

**ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
1 FEBRUARY 2024**

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**INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY FOR DARLINGTON**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To outline the approach to develop and build an evidence base to provide the foundation for the development of the local inclusive growth strategy.

**Summary**

2. Since the publication of the Council's last economic strategy, much has changed, both locally and nationally. Many underlying issues within the local economy are seen to have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of living crisis.
3. As a result, the Council is developing a new Inclusive Growth Strategy for Darlington
4. The strategy will provide the framework for future long-term sustainable inclusive economic growth. It will complement the emerging economic ambitions and priorities of the new Council Plan.
5. The first step in this process is to review current data and gather new/updated evidence. This will include previous scoping work undertaken.
6. The evidence base will help shape and inform the development of the strategy.

**Recommendation**

7. Members are asked to:
  - (a) Endorse the approach outlined to develop the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

**Ian Williams,  
Chief Executive**

**Background Papers**

None

Andrew Perkin : Extension 6308

Health and Wellbeing	No impact from the report
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	No impact from the report
Diversity	No impact from the report
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally
Groups Affected	No impact from the report
Budget and Policy Framework	This decision does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	N/A
Urgent Decision	N/A
Council Plan	This report directly supports the delivery of the Council Plan by setting local economic priorities and actions to support the economic development of the Borough.
Efficiency	No impact from the report
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No impact from the report

## MAIN REPORT

8. Since the publication of the Council's last economic strategy, much has changed, both locally and nationally. Many underlying issues within the local economy are seen to have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost-of living crisis.
9. As a result, the Council is developing a new Inclusive Growth Strategy for Darlington
10. The strategy will provide the framework for future long-term sustainable inclusive economic growth. It will complement the emerging economic ambitions and priorities of the new Council Plan.
11. The new Inclusive Growth Strategy will take account of recent investments and opportunities in the Darlington local economy, including:
  - Darlington Economic Campus
  - Darlington Science Park
  - Hopetown Darlington – 1825 Celebrations –
  - Towns Fund Programme
  - Bank Top Railway station
12. The starting point for developing the new strategy is to undertake a review of the existing evidence base.
13. The evidence base will help shape and inform the strategy and provide an update on the local economic picture, highlighting emerging issues and opportunities, identify gaps in the data, and secure a better understanding of Darlington's economic performance and drivers of growth.
14. The revision of the evidence base draws upon the latest data to provide a robust foundation and sound understanding on changing circumstances to inform Darlington's economic policies. These policies and actions will form the backbone of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.
15. As the Council aims to develop a new economic strategy around the principles of inclusive growth, this economic evidence base focuses not simply on job and business growth but on how change in the economy affects local residents and workers—and how the economy can be more equitable for everyone.
16. The current performance measures for reviewing economic growth are:
  - EC301 - Change in total employment since previous year
  - EC301e – Number of people employed including self-employed
  - EC301f – Number of employees
  - ECI321 – Monthly Unemployment Claimant Count
  - ECI321a - 18-24 Unemployment Claimant Count
  - ECI322 – Long Term Universal Credit Claimant Count Rate
  - ECI327 – Percentage of working age adults who are economically active
  - ECI329 – Average (Median) annual income: Darlington Residents
  - ECI 330 – Average (median) annual income: Darlington Employees

- ECI333 – Median Weekly All Residence based earnings
- ECI334 – Median Weekly Full-time employee-based earnings
- ECI337 – New Business Registration rate per 10,000 residents
- ECI340 – Percentage of workers earning the real living wage.

17. Data on these indicators is provided elsewhere on the agenda.
18. However, reviewing this small number of indicators shows that the Darlington profile is mixed. In some areas Darlington is doing well, in other areas, Darlington's performance is weak.
19. For example, the number of employees continues to grow (47,200 – June 2023), yet the monthly unemployment claimant count remains static. Employee based earnings remains higher than residence-based earnings. Finally, the percentage of workers earning the real living wage is now lower than both the England and North-East.
20. Hence the need to develop an inclusive growth plan.
21. Whilst inclusive growth means many different things to different people, it can be broadly defined as "a concern with both the pace and pattern of growth.
22. Where previous approaches to economic development had prioritised any growth, inclusive growth asks new questions about which people and places stand to benefit from growth – as well as which people or places are excluded from the benefits of growth.
23. Defining what inclusive growth means and translating these high-level approaches into tangible and measurable action is our next challenge.
24. It is expected that the draft Inclusive Growth Strategy will be published in June 2024.