

# DRAFT BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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## Introduction

This engagement strategy sets out a plan for engaging businesses and supporting economic growth in the district.

### *Our Ambition*

Our growth strategy, *Vision Bolsover*, sets out a plan for sustainable growth across the district. The strategy puts forward the Council's key ambition:

"To become a dynamic, self-sufficient and flexible Council that delivers excellent services, whilst adapting to local aspirations and acting as the economic and environmental driver for Bolsover District."

*Vision Bolsover* clearly sets out priorities and objectives for economic growth and highlights the importance of focussing resources on developing the right conditions for businesses to grow.

### *Our Economic Priorities:*

- Working with partners to support enterprise, innovation, jobs and skills
- Unlocking Development Potential: unlocking the capacity of major employment sites
- Enabling Housing Growth: increasing the supply, quality and range of housing to meet the needs of the growing population and support economic growth
- Making the best use of our assets
- Ensuring financial sustainability and increasing revenue streams
- Promoting the District and working with partners to increase tourism

We have an excellent understanding of our local economic assets and the opportunities laid out in front of us. Working with partners to bring forward employment and development sites, and new collaborations that support skills and innovation and pull investment into the district, will drive the business growth we aspire to.

This engagement strategy focusses on how the Economic Development team will prioritise its own work and its work with partners to help achieve this ambition.

## Purpose

Our strategy is to support growth across all sectors. Our focus for engagement is on creating high value, skilled jobs and industries, and providing access to the skills our local workforce and businesses need to succeed.

### *Understanding our businesses*

Unfortunately, we don't know our business community as well as we could, due to historically perceived apathy and lack of appetite from businesses to engage. As a result, our services have naturally focussed elsewhere. Without fuller insight about our businesses, we risk failing to achieve our ambitions for growth.

There are lots of business growth programmes out there (D2N2 LEP funded programmes, county level business growth schemes, ERDF funded programmes, Bolsover District Council's own programmes i.e. Business Growth Fund and the Economic Loan Fund) but we are not sure that Bolsover businesses are making the most of it or the reasons why.

It could be that the support is not meeting business's needs, is too difficult to access, or that the offer is not being communicated effectively to businesses. If we are to increase the take up of business growth programmes or influence their delivery, we need to understand the issues and challenges for businesses so that we can take the right course of action.

We don't have substantial contact details for industrial estate businesses, foreign owned businesses or our key sectors. We don't know how many businesses in the district trade internationally. Despite this, we have a great opportunity in front of us. Through the development of our tourism strategy, we have contact details for the visitor economy and town centre businesses. Through the delivery of recent grant schemes (ARG, BGF), we have a list of businesses from a range of sectors who are willing to engage with us.

### **Aim**

The aim of the strategy is to better understand our business community and their growth needs, in order to tailor our engagement and communications, so that we might increase take up of business growth programmes and identify opportunities for growth.

### **Objectives**

So that our new strategy makes a difference, we have identified new objectives and actions which will be achieved over the next three years. Some are measurable now and others will be defined and measured later as we collect the insight we need.

Our objectives are designed to drive new positive ways of working within our team and wider teams within the council and to support the achievement of our growth strategy.

### ***Laying the foundations***

- Provide a structured approach to engagement and communication between the council and local businesses
- Utilise insight and intelligence to better understand our businesses and their needs so that we can support them more successfully
- Evolve our Business Bolsover brand and image so that businesses want to engage with the council and begin to trust us

### ***Building success***

- Fully engage our businesses to increase take up of business growth programmes and grants
- Use insight to influence the delivery of business growth programmes
- Provide opportunities for businesses to contribute to economic growth plans and other issues
- Identify potential high value partnerships that will drive productivity and growth across the district

### ***Being vocal***

- Build on our Business Bolsover brand so that it adds value to the council and the perception of the work that we do

- Be aspirational and innovative in our engagement with businesses
- Celebrate our achievements and the successes of our businesses so that we can demonstrate the value of our work

### Local Economic Landscape

Bolsover is a significant economic asset to the East Midlands. We are home to a number of leading businesses and iconic cultural assets. The district shows continued growth in higher value manufacturing and engineering, and mirrors the national trend for high growth in professional, scientific and technical industries.

Tourism is an important part of the local economy, which is home to a number of key tourism sites including: Bolsover Castle, Hardwick Hall and Creswell Crags.

There are currently 2265 enterprises in the district. Around 97% are small and micro businesses and 2% are medium sized businesses. The district is also home to a significant number of large businesses, such as Amazon, Sports Direct and the Co-Operative, which make up 1% of total businesses.

### Skills

- The percentage of working age residents qualified to degree level and above in Bolsover district is low by national standards, with 21.8% qualified to this level compared with 43.1 nationally
- Weekly earnings in the district are typically lower than average, at £494.70 per week compared with £552.00 in East Midlands

### Investment

- Representation of Bolsover businesses on business growth programmes is low when compared with surrounding districts
- To June 2018, funding attracted into the area from business growth programmes included £48,200 from the D2 Energy Efficiency programme, £11,700 from D2N2 Growth Hub interventions, £49,600 from SCR Growth Hub Enhancement Project grants, and £250,000 from SCR Growth Hub interventions

### Innovation

- The number of patents filed in the district is low, with just 1 filed in 2017 and 1 in 2016
- There is a push for higher value employment uses at Horizon 29 (former Coalite site)
- The district has a high proportion of low skilled workers, which limits its attractiveness for the highest value innovation uses

### Entrepreneurship

- Prior to the pandemic, productivity in the district was steadily increasing. In 2019, GVA per job was 14% higher than the national average, which may be attributed to the increased use of automation
- While start up rates are good, the district has one of the lowest business survival rates nationally. The two year survival rate is 68.1, falling to just 27.78% at 5 years

## Current Business Engagement

Most existing business engagement in the district is designed for networking and sharing of information. It does not collect and interpret business views in a systematic way that can provide a clear plan of economic development action.

Identifying business challenges and growth needs is typically anecdotal, and relies on informal networks, fragmented business growth schemes, and changing business growth providers.

There are good examples of engagement with business groups – the work currently done by the Economic Development team; Clowne Enterprise; and the Bolsover Business and Skills Partnership. However, collection and analysis of information is not robust and objective, or shared consistently amongst parties so that it can be stratified.

Recent grant schemes (BGF; DGF; ARG) have increased our engagement with businesses. However, there is always a risk of future funding going to those who understand the system and come back in subsequent rounds.

Elected members are very good at driving business engagement and may benefit from more structured updates and training on the business growth offer available.

## The Future Challenge: transforming businesses through skills, investment, innovation and entrepreneurship

Almost everything we do, how and where we work, how and what people buy, how we interact with others – has been changed beyond recognition by the events of 2020.

COVID-19 was the biggest global event and challenge of our lifetimes. Human attitudes and behaviours shifted like never before, and these behaviours are not going to go away once the immediate threat of the pandemic is over.

We all expect simple, user-friendly digital experiences from the brands we interact with. We have short attention spans, low patience and high expectations. We expect tailored news bulletins and we want to get to the information we need with minimal clicks. Covid-19 has only made this more so. We expect this for ourselves and our businesses demand it from us as well.

The way we currently engage and communicate with businesses will need to evolve and adapt. We will need to become more creative in the way that we demonstrate the value we add and work harder to create content and campaigns that give businesses more reason to engage with us, subscribe to our emails, and to talk to us.

COVID recovery, Brexit, carbon reduction, productivity, automation and AI, innovation and high value jobs remain key priorities for regional and national policy and are without a doubt key challenges for our district. Therefore these must be our focus also.

## Our Priorities

Our businesses need our support to succeed and grow. We want to support businesses across all sectors and size to be entrepreneurial and innovative and equipped with the skills they need to be successful. Our priorities will help us to focus our work with businesses.

### *Develop an enterprise culture*

- Move away from a 'dependency culture', where businesses rely on others to solve problems for them
- Challenge existing ways of doing things and come up with new ideas and solutions
- Identify 'great business ideas' and develop entrepreneurship

### *Transform productivity of key businesses and sectors*

- Understand the needs and ambitions of our key businesses and sectors
- Identify opportunities to improve efficiency and productivity within key businesses
- Support businesses to become more competitive in their marketplaces

### *Drive business growth and high value job creation*

- Upskill the local workforce as part of the productivity improvements
- Increase the value of production through innovation
- Grow employment opportunities and improve local skills and wages as a result of value added

## Our approach

There is no one approach to business engagement. Our strategy includes existing engagement activity, along with some new initiatives. As we gain more insight, we can build more accurate personas that reflect our audience, segmenting businesses and sectors in ways that allow us to respond to their different needs to maximum effect.

The main challenge will be sustained engagement with businesses. For it to succeed, engagement needs to be sustained long term.

### *What's required*

- Provide a simple and clear offer for businesses; as the local authority we have an active role to play in supporting information sharing, networking and referring for business growth
- Open the door and reduce real or perceived barriers between the council and business community
- Know our business community better and put long term relationships ahead of short term results
- Create a culture of solving for business success, not for our systems
- Identify key businesses and sectors whose needs and growth ambitions align to the councils
- Empower and capacity build businesses to be able to answer their own questions and solve their own problems

- Proactively seek out high value, collaborative partnerships to deliver economic development activity in the district
- Develop our internal capacity to deliver against our priorities and for business success
- Embed an enterprise culture and innovation into our work at every opportunity

## How will this be achieved

### *1. Insight*

Business survey – a regular local business survey that helps us to develop a clearer picture of business needs and identifies the opportunities and challenges facing businesses across a range of themes

Make the most of existing data – we have an opportunity to use existing data to segment businesses, to better understand their needs and target them for support

### *2. Connecting with Businesses*

A clear business growth offer – the support offered by Business Bolsover is clearly defined and provides straightforward connectivity between businesses and providers

Internal training and information sharing – anyone delivering services to businesses within the wider council is able to identify opportunities for business growth and has access to the information they need to help businesses

Branding – increase the use of and further develop the Business Bolsover brand in our engagement with businesses, so that the brand becomes recognisable as the first point of contact for business growth in the district

Key account management – a proactive key account management strategy with the aim of establishing strong, long-term relationships with key businesses and driving forward our priorities

CRM system – better coordination between the council, businesses and providers; offering a better quality and efficient service to businesses and providing valuable insight into business engagement activities and outcomes

### *3. Communications*

Communications plan – consistent, planned and proactive communications that promote the Business Bolsover brand and increase take up of business growth programmes

Content development – a new In Business magazine and refreshed e-bulletin, along with new content to demonstrate the value of business support i.e. case studies

Communications framework – ensure that communications are personalised and targeted for businesses, improving the relevance and usefulness of information



Website – update the corporate website to promote the Business Bolsover brand and explore how the website can be utilised to offer a better service to businesses

*Just as businesses innovate, so must we*

Although our ambitions and priorities may not change, how we implement our plan to get us there might. Our engagement strategy, therefore, will evolve and improve as our knowledge and understanding of business needs is progressed through this work.

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## Action Plan

<b>Insight</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ambition</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>
Regular business survey	Develop a benchmarked business survey and collect responses from local businesses	Target business growth activities more effectively	Undertake a range of campaigns in which we can gain insight and other appropriate data  Use intelligence gained to inform future engagement and business growth activities and to share with partners		<b>January 2022</b>
Existing data	Consolidate and segment existing business data, with the aim of targeting support	Increase take up of business growth programmes and grants	Utilise tourism/ARG/DGF/BGF business data to target businesses for growth  Utilise existing business databases to gain intelligence and insight and create business segments to target for growth		<b>March 2022</b>
<b>Connecting with Businesses</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ambition</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Target Dates</b>
Clear business growth offer	The business growth offer is clearly set out and accessible to businesses, partners and colleagues	Straightforward connectivity for businesses to providers	Business Bolsover clearly defined and set out  Up to date repository of the available business growth programmes with lead contact		<b>Review April 2022</b>

			<p>details and agreed processes for referral and follow up</p> <p>Regular attendance at business networks and partner meetings</p>		
Training and information sharing	Support internal colleagues and members to engage with businesses on the business growth offer	A 'one council' approach to business growth	<p>Rework existing folders and inserts and create new 'business growth' information packs to share with colleagues and members</p> <p>Include content and updates on the business growth offer and business engagement activities in wider council meetings</p>		<b>August 2022</b>
Branding	Rework the existing Business Bolsover branding and publish formal brand guidelines to share with colleagues and partners to promote their use	Business Bolsover is recognisable as the first point of contact for business growth in the district	<p>Rebrand the Economic Development team to Business Bolsover through use of branding in internal/external communications/meetings/events</p> <p>Promotion of the Business Bolsover service to businesses and partners</p>		<b>April 2022</b>
Key Account Management	A key account management strategy that includes provisions for monitoring and	Increase take up of business growth programmes and grants, resulting in increased	<p>Publish key account management strategy</p> <p>Implementation of key account management strategy with relevant KPIs/Targets, using</p>		<b>December 2022</b>

	follow up with businesses	productivity and growth	business intelligence to target business segments  Analysis of key account management activity through CRM to gain insight and inform future engagement and business growth activities		
CRM System	A CRM system that captures our work with businesses, and allows for segmentation of business data and efficient distribution of information	A better quality and efficient service to businesses and valuable insight into engagement activities and outcomes	Identify and procure suitable CRM		<b>March/April 2022</b>
<b>Communications</b>					
Communications Plan	A planned programme of communications to business intended to inform local businesses of the business growth offer	Promote the Business Bolsover brand and encourage take up of business growth programmes and grants	Publish communications plan  Analysis of communications activity through CRM to gain insight and inform future activity		<b>Review July 2022</b>
In Business Magazine, eNewsletter, and Content Development	New and refreshed content to use in our communications with businesses	Demonstrate the value of business growth programmes and increase take up	Publish In Business Magazine  Refresh e-bulletin		<b>March 2022</b>

			New content development i.e. case studies		
Communications Framework	A published framework for how communications are targeted and distributed	Improve the relevance and usefulness of communications for businesses	<p>Publish communications framework</p> <p>Segmentation of business data (i.e. by sector; interests; size) and up to date distribution lists</p> <p>Update CRM to target communications</p>		<b>Review July 2022</b>
Website and social media	The Council main website and social media is updated with the Business Bolsover service and business growth offer	Promote Business Bolsover as a first point of contact for business growth in the district	<p>Update the website</p> <p>Explore how the website can offer a better service to businesses (such as enquiry capture; link to CRM; standardised responses; opt-in preferences)</p> <p>Explore use of social media to promote Business Bolsover</p>		<b>Review July 2022</b>