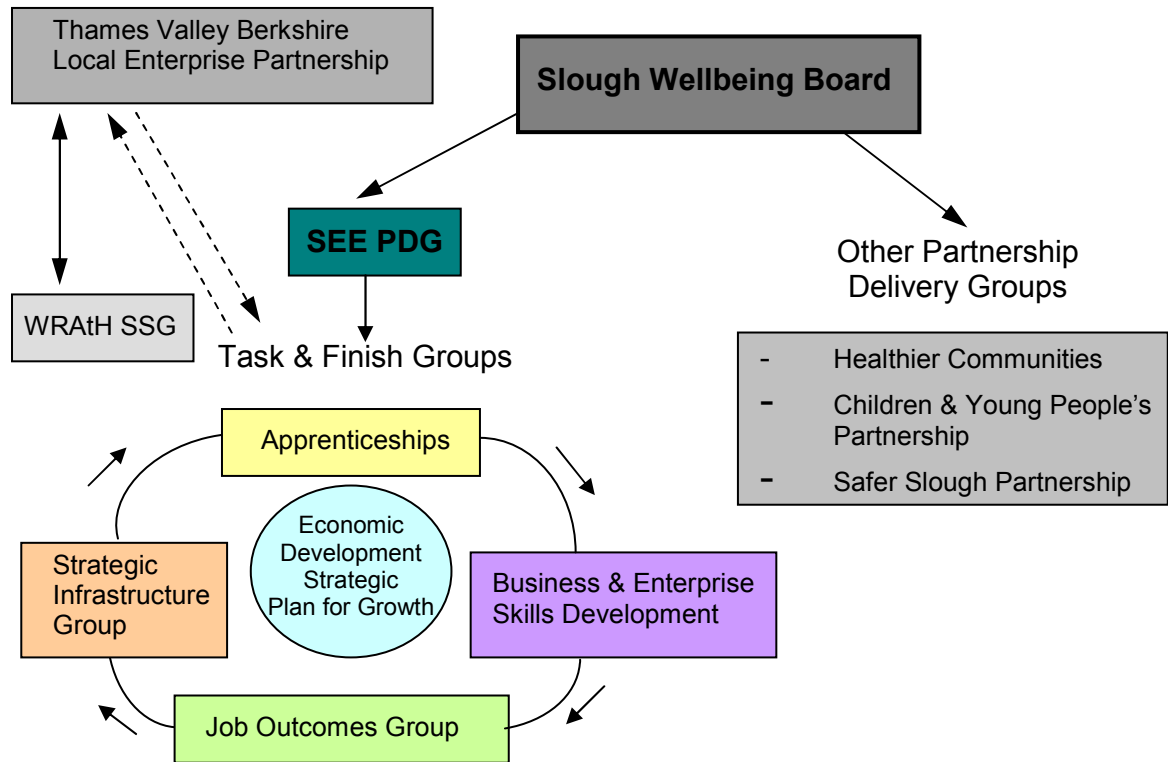
The Business and Enterprise Skills Development Group focuses on supporting the smaller businesses of the town in receiving important council information and for partners and stakeholders to provide a platform and facilitate business-to-business activity. It also promotes a supportive response from all our business regulatory services. The task group is chaired by a local business and is represented by the Council, a large Corporate, Business Support agencies, Town Centre Manager and a local commercial landlord.

The **Jobs Outcome Group** brings together all employment support providers of the town and links them to a project called Slough Aspire which will be setting up a central jobs board for the town advertising as many local vacancies as it can. This way the employment support providers can plan and prepare their unemployed cohorts for these vacancies. This group is chaired by Aspire.

The diagram below illustrates the relationships between various stakeholders and how the work of the SEE PDG and its Task and Finish Groups feeds into the Wellbeing Board and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Strategic Infrastructure Group is made up of mainly internal officers who consider the current road and transport networks, the physical space and local assets that can provide opportunities for employment, homes and general growth for the town. This group will be taking forward the activities related to this agenda. It will work very closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure investment in Slough is a priority.

The Structure Chart below illustrates the relationships between the SEE PDG and its' Task Group and other strategic partnerships that affect the economic agenda of Slough.



SECTION 5 - CURRENT ACTIVITY IN SLOUGH SUPPORTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1** SBC recognises the uniqueness of Slough as a location and the excellent communication links that run directly through and around the town. Also, its close proximity to Heathrow Airport and how all of these features are very important for foreign direct investment (fdi) and inward investment in general. Therefore the Council has developed an inward investment website which presents the great benefits the town has to offer business and why Slough is a location of choice in this region. The website can be accessed at www.sloughmeansbusiness.co.uk
- 5.2** Most sectors are attracted by Slough's location but its most popular and growing sectors are telecommunications, biotechnology, consumer electronics, ICT, auto, business and financial, pharma and healthcare. Business within these sectors is attracted to Slough in order to be closer to its competitors and supply chains.
- 5.3** More recently, Slough has seen an interest from companies further afield, namely China. This has led to, not only direct Chinese investment into the town, but the Council has joined 'Link to China' which connects UK members to Chinese business agencies and is facilitated by the British Chamber of Commerce. Slough has been represented at a number of China conferences providing an opportunity to sell the town as a location of choice. The Slough Means Business website also targets foreign businesses particularly Chinese businesses.

Inward Investment and Regeneration

- 5.4** Slough Regeneration Partnership
SBC has chosen a preferred bidder for a partnership which will bring a billion pounds of investment into the town, including the construction of The Curve. The Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV) has been named Slough Regeneration Partnership with the council and Morgan Sindall Investments each holding 50 percent of the new company.

The partnership will be for at least 15 years and will provide work experience places, apprenticeships and direct employment opportunities to local people during the first phase of development. There will also be 'meet the buyer' events for local businesses so they can find out how they can secure a place on the supply chain for the partnership.

The first phase of development the partnership will undertake includes The Curve – a new library, cultural and community facility which provides the next stage of the council delivering the Heart of Slough regeneration. The Curve will be built by Morgan Sindall plc, part of the Morgan Sindall Group.

The first tranche of residential developments, to be built by Lovell Partnerships Ltd, the affordable housing division of the Morgan Sindall Group, will provide 525 new homes, ranging from two to four bedrooms on five sites across the borough.

Heart of Slough

- 5.5** The project involves the redevelopment and reconfiguration of the old Brunel roundabout at the junction of Wellington Street with William Street to create a crossroad layout at this road junction. The four quadrant sites adjacent to the old roundabout include:
- Thames Valley University
 - Brunel Bus Station
 - Slough Central Library
 - Slough Day Centre & the Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert.

Like businesses, towns need to compete effectively to survive. SBC wants to make Slough a town where people want to live, work, play, learn, shop and invest.

The major improvements currently taking place will completely change the look of the town and help take it into the 21st century. It will bring together:

- an iconic new Slough Bus Station – completed in May 2011
- The Curve, a learning and cultural centre – expected in 2015
- new office developments
- major new infrastructure improvements to help link Slough Bus and Railway Station to the town centre, and make it more pedestrian friendly.

Superfast Broadband

5.6 Superfast broadband is already being expanded by existing commercial providers and will certainly have an improved reach in Berkshire over the next three years. However, even with these plans it is estimated that 47,000 business and domestic premises will remain without superfast broadband unless further action is taken. The Superfast Berkshire project has been created to cover this shortfall and ensure as many residents and businesses as possible will have access to the new technology.

The government, as part of a nationwide initiative, has pledged £1.43 million for the Superfast Berkshire project. The county's six unitary councils, together with a number of parish councils, are providing £1.43 million match funding which in total should act as an incentive for a private sector provider to sign up and invest in delivering the necessary infrastructure. Support is being provided by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Slough Means Business

5.7 The Council has developed a dedicated website to promote Slough to any potential investors whether within the UK or abroad. It has featured businesses that are already here who provide quotes and information on why Slough works for them. It also provides useful information about Slough to any new businesses thinking about locating here. The site has been developed in partnership with The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce who deal with the enquiries generated through the site.

Transport and communications

5.8 Slough's excellent location in relation to the motorway network and proximity to Heathrow Airport brings many advantages to the town, particularly in retaining and growing its economic position. There are also excellent public transport links via rail, both to central London and the rest of the Thames Valley and beyond and an excellent bus network. However, residents and those coming to the borough to work rely heavily on cars for their daily travel and this adds to traffic congestion, increased carbon dioxide emissions and poor air quality in some areas which reduces the viability of bus services and contributes to poor health through lack of exercise. Workplace and school travel plans have been drawn up in partnership with the partners to promote alternatives to travelling by car. Future investment in Crossrail will improve this strategic rail link.

Public transport access to the airport has been enhanced by the Slough - Heathrow Series 7 bus services promoted by the Council, First Group and Heathrow Airport Limited. The potential for developing this into a bus rapid transit link is being explored.

Western Rail Access to Heathrow

- 5.9** SBC and TVBLEP are leading on the Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRAtH) project for a direct rail link from Slough to the airport that would serve, not only the borough, but residents and businesses as far west as South Wales and the West Country. WRAtH can play a significant role in improving access to international gateways both for the economically successful Thames Valley as well as less economically active regions in the south west who at the same time are losing local air connectivity through airport closures.

The project was endorsed by government in July 2012 as part of the Draft Aviation Policy Framework Consultation with up to £500 million pledged to fund construction, subject to a satisfactory business case. This would significantly reduce journey times between Slough and other Thames Valley stations and Heathrow, as well as reducing journey times from further afield. The link will result in a 6-minute journey time between Slough and Heathrow, will significantly reduce congestion in the regions roads by removing one million car journeys, and will generate £800 million additional economic activity and 42,000 jobs in the Thames Valley, rising to £1.5 billion additional economic activity across the UK. SBC supports the WRAtH Stakeholder Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Executive and gathering support from across the South West and South Wales. The objective of this group is to secure delivery as quickly as possible.

The Western Rail Access to Heathrow project could be fully operational by 2018.

Crossrail

- 5.10** Crossrail is the new cross London rail link from Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west to Abbey Wood and Shenfield in the east via nine central London stations. The service will benefit from electrification and new 10-car rolling stock, and is due to be operational by 2018 in the central section with a phased roll out by 2019 to the western section.

Crossrail will increase capacity and reliability for passengers in the Thames Valley through upgraded infrastructure and rolling stock. While early timetabling suggests a similar service to that currently provided at Slough, passengers will benefit from trains which travel beyond Paddington to central and east London. Up to 24 trains per hour will operate on the central section of Crossrail during peak time. Including Crossrail and franchise services six trains per hour will serve Slough during the peak, reducing to four outside peak.

While journey times from the west to Paddington will be similar or slightly longer than currently, journey times will be reduced for those travelling into central London, with significant journey time savings further east, e.g. Canary Wharf.

The role of TVB LEP and other Thames Valley stakeholders will need to ensure that Crossrail is part of an enhanced service along the Great Western Mainline to London, offering a high capacity cross London service. They also need to agree to retain express services.

Heathrow Airport – a vital contributor to Slough's economy

- 5.11** Slough owes much of its economic viability to the presence of Heathrow airport. In a globally interconnected world, air travel continues to be one of the keys to economic growth. The Thames Valley is the most productive sub region outside of London, with an economy worth £30 billion and employing close to 1 million people. Slough sits at the heart of the Thames Valley with an economy worth £9 billion. The number of international headquarters located in Slough is testament not only to the town's prime position in the UK, but also its links to emerging markets overseas.

Many Slough residents rely on Heathrow for their livelihoods, with over 7,000 working in airline related industries, and with 5.6% of Heathrow's directly employed staff drawn from Slough. In Kedermister ward alone, 587 people are directly employed by Heathrow, making this the area in Slough with the highest percentage of directly employed Heathrow staff. We also know that 70% of foreign owned companies locating in the UK for the first time will locate within 60 minutes travel time of Heathrow, placing Slough firmly within this catchment area. For those businesses already located in the Thames Valley, 75% cite Heathrow as the most important reason for their choice of location.

Heathrow is a major driver of employment and investment in west London including Slough, and across the region. A decision to build a new hub airport would place these jobs at risk and create an uncertain future for the local economy. Direct job losses would be the largest single redundancy in UK history, and would be comparable to the worst year of pit closures (30,000 jobs in 1984). The Council is working with the London boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing to undertake research to provide evidence on the impact of closure of Heathrow along with other changes to airport capacity.

Council and Business Relationships

5.12 The Council values partnerships with local businesses to ensure communication is strong and needs all round, are being met. Slough presents itself as a town that is open for business and is interested in shaping local business services that are relevant, accessible and of high quality.

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

5.13 The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group works with businesses across Berkshire and other regions to help them achieve their full business potential. They do this by offering members a range of services including business advice, networking events, training and international trade support. SBC is a member of the chamber and takes advantage of its services and also works in partnership to provide relevant services to businesses and engage more effectively with business.

Slough Business Community Partnership

5.14 Slough Business Community Partnership was formed in 2001 as a not for profit company limited by guarantee. Since that time, it has grown to become one of the leading Business Community Partnerships in the UK. The Partnership goes from strength to strength and now has an active membership of 50+ companies and organisations who represent large, medium and small business, the Council and the Voluntary Sector.

SBCP provides the expertise and knowledge for local companies to enable them to develop their own Corporate Responsibility Strategy and identify ways of becoming engaged in the community.

SBC work in partnership with SBCP to reach its membership and provides messages and services to its members.

Business Rate Relief

5.15 Economic growth and the sustainability of existing businesses in Slough are vital to the borough. Although the borough has a £9bn economy, 86,000 jobs and is the third most productive town per capita in the UK, it is important that the Council continues to promote the opportunities in Slough and to attract inward investment.

A policy for the award of discretionary national non-domestic rate relief to charities and other not-for-profit organisations and the award of hardship relief is already confirmed.

Although this is an opportunity to retain a new source of funding that did not exist before in this way, the local authority has exercised its power to offer a grant relief if it would be reasonable to do so having regard to the interests of council tax payers in its area (not business rate payers). Rate relief may be offered where the impact will be very significant.

The benefits to this scheme include:

- May attract businesses to the area
- May improve employment prospects for local people
- Long term may increase business rates base and therefore income to the council
- In attracting some larger businesses, this may have a knock on effect of attracting smaller businesses.

SBC's relationship with business includes supporting businesses to locate in the borough and encouraging them to play a part in the local area but also a regulatory relationship.

The Consumer Protection and Business Compliance service

5.16 The Consumer Protection and Business Compliance service is a jointly delivered service made up from the Food and Safety, Trading Standards and Licensing teams.

In supporting the economy and skills of the town, the service supports local businesses in meeting their legal requirements through low cost training and advice. Slough has a growing number of businesses who are compliant and aspire to raise standards, these businesses are recognised and awarded with the 'Buy with Confidence' and rated on the 'Food Hygiene Rating Scheme', which promotes local businesses and provides informed choices for residents.

Slough leads on a Primary Authority Scheme and forms partnerships with businesses, providing regulatory compliance advice for businesses trading beyond the boundaries of Slough, (meaning that the businesses does not need to deal with a range of regulators in other local authorities where they are based) so reducing the regulatory burden and contributing to the prosperity of the town.

Simplified Planning Zone

5.17 A simplified planning zone allows certain types of development to take place without specific planning permission, providing a number of conditions are met. There has been a simplified planning zone covering the majority of the Slough Trading Estate since 1995. The current scheme, adopted on 12 November 2004, provides the framework for regeneration and development on the Trading Estate until 2014. It continues the approach developed during the period of the first scheme, and is implemented in partnership with SEGRO plc (formerly known as Slough Estates). A key addition in the current scheme is an integrated transport strategy which helps ensure more sustainable travel to, from and within the estate.

Skills and Employment Support

Slough Aspire, Skills and Economic Inactivity

5.18 Skills development is an important area of our work as the Council supports its residents to raise basic skills levels, language skills as well as equip people with higher end skills. Slough's issue of a skills mismatch is a longstanding one, and there are various partnerships, services and agencies that attempt to address this.

Slough Aspire

5.19 This is a unique employer led public-private partnership supported by SEGRO, East Berkshire College, Slough Borough Council, Mars and Lonza.

The purpose of the partnership is to engage business with schools and the wider community to improve communication and increase understanding. Its aim is to ensure an effective talent pipeline to meet the growth of Slough's economy over the next 10 years and beyond. The partnership will support local residents, young people, businesses and employed learners to access and develop effective training and learning solutions that lead to sustained employment. This will be done by improving careers guidance to all residents and through the facilitation of new business in Slough and supporting enterprise. The three main strands that are priorities for Aspire are Aspire for Schools, Aspire for You and Aspire for Business.

SBC leads on the Aspire for You strand which supports local residents into employment and skills development so that they can access local higher paid jobs.

Aspire Business Start-Up

5.20 Aspire Business Start-Up is a service provided by the Council, to help residents who want to start their own business. The project provides business advice, training courses, workshops and hold networking events. This is part of the Aspire for You strand.

Adult Learning Service

5.21 The Community Learning and Skills Service deliver adult and community learning across the borough of Slough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This includes English Language, basic skills, computing, skills for work, personal development and family learning courses. It seeks to raise learners' aspirations and achievements through high quality teaching of a wide range of courses that support learners into work and further learning.

SBC manages the provision of community learning in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This enables it to offer more courses to both boroughs such as languages.

The service prioritises working with those residents who do not have a level 2 qualification, in particular unemployed people, and those in areas of deprivation and disadvantaged communities who would not normally access learning opportunities. The service works in partnership with an increasing number of local providers to deliver learning to the targeted groups of learners.

The service receives funding from the Skills Funding Agency to provide work-based learning (Adult Skills Budget), Community Learning and apprenticeships for young people. The Council also receives funding from the European Integration Fund (EIF) to deliver a programme aimed at migrant communities, Skills Funding Agency grant to deliver apprenticeships for young people. The service also delivers guidance to adults through the national careers service.

Employment Support

5.22 SBC provides an Employment and Learning Advice service which provides information, advice and guidance to help residents learn a new skill, get into work and return to learning. Job Clubs are available to the community as drop ins, to receive practical support on looking for work, including access to internet and relevant vacancy sites.

Support for new arrivals

5.23 Migration Excel provides support for newly arrived migrants from outside EU and EEA who have lived in the U.K. for less than three years and have arrived here for settlement purposes. Activities include ESOL courses, job preparation, confidence building, social media, IT, life in the UK and support from Peer Mentors from the host community. All the project activities are aimed to support third-country national migrants to integrate and feel a sense of belonging in Slough.

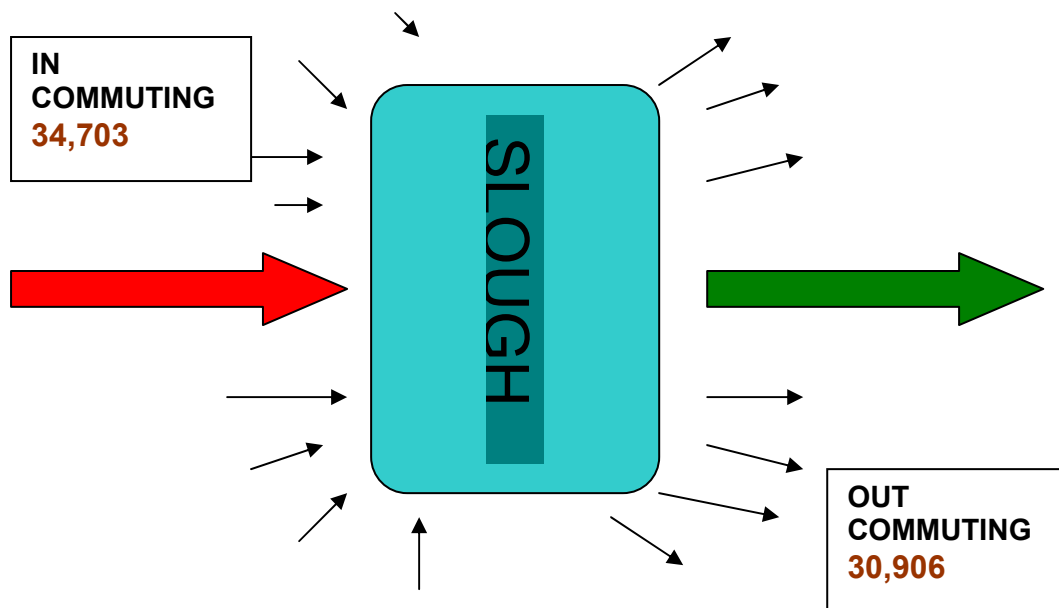
APPENDIX 1 – DATA TABLES AS EVIDENCE BASE

Table 1 – Employment

	Slough numbers	Slough %	South East %	Great Britain %
Economically Active	70,400	76.2	79.4	77.1
Males job seeker allowance claimant	1,801	3.8	2.6	4.3
Females job seeker allowance claimants	1,179	2.5	1.5	2.4
Economically Inactive	21,500	23.6	20.6	22.9
Female Inactivity	14,600	32.7	–	–
Male Inactivity	6,900	14.7	–	–

Source: ONS – Annual Population survey 2012

Diagram 1: Commuting Data



Source: Annual Population Survey – Commuter Flows 2011

Table 2 : Skills

Date	Slough	Slough %	South East %	Great Britain %
Jan 08 – Dec 08	20,200	23.8	31.0	28.6

Jan 09 – Dec 09	24,400	28.0	32.6	29.9
Jan 10 – Dec 10	22,600	25.7	33.9	31.3
Jan 11 - Dec 11	28,900	32.2	36.2	32.9
Jan 12 – Dec 12	30,700	33.7	36.8	34.4

Source ONS Population survey – Jan 2012-Dec 2012

Table 3: Qualification Levels of Adult Population 16-64

Level	Slough numbers	Slough %	South East %	Great Britain %
No qualifications	10,300	11.3	6.9	9.7
Other qualifications	9,900	10.8	5.4	6.3
NVQ1 and above	71,100	77.9	87.7	84
NVQ2 and above	61,400	67.3	75.4	71.8
NVQ3 and above	47,700	52.2	58.2	55.1
NVQ4 and above	30,700	33.7	36.8	34.4

Source ONS Population survey – Jan 2012-Dec 2012

Table 4: Income Levels

2012	Slough	South East	Great Britain
Workplace earnings per week (full time)	£593.80	£536.60	£507.60
Resident earnings per week (full time)	£516	£555.80	£508.80

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey 2012

Table 5: Economic inactive in Slough who want to work

Area	Economically inactive		Economically inactive who want work		
	Count	%	Count	% (of econ. inact.)	% (of pop.)
Slough	21,700	23.9	4,900	22.7	5.4

source: Economic Inactivity Report 2012: The Work Foundation

Table 6: Age breakdown of unemployed

Age Cohort	Slough numbers	Slough %	South East %	Great Britain %
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16-64	2,980	3.2	2.1	3.3
18-24	680	5.6	3.7	6.1
25-49	1,785	3.0	2.1	3.5
50-64	515	2.6	1.4	2.0

Source ONS Population survey: August 2013

Table 7: Sectors of Slough

Industry	Total number of enterprises	Total employee jobs	Percentage of employment	Ranking – (largest based upon percentage of total employment)
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	10	10	0.0	
Mining, quarrying & utilities	20	1,269	1.6	
Manufacturing	205	7,222	8.9	4
Construction	305	2,898	3.6	
Motor trades	150	2,675	3.3	
Wholesale	270	5,682	7.0	
Retail	350	5,885	7.3	
Transport & storage	345	8,277	10.3	3
Accommodation & food services	150	3,065	3.8	
Information & communication	555	12,044	14.9	1
Financial & insurance	70	911	1.1	
Property	95	405	0.5	
Professional, scientific & technical	480	6,328	7.8	6
Business administration & support services	290	8,662	10.7	2
Public administration & defence	0	1,625	2.0	
Education	50	5,595	6.9	
Health	125	6,358	7.9	5

Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	205	1,792	2.2	
Total	3,675	80,702	100%	

Source: ONS – Annual Business Inquiry 2011

APPENDIX 2 – NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 National Policy Drivers

Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Growth Agenda

The formation of Local Enterprise Partnerships, set up by Government in 2012 to lead economic growth and job creation within its local area are the key drivers of the growth agenda. They are private sector led who determine the priorities of the region and focus resources on activity that will enable growth. The public sector has been providing support to strengthen and establish governance structures of the LEPs. Government expects each LEP to outline the strengths of their area that will create growth and then bid for funds from central government to support them in this. LEPs are key to taking the country out of recession and creating economic growth.

There are three major funding programmes managed through the LEPs; however this is likely to expand in the future as the Government has indicated that it intends that all future economic funding streams should be administered through LEPs.

➤ **Regional Growth Fund (RGF)**

The £1.4 billion Regional Growth Fund (RGF) is operating between 2011 and 2014. It has been designed to support the creation of private sector employment in those areas of the country likely to face the most substantial fall in public sector employment. The emphasis is on the direct involvement of the private sector in formulating bids to the RGF.

➤ **Growing Places Fund**

The Growing Places Fund and its equivalent in London (the London Growth Fund) is designed to get stalled sites for development moving again; provide additional funding for infrastructure projects already in the pipeline; and promote wider economic growth and the delivery of jobs and houses. The Growing Places Investment Fund has provided funding to the Superfast Broadband Berkshire for Berkshire.

➤ **The Escalator Fund –**

This fund is available within Berkshire to early stage SMEs that have generated some sales and require funding support to significantly enhance market positioning and deliver a step change in growth. Businesses can apply to the Loan Scheme if they are a SME established as a limited company with a material part of its operations in **Berkshire**. They must have a product or service with some initial sales and have clear commercial potential and sustainable competitive advantage. The business should be looking for finance to invest in market development activities to establish a market presence. They may have insufficient track record to obtain conventional finance or need help beyond typical bank parameters.

➤ **EU Structural and European Social Fund**

The European Structural and Investment Funds exist to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. These funds are:

- The European Regional Development Fund
- The European Social Fund
- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; and
- The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (currently called the European Fisheries Fund for the 2007-2013 programme period)

Each Local Enterprise Partnership area will receive an allocation of European Structural and Investment Funds for the full seven-year period of the European Growth Programme. The Local Enterprise Partnership and its partners have been asked to set out how they intend to use this allocation in a European Structural and Investment Funds Strategy, which should be agreed with Government by early 2014.

More locally, the resources available to Slough Council to deliver the Economic Development Plan are limited, with the vast majority of public funding to support local economies channelled through various national, regional and sub-regional agencies. Moreover, the council also recognises that to deliver economic growth and prosperity for Slough it is the private sector that will lead with the Council providing an 'enabling role' through the provision of the right infrastructure to let business and enterprise develop and thrive.

With regard to publicly funded provision the Government has introduced a series of policy initiatives and legislative changes to support local economic growth and the council will assess the relevance and suitability of these new initiatives to promote economic development within the borough.

1.2 Inward Investment

The national inward investment arrangements take over the delivery of inward investment support from the former Regional Development Agencies in England with the signing of a contract with UK Trade & Investment.

1.3 Business Support

Business Link retained a national web service providing online support to individuals and businesses advising them on starting, improving and growing their business online at <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk>.

There are a number of national schemes for businesses to support their growth potential such as those looking for an experienced business mentor <http://www.mentorsme.co.uk> schemes to identify and accelerate growth such as Growth Accelerator Scheme <http://www.growthaccelerator.com>. This development forms an element of the emerging 'enterprise' support framework for the borough led by the Skills, Employment and Enterprise Priority Delivery Group.

The main methods and channels for assisting economic growth are:

1.4 Localism Act

The Localism Act became law in November 2011. It devolves greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and aims to give local communities more control over housing and planning decisions. Specific elements of the act such as Community Right to Challenge and the allied 2012 Public Services Social Value Act may stimulate new (particularly social enterprise) service deliver models and 'neighbourhood' and grassroots enterprise development. Local authorities also have more flexibility to explore different avenues for delivering services under the power of general competence.

1.5 Local Finance

Within the overall Government commitment of devolving powers from Whitehall there are a number of structural changes that came into effect in April 2013. These include business rate retention and council tax localisation that are based around the concept of 'risk and reward'. There will be new 'financial risks' with local government finance increasingly being tied to the local economy and benefit bill. For example, a relocation

decision of a major business over which a local authority may have little control will have a significant impact on its finances. It is therefore crucial for the whole council to be actively engaged in the positive promotion of Slough as a first class business location with agile, proactive services to attract and grow new and retain existing businesses within the borough.

1.6 National Skills Policy

Within this national policy priority area resides apprenticeships promotion and support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 250 employees. Slough and its partner agencies within the Skills Employment and Enterprise Partnership Delivery Group (a borough-wide partnership between the public, private and community sector, leading on the skills and employment agenda) are actively involved in both the direct provision and promotion of apprenticeships with Slough employers. The group view apprenticeships as an ideal solution to future workforce development and local employment for borough residents.

1.7 Welfare Reforms

The Welfare Reform Act introduced a wide range of reforms that make the benefits and tax credit system fairer and simpler by incentivising work through, for example, the introduction of Universal Credit came into effect in April 2013 with its' overall aim of reducing worklessness and poverty.

Universal Credit with its design on 'making work pay' that will replace Jobseekers Allowance and the 'passport benefits' (such as housing benefit & tax credits) will assist active jobseekers obtain jobs who are expected to be at least 35% better off when taking a job. Currently the difference between taking a job and remaining on benefit can be as low as 10%.

1.8 Welfare to Work Programmes

From April 2011, Jobcentre Plus_(JCP) increased flexibility to make decisions on how best to help local people into work and can now deliver more personalised support to all customers.

JCP has also been given the responsibility to work with local businesses and organisations to support people through the 'Get Britain Working' measures which include:

- **Work Programme** – The new Work Programme is the flagship of the Government's plans to reform welfare-to-work provision in the UK. In Slough the two main Prime Contractors (i.e. service providers), Action for Employment (A4E) and Maximus are both members of the Skills, Employment and Enterprise Priority Delivery Group.
- **New Enterprise Allowance** – The new enterprise allowance (NEA) supports those local JSA registered unemployed who are looking to start a business by providing access to finance and valuable support from local entrepreneur mentors. Government has also initiated a series of measures designed to promote sustainable growth through:
- **Structural reform priorities** that can benefit the whole economy in planning, competition, trade and investment, regulation, access to finance and corporate governance.
- **Removing barriers** in sectors where there are clear opportunities for growth and where Government can make a difference, starting with the following sectors: construction; retail; healthcare and life sciences; professional and business

services; advanced manufacturing; and digital and creative industries. Two mechanisms to support delivery included in this are Tax Increment Finance, to support key infrastructure and other capital investments, and the New Homes Bonus, to incentivise local planning authorities to increase housing provision.