

Strategy for Growth – Midlothian Council Economic Strategy 2020- 2025

Report by Dr Mary Smith, Director of Education, Communities and Economy

1 Purpose of Report

This report sets out a new strategy for growing Midlothian's economy. It provides information on the priorities and actions to be taken by the Council and its partners over the next five years to help deliver the strategy's aim to ensure Midlothian is a great, green place to grow.

2 Background

- 2.1** The strategy replaces the 2014 Midlothian Economic Recovery Plan, and whilst much of it remains relevant, there is a need for a comprehensive review to address merging priorities and capitalise on major infrastructure programmes such as the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, as well as meeting the demands placed by sectoral and inclusive growth. Delivery of the Borders Rail Blueprint will ensure Midlothian sufficiently harnesses economic growth of a number of key tourism and natural assets.
- 2.2** The Strategy for Growth aligns Midlothian to local and national priorities; and its focus and delivery will ensure Midlothian is well placed as a key location for inward investment and place to do business.
- 2.3** The appointment of the Economic Development Manager in February 2019 began the process of creating an ambitious new strategy to capitalise on the area's growth ambitions, and provide a strategic framework for development for: The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, Borders Railway Blueprint, the Council's economic development land and key growth sectors, including agri-tech, animal sciences, food and drink and tourism.
- 2.4** To begin the process, the Economic Development team identified a number of key sectoral areas for Midlothian and undertook extensive sectoral engagement sessions and consultation with our partners, key stakeholders, communities, businesses and developers, education providers and young people. Over the course of summer 2019, six consultation sessions were held across Midlothian with focus on: community planning and place, employment and skills, business and development, life sciences, data and digital, food and drink including tourism.
- 2.5** Each consultation session was attended by on average 25 people, and this was coupled with the option for respondents to reply online via Survey Monkey. This captured those unable to attend and increased the audience and consultation. In total, the reach was approximately 200 people or businesses.

- 2.6 The strategy was developed in house over the course of the last quarter, with input from strategic delivery partners, communities and citizens. Once compiled, a draft version was sent to all consultees for further feedback comment and to achieve buy in. The final version presented to CMT reflects the priorities and ambitions of the people of Midlothian.

3 Main Report

- 3.1 The Strategy for Growth sets out a new vision for Midlothian's economy. The key priorities and actions described in the strategy aims to facilitate good growth for the area's economy. By doing so, the strategy seeks to ensure that Midlothian continues a positive and inclusive growth trajectory where all citizens can prosper and benefit from economic development actions.

- 3.2 To deliver that vision, the strategy sets out a four pillared approach and clear focus on: innovation, inclusion, partnership working and ambition.

Innovation – we will identify challenges, be proactive in finding solutions, be sustainable in our actions – and be resilient to change;

Inclusion – we will ensure community benefit is achieved through our ambition to grow Midlothian's economy. We will work with our education providers, businesses and partner agencies to develop and harness the skills of our citizens to create a strong economic base;

Partnership working – we will continue to foster our partnerships and engage with our stakeholders to enable good growth and inclusivity, and enhance the reach and impact of our messaging;

Ambition – we will recognise and capitalise on the opportunity that exists for Midlothian by creating a platform for digital development, internationalisation and new channels for inward investment.

- 3.3 Across these pillars, the strategy sets out six strategic priorities Midlothian needs to achieve to grow the economy.

1. **To integrate Midlothian with the regional economy and promote the region internationally.**
2. **To improve the skills landscape.**
3. **To increase economic participation.**
4. **To build on the success of our key sectors.**
5. **To improve the vibrancy of our town centres and make them more environmentally friendly.**
6. **To accelerate growth through infrastructure upgrades.**

- 3.4 The strategy is focused on key priorities and actions within Midlothian, and sets the direction to address challenges. It recognises the Midlothian economy operates on a number of levels. As such, partnership delivery across the City Region is embedded in the strategy, as well as a number of targeted interventions which are specific to Midlothian's town centres and settlements.

- 3.5 The strategy's focus is from 2020- 2025, and engagement with residents, stakeholders, partners, businesses and young people will be ongoing throughout delivery.

- 3.6 In order to retain focus and need, the strategy will be reviewed annually through the Community Planning Partnership's 'Sustainable Growth' theme, with a report to Midlothian Cabinet to update on progress, highlight emerging issues and make recommendations, as required.

3.7 Financial Implications

There have been no costs associated with the preparation of this strategy as it has been developed in house. Delivery of the strategy will be met by the Economic Development Service in conjunction with key delivery partners.

4 Other Report Implications

4.1 Risk

The significant risk is that if an economic development strategy is not implemented it would be a lost opportunity to focus on priorities and actions to benefit the Midlothian economy and the agenda of economic outcomes set out in the Council's and Community Planning Partners' Single Midlothian Plan (SMP).

There is also risk associated with not meeting the agenda for good growth and having the team resources to capitalise on the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, and spin offs from the Borders Railway investment and future development of the Midlothian Science Zone.

4.2 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- Community safety
- Adult health, care and housing
- Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- Sustainable growth
- Business transformation and Best Value
- None of the above

4.3 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

A new strategy for growth can more effectively contribute to addressing key aims of the Single Midlothian Plan to reduce inequalities in health, welfare, income, and skills/employability.

4.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

See 4.1 and 4.2 above.

4.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

See 4.1 above.

4.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Development of this strategy has been a collaborative process involving six workshops with communities, businesses, public sector partners, third sector organisations and young people.

The commitment to partnership working will continue throughout the implementation of this strategy and key actions, and form a key component of the Community Planning Partnership's 'Sustainable Growth' theme.

4.7 Ensuring Equalities

Equalities impacts arising from the new strategy have been considered as part of the draft equalities impact assessment and is attached to this report at Appendix B, and is a positive strategy to address inequality through promotion of inclusive growth.

4.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Sustainability impacts arising from the new strategy have been considered as part of a draft integrated impact assessment. The strategy supports sustainable development of the Midlothian economy.

4.9 IT Issues

A new website will be developed as an action to the strategy. This will be delivered in house by the Economic Development Officer (Digital) post with the support of the Council's Digital Services and Communications teams.

5 Summary

- 5.1** The current Economic Development Strategy was published in 2014. Since then there have been significant changes in the economic climate at UK, Scottish, and regional levels. It is therefore an opportune time for a new strategy to refocus and set the direction to grow the Midlothian economy, with a clear emphasis on delivering inclusive growth. The strategy utilises a partnership based model to make best use of limited resources to contribute most effectively to the delivery of sustained and inclusive economic growth.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1** It is recommended that Council:

- i) Approves the Strategy for Growth – Midlothian Council Economic Strategy 2020 - 2025, subject to any amendments required by Council;
- ii) Approves proposals for annual reporting of indicators via the Community Planning Partnership and Midlothian Cabinet to monitor economic performance.

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Background Papers:

- i) Midlothian Economic Recovery Plan

APPENDICES

A Strategy for Growth – Midlothian Council Economic Strategy 2020- 2025

B Equalities Impact Assessment