

# B A B E R G H & M I D S U F F O L K



## **JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS' STRATEGY to 2022**

(CORE CONTENT)

POST CONSULTATION REVISIONS IDENTIFIED IN **RED** FONT

**NOTE: FORMATTING, PROOF READING, INFOGRAPHICS, APPENDICES, CASE STUDIES, REFERENCES/FOOTNOTES & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY TO BE ADDED IN DUE COURSE**

# CONTENTS

## Our Place

### 1. Priorities

- Joint Strategic Plan
- Priority areas

### 2. Major issues impacting on growth in BMS

- Local challenges in a regional strategic context

### 3. Aims and Objectives

- Framework
- Enabling delivery
- 'Open for Business' commitments

### 4. Opportunities for our places in BMS

### 5. Where and How do the District Councils make a difference?

- How we approach being 'Open for Business'
- What the Districts will do to make a difference

### 6. Key Delivery Actions (Now and Future)

- Thematic approach to delivering key priorities

### 7. Underpinning Assumptions for our Approach

- The parameters within which we will deliver

## APPENDICES

### A. Growth Context (National to Local)

### B. Evidence Pack [links and keep live]

### C. Partner agencies and organisations

### D. Case studies / Narrative – what might success look like?

## OUR PLACE

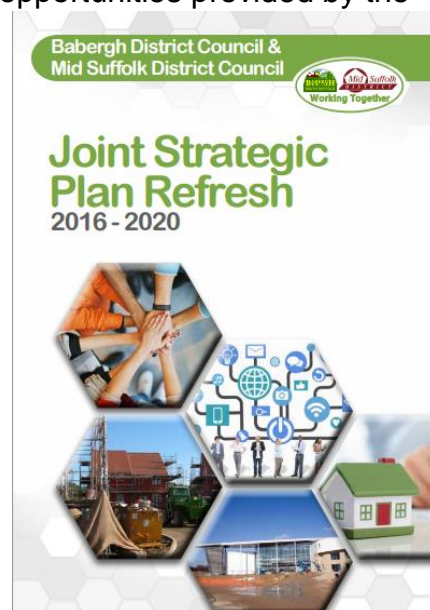


## 1. PRIORITIES

1.1 The Councils' Joint Strategic Plan (2016-2020)<sup>1</sup> sets out how the Councils and the communities they serve can take full advantage of the economic opportunities provided by the changes and challenges we are facing. It provides an overview of the shared direction, pace and common purpose which can deliver the kind of outcomes we jointly wish to see.

The five key strategic outcomes are:

- **Housing Delivery** – more of the right type of homes, of the right tenure, in the right place
- **Business Growth and Increased Productivity** – Encourage development of employment sites and other business growth, of the right type, in the right place and encourage investment in skills and innovation in order to increase productivity
- **Community Capacity Building and Engagement** – All communities are thriving, growing, healthy, active and self-sufficient
- **Assets and investments** – Improved achievement of strategic priorities and greater income generation through use of new and existing assets
- **An enabled and efficient organisation** – The right people, doing the right things, in the right way, and the right time, for the right reasons.



The top three priority areas for the Joint Councils are:

### 1. Economy and Environment

- a. Babergh: *Shape, influence and provide the leadership to enable growth while protecting and enhancing our environment*
- b. Mid Suffolk: *Lead and shape the local economy by promoting and helping to deliver sustainable economic growth which is balanced with respect for wildlife, heritage and the natural and built environment*

### 2. Housing

- a. Babergh: *Shape, influence and provide the leadership to achieve the right mix and supply of housing*
- b. Mid Suffolk: *Ensure there are enough good quality, environmentally efficient and cost-effective homes with the appropriate tenures and in the right locations*

### 3. Strong and healthy communities

- a. Babergh: *Shape, influence and provide the leadership to support and facilitate active, healthy and safe communities*
- b. Mid Suffolk: *Encourage and support individuals and communities to be self-sufficient, strong, healthy and safe*

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<sup>1</sup>

## 2. MAJOR ISSUES IMPACTING ON GROWTH IN BMS

- 2.1 The significant challenges, and also opportunities, to the region are expressed within the New Anglia Economic Strategy and emerging Industrial Strategy work and therefore need not be replicated within this document. At a local level however that is reflected and expanded as:
- a) There are several large local strategic sites in BMS, including designated Enterprise Zone sites, with potential for significant job generation but which need support (including utilities, key infrastructure and services) to bring them to the market
  - b) There are limited premises options for SMEs – starter/incubator/clustering then scaling-up 'graduation' space
  - c) There are still slow broadband speeds and patchy mobile phone coverage in rural areas
  - d) Lower skill levels and educational attainment than the regional/national averages
  - e) High levels of outward commuting - **contributed to by** an imbalance between housing and jobs
  - f) Low levels of entrepreneurship and business start-up (but also fewer business failures)
  - g) Market towns are in need of support with emphasis on improving the vitality of the town centres, and to become destination areas playing to their individual strengths
  - h) Limited access to higher education learning provision (although this may now be improving). Limited access to adult learning provision and support across the wider rural areas
  - i) Rural infrastructure, access to skills and inability to recruit young people to rural locations can be barriers to growth - particularly road and digital network (improving existing as well as lobbying for new links) and specialist/higher level skills and leadership
  - j) Places which have inherent barriers to growth and development such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

## 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 This strategy will, in combination with other collaborative approaches, provide a framework to deliver the following **aims and objectives**:

- a) Support delivery of the Councils' Joint Strategic Priorities, the Suffolk Growth Framework, New Anglia Economic Strategy and the Government's Industrial Strategy
- b) Protect our employment base
- c) **Help to deliver** 10,000 new jobs<sup>2</sup> and nearly 18,000 new homes<sup>3</sup> by 2036
- d) **Deliver a range sites of different types, sizes and locations to meet both identified business sectoral needs as well as general employment sites.**
- e) Safeguard employment land and assets that are able to deliver additional growth beyond these minimum needs
- f) Improve productivity
- g) Raise the quality of local jobs, **the** value of our businesses, increase average wages, and support gender pay equality
- h) Support local businesses to survive, thrive and grow and in doing so recognise that our local economic bedrock is micro and SME businesses/enterprises **and these support, and build identity, within our local communities**
- i) Raise the employability and skill levels of our workforce

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Current-Evidence-Base/Ipswich-Economic-Area-Sector-Needs-Assessment-Sept-2017.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Current-Evidence-Base/Ipswich-and-Waveney-Housing-Market-Areas-Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-Part-1-May-2017.pdf>

- j) Reduce the leakage of talent out of the area and helping to retain local skills, innovation and ability
- k) Support a thriving visitor economy sector (including events, activities and attractions)
- l) Regenerate our vibrant market towns
- m) Nurture a climate of entrepreneurs and innovation (including sub-sector innovation which may mitigate forecast decline in some sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing)
- n) Improve physical infrastructure to support sustainable growth and environment
- o) Secure greater inward investment and access to funding

3.2 To **enable the delivery** of the above we will:

- a) Work collaboratively, and smartly, with our partners supported by shared business intelligence, common/open data and evidence base and effective networking - building trusted relationships through open and honest dialogue
- b) Secure or signpost new funding streams or investment financing mechanisms, and make it easier for businesses to access these
- c) Improve the co-ordination of interventions, actions and resources from national, regional and local organisations and agencies
- d) Attract new inward investment into the districts, and consider our own investment interventions, and use of assets, where appropriate
- e) Increase our commercial awareness and understanding of the local business community
- f) Support the requirement for the Councils to be financially resilient
- g) Support creation of additional commercial floorspace

3.3 The strategy also acts as:

- a) An inward investment prospectus
- b) Material information to inform planning decision-making, including through direct planning consultation responses made via the Open for Business Team
- c) Support for development of a phased and prioritised Delivery Plan (for example, through facilitating Visioning for Prosperity activity with stakeholders and communities)

3.4 The Strategy seeks to achieve this by being '**Open for Business**'. We will support economic growth across our joint authority areas, being flexible towards the needs and scale of different business sectors, and seeking to find solutions which deliver economic growth.

We are committed to:

- a) Promoting our '**Open for Business**' ethos at every opportunity to deliver our Joint Strategic Plan by aligning this framework with other Council strategies, policies and functions (planning, investment, spatial, housing, environmental and regulatory).
- b) Supporting, with our partners, **businesses of all sizes and across all sectors**, wherever they are located in BMS.
- c) Encouraging a culture of **entrepreneurism** and supporting **new start-up businesses**.
- d) Supporting, with our partners, our **existing businesses** to establish, survive, grow and improve their **productivity and competitiveness**.
- e) **Welcoming and supporting larger businesses** looking to relocate or expand in our areas
- f) Developing our **investment strategy** to join-up investment in land and property, development and **regeneration projects** to provide sustainable business growth options.
- g) **Championing the business community** of BMS on the regional, national and international stage to promote growth and trade locally, and boost inward-investment.
- h) Obtaining and maintaining **intelligence and baselines of evidence** for tailoring/adapting and justifying our offer. Working with our partners on effective use, collation and analyses of data to **inform strategies and actions** which deliver growth.

- i) Developing a **marketing and brand-building strategy**, in collaboration with others, for Mid Suffolk and Babergh to domestic and overseas investors and visitors.
- j) Developing our **website functionality and content** to enable easier access to relevant and targeted information (including sectoral and transactional)
- k) Publishing information and intelligence that businesses can use to **inform growth and investment decisions**.
- l) Ensuring there is continuing councillor and officer development and **closer working to best serve our businesses** – developing training, expertise and locality knowledge.

#### 4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR PLACES IN BMS

##### a. SUPPORTING THE REGION'S PRIORITY PLACES AS 'GROWTH ENGINES'

Babergh and Mid Suffolk are placed at the very heart of Suffolk and the region, and are well placed to support making Suffolk an optimal location for commercial innovation, investment, and business expansion and bringing about sustainable and inclusive growth.

BMS recognise that inclusive growth of the region's priority places, **as expressed in the New Anglia Economic Strategy**, and advancement of its global scale business operators creates opportunities for our local businesses as suppliers and supply chains, consumers, sectoral cluster innovators and developers of sub-sector specialisms - and with it grow the potential for challenging incumbent operators. Regional engines are supported by our district **level** priority places **but BMS is an attractive business proposition in its own right** – including 'Space to Innovate' branded Enterprise Zones, Food Enterprise Zones, 'greater' Stowmarket and the A14 corridor from the Port of Felixstowe, 'greater' Sudbury and South Suffolk area and the Ipswich fringe/A12 gateway. BMS business can and do help to reinforce and grow the regional economy.

Stowmarket and Sudbury are the main towns and key drivers of growth and prosperity in BMS, with large spheres of influence as the major social and economic hubs for the districts. We will complete a project called '*Delivering a Vision for Prosperity*' for both Sudbury and Stowmarket, which is intended to establish:

- a high-level **aspiration**, setting out the community's key desires and wishes for the towns they would like to live and work in;
- the **priorities** for the towns – setting out the main targets, goals and achievements to focus limited resources;
- a **delivery plan** that identifies the intended key projects and action points, and sets out who will be responsible for their implementation, and when.

The purpose of this visioning process is to provide an opportunity for the local community, businesses and organisations to:

- Understand the current projects, plans and strategies that are already shaping their place – seeing that this is not new, just one point along the town's timeline of growth.
- Set out what they would like to see in the future, commenting on development, service delivery and important issues.
- Reflect upon and share what they would like their town to become in the context of the benefits and opportunities that growth may bring.
- Unite behind the strategic, high level co-ordinated vision for the improvement of their area

As delivering a *Vision for Prosperity (VfP)* progresses, the towns and their catchment areas will have a clear focus for improved quality of life and confident business decisions.

**b. STRATEGIC CONNECTIVITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts are well served by major freight and passenger ports, Stansted airport, and their proximity to London, Cambridge and the Midlands. Weaving these together is a dual carriageway and A-road network which offers convenient journey times. The quality of life on offer in Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts is excellent, with Mid Suffolk in particular consistently rating very highly as one of the happiest places in the UK. Around an hour from London, Norwich and Cambridge by train, with high speed links across the country, Babergh and Mid Suffolk are well connected. With the exception of a few hotspots, traffic congestion is also very low, with ample free and low-cost parking.

The rural nature, open green spaces and low crime rate create an attractive environment to live and work in - encouraging both businesses and families into the area.

**c. DIVERSITY OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY**

BMS is home to numerous and diverse businesses including global brands such as Akzo Nobel, Bosch, Philips Avent, Tesco, Nestle Purina, Aspalls, Konings (Copella), PPG, Siemens and Muntons – and some sectoral stand out and key local employers including Ichiban, MEL Aviation, Sackers, Breheny, A&B Glass, Celotex, Kersey Freight, Jim Lawrence, Bacton Transport and Vanners, Gainsborough, and Stephen Walters silk weavers in Sudbury.

Our districts site the head office of the East of England Co-operative Society and our businesses regularly feature prominently in the top 100 performing businesses in Suffolk. We have a plethora of artisan, agricultural, creative, technological, food and drink, health and social care, hospitality and other sector micro and SMEs spread across our districts – with some real ‘hidden gems’, unique offers, local provenance and specialist skills, innovation and talent. Some of these micro and SMEs have high potential for growth, and all are of vital importance to our small rural communities.

The Lichfields Sector Needs Assessment 2017 points to jobs growth across the Districts at

- Babergh                      3640 (9.3%)
- Mid Suffolk                6450 (14.7%)

**Business Stock by Sector at 2016**

	Babergh		Mid Suffolk	
	Number of existing businesses		Number of existing businesses	
Agriculture	110	3%	220	6%
Business and Professional Services	1330	41%	1440	40%
Computing and Technology	110	3%	100	3%
Construction	420	13%	480	13%
Education	90	3%	100	3%
Energy, Waste	20	1%	30	1%

and Utilities				
Health & Care	200	6%	220	6%
Hospitality and Leisure	250	8%	210	6%
Manufacturing	230	7%	250	7%
Retail	250	8%	210	6%
Transport and Logistics	70	2%	120	3%
Wholesale	200	6%	240	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3280</b>		<b>3620</b>	

Our importance stretches far beyond East Anglia. Eight key economic sectors for Suffolk have been identified where Suffolk either currently has a large number of businesses, or proportion of people employed in the sector, or where future growth is likely to be focused. The eight key sectors identified for Suffolk are:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Biotechnology
- Creative Industries
- Energy
- Food, Drink and Agriculture
- Information and Communication Technology
- Ports and Logistics
- Tourism and Visitor Economy

Out of the Suffolk sectors, within BMS the number of businesses in the manufacturing, construction, transport services, agriculture, and wholesale sectors is much higher than the national average. Conversely, the number of businesses in ICT, financial & business services and public administration sectors are much lower than the national average. There are opportunities to build on these strengths and also bridge some of the gaps. Ingredients are here for economic success - our favourable commercial rental profiles, environment, connectivity, business diversity, climate, quality of life and potential to cluster smaller sector and sub-sector specialist and supply chain businesses around global operators.

Finance and Insurance (FinTech) (in addition to New Anglia LEP sectors mentioned earlier) has been identified within responses to the Government's Industrial Strategy. **Neighbouring Ipswich is a key financial and insurance centre and place of employment for BMS residents. Ipswich has a significant amount of activity in both banking and insurance; the concentration of insurance expertise in the town represents a significant driver of employment and income. Recent macro-economic events in the banking and insurance sub-sectors have led to cuts and restructuring but the sector remains buoyant, and the market is likely to remain competitive for the foreseeable future.**

**Approximately, 16% of the working population of Ipswich is active in businesses associated with some kind of financial services delivery or brokerage. AXA and Willis employ over 1,000 people each in their Ipswich offices, and with Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), are three of the largest single employers in the town. These are further complemented by a range of other major insurance sector businesses such as Call Connection and Liverpool Victoria (LV). The insurance industry expanded its presence in the town - citing the availability of an established and knowledgeable**



workforce as a major attraction compared to alternative locations. Such examples support the assertion that Ipswich's skills pool for this sector is strong, and Babergh and mid Suffolk are well placed to capitalise on that growth.

Sectoral jobs growth forecasts for the Districts are set out below, however the context is more fully explored within the Appendices. The reasons for a forecast decline in some sectors may be due to a variety of factors – for example previous significant growth in a sector, innovation creating higher value jobs (but an overall reduction in quantity of jobs), migrant workforce mobility, skills and other labour force issues as well as technological/automation advancement. Therefore a forecast decline in jobs is not an indicator of a weak sector.

	Babergh		Mid Suffolk	
	Jobs growth	Jobs growth as %	Jobs growth	Jobs growth as %
Agriculture	-500	-36.8%	-980	-38.9%
Business and Professional Services	2430	34.2%	2460	37.1%
Computing and Technology	90	13.6%	160	31.4%
Construction	1410	45.9%	3130	54.9%
Education	-420	-12.0%	-10	-0.4%
Energy, Waste and Utilities	20	8.7%	20	0.2%
Health & Care	900	23.0%	1200	24.4%
Hospitality and Leisure	900	25.3%	1100	36.3%
Manufacturing	-1900	-27.4%	-1590	-33.6%
Retail	160	3.5%	330	13.8%
Transport and Logistics	-4	-0.3%	100	2.6%
Wholesale	50	2.1%	300	11.9%

#### d. TOURISM, LEISURE, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND CREATIVITY

Our outstanding natural and built environment provides places and spaces which truly offer a second to none work and life balance – whether resident, commuter, visitor, small business start-up, entrepreneur or large multi-national.

BMS proudly presents many historic houses, stately homes, country parks, churches, castles, inspirational scenery and archaeological monuments. Enhanced by a multitude of events, festivals, attractions and activities throughout the year and many of which are directly linked to, and showcase, our key sector economic activity as well as our rich cultural heritage (such as agricultural, artistic, literary, wool and silk trades) BMS offers something for all. Shopping, restaurants, museums and theatres abound in our market towns, while our neighbouring destination towns of Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, Cambridge, Norwich and Colchester offer great retail within easy reach by car or train in well under an hour. Nearby days out include theme parks, horse and motor racing, zoos, heritage sites, walks and trails, sports and leisure activities or simply taking in the beautiful countryside and coastline with its unrivalled locally sourced food and drink excellence.

## 5. WHERE AND HOW DO THE DISTRICT COUNCILS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

## 5.1 Our 'Open for Business' approach

Our approach to the key sectors will not be at the expense of smaller sectors - we won't just seek to support the large businesses. Our local economy is made up of thousands of micro, small and medium enterprises. 99.6% of registered businesses in Suffolk are SMEs, similar to the national average, but with business survival rates consistently better than the UK average [Source: ONS Business Demography 2015/UK Business 2016].

By working collaboratively with our key delivery partners and business sectors, we will ensure that we understand where we add value for business and industry. This will help us to maximise our influence, impact and effectiveness by tailoring our support to better meet businesses needs and facilitating greater self-service. It should not matter at what point a business interacts with our organisation, they should consistently receive reliable, joined-up and timely advice.

Feedback from our businesses indicates that they do not care *who* provides support but they do value *how* it is done, and appreciate a comprehensive, value adding and relevant offer – which is all together better for their needs. It is our mission to ensure that we achieve this by *working alongside and complementary* to existing business support mechanisms offered by organisations and groups such as New Anglia LEP, Growth Hub, Menta, Nwes, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce. **We also work with local groups such as Ipswich & Suffolk Small Business Association (ISSBA) and the local Chambers/business associations.** If this work is done well, then a more seamless and joined-up support experience for the business results, which can lead to increased confidence and investment to help support growth, jobs and productivity.

The significant strengths within our diverse district business sectors already have the potential to translate to regional and global significance, but we will also not lose sight of the 'hidden' and emerging micro business ventures that operate innovatively in niche, creative, technological, food, agricultural, pharmaceutical, health or energy sectors - to identify just a few. Given the right conditions, nurturing and space to innovate and grow, these could be the real success stories of tomorrow and identify our districts with successful businesses, products and sectors which will attract further skills and investment.

Collaboration across the Suffolk-sector, Sub-Regional and Regional framework and with National initiatives is crucial, as is how we approach working together with our business and industrial sectors, education and skills providers and delivery partners.

## 5.2 To support being 'Open for Business' we will...

- a) Strive to better understand our place in engaging with and supporting our businesses, and will sharpen the focus of our resources in areas that we are best, or uniquely, placed to influence – whether through our expertise, functions, lobbying, access to resources, information or people. **We will not seek to do things where others are better placed or positioned to achieve positive outcomes.**
- b) Improve meaningful engagement and actively listen to the local business community to ensure their needs are understood and acted upon – for example cross-sectoral sharing of knowledge and services and opening up supply and value chain opportunities for local businesses. Many of our growth opportunities involve collaboration and partnership between firms in different sectors. We will help to break down barriers which might otherwise hinder growth. We will also provide a corporate approach to supporting the local economy through such areas as local procurement of goods and services, and developing our own assets (for

example our investment to grow the Hadleigh Market offer in support of local businesses and the visitor economy).

- c) Work with our partners and other enablers to attract financial investment into the area to support improvements to the local infrastructure – digital as well as physical. We will work in partnership with not only Suffolk County Council and New Anglia LEP/Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough **Business Board** but also the Haven Gateway Partnership and any other bodies interested in supporting economic growth within our districts.
- d) Recognise the strategic importance of the New Anglia LEP, which will improve links not only with the Suffolk Local Authorities and central government, but also our neighbours across the East - Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. For us to best support our local businesses and growth opportunities we must be involved and have an influential voice at a strategic regional level, and encourage our businesses to do the same through business-led networks and forums such as Chambers of Commerce or Destination Management Organisations.
- e) Through up to date flexible planning policies take significant steps to enable housing delivery. Our Economic Development Strategy offers another layer which supports this growth and provides opportunities for change. Our aim is to link people to jobs, not trying to *steer* business, industry and markets, but *respond to and champion their needs* and help them to grow. The Councils, and in particular **our planning and our built environment related services** can *facilitate* and *enable* sustainable growth rather than seek **simply to control it without consideration of the bigger picture**.
- f) Foster a culture of encouraging proposals for economic development, with applications only assessed on their detail in the context of the Local Plan. **Where that detail needs careful scrutiny, we'll keep that culture in the forefront of our consideration if we need to find solutions that aren't on the table**.
- g) Present a welcoming and can-do attitude. We'll try to find **real** solutions to obstacles **for business**, not put up more barriers **or simply 'follow procedures'**. We will set out our expectations of industry and commerce, and help businesses meet those expectations by providing information, support, and guidance from early intervention through to success.
- h) Consider opportunities for BMS to invest in and stimulate infrastructure, land, premises and projects to ensure a steady supply of workspace options for all sizes of business. We will steer proposals towards existing sites and allocated land, but will be flexible and receptive towards business needs, and supportive of development in other locations (including the open countryside) where the evidence suggests that that is feasible and sustainable **and there are no significant environmental constraints**. We will also participate in re-location/**land swap** conversations with businesses interested in growing, diversifying or freeing up land to make best use of viable opportunities to benefit the districts more broadly (e.g. enabling housing growth or increasing sectoral and higher value skills). We recognise the need for, and to encourage and support, growth of start-up business units. We will look for opportunities to make a difference, such as our current investment and joint-working at South Suffolk Business Centre in Sudbury - encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting new start-up businesses.
- i) Commit to minimal red tape, bureaucracy and paperwork – only doing what is necessary in statute, whilst turning interactions (including regulatory **ones**) into positive relationships and opportunities. We will demonstrate value-added interventions and speed in decision-making with a commitment to common sense, honesty, rational and logical decision-making. **Our** decisions will be justified using evidence to clearly and transparently, **in plain English**, set out why a decision is made in the way it is. In some circumstances the Councils are the regulatory body for a number of functions which affect business directly and indirectly,

including the Planning Authority and Licensing Authority **and we have to exercise those functions within the proper legal framework but we'll do that with consideration and good customer service in mind.** It is our aim to provide services to help businesses in these areas with a view to compliance and 'getting it right first time'. Some of these services are fee-charging and some are free. We will regularly review our fee structure where we have any discretion, to ensure that they remain sustainable and provide value for the user whilst allowing us to deliver relevant services **with the right services behind them to be effective.**

- j) Review where BMS can impact positively on the skills agenda by enhancing and adding value to the scale initiatives at a local place level to address specific needs (for example MSDC's investment to enhance the Phase 1 MyGo offer at The Mix in Stowmarket to specifically support the needs of young people in the Stowmarket and surrounding area). We will also explore where we can in partnership work more with schools – for example support sharing information and intelligence about the local economy with schools. Access to labour market information and employability experience is an increasing challenge, with some schools withdrawing curriculum time completely. This emphasises the need for a positive relationship and offer with those providers facilitating a progressive connection between education and business. BMS has already committed to gap fill initiatives such as the Navigator project and specific activities we are best placed to deliver such as Planning and Visioning workshops with our high school students.

BMS are well placed to ensure that the challenges faced by both businesses and young people are represented in the regional and local initiatives designed to address and support specific needs. District engagement in the strategic planning and delivery of these can ensure equality of access across our areas. The opportunities presented by the wide range of skills, experience and qualification embedded within the districts are many and varied, enabling us to adapt an approach where sought or appropriate to support schools, students and the unemployed.

## **6. KEY DELIVERY ACTIONS (NOW AND FUTURE)**

### **6.1 Supporting our micro, small, medium business and enterprise base**

The diversity within our local economy micros and SMEs is a real strength, mirrored at a regional level. Our key businesses and institutions see well established businesses and supply chains across our sectors. We will support the integration of investment in skills, infrastructure, housing, innovation and business support to provide the conditions that both new and enabling businesses need to thrive and grow. We are committed, with our partners, to empowering businesses through planning, housing and infrastructure.

Business groups and individual businesses in some areas of our districts, especially rurally-based micros and SMEs which make up **over 90% of BMS** business volume, are often feeding back that they feel their voice and influence is missing and with it potential opportunities for them to grow, network or compete. We also understand that businesses may prefer small, or are otherwise limited to, incremental steps in their growth journey, to support their sustainability, rather than a big-bang approach to growth and diversification. **Supporting organic growth of SMEs in their localities, particularly in rural areas, can contribute positively to the communities in which they are based including place identity and boosting supply of homes. SMEs within the construction sectors support employment in our rural areas, as well as housing supply, and BMS will support initiatives which assist small scale builders.**

From our own business engagement activities, reinforced by intelligence from our partners such as the Growth Hub, there are supply-chain, cluster and lobbying opportunities available to businesses by increasing their awareness of and connections with other businesses, and business-led forums, in their vicinity and the wider local area. **This is an area we and our business partners can assist with or facilitate.**

BMS holds a corporate membership with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, and it is of high value to our organisation in several respects including our priority to better understand business needs, lobbying central government on major issues such as skills and infrastructure, and growing our own commercial awareness for the onward value to our businesses.

However, this engagement identifies a visible lack of BMS business presence and representation at that Suffolk level, including our larger key sector businesses, whereas other areas of Suffolk are better represented. Access to that forum helps them to raise the profile of their sectors and places and increase lobbying opportunities and shared experiences about matters of support and interest to their local places.

To redress this gap, BMS will actively encourage the districts businesses to support and join functioning networks such as the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Destination Management Organisations and Federation of Small Business so as to amplify impact and develop opportunities. Involvement with the right tier locally can bring additional weight and profile to investment opportunities in a regional and national context.

BMS may support discounted memberships or other mechanisms to facilitate improvements. This may also include working with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce to develop an Affiliated Chamber to serve the Council(s)/ Central Suffolk to enable a strong business voice within our areas. A strong and unified voice for the business community can itself increase the constructive challenge to the districts on key issues and place shaping.

**We will also use our business intelligence and network to identify in which localities poor or inconsistent broadband infrastructure is hindering business, and look for viable lobbying and investment opportunities to improve this situation.**

## **6.2 Supporting a thriving cultural, heritage and creative industries offer will have positive economic impacts on our districts**

Successful places are much more than economic powerhouses. They are underpinned by a sense of creative vibrancy, a manifestly strong quality of life, and a clear sense of cultural and community identity. For example, combining creative and leisure industries with technological innovation sectors can quickly build a sense of vibrancy and community, which can support place identity and stimulate growth investment.

BMS will take opportunities to positively promote and further Suffolk's offer in this regard, including through our outstanding local natural and built assets – all within easy reach of London. Through collaboration we will support creative and showcasing initiatives such as Screen Suffolk which promote Suffolk's film service infrastructure, creative talent and fantastic locations with an aim to make Suffolk the most film-friendly county in the UK. We shall also develop our districts' links with the film industry to generate income and investment, develop a locations library and help to put our places on the map as visitor destinations linked to film and television productions. BMS, in collaboration with its partners and businesses, will also review what approaches we can take to support maximising the impact of this sector given that research shows that creative Industries are likely to grow as a proportion of our economy, and with it other industries relying on creative disciplines – such as Design and Advertising.

We will also work with Gainsborough's House and the Museum of East Anglian Life to support strengthening the connections between our artistic and agricultural heritage and future prosperity, also recognising our silk and wool towns heritage and building upon these assets to promote the arts and textile industry as part of supporting the creative industries.

### 6.3 Supporting Large Business and Site Requirements

Working with and supporting investment and expansion enquiries from business with larger requirements - recognising the value of job creation, inward investment and contribution to business rate growth. This also may strengthen the diversity of the business offer within the districts.

We need to influence the creation of site-ready, fully-serviced employment land allocations through the planning application processes and our influence with strategic partners **and developers** as this would provide greater surety for sites being delivered and operational in a shorter period of time.

We understand the potential impacts of larger scale businesses leaving our areas and will do more to understand and support this with our partners, including furthering our awareness of supply chain impacts.

### 6.4 Supporting our 'Space to Innovate' branded Enterprise Zone sites and Food Enterprise Zones

BMS have a long term commitment to supporting our Enterprise Zone sites at **Mill Lane, Stowmarket** and the **former British Sugar site at Sproughton**. We are also committed to our Food Enterprise Zones (also at Mill Lane) in Stowmarket and Wherstead.

To capitalise on the availability of allocated employment land along the A14, within our Districts, the Economic Development Team submitted a bid to New Anglia LEP in Autumn 2015 for Enterprise Zone status for two important strategic sites located along the A14. These sites were designated in 2016 as part of the region-wide 'Space to Innovate' initiative led by New Anglia LEP. Designation means that businesses locating to new premises on these Enterprise Zone sites will be eligible for Business Rates Relief, funded by central government, a simplified planning regime, high capacity broadband and a guarantee that a proportion of business rates collected will be used to complete development of the site.

BMS Economic Development Team aim to work with stakeholders and delivery partners to ensure that the Enterprise Zone sites expand the local employment market, and offer higher quality employment. These locations will be attractive to developers of technology focused business parks as well as state of the art logistics developers.

To support local food related industries, the Economic Development Team achieved dual EZ/FEZ designation at Mill Lane, Stowmarket to ensure that local businesses in the food sector are also able to take advantage of the above business benefits. There will also be support for Advanced Apprenticeships to support the food business clusters likely to benefit from the FEZ.

### 6.5 Economic Indicators and Measures of Success

Due to the significant joint-working, across public and private sectors, which is necessary to deliver broader economic outcomes, it follows to link the districts' economic performance to the County and regional framework, including the indicators expressed within the New Anglia Economic Strategy. These aim to achieve shared ambitions through action and investment in themes and places and identify eight economic indicators as 'barometers for success'. **These are GVA, productivity, jobs, businesses, housing, median wage, employment rate and skills.** This Strategy has set targets for those eight economic indicators to 2036. Given the long term nature of

the strategy, delivery plans will also reflect shorter term targets as appropriate. BMS will feed the districts' performance into those indicators.

At a local level, business rates growth for BMS (including that linked to its Enterprise Zone sites at Stowmarket and Sproughton) will be an indicator of progress. The districts will develop a complimentary package of meaningful local level 'on the ground' performance indicators that, in addition to supporting the regional framework, demonstrate the local level actions, delivery and impact needed against BMS's joint strategic priorities and key projects. This will also make evident the contribution BMS business sectors and places make, and further our ambitions to greater support micro/SME businesses and enterprises.

In addition, local district case studies and narrative, to illustrate and demonstrate impact will be collected and promoted by BMS. This also serves to express to the business community what may be achievable in tangible terms, and how the districts are working differently to deliver successful outcomes.

BMS will report progress on New Anglia and other local economic indicators, and performance (which will include case study narrative), to its Cabinets at least annually.

## **6.6 BMS understands the links between effective and proportionate regulation, delivered better by those agencies with a regulatory remit, and good businesses**

Getting regulatory compliance right first time, through understanding any sectoral regulatory framework and being offered reliable and plain English advice by regulatory agencies who work in a joined-up and smarter way, can make a significant difference to a business. Confidence to maximise opportunities, create efficiencies, draw in funding or sectoral expertise can be crucial to a fledgling or established business.

Adding value and network to regulatory conversations - such as energy efficiency advice, grants and loan information, exporting information, local knowledge of business supply chains, sites and clusters can all assist in making a business feel positive about a regulatory intervention or visit. BMS will develop its own local better regulation initiatives, such as its own Joint Corporate Enforcement Policy, as well as support regional initiatives to further the links between regulation and economic development, particularly the emerging 'Better Business for All' programme supported by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Transactional and specific sectoral support will be developed and facilitated through the Council's joint website and/or links to partner, third party or central government digital platforms.

## **6.7 Growing our intelligence about our business base. Sharing data, intelligence and analytics**

Reliable and up to date evidence and intelligence is the cornerstone of development, focus and delivery of economic strategy – whether local, regional or national. BMS will use feedback, commissioned work (such as sectoral analysis), Enterprise Zone, Food Enterprise Zone and key site support, business rate profiling and modelling, intelligence gathered by business engagement, network and lobbying to further its local business intelligence. It will also feed this into County or regional work as appropriate. BMS is now developing its own Business CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system with a view to upscaling contributions to regional platforms such as the FAME system being **implemented** by New Anglia LEP.

Unified collated data, evidence and analysis is of benefit to all stakeholders and supports the lobbying for Industrial Strategy recognition and significant inward investment in infrastructure so as to bring inclusive growth benefits to the East.

Spatial information and mapping of sites shall be transparent to business sectors and available for self-help.

BMS will take appropriate steps to safeguard commercially sensitive, intellectual property or confidential/**personal** information about specific business engagements, but will use intelligence gathered in general ways to better support the business community.

## 6.8 Supporting the visitor economy

The visitor economy is of significant importance to the region and especially Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Research has shown that in 2016 the overall economic impact of tourism to the Babergh District was £188.5m (tourism related employment accounting for 11% of all employment) and for Mid Suffolk District £167.5m (9% of all employment) (source Destination Research Ltd Economic Impact of Tourism Reports 2016).

BMS note that the model of networked DMOs (and similar bodies) is seen as the way forward by both central government and Visit England. Accordingly, BMS will also support that approach, including key actions contained with the local Visitor Destination Plan produced by AECOM in 2015.

BMS recognise that the tourism landscape is complex, fragmented and not one-size-fits-all - particularly so for BMS as we do not have a Destination Management/Marketing Organisation (DMO) within our districts. Sustainable funding issues remain of key concern for our sector groups, organisations and funding partners. We see a place, and a need, for continuing with the Visit Suffolk brand as a recognisable gateway into our county's visitor offer but it needs to operate in an optimum way so as to support pan-Suffolk benefitting marketing campaigns (not just those within Suffolk boundaries) as well as the County's DMOs and Local Tourism Action Groups (LTAGs). Over time we see the County's DMOs as providing further support and link-ups to BMS's places and our sector businesses and attractions, underpinned by and linked to an effective set of LTAGs supporting BMS visitor attractions, products and providing marketing narrative and content. BMS will also progress its own 'Heart of Suffolk' brand and place identity within this framework, and our approach here may need to change (including a move away from 'Heart of Suffolk' brand) so as to best fit visitor expectations and the needs of our sector businesses.

We do not envisage our District Councils being able to directly core-fund tourism action groups, Visit Suffolk or DMOs. We can however assist with enabling expertise such as scoping bids for external funding and other support or projects where the Districts are best placed to add value. Where there is a realistic prospect of growth linked to investment in campaigns and marketing initiatives then the Councils will consider opportunities on a case-by-case basis and, given financial limitations, may preferentially invest or make a contribution in those groups and organisations with a track record of delivery and developing sustainability - minimising future reliance on public sector funding. Where Pooled Business Rates funding is considered it should be towards creating sustainability in the visitor economy sectors, given there are many other potential, and competing, programmes and projects to stimulate economic growth.

We will encourage local Tourism Action Groups to both network with each other for mutual gain and build effective relationships with DMOs. Collaborations at scale also stand greater chance of accessing central and regional funding, broader marketing initiatives and resources. BMS encourage Local TAGs to create activities and new products in support of the tourism character areas and developing a year round visitor offer, helping to increase visitor spend and stay. BMS will work in collaboration with all stakeholders in the visitor economy sectors to deliver the 'best fit' for our local places as well as the wider region, and see the visitor economy (broader than 'tourism' and encompassing matters such sports and leisure) as a vital component interlinked within broader economic strategy rather than as a separate strand.

The way BMS supports sustainable visitor information provision will be reviewed given the strategic tourism context, BMS's own public access strategy, societal changes in how visitors'



research and book day and stay trips and the need for greater business and community ownership - with any targeted public spend being able to demonstrate best value impact and growth outcomes for our districts. BMS may not be best placed to support visitor information going forward, in the way it has directly delivered and funded with its existing Tourist Information Centres at Stowmarket and Lavenham, and also previous offers at Flatford and Sudbury. Research identifies that this format of face-to-face provision is increasingly seen as being outdated. BMS will therefore explore with its partners, communities and the private sector alternative models for a 'best-fit' solution in support of our key tourism destinations. For example, this may lead to mix-and-match visitor information alternatives such as mobile or peripatetic, self-service, retail outlet display stands, seasonal or event pop-ups, enhanced digital visitor support (and applications) or other collaboration or divestment opportunities. Visit England's research on visitor information provision and AECOM's Visitor Destination reporting will also inform BMS's approach on this topic.

## 6.9 Supporting skills and local jobs for local businesses

'Skills' is regularly fed back as being a key priority concern, and gap, to the business community in Suffolk - especially advanced engineering, leadership and some traditional skills linked to our cultural and agricultural heritage. There are also challenges facing some specific sectors heavily reliant on migrant labour (such as fruit farming, healthcare and manual labour activities) where it difficult to recruit and retain from the wider workforce and Brexit uncertainties have impacted.

1 in 4 respondents to BMS's Open for Business Survey in 2016 reported training needs as a challenge to their business and were looking for further advice about education and training. The skills theme forms a foundation part of the emerging Suffolk Framework for Growth, and the developing sectoral support is within key growth sectors but also the underpinning/enabling, for example - construction, engineering and 'big data'.

BMS's role is in collaboratively supporting the Suffolk delivery, but also by enhancing and adding value to the scale initiatives at a local place level. This type of investment in local place to address specific local needs is the type of 'supplementing' approach that may also be effective in the future within the skills and productivity arena.

We will strengthen our links to the Developing Suffolk Talent work of the Suffolk County Council Skills Team, and key developments in the skills and labour market across the region and nationally (including Skills Sector Deals through New Anglia LEP). **We will however seek to understand root causes of skills and employability difficulties so we can make best and smarter use of our resources towards supporting longer term sustainable outcomes.**

We will support and signpost on matters such as impact of the Apprenticeship Levy, which we will work up into support for our businesses, and assess impact on our inward provision. We will continue to speak to businesses about their skills needs/gaps and feed this back through appropriate channels and encourage businesses to link to initiatives such as ICanBeA and engage with current and emerging schemes designed to support this area.

The skills area needs to be on our 'checklist' of topics when we are engaging with businesses. We can assist with business intelligence pickups and facilitating conversations between business, business support organisations (Chamber/Menta/Growth Hub) and higher education/further education institutions and providers. Sharing our sectoral intelligence (including of motivated local individuals and operators) so as to prompt Skills Deal pooling/bids is also practical action we may take, and we are also alert to the potential commercial sensitivity / competition barriers in such conversations.

The gender pay gap and equality is also an issue for Suffolk. Compared to the national average of 18.1% difference between men and women's average earnings, Suffolk has a wider gap of 22.4%. Some larger companies in BMS report that they have difficulty in recruiting and developing females into

top and higher paid positions within their businesses. Whilst BMS has little influence in this area, its support for leadership development programmes, skills sector deals and business mentoring may aid broader initiatives to redress this imbalance. Similarly BMS will support initiatives which aim to increase average wage levels and encourage living wage employers.

There are inherent difficulties with start-up and fledgling businesses, as well as established or rural micro/SMEs, having sufficient capacity/business plan to engage in the skills space or have a voice platform (and this is similar to what we see in the Tourism sectors). Encouraging businesses to engage with the Chamber of Commerce and with business support partners like Menta may help to elevate awareness of rural business needs.

There is a place for BMS (in partnership) to work more with schools and to extend its invitation to those students or unemployed people disadvantaged by a lack of relevant experience – and the Councils may extend their influence to address any identified gaps by developing specific or thematic activities. The learning from that, combined with other county initiatives such as the 'Lowestoft Rising' programme, could create the core of a broader scalable offer. Suffolk leader support, such as pooled business rates or local investment, could also elevate that possibility. There is also a clear role for BMS to better support sharing info/intel/sectoral trends about the local economy with schools, and intervening in a targeted and informed way as a place-based catalyst for skills – for example with FEZ advanced apprenticeships using DEFRA grant.

We may also with our partners examine the reasons behind declining sectors, in a skills context, and assess potential for supporting improvements.

#### **6.10 Importance of the A14 corridor, A12 and rail links/gateway**

The activity of the district's economic development team, supporting the groundwork for success (including potential Abellio investment at Brantham), is often behind the scenes and not immediately apparent. BMS will continue to deploy its economic development interventions at the right level and timing to best support successful outcomes, and with the awareness that there are often third-party influences which may ultimately impact upon deliverability.

BMS understands that the economic arteries to our places in the heart and south of Suffolk are the A14 and A12, and that both the road infrastructure and the rail network are of critical importance in terms of our corridor connections to the Port of Felixstowe (which handles over 40% of UK container traffic), London, Norwich, Cambridge, the Midlands and Haven Gateway. Logistics and distribution are of high importance to our areas, and many of our key businesses and development seek opportunities to ease access to and from suppliers, increase potential exports, develop, test and use technological advance in this sector, reduce carbon footprint and support effective distribution of fresh produce. **BMS's favourable conditions in terms of connectivity, land cost, environment and significant commercial potential have attracted, and will continue to draw, key sector businesses of all scales into the area.**

Whilst A14 pinch-point improvements are a short/medium term fix, **and BMS will support initiatives such as the 'No More A14 Delays in Suffolk' campaign**, in the longer term the A14 needs to be developed to a motorway standard to serve the future economic and housing growth needs of Suffolk. Similarly A12 improvements are needed between Ipswich and Colchester.

The new rail franchise for the East, with twenty new trains to be operational from 2019, and any significant Abellio depot investment at Brantham are also recognition of the strategic potential of our region and districts, and that a supportive rail infrastructure can help to attract investment. **District support will be given for rail freight infrastructure upgrades, such as those needed at Haughley junction.**

We will lobby to improve facilities at Stowmarket rail station (a gateway to Stowmarket currently catering for a 1m passenger footfall each year), and also likely to take significant further numbers if

the SnOasis complex is developed at Great Blakenham. We will use our influence to seek refurbishment of buildings and increased car parking in support of our rail stations.

The Councils will pro-actively lobby to support sustainable and inclusive growth, and played a crucial role in the (Autumn 2017) National Planning and Infrastructure Framework award for A140 improvements at Eye. There are also more localised pinch-points which need improvement, for example the A1071 at Hintlesham, and at peak times impact on productivity as key traffic routes. Other general improvements at the A14 junctions and more locally at the A140, works in and around Sudbury, and works that potentially further unlock the significant economic potential of Eye Airfield and South Suffolk, will be supported (subject to their detail) in an economic and productivity context.

## 6.11 Business Account Management and Relationship Development

As referenced at 5.1 of this strategy, businesses are less interested in *who* provides the support and services they need and more interested in *what* is delivered, or facilitated, and *how*.

The District Councils have a statutory remit, often attached to nationally prescribed procedural frameworks, in business-essential services such as Planning, Licensing, Food and Safety/ Environmental Health, Waste Collection and Business Rates Collection. Whilst this can, and must, create limits and parameters about how the district councils deliver some functions and services, this does not mean that the Councils should close their ears and minds to broader business needs in the context of those services nor the importance of business growth to our places. Local policies and strategies which sit beneath national frameworks will endeavour to be flexible and business friendly in content, language and format.

BMS has already trialled an approach to better support business enquiries and develop a model of Business Relationship Management that works effectively for business by having less separate interactions with different Council departments and instead being offered access to a single officer that will take the time and effort to better understand their full business enquiry to add value, gain insight and intelligence to tailor support, provide honest and timely advice and best help a business to assess its own options and future plans. We will strive to embed this approach within our organisational culture.

The further principles underpinning this approach are expressed below, and the Councils will continue to refine and expand this work (in synergy with its Public Access strategy and initiatives such as New Anglia Better Business for All):

- BMS recognises that investment in developing effective relationships with businesses, has benefits to all parties but is often slow-burn and time-consuming. The Council does not have capacity to directly reach all of its 9000+ businesses.
- BMS is not always best placed to deliver business support, nor do some businesses want to engage with the Councils in this regard. However, BMS can often deploy its network to meet a business's need. Where viable, BMS will facilitate greater support and reach for micro and SME businesses through commissioning investment in partner organisation support e.g. Menta/Nwes/Growth Hub or through managed and serviced work spaces (for example South Suffolk Business Centre in Sudbury)
- BMS will develop transactional and self-help resources including tailored to specific sectors. Where viable this will align with regional/cross-border information and co-design with the business community or business support organisations – such as output from the New Anglia Better Business for All programme.
- For BMS its intelligence and understanding of the business community and local economy may grow through an account management type model which permeates a broader

business friendly culture – enabling the Council to focus its influence and interventions in the areas and in ways which most benefit business.

- BMS will strive to deliver its business facing services in a professional, business centric and understanding way.
- BMS will be realistic, rounded, honest and timely in its advice and guidance (including any pathway options) to best support businesses in consideration of their own plans
- Councillors, as representatives of place and community, will work together with officers and businesses to seek successful solutions and outcomes. Care will however be taken to not prejudice any formal decision-making roles or responsibilities.
- Unlocking sites conversations (not just Enterprise Zones) though our work with investors, developers, land owners, utilities and New Anglia LEP – seeking funding and infrastructure investment. Direct engagement with companies wishing to invest in the districts (some multi-million investment opportunities and significant innovation) which also supports local supply chains and clusters and boosts the regional significance of our places

## 7. UNDERPINNING ASSUMPTIONS FOR OUR APPROACH

- We cannot, and should not attempt to, deliver support in isolation. We will strive to complement and not duplicate the range of support available or offered by our partners. Every intervention should add value whether we lead it or not. To this end, we shall maintain an outward focus and use intelligence and networking to maximise positive outcomes for business and industry and the broader benefits those will bring to our communities.
- That to assist existing, new and potential businesses with access to business advice, finance, funding networking and business opportunities we need to impact at the point it will be most valuable, including supporting where we can the export potential of goods and services and creation of higher value jobs and products.
- The national housing shortage and the measures in place to boost significantly the housing land supply. BMS are doing their part to increase housing delivery, and also recognise that this must be coupled with economic and infrastructure growth. Locally, this means a change from a focus on 'large industrial estates in the towns' to being more responsive to the needs of business wherever they are in the districts and whatever their property requirements are.
- That to be effective, and given our resource and financing constraints, we may need to 'get out of the way' or stop doing some things, particularly in relation to sectoral matters which we are not best placed to fund or lead on. An example of this is our transitional support to the tourism sector (Local Tourism Action Groups, Destination Management/Marketing Organisation and Visit Suffolk brand support investment) to help create the conditions for private enterprise and groups to step-in and take forward plans to develop local tourism offers and visitor destination planning.
- **We have communicated our strategic understanding and approach within this document for transparency and clarity. The strategy is living, flexible and responsive to local and wider circumstances including delivery progression and evidence. Where updates, clarifications or achievements will add value, the document may be modified accordingly under a light touch arrangement.**