



Eastbourne Economic Strategy

2025-2035

By:

Marshall Regen Ltd

for

Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board

and

Eastbourne Borough Council

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A Generational Challenge

The creation of the Neighbourhood Board, in April of this year, is to provide stewardship of the Plan for Neighbourhoods Fund, through which Eastbourne was awarded £20 million over 10 years to invest in long-term regeneration and community empowerment. To help all of us determine how best to invest, we need compelling evidence-based assessments to run alongside the engagement and decision-making processes to come.

This Economic Strategy is designed to activate the values of sustainable and inclusive growth, and at the same time enhance fairer prosperity and well-being across the town and beyond. It is a commitment to both the current and future generations to create a connected town that meets their needs and gives everyone the quality of life they seek.

Economic strategies tend to be full of metrics, from business survival rates to the gross value added (GVA) figures, and this one is, of course, no exception. However, we wanted to recognise that beyond the economic data, policies, and measurables, it is our individual behaviours and relationships with our town and each other that deliver economic security, shape progress and provide the heartbeat of our neighbourhoods. It is understanding our history and how we got here; thinking about where we are heading; and understanding what is already working well.

We are an exceptional town with exceptional citizens, communities, entrepreneurs, networks, and, of course, we are the sunniest place in the UK. We all need to support a transformation to a more distributive and regenerative economy. This means creating more shared wealth that benefits the greatest number of people; and we should all have the opportunity to participate fully to ensure that we have a town that thrives within its environmental and social limits.

We recognise that we need to be better at providing quality, affordable housing and infrastructure to support growth, and that we must align learning and skills to these new economic goals. An ambitious quality of life vision can be a model of urban renewal, attracting entrepreneurs and established businesses alike; and most importantly offering its citizens breathing space. With our collective energies, I am certain that this can lead to a more productive, resilient and fairer Eastbourne economy.

Richard Garland
Chair, Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board

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Eastbourne's Economic Ambition

A more productive, resilient, and inclusive economy that supports Eastbourne's citizens, celebrates its outstanding natural and built environment, and grows successful businesses.

A distinctive and outstanding coastal Borough where people are proud to live, inspired to work, and drawn to visit — a place that encourages ambition, champions well-being, and strives to improve the quality of life for all of its residents.

Executive Summary

This is a ten-year Economic Strategy for Eastbourne. It will inform the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board's and Eastbourne Borough Council's investment decisions over the next decade. It provides an ambition, priority themes, and action areas around which the Borough can coalesce to drive a more distributive and regenerative economy.

It has been informed by a strong evidence base and detailed discussions with local stakeholders; it is aligned with East Sussex County Council's economic prosperity priorities; and it sets out the Borough's strengths and challenges as Sussex establishes a new Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority.

Many factors that will influence the Borough's economy are beyond the control of local stakeholders, but Eastbourne can take advantage of new opportunities and build resilience to withstand future challenges by working collectively, and by making the most of its considerable natural and human capital assets.

Eastbourne Today

Place

Eastbourne is one of England's most well-known coastal resorts. It has a well-kept seafront, direct access to the Seven Sisters Country Park, and an outstanding cultural offer. Its town centre is the commercial hub for a catchment that stretches well beyond its administrative boundaries, and it is an important part of the East Sussex economy. There has been significant investment in the town centre, but much of the commercial accommodation is tired. The seafront is a key asset, but its economic contribution could be enhanced with the right investments.

Eastbourne's environmental context constrains development opportunities and, as a coastal location, climate change poses long-term threats to the Borough. Although its railway is centrally located, journey times to and from other commercial centres can be long, whilst the condition of the A259 and A27 trunk roads along the Sussex coast inhibit economic growth.

Digital connectivity in the Borough is good, but business and consumer expectations are constantly rising as technology evolves.

Eastbourne's distinctive location—nestled between the coast and the South Downs—creates a deep connection between its economic well-being and the natural environment. As such, any economic strategy must be pursued in harmony with nature, ensuring a balanced, mutually beneficial relationship. This approach can offer the town and its residents greater access to green spaces, cleaner air, and a stronger, healthier connection to the natural world.

People

Eastbourne has a population of 104,000, a quarter of whom are aged 65+ years. Between 2025 and 2035, the number of residents is projected to increase by around 3,200. This hides a fall in the number of working age residents and an increase of 6,000+ in the number of post-working age people. The age profile of the Borough's residents influences both the demand for services and the labour supply.

Eastbourne is not especially disadvantaged, but there are significant pockets of deprivation; qualification levels and educational attainment are below national averages; and there are large numbers of carers and people with disabilities or long-term health conditions. At 76%, the employment rate is around the national average, but over 2,400 more people would need to be in work to achieve a national employment rate target of 80%, equivalent to an additional 4% of working-age individuals.

Economy

Eastbourne's economy is worth over £2.1 billion, but real terms economic growth over the past decade has averaged just 0.8% - half the growth rate in England. The Borough's economy is over-reliant on lower value service sectors, including accommodation & food service, health & social work and retail. These provide significant local employment, but they do not add the same level of economic value to the Borough's economy. Low value sectors generally provide low-paying jobs and, in Eastbourne's case, over a third of these are part-time. At £30.90 per hour, productivity is well below that in England (£40.20).

Median house prices are now around 8.5 times median earnings for the Borough's full-time workers – compared with 3.3 times in 1997. Indeed, wealth associated with privately-owned housing makes a significant contribution to Eastbourne's economy. High housing costs can make local recruitment difficult for local businesses.

There is some evidence of the emergence of higher value activity in the IT & Communications and Professional, Scientific & Technical sectors, albeit from a modest base. Health & social work continues to provide the most jobs and the greatest value to Eastbourne's economy.

Opportunities for significant inward investment are likely to be limited, not least due to development constraints. However, Eastbourne has a thriving freelance and small business economy with high start-up and business survival rates. These are good ingredients to build on and for Eastbourne to develop a strong reputation for enterprise and entrepreneurship. Despite this, Eastbourne lags well behind peers in rates of high growth businesses, which must be a priority for support.

Eastbourne is home to a wide array of world-class cultural, artistic, and sporting events. From the expanding international carnival and the UK’s largest free airshow to international tennis and the prestigious Turner Prize, the town attracts global attention. With thriving theatres that host both international performances and homegrown productions, alongside state-of-the-art conference facilities, Eastbourne is uniquely positioned to leverage these legacy events for long-term growth and inward investment, rather than merely focusing on short-term economic benefits.

As with many other places, much of the money spent in the Borough flows straight out again to outside businesses and remote shareholders, without benefitting local residents and businesses. Community wealth building initiatives provide opportunities to keep more of the value of the economy circulating locally, supporting local jobs and businesses, whilst giving residents a greater stake in their communities. Ensuring the increased benefits accrued from a growing economy are distributed inclusively, at a local level, is therefore of great importance, and is recognised as such within this Strategy.

Finally, a healthy, active and engaged population is central to driving prosperity, building resilience, and enhancing quality of life in Eastbourne. Actions that address the Borough’s health and well-being challenges are, therefore, a distinct priority within this Economic Strategy. A healthier town is not just a social goal — it is the foundation for a stronger, more productive local economy.

Economic Themes and Action Areas

Eastbourne must build on its assets, including strengthening and increasing the value of its visitor economy, but it must also diversify its economy to attract and grow businesses in higher value and more productive sectors.

The economic ambition will be delivered through five themes, supported by seventeen action areas. These provide the framework for the action plan.

Themes	Action Areas
<p>1: Develop and diversify Eastbourne’s sectors and clusters for a prosperous economy</p>	<p>1.1: Support innovation in the health & care sector 1.2: Develop Eastbourne into a creative & digital hub 1.3: Raise the profile of advanced engineering in the Borough 1.4: Increase the value of the visitor economy 1.5: Strengthen the economic and social potential of health, leisure and sporting facilities across the Borough</p>

2. Nurture community wealth building, enterprise, and entrepreneurship	2.1: Develop and implement a Community Wealth Building Framework and Action Plan to tackle local poverty and inequality 2.2: Provide world-class business support and opportunities to freelancers, start-ups and SMEs 2.3: Provide good quality, accessible, flexible and affordable business accommodation
3: Develop a vibrant town centre and clusters of retail hubs that serve as great places to live, do business, invest, and visit	3.1: Encourage a mix of uses in the town centre to generate greater footfall and vibrancy 3.2: Improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre to support sustainable growth through design excellence and quality public realm 3.3: Enhance bus, cycle and pedestrian networks to secure an improved environment and reduced congestion 3.4: Develop and strengthen retail hubs outside of the town centre
4: Upskill and empower residents to thrive in the modern Eastbourne economy	4.1: Improve access to work 4.2: Develop skills for the new economy, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills 4.3: Inspire learning and placemaking amongst young people to nurture mutually beneficial social and economic connections with schools and centres of learning
5. Promote and ensure investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure to deliver long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits	5.1: Promote investment in the strategic transport network 5.2: Develop the commercial floorspace needed to support businesses to grow and be retained locally 5.3: Develop green and blue infrastructure, including green corridors to encourage active living and to better connect communities with centres of learning and commerce, while collaborating with key partners, including Eden and the Environment Agency

The Economic Strategy is framed by four principles that inform all interventions. They will be delivered in ways that are **inclusive**, ensuring benefits reach all residents; **sustainable**, building long-term community, social and environmental resilience; **connected**, linking people, strategies, organisations and opportunities across the Borough; and **transparent**, with open decision-making, clear reporting and accountability, so that everyone can see how priorities are being delivered and what impact is being achieved.

By giving these principles a dedicated focus, while embedding them within cross-cutting actions, this Economic Strategy will ensure that they remain visible, measurable, and central to creating a thriving coastal economy in Eastbourne.

Governance and Delivery

The Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board, in collaboration with Eastbourne Borough Council, our Member of Parliament, and East Sussex County Council, will establish a collaborative framework that brings together local business leaders, key organisations, community representatives, and expert external advisors to oversee and deliver the objectives of this economic strategy. This will be underpinned by three core commitments:

1. **Sustainable Economic Growth** – Driving long-term prosperity through responsible development and investment.

2. **Business Responsiveness** – Ensuring this strategy evolves to meet the changing needs of local businesses and market conditions.
3. **Evidence-Based Decision Making** – Commissioning research and analytical studies to inform decisions, measure impact, and guide future interventions.

Through these commitments, the aim is to secure Eastbourne's economic resilience, enhance competitiveness, and create an environment that supports opportunity, innovation, and a quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

This Strategy and Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated, as necessary, when relevant documents, such as the Local Plan and the Plan for Neighbourhoods Investment Plan, are produced, updated and implemented.

1. Background and Context

1.1 Background

This Economic Strategy sets the framework and ambition to position Eastbourne as one of Sussex's leading commercial centres over the next decade. It is underpinned by a pragmatic action plan that sets out the actions that will deliver positive and tangible economic benefits to the Borough.

It has been commissioned and developed by the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board (which oversees the Eastbourne Plan for Neighbourhoods programme) and Eastbourne Borough Council, and it has been informed by a detailed evidence base and consultation programme.

Eastbourne has considerable cultural and natural assets, but it also has entrenched challenges. It relies too heavily on a narrow range of low-value sectors that provide too many low-paying jobs. The Covid-19 pandemic brutally exposed this, and low-paying work is becoming less sustainable as house prices become unaffordable for large numbers of local people.

Eastbourne needs to grow, diversify and strengthen its business base, and it must create new, higher-value jobs. Its residents need the skills to thrive in the emerging economy, and the town centre and seafront must continue to evolve to stay competitive and to attract investment.

Inclusive and sustainable growth are central to this strategy. This means scaling the social economy, building resilience in local communities, and improving the health and well-being of the Borough's residents.

Environmental factors may restrict development opportunities, but Eastbourne has the talent, ingenuity and drive to find new ways of delivering sustainable economic growth over the next decade.

1.2 Context

The Strategy has been produced at a time of rapid change globally, nationally, regionally, and locally. Geopolitical turbulence, external economic conditions, climate change, technological developments, and demographic shifts define the external context for this strategy:

- Global power shifts, including the rise of China and India, create political uncertainties, but provide new international market opportunities for Eastbourne's businesses, for example in the creative and digital sectors and international tourism;
- Global warming exposes coastal towns like Eastbourne to flood risks through rising sea levels, but it also provides opportunities to find innovative solutions through green technologies and clean energy, and by making better use of natural resources;

- New technologies are changing how goods and services are produced and consumed. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning are rapidly altering labour markets, threatening some jobs, but providing new opportunities for those who are best able to adapt. The precise impact of AI is still uncertain, but digital literacy is likely to be an increasingly important feature of successful economies;
- Hybrid and other flexible forms of working have changed how and where people work, enabling them to access the labour market in ways that suit their different life circumstances. This provides new opportunities for people who need a more flexible access to employment, but it also means that much work can be undertaken away from core markets in more cost-effective locations; and
- Population growth over the next decade is projected to be primarily amongst older (65+ years) residents, influencing the demand for services, including health & social care and leisure, entertainment & recreation services. It may also limit the supply of labour for the Borough's businesses, unless a flexible approach to recruitment and talent development is adopted.

Alongside this, the Government has a clear focus on delivering growth, including by implementing actions in Invest 2035 – the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy. This identifies eight growth-driving sectors: advanced manufacturing; clean energy industries; creative industries; defence; digital and technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional and business services.

The approach to growth is intended to be inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. Invest 2035 includes aims to enhance skills and increase access to talent by reforming the skills and employment support system, strengthening local business environments, and supporting small and medium sized businesses by improving access to government support, advice and funding.

Improving health and well-being is a key part of the Government's plans to increase labour market participation, reduce welfare dependency, and boost economic growth. The Get Britain Working Plan (2024) aims to get more people into work, including by addressing health-related worklessness. The 10-Year Health Plan for England – Fit for the Future (2025)- has aims to join up support across the health, work and skills systems to help people to find and remain in work. It also includes aims to support locally-designed physical activity initiatives to get millions more people to exercise on a regular basis.

Many of these aims are being translated into plans that reflect local needs. These include the emerging Get Sussex Working Plan, which will include clear actions for partners across Sussex and Brighton to deliver better outcomes for people in the most disadvantaged communities and groups.

Building the social economy by supporting social enterprises and by establishing mechanisms for creating and retaining wealth locally will ensure that economic growth is truly inclusive and benefits all sections of the community.

Climate change is now a reality, resulting in more extreme weather conditions, rising sea levels and associated flood risks. This is a particular threat to coastal locations, like Eastbourne. Climate change mitigation is a central part of government policy at national and sub-national levels. The UK Government has ambitious targets to reduce emissions by 68% on 1990 levels by 2030. This includes using low carbon electricity to replace oil and gas use in surface transport, and heat in buildings and industry, alongside nature-based solutions.

East Sussex County Council has also set out clear economic ambitions for the county in its East Sussex 2050 Economic Prosperity Strategy. The twin goals are for East Sussex to become a county of opportunity and a county of creativity and innovation. The Eastbourne Economic Strategy aligns with these goals and its two defining principles: achieving net zero carbon by 2050; and embedding circular economy considerations into local decision-making.

New sub-national governance structures are emerging, too: A newly elected Sussex and Brighton Mayor is scheduled to be in place in May 2026, supported by a Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority and potentially three unitary authorities. This Strategy will play a crucial role in shaping sub-regional strategies, programmes and governance by clearly articulating the issues and opportunities facing the Borough. Whilst not being constituent members of the Mayoral Combined County Authority, Eastbourne Borough Council and the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board have key strategic roles in representing the Borough externally, and this Strategy will retain relevance throughout changes in sub-national governance arrangements.

In 2025, Eastbourne was awarded up to £20 million from the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods programme. Managed by the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board, the investment will provide an important stimulus to Eastbourne's economy, focusing on eight priorities¹, delivered under three broad themes:

- Thriving places: Making town centres and neighbourhoods meet community needs;
- Stronger communities: Rebuilding relationships and a sense of belonging; and
- Taking back control: Supporting children and enabling adults to live fulfilling lives.

This builds on the £20 million Levelling Up Fund investment that was secured in 2021 to improve the town centre and the Towner Art Gallery, and to create a new world-class culture and education centre at Black Robin Farm, which will connect the South Downs National Park with the town centre and seafront.

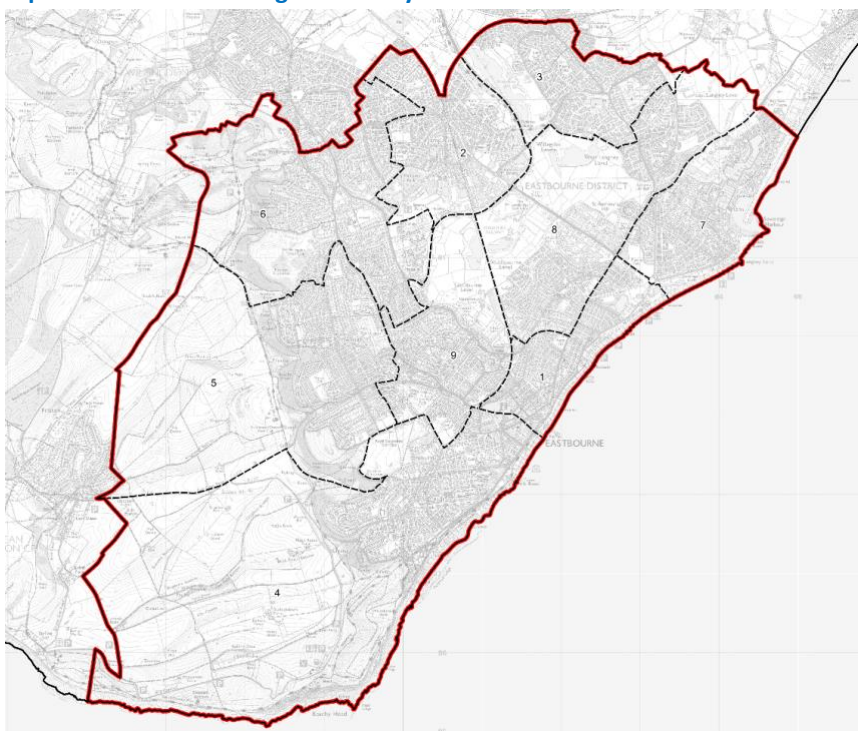
This is the time for Eastbourne to clearly state its ambitions and to articulate these with confidence, both internally to residents and businesses, and externally to investors, funders, and strategic decision-makers at all spatial levels.

¹ Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage; Housing; Work, Productivity and Skills; Cohesion; Health and Well-Being; Transport; Safety and Security; and Education

2. The Evidence Base

2.1 Location and Assets

Map 1: Eastbourne Borough Boundary



Wards:

1. Devonshire
2. Hampden Park
3. Langney
4. Meads
5. Old Town
6. Ratton
7. Sovereign
8. St Anthony's
9. Upperton

Location

Eastbourne Borough is located equidistant between Brighton & Hove and Hastings and is one of the south coast's principal tourist destinations. It covers an area of just over 17 square miles and has strong economic links with south Wealden, particularly Willingdon, Polegate and Hailsham. Seven Sisters Country Park is located to its west, the English Channel to the south and Pevensey Bay to its east. Eastbourne Park runs through the central area of the Borough.

Its coastal location and its natural environment shapes its economy, constraining physical development opportunities, but making it one of the south coast's most desirable places to live and visit.

Heritage, Recreation and Cultural Assets

Heritage, culture and sport are major parts of Eastbourne's identity, serving residents, visitors and businesses. It has 173 listed buildings, including the Pier, the Town Hall, Bandstand and Colonnade, and Beachy Head Lighthouse.

It has significant cultural assets, many of which are located in the Devonshire Quarter of the town. These include the Congress Theatre, Devonshire Park Theatre, and Winter Garden. The Welcome Building, which opened in 2019, is the Borough's flagship conference venue. In December 2024,

Eastbourne Borough Council entered a partnership with Trafalgar Entertainment, an award winning global live entertainment business, to manage these Devonshire Quarter Venues.

Eastbourne has two other theatres, the Grove and the Royal Hippodrome theatres, whilst the Towner Art Gallery is the centrepiece of the town's visual arts offer. In 2023, it hosted the Turner Prize, one of the world's most prestigious awards for contemporary art.

Eastbourne also has a rich sports and recreational offer. The Eastbourne Open tennis tournament is a key feature in the national sporting calendar, and the Saffrons is home to Eastbourne Cricket Club, Eastbourne Town Football Club, Eastbourne Hockey Club, and Compton Croquet Club. The Borough has three football clubs – Eastbourne Borough, currently playing in the National League, and Eastbourne Town and Eastbourne United, which play in lower leagues.

The seafront provides further opportunities for watersports activities, whilst there is a wide range of sports and leisure centres throughout the Borough, including Eastbourne Sports Park, Hampden Park Sports Centre, Shinewater Sports & Community Centre, Cavendish Sports Centre, the Sovereign Centre, the David Lloyd Club, and the Bannatyne Health Club. Eastbourne is also home to Sovereign Harbour, northern Europe's largest composite marina complex which offers full-service boatyard facilities and a yacht club. It is also a popular destination for boat cruising and fishing in the English Channel, with visitors drawn to its restaurants and bars.

Eastbourne is also a great location for cyclists and walkers. National Cycle Routes 2 and 21 and the King Charles III Coastal Path pass through the Borough, whilst it is also the start and finish of the South Downs Way and a gateway to the South Downs National Park. Seven Sisters Country Park, including Beachy Head, is amongst the most iconic stretches of the English coast attracting increasing numbers of visitors from as far as China and South East Asia. It hosts the Seven Sisters walk, which is regularly reported as one of the best hiking routes in the country.

Commercial Floorspace

In 2023, Eastbourne had 694,000 sq.m of commercial floorspace, 38,000 sq.m less than in 2013. Retail (41%) accounts for a high proportion of this, reflecting the Borough's role as an important commercial centre that serves residents well beyond its administrative boundaries. The town centre has been the focus of significant investment in recent years. The Beacon Shopping Centre opened in 2018, and the Eastbourne Town Centre Improvement Scheme (ETCIS) continues to enhance the public realm and create an attractive and pedestrian-friendly environment in the heart of the Borough.

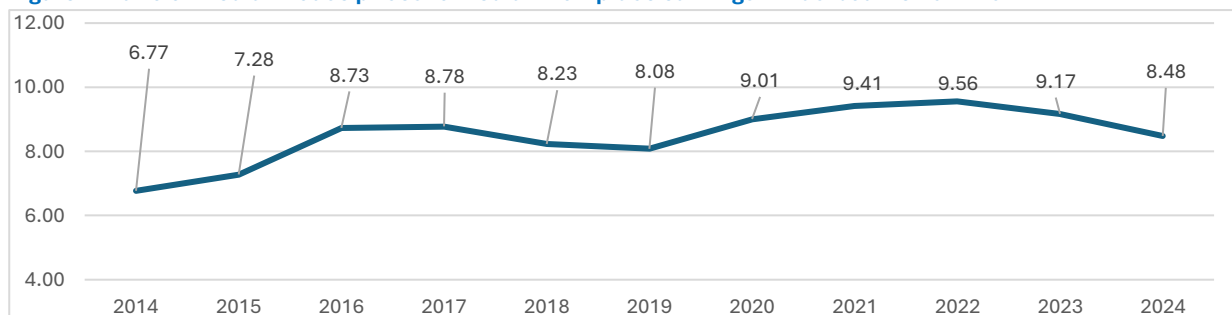
Your Eastbourne, Eastbourne's Business Improvement District (BID), invests in the town centre to improve trading conditions for its 700 members by providing additional security, promoting events to encourage increased footfall, and working with partners, including Eastbourne Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, and Sussex Police.

Housing and Housing Affordability

In 2024, there were 50,026 residential dwellings in Eastbourne. This is just under 1,900 more than there had been in 2014. The Eastbourne Local Housing Needs Assessment (2024) identifies a need for 735 new homes each year, including 520 affordable homes annually². The borough faces significant challenges in meeting housing demand, specifically the physical and environmental constraints that restrict the supply of development sites across the town.

Housing and housing affordability are significant local issues. Median house prices were 8.48 times median earnings for full-time workers in Eastbourne. This compares with 6.77 times median earnings in 2014 and 3.29 times median earnings in 1997. This has a significant impact on the local economy. It makes it difficult for many local people to get on the property ladder and, when they do, a high proportion of their earnings leak out of the local economy in the form of mortgage repayments. High housing costs can also make it difficult for the borough's businesses to attract the talent that they need to grow if they are in competition with less expensive parts of the country.

Figure 1: Ratio of median house prices to median workplace earnings in Eastbourne 2014-2024



Source: Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings by local authority district, England and Wales, 1997 to 2024; 2025

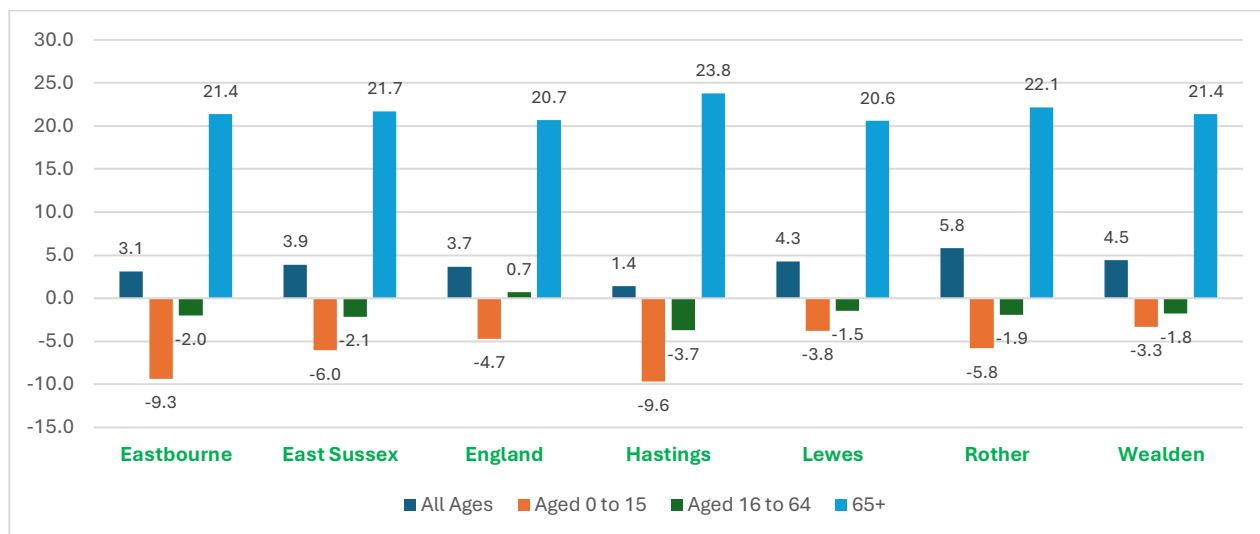
2.2 People and Skills

Population

Eastbourne has a population of just under 104,000, around a quarter (24.7%) of whom are aged 65+ years – a much higher proportion than the England average (18.5%). Much of the increase in the population in recent years has been amongst people aged 65+ years.

² Eastbourne Local Housing Needs Assessment; AECOM; 2024

Figure 2: Projected population changes by age (%) in Eastbourne, East Sussex, its districts and boroughs and England, 2025-2035



Source: Population projections (2018 based); Office for National Statistics; 2024

Population projections suggest that the Borough’s older population is likely to continue to increase over the next decade and form a larger proportion of Eastbourne’s residents by 2035. Whilst the overall population is projected to increase by 3.1%, the number of older (aged 65+ residents) is projected to increase by more than a fifth (21.4%)³. This equates to an additional 6,000 older residents, whilst the number of working age residents is projected to reduce by 1,200.

Whilst the ageing population presents health and social well-being challenges, it also provides Eastbourne with opportunities to design and develop services that meet the expectations and needs of older people. Additionally, as the pension age rises, so the need for retraining, digital skills, and flexible working increases among older workers.

Skills and Qualifications

Overall, working age residents in the Borough are less qualified than residents in England. Around 39% have a Level 4+ (degree or equivalent) qualification, compared with 46.8% in England⁴. Attainment at the Borough’s schools is mixed and a lower proportion of 19 year olds in Eastbourne (50.4%) than in England (57.6%) hold at least a Level 3 qualification (‘A’ Level or equivalent)⁵. This pattern exacerbates the Borough’s low pay/low productivity challenges and makes many of its residents vulnerable to labour market changes that demand higher level skills.

³ Source: Population Projections – Local Authority (2018-based); Office for National Statistics; 2025

⁴ Source: 2021 Census; Office for National Statistics; 2021

⁵ Source: Explore Education Statistics; Department for Education; 2025

Deprivation

At 76%, the Borough's employment rate is below the national government's 80% target. More than one in five (22%) working age residents are economically inactive⁶ and the claimant count unemployment rate (4.7%) is higher than in England (4.2%)⁷.

Overall, Eastbourne is not one of England's most deprived local areas. However, it has significant pockets of deprivation, particularly in Langney, Devonshire, and Hampden Park wards. A third (36%) of households have at least one dimension of deprivation⁸, and over a quarter of the Borough's working age residents have some form of work limiting disability⁹. Unpaid carers also account for a large proportion (10%) of the Borough's population¹⁰.

Workplace Earnings

At £33,009, median earnings for full-time workers in Eastbourne are £4,621 below the median earnings in England, and £6,029 below median earnings in the South East. People who work full-time in Eastbourne also earn £2,841 less than the Borough's residents. This points to higher-earning residents working outside the Borough, and demonstrates the low value of Eastbourne's economy.

Although median earnings increased by £5,825 between 2014 and 2024, this is in nominal terms. In real terms, once inflation has been removed, median earnings for full-time workers in 2024 were below their 2014 value. This real terms fall should be seen within the context of a 27% real terms rise in median house prices in the Borough.

People increasingly engage with the labour market in flexible ways that reflect their life circumstances. Technological developments enable this to be extended further. Eastbourne's employers can be supported to diversify their workforces and to adopt flexible working patterns to ensure that more people are able to work in ways that are beneficial to both employees and employers.

Developing the conditions to create a greater demand for and supply of higher level skills is likely to be central to achieving a more productive economy with better paying jobs.

2.3 Business and the Economy

In 2023, Eastbourne's economy was worth £2.14 billion, with over 41,000 people working in 3,800+ businesses. Its economy is similar in size to that of Lewes (£2.19 billion), smaller than the Wealden economy (£2.99 billion), but larger than the economies of Hastings (£1.73 billion) and Rother (£1.53 billion).

⁶ Source: Annual Population Survey (APS); Office for National Statistics; 2024

⁷ Source: Claimant Count May 2015 to May 2025 Office for National Statistics; 2025

⁸ Source: 2021 Census; Office for National Statistics; 2021

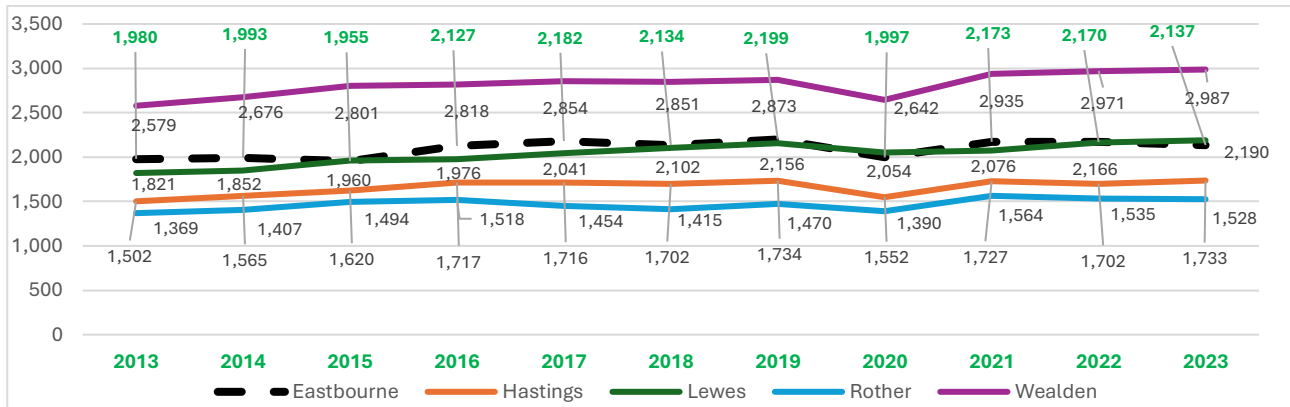
⁹ Source: Annual Population Survey; ONS 2025

¹⁰ Source 2021 Census; Office for National Statistics; 2021 (note: this includes people aged 5 years and over)

Between 2013 and 2023, the Borough’s economy grew by £157 million (+7.9%) in real terms, the number of jobs increased by 765 (+1.9%), and the number of businesses increased by 155 (4.1%).

However, annual average economic growth of 0.8% is less than half the England average over the period. The Borough’s economy shrank by 9.2% during the Covid-19 pandemic (similar to England – 9.8%). After an initial strong recovery, it lost ground between 2021 and 2023.

Figure 3: GVA (£m) in Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother & Wealden, 2013-2023



Source: Table 2: Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region: TLJ South East; Office for National Statistics: 2024

The most significant contributor to Eastbourne’s economy is Real Estate, but this has little to do with the labour market and the productive economy. Owner-occupiers’ Imputed Rental¹¹ contributes £343 million (16%) to the Borough’s economy – more than all other sectors, apart from Health & Social Work activities (£403 million). Like much of East Sussex, Eastbourne’s economy is disproportionately driven by the value of its privately owned assets.

Sectors that provide large numbers of jobs do not contribute to the value of the economy to the same extent. Accommodation & Food Service, a key component of the visitor economy, provides 12% of the Borough’s jobs, but contributes 4% of GVA value; wholesale & retail provides 19% of local jobs, but contributes 12% of GVA value; and Health & Social work activity provides 27% of the Borough’s jobs, but it contributes 19% of value.

¹¹ Owner Occupiers Imputed Rental “refers to the estimated value of the housing services that homeowners receive from living in their own homes, as if they were renting the property from someone else. This value is included in national accounts to ensure a consistent comparison of housing services across different countries and time periods” Office for National Statistics

Figure 4: % GVA and Employment contribution to Eastbourne’s economy by sector, 2023



Sources: Business Register & Employment Survey (BRES); Office for National Statistics; 2024; and Source: Table 2: Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region: TLJ South East; Office for National Statistics: 2024

The value and contribution of tourism depends on the definitions and methodologies used. In spend terms, it is estimated to contribute £377 million¹², but its Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution is likely to be around half of this, at best. This would suggest a 9% GVA contribution to the economy – around half the value of the Human Health & Social Work sector. Equally, direct tourism employment estimates range from 2,065 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs¹³ to 4,681 FTE jobs¹⁴.

Tourism is an important part of Eastbourne’s identity and economy, but it is not its main employment or economic contributor – it is, generally, a low value sector that provides work that is often part-time and seasonal. Eastbourne must broaden its economic base away from low value activities and develop a higher value tourism sector with activities that attract visitors throughout the year.

Arts, entertainment and recreation also have a high profile in the Borough, but their direct economic contribution is modest. In 2023, this sector contributed £36 million to the economy and provided 1,250 direct jobs. This, and other creative sub-sectors, have a strong profile of freelancers and portfolio workers, so its contribution is likely to be more than this. This sector and tourism also have a wider role in place-shaping and in supporting social and community objectives that are not readily captured in economic data.

The low value of Eastbourne’s employment is borne out by productivity data. In 2023, GVA per hour worked was £30.90 – well below that in the South East (£44.40) and England (£40.30). Within East Sussex only Rother (£28.90) had lower GVA per hour worked than Eastbourne.

¹² Source: Cambridge Model 2 – Calculating the Economic Value of Tourism: 2023, Eastbourne Borough; 2025

¹³ Source: Eastbourne Tourist Accommodation Study; Tomorrow’s Tourism; 2024

¹⁴ Source: Cambridge Model 2 – Calculating the Economic Value of Tourism: 2023, Eastbourne Borough; 2025

Figure 5: GVA per hour worked (£) in Eastbourne, East Sussex, its districts and borough, the South, East and England, 2022



Source: Table A3: Current Price (smoothed) GVA (B) per hour worked (£); Local Authority District, 2004 – 2022; Office for National Statistics; 2024

Between 2012 and 2022 GVA per hour worked increased by £2.85 (12.6%) per hour worked in real terms. This is faster than the overall growth in the economy (7.8%), which suggests that some of the Borough’s economic growth has been delivered by productivity gains, rather than just by increases in employment.

Although there is a notable absence of higher value sectors, Eastbourne does have some niche manufacturing, including in vacuum pumps, whilst education and construction are also important sources of good quality local employment. There is also evidence of emerging activity in the IT & Communications and Professional, Scientific & Technical sectors, both of whose economic contributions have increased significantly since 2018, albeit from modest bases.

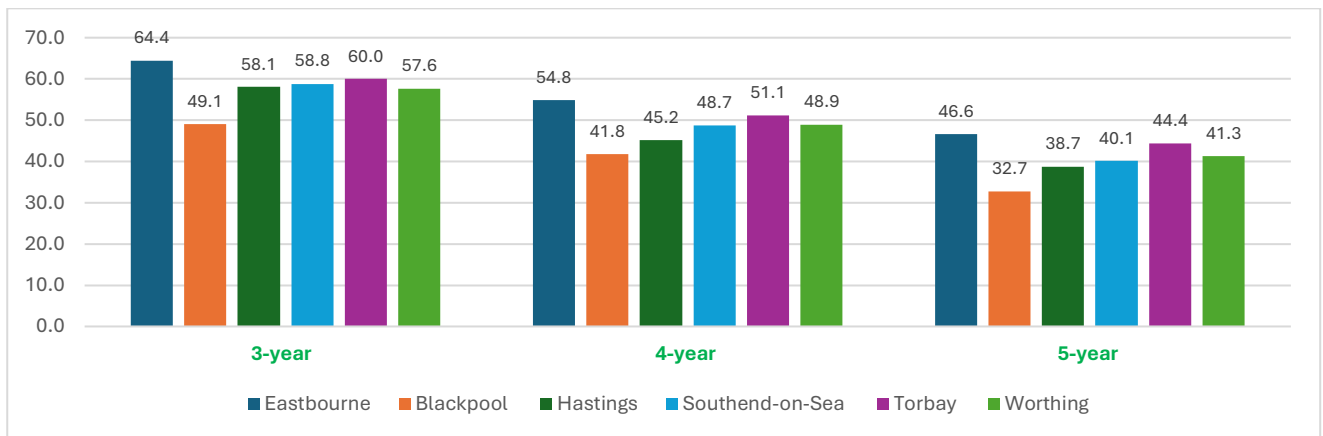
These may provide opportunities for future growth, particularly if there is an effective fusion of the Borough’s creative and technical talents, strong support for enterprise and entrepreneurship, and a focus on developing a good supply of technical skills.

Business birth rates are high in Eastbourne, when compared to other coastal towns. In 2023, there were 108 new businesses for every 1,000 active businesses in the Borough, compared with 100 per 1,000 active businesses in Hastings and 98 per 1,000 active businesses in Worthing.

Three, four and five year survival rates for business survival rates¹⁵ are also high in the Borough, compared with other coastal towns. Nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of businesses that were established in 2018 were still operating three years later; and nearly half (46.6%) were still active after five years.

¹⁵ For businesses that were created in 2018: 3-year survival rates: Eastbourne (64.4%); England (57.5%); 5-year survival rates: Eastbourne (46.6%) and England (39.4%); Source: Business Demography, Office for National Statistics; / 2025

Figure 6: Three, four & five year survival rates (%) for businesses created in 2018 in Eastbourne, East Sussex and the other coastal towns, 2023

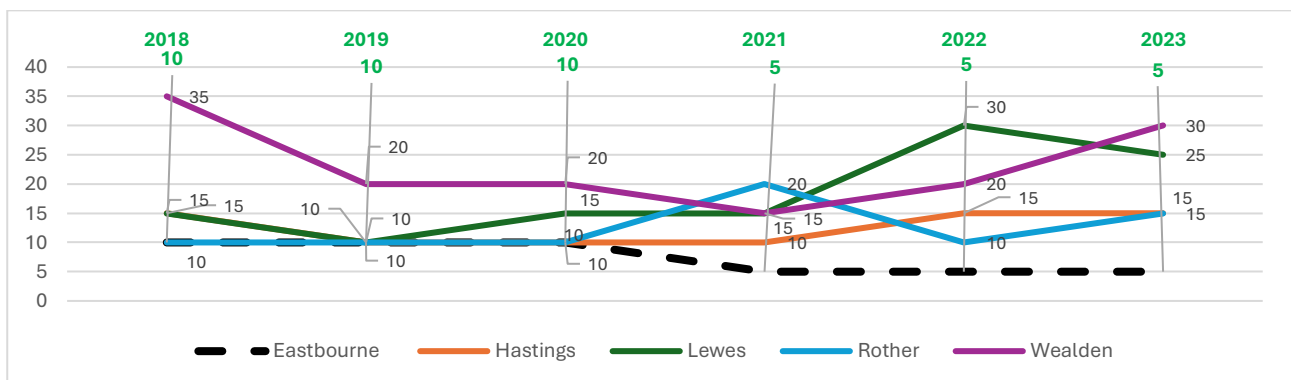


Source: UK Business Demography; Office for National Statistics; 2023

This suggests that Eastbourne has a vibrant and successful enterprise culture that should be supported. However, although Eastbourne had a large number of business births in 2019 and 2020, three-year survival rates of these businesses were lower than the 2018 cohort. Since then, the business birth rate has fallen, but the two-year survival rate of businesses increased to again be near the England rate.

However, more of a challenge may be encouraging businesses to grow. Eastbourne lags behind peers with regards high growth businesses, and this is reflected both regionally and nationally. In 2023, the Borough had 5 ‘high growth’ businesses¹⁶. This is a smaller number than all the other districts and boroughs in East Sussex. The small number of high growth businesses has been a feature of Eastbourne’s economy for several years.

Figure 7: Count of high growth businesses in Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden, 2018-2023



Source: UK Business Demography; Office for National Statistics; 2023

There are just 135 businesses in the Borough that employ over 50 people, and only 10 that employ 250 or more staff. Many of the Borough’s larger businesses operate within the public sector. Indeed, over a quarter (27%) of all Eastbourne’s jobs are in the public sector.

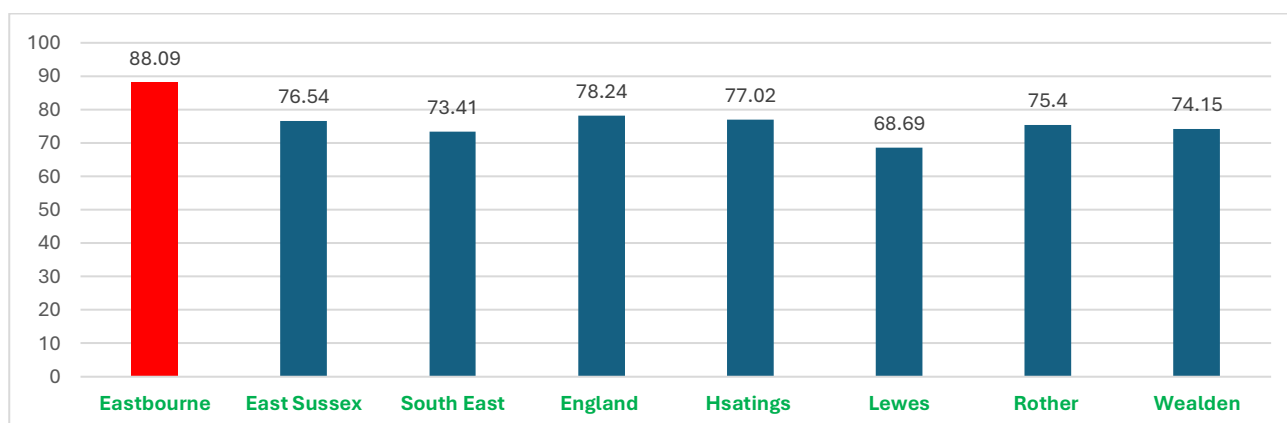
¹⁶ High growth businesses have a minimum of 10 employees and an average, annualised employment growth rate of 20% or more over a three-year period

Although they can be under considerable financial pressures, public sector organisations are often less footloose, they can use procurement to support local enterprise, and they often have a strategic interest in delivering positive economic and employment outcomes throughout the economy as a means of strengthening local communities and improving well-being.

A key part of delivering sustainable and inclusive economic growth is generating and retaining wealth locally by scaling up the social economy. This includes supporting social enterprises and the voluntary sector, encouraging community ownership of local assets, developing a coordinated approach to local procurement, and strengthening local supply chains.

Eastbourne has significant assets that are likely to be attractive to future investors. Alongside the excellent quality of life and natural environment that it offers, the Borough also has very good digital connectivity, a key factor in business location decisions. Nearly nine out of ten (88%) premises in Eastbourne have access to full-fibre broadband. This is greater coverage than in the South East region, England and all the other districts and boroughs in East Sussex.

Figure 8: Percentage of premises with access to full-fibre broadband in Eastbourne, East Sussex and its districts and boroughs, the south east and England, 2025



Source <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/E07000065>; 2025

2.4 Health and Well-Being

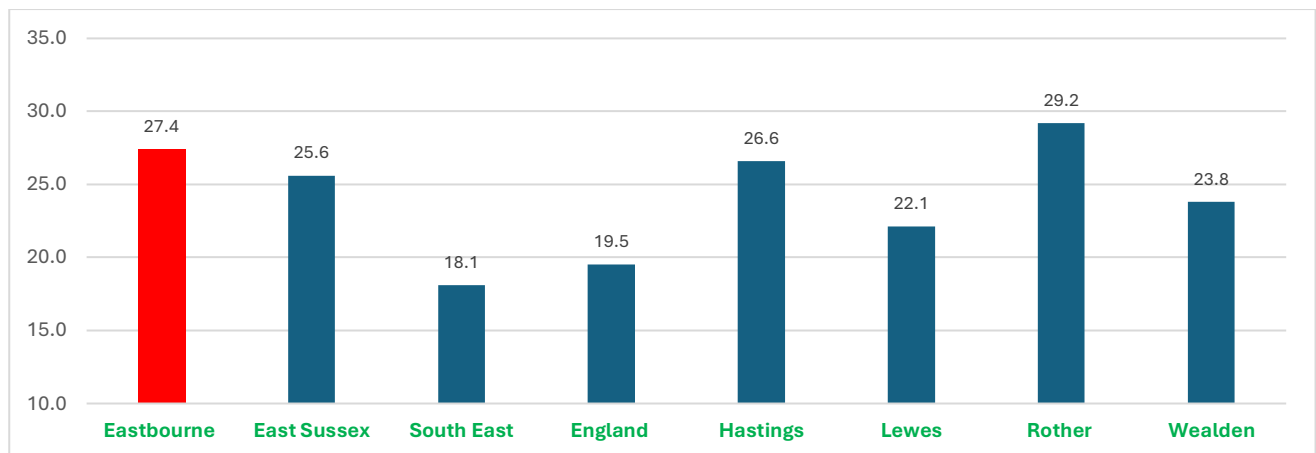
The Borough's ageing population presents both challenges and opportunities in designing and developing services that improve the well-being of older residents, and making the Borough attractive to older visitors from outside Eastbourne. The Borough's outstanding natural and cultural assets, and its strong community cohesion can be promoted and strengthened to ensure that older people can live full and active lives.

Improving health and well-being is not confined to older residents, however. Nearly a third (30%) of the Borough's 16-64 year old residents have some form of work-limiting disability¹⁷, and 10% of its residents provide regular unpaid care¹⁸.

¹⁷ Source: Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec. 2024; Office for National Statistics; 2025

¹⁸ Source: Census 2021; Office for National Statistics; 2021

Figure 9: 16-64 Year olds: Work-Limited Core Disabled in Eastbourne, East Sussex and its districts and boroughs, the South East and England, 2024



Source: Annual Population Survey; ONS 2025

Fewer than half (43.7%) of working age residents with work-limiting disabilities are in work. This means that over 10,000 of this group are not employed. This is a significant amount of under-utilised talent that can be better harnessed through a more holistic approach to improving health and well-being, and by promoting active participation in community activities, learning, and more flexible forms of employment.

2.5 Consultation and Engagement

To inform this Eastbourne Economic Strategy and Action Plan (2025 – 2035), a consultation and engagement programme was undertaken with key local public and private sector stakeholders and business partners. A separate Consultation Summary Findings Report has been prepared on the process, including key consultee comments.

Although the Borough has a number of assets and economic strengths, a significant concern expressed by consultees is the lack of high-value, quality jobs for local people. The spatial constraints, particularly the lack of strategic sites, mean that the focus needs to be on supporting entrepreneurs and existing dynamic businesses. This can be built on Eastbourne’s superb lifestyle offer and positive environment in which to start and grow a business.

Addressing an ageing population, retaining young talent, and up-skilling local residents to take advantage of new employment opportunities across both traditional and emerging sectors were also highlighted as key challenges.

There was a clear endorsement of the need to broaden the economic base as well as developing a higher-value visitor economy by attracting tourists who spend more and stay longer. Revitalising and improving the attractiveness of the seafront was seen as a high priority by many consultees.

Overall, there was a clear call for proactive interventions, that balance ambition with practical, accessible, and deliverable actions to help realise opportunities and drive local economic growth.

The Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board also undertook a survey of local businesses, which sought to identify their main challenges and their views on priorities to allocating the £20 million Plan for Neighbourhoods funding. As of August 2025, 71 businesses had completed the survey. This is around 1.9% of the Borough's businesses. The survey provides useful insights from businesses that have participated. However, given the survey format, there is inevitably selection bias in the responses, resulting in an unrepresentative sample of Eastbourne's business base. Additionally, given the small sample size, statistical significance is limited, and so the findings must be used as a guide, rather than as empirical evidence.

The top three investment priorities identified by respondents were: Improved town centre facilities and safety; seafront improvements; and marketing and promotion of year-round tourism.

Further analysis of the responses by the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board found that rising costs and declining footfall were respondents' biggest challenges. These were compounded by a sense of town centre neglect and insufficient support from local authorities. Workforce shortages and digital skills gaps were also identified as challenges, but they ranked behind more immediate concerns.

Small tourism and retail business respondents reported being particularly hard-hit, whilst digital and professional services respondents felt comparatively better (or at least voiced different priorities).

The overall picture from respondents was of a traditional seaside economy struggling to adapt to modern pressures.

Respondents' more immediate priorities were for lower costs, cleaner and safer streets, and better marketing & promotion. There was also an identified need for a longer-term strategy that addresses transport, skills, and diversification.

2.6 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis is based on a detailed review of the evidence and the insights that have been provided during the consultation exercise. It marries the essential data evidence with on-the-ground knowledge that only local people can provide.

It summarises the Borough's strengths and weaknesses and it identifies the main threats and opportunities. It shapes the priorities of the interventions within this strategy so that Eastbourne can achieve its economic ambition over the next decade.

Strengths;	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-established and recognised visitor destination, including high quality conference facilities • Attractive seafront and beach, including the bandstand and pier • Resilient town centre with significant investment, including the Beacon Centre • Major urban and commercial centre in East Sussex with capacity to serve a much wider hinterland into south Wealden and beyond • Excellent cultural and sporting facilities, including theatres, galleries, sporting arenas (tennis) and golf courses • Gateway to the South Downs National Park, Seven Sisters Country Park and Beachy Head • Town centre railway station connecting town to London and the south coast • Sussex's only 5* hotel • A wide range of restaurants and bars • Strong public sector anchor institutions, particularly in the health sector • Niche manufacturing and emerging strengths in IT & Communications • Relatively high levels of entrepreneurship • Good digital connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A low value economy with minimal recent growth • A weak office market and poor-quality commercial accommodation stock • Low incomes and high house prices, creating affordability issues for working age people • An older population that limits the labour supply • High proportion of disabled residents and carers • Modest local educational attainment • A low value visitor economy that has not recovered to its pre-Covid levels and which provides seasonal employment • Oversupply of serviced visitor accommodation, which compromises quality • Limited room for expansion due to flood plains, seafront and protected areas • An asset rich economy where proportions of the population are not solely reliant on productive work to support their lifestyles • Traffic congestion and poor access to trunk roads • Long journey times to London and slow rail journeys along the coastal route to Ashford • Little presence in the Government's high growth sectors • Concentrated deprivation mainly in Devonshire, Langney and Hampden Park wards • Noticeable rise in acquisitive crime, including shoplifting • Disconnect between town centre and Sovereign Harbour • Lack of (and loss) of Higher Education presence in Borough

Opportunities

- Proximity to University of Brighton’s health innovation hub enables potential to build on existing health strengths
- Anchor institutions with the potential for strong local supply chains
- Overheating centres, like Brighton & Hove, can push talent to Eastbourne, with the right creative, cultural and lifestyle pull factors in place
- Opportunities to diversify and increase the value of the visitor economy assets to attract younger, executive visitors e.g. boutique hotels
- Local government reorganisation presents an opportunity for Eastbourne to reposition itself
- There is scope to continue to invest in the town centre and diversify its uses, into residential, and experiential activities
- Existence of innovative start-ups and micros, that can grow with the right support, including providing flexible workspaces
- Success of Turner prize can act as a platform to build upon.
- Proximity of the South Downs National Park presents room for improved links between the Borough and the Park
- Currently untapped potential of young people that can be unleashed by raising aspirations and attainment and by strengthening education-business links
- An under-developed seafront that can be enhanced by providing new and innovative attractions
- £20 million secured for Plan for Neighbourhoods funding over the next ten years to invest in key priorities and projects
- Increasing use of AI upends traditional labour and living processes.
- Changing labour mobility, including increases in working from home, can open up markets (like Eastbourne) outside of regional hubs (such as Brighton and London)

Threats

- Changing retail patterns risk reducing town centre footfall and vibrancy
- Lack of move-on accommodation for SMEs wishing to expand
- Viability of new development
- Local government reorganisation may result in more distant decision-making that does not adequately address Eastbourne’s needs
- High (and increasing) housing costs may make it difficult to attract and retain ambitious working age people and risks reducing local discretionary spend
- The ageing population will further reduce the labour supply and increase demand for lower value services
- High costs prevent investment in visitor accommodation and upkeep of the seafront
- Loss of the University of Brighton campus could make Eastbourne less attractive to young people and dilutes local aspirations
- Competitor locations may be seen to be more attractive to visitors and business delegates
- Further public sector funding cuts could limit opportunities for local leaders and stakeholders to intervene
- Increases in crime and anti-social behaviour undermine efforts to improve the town centre
- Effects of climate change, particularly rising sea levels, on the geographical integrity of the Borough
- Increasing use of AI upends traditional labour and living processes.
- Changes in working habits and labour mobility, such as potential reductions in working from home, could pull people away from local markets and back to regional hubs, such as Brighton and London

3. Economic Ambition, Themes and Principles

Eastbourne is one of the south of England's most attractive coastal towns. It is a high profile and successful visitor destination with outstanding natural assets, but it is over-reliant on low value service sector jobs that no longer keep pace with high local housing costs. A step change in the performance of its economy is required with a multi-dimensional and collaborative approach, based on strong and clear leadership.

This should make best use of the Borough's human, natural, and cultural capital assets, and strengthen communities throughout the Borough. Creating higher value employment in Eastbourne, including a targeted focus on key sectors (identified in the Action Plan) is a major priority, which will underpin inclusive economic growth.

Qualitative and quantitative evidence has identified Eastbourne's challenges and opportunities. These have been translated into a bold economic ambition that provides the direction of travel for the strategy.

The Strategy is built on four principles that shape every decision and action. These principles are not abstract ideals; they are the way we will deliver tangible results:

- **Inclusive:** Ensuring that all residents, regardless of background or circumstance, can share in the benefits of a balanced economy. By making growth inclusive and accessible, the Strategy addresses the health inequalities and economic exclusion that have held parts of our community back, thereby ensuring disadvantaged residents directly benefit from local economic activity.
- **Sustainable:** Building long-term environmental, economic, and social resilience so prosperity lasts for generations. By making it sustainable, the Strategy will strengthen long-term resilience and ensure that wealth supports local people and protects our natural environment.
- **Connected:** Linking people, places, opportunities, and strategies so that Eastbourne's economy functions as one cohesive eco-system. This will ensure that services, supply chains, and opportunities create an environment where people and businesses can thrive together.
- **Transparent:** To be open and accountable in how decisions are made, resources are allocated, and outcomes are measured. Progress will be reported publicly and accessibly, enabling residents, partners, and businesses to see how priorities are being delivered, how funds are spent, and what impact is being achieved.

Our economic ambition is underpinned by five themes, which are developed further in Section 4. These set the parameters for more detailed actions in the pragmatic Action Plan (Annex A). The Action Plan's themes align with the Plan for Neighbourhood's eight principal investment interventions, and these are summarised in Annex B.

Economic Ambition	<p>A more productive, resilient, and inclusive economy that supports Eastbourne’s citizens, celebrates its outstanding natural and built environment, and grows successful businesses.</p> <p>A distinctive and outstanding coastal Borough where people are proud to live, inspired to work, and drawn to visit — a place that encourages ambition, champions well-being, and strives to improve the quality of life for all of its residents.</p>				
Principles	<p>Inclusive, Sustainable, Connected, and Transparent</p>				
Themes	<p>Develop and diversify Eastbourne’s sectors and clusters for a prosperous economy.</p>	<p>Nurture community wealth building, enterprise, and entrepreneurship.</p>	<p>Develop a vibrant town centre and clusters of retail hubs that serve as great places to live, do business, invest, and visit.</p>	<p>Upskill and empower residents to thrive in the modern Eastbourne economy.</p>	<p>Promote and ensure investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure to deliver long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits.</p>

4. Themes and Action Areas

Theme 1: **Develop and Diversify Eastbourne's Sectors and Clusters for a Prosperous Economy**

Eastbourne needs more productive and better paying jobs. It must improve performance in sectors where it has strengths, and grow high value businesses in emerging sectors, through intelligent and targeted cluster development, and by creating a supportive environment for business growth and innovation. The main sectors that the strategy focuses on are: health & care; creative, digital & IT; advanced engineering; and tourism.

Key Performance Indicators:

Eastbourne's economy grew by an average of 0.8% per year in real terms between 2013 and 2023, compared with an average of 1.8% per year in England¹⁹. Productivity (GVA per hour worked) in Eastbourne increased from 72.1% of the England productivity rate in 2012 to 76.7% in 2022²⁰.

1. Economy (GVA) to grow at the same rate or faster than England

Baseline: Eastbourne - £2,137 million; England £1,945,256 million (2023)

Data Source: Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region: TLJ South East; Office for National Statistics: 2024; and Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: all International Territorial Level (ITL) regions: 2024

Regularity: Annual

2. Productivity (GVA per hour worked) to grow at the same rate or faster than England

Baseline: Eastbourne - £30.90; England £40.30 (2022)

Data Source: Current Price (smoothed) GVA per hour worked (£); Local Authority District (2004 – 2022); Office for National Statistics (2024)

Regularity: Annual

Action Areas

Action Area 1.1: Support innovation in the health & care sector

Rationale

Innovation is crucial for enabling the NHS and health providers to increase the speed of diagnosis and deliver better outcomes for patients. The health sector is the main contributor to the

¹⁹ Analysis from Table 2: Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by International Territorial Level (ITL) 1 region: TLJ South East; Office for National Statistics: 2024

²⁰ Analysis from Table A3: Current Price (smoothed) GVA (B) per hour worked (£); Local Authority District, 2004 – 2022; Office for National Statistics; 2024

Eastbourne economy in terms of both jobs and value. It is also central to delivering wider well-being goals. The town has a major hospital and a large number of care homes, whilst the ageing population is expected to increase demands on publicly-funded health and social care services.

New ways of delivering cost-effective, accessible and high-quality services are being sought and trialled. The University of Brighton has established a health innovation hub to develop and implement innovative solutions to current and emerging healthcare challenges, whilst East Sussex College Group has partnered with East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust to launch the NHS Career Pathway Academy. Life sciences and medical devices are key strengths across much of Sussex.

Action Area 1.2: Develop Eastbourne into a creative & digital hub

Rationale

Post-Covid, there has been a growth in the economic contribution of businesses in the IT & communications and professional, scientific & technical services - sectors that are often characterised by innovative freelancers and micro-businesses.

Eastbourne's high quality of life, strong cultural assets, relative affordability (in Sussex terms) and excellent digital connectivity makes it attractive to innovative and creative people. The infrastructure is already in place to support this sector through Chalk Eastbourne, for example, and Eastbourne has the opportunity to increase its contribution to the Creative, Digital & IT (CDIT) sector across Sussex and the South East region.

Action Area 1.3: Raise the profile of advanced engineering in the Borough

Rationale

Eastbourne has niche specialisms in pump and vacuum manufacturing. Key local employers include Edwards Vacuum Ltd, HMD Kontro, Viking Pump Hygienic and Eastbourne Pump Co. Ltd. This is a high value sector, often with national and international markets. Businesses in this sector often demand higher level technical skills that are not always easy to source locally. Supporting the Borough's high-value, technical businesses will diversify the Borough's economy and create better paying jobs.

Action Area 1.4: Increase the value of the visitor economy

Rationale

Tourism has been the bedrock of the town since the 1800s, with visitors attracted by Eastbourne's distinctive cultural and natural assets and its good weather. However, the sector is not as innovative, productive or as profitable as it could be. It extracts insufficient economic value from its leisure and

sporting facilities, its excellent digital and physical connectivity and its access to the South Downs National Park. Eastbourne's offer to visitors is still not broad enough, and too many of the Borough's tourism jobs are seasonal and low paid.

The visitor economy must embrace changing visitor demands. Working closely with Trafalgar Theatres and other cultural providers, improving visitor accommodation, making better economic use of the seafront and enhancing the contribution of the Borough's conference facilities will drive up the contribution of tourism to the Borough's economy. Additionally, there is the opportunity to build on the current annual major events and festivals programme, and to connect local creatives and small artisan businesses to the tourism economy.

Action Area 1.5: Strengthen the economic and social potential of health, leisure and sporting facilities across the Borough

Rationale

Sport and physical activity make a significant contribution to Eastbourne's economy and society, providing numerous benefits for residents' health, wellbeing and community cohesion. The Borough offers a range of sports and leisure amenities and has an array of sports clubs, gyms, leisure facilities and parks, alongside opportunities for boating and yachting, fishing, and watersports.

The sport and physical activity sector help drive up productivity by maintaining a healthy workforce as well as by generating economic benefits through tourism, sports events and related activities.

Theme 2: Nurture Community Wealth Building, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

A key focus of this Economic Strategy is on directing economic growth and development to benefit local people and businesses, by generating and keeping wealth within the community. A commitment to community wealth-building will be an important thread that runs through all activities. This involves fostering new business ownership models, including cooperatives and social enterprises, to fill gaps in the market and to drive inclusive local economic development.

Business births in Eastbourne remain buoyant and start-up survival rates are also above the national average. The lack of strategic sites to accommodate major inward investment projects means that the main focus is to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and support indigenous business growth, including accessible move-on accommodation, increasing opportunity and driving up productivity.

Key Performance Indicators:

In 2019 and 2020, business start-up rates were higher in Eastbourne than in England, but between 2021 and 2023, they fell below the national rates²¹. Although Eastbourne had a large number of

²¹ Analysis from Business Demography 2023; Office for National Statistics; 2024

business births in 2019 and 2020, three-year survival rates of these businesses were lower than the 2018 cohort. Since then the business birth rate has fallen, but the two-year survival rate of businesses increased to again be near the England rate. Between 2018 and 2020, Eastbourne had ten 'high growth' businesses²², but between 2021 and 2023, the number fell to five.

Community wealth building is about ensuring a better distribution of wealth. Median earnings are a proxy measure of this. Median workplace earnings for full-time workers in Eastbourne were 98.9% of those in England in 2014, but 87.7% of median earnings in England in 2024.

1. Business Births (rate per 1,000 businesses) to exceed the England rate

Baseline: Eastbourne: 108 per 1,000 active businesses; England: 111 per 1,000 active businesses (2023)

Data Source: Tables 1.1d & 3.1d Business Demography (2023); Office for National Statistics (2024)

Regularity: Annual

2. 5-Year Business Survival Rate (%) to continue to exceed the England rate

Baseline: Eastbourne: 46.6% per 1,000 active; England: 39.4% per (businesses born in 2018)

Data Source: Table 5.1a - Survival Of Newly Born Enterprises District, Counties And Unitary Authorities Within Region And Country By Births Of Units In 2018 And Their Survival; Business Demography 2023; Office for National Statistics (2024)

Regularity: Annual

3. Double the number of 'high growth' businesses to regain 2018 levels

Baseline: 5

Data Source: Table 7.1d - Count Of High Growth Enterprises For 2021, 2022 and 2023 by District, Counties And Unitary Authorities Within Region And Country; Office for National Statistics (2024)

Regularity: Annual

4. Reduce the gap between median earnings for full-time workers in Eastbourne and median earnings for full-time workers in England

Baseline: Median earnings in Eastbourne 87.7% of median earnings in England (2024)

Data Source: Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings (ASHE); Office for National Statistics

Regularity: Annual

²² ONS definition of 'high growth businesses' - businesses with ten or more employees that have an average annualised increase in their number of employees of greater than 20% per year over a three-year period.

Action Areas

Action Area 2.1: Develop and implement a Community Wealth Building Framework and Action Plan to tackle local poverty and inequality

Rationale

Eastbourne is a Borough of contrasts, containing neighbourhoods of affluence, and areas of poverty and inequality in specific neighbourhoods, including Hampden Park, Langney, and parts of the town centre. Just over a third (36%) of Eastbourne's households are deprived in at least one dimension and 16% are deprived in two dimensions of deprivation.

A concerted approach is needed to address inequality through community wealth-building and promoting good work, using the combined strategic and procurement power of anchor institutions (including the local authority), businesses and communities to build and retain more wealth in the local economy.

Action Area 2.2: Provide world-class business support and opportunities to freelancers, start-ups and SMEs

Rationale

Over one in 10 of Eastbourne's working residents are self-employed and new ways of working enable people to start and grow businesses away from their main markets. Sectors that have large numbers of freelancers and micro-businesses have started to make a greater contribution to the Borough's economy. But micro-businesses and freelancers risk isolation and can find it difficult to grow without the right support at the right time.

Business birth and survival rates have, overall, been healthy in Eastbourne. However, there is a lack of high growth businesses in the Borough. The reasons for this are unclear, but there may need to be a strong and targeted focus on supporting Eastbourne's businesses to grow.

The East Sussex Growth Hub, Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce, and specific sector groups provide the basis to develop a high-quality business support service to Eastbourne's ambitious and growth-oriented businesses. There is also the opportunity to explore new investment and funding models to support start-ups, micros and small businesses.

Action Area 2.3: Provide good quality, accessible, flexible, and affordable business accommodation

Rationale

The right spaces in the right locations are central to promoting and developing Eastbourne's enterprise culture.

How and where people work has made offices more collaborative and flexible spaces. Freelancers, micro-businesses, entrepreneurs and remote workers need flexible maker-spaces and serviced offices with flexible lease arrangements, high quality digital connectivity, and break-out spaces. Those with ambitions to grow need suitable 'grow on' spaces so that they can be retained locally and create local jobs.

Theme 3: Develop a Vibrant Town Centre and Clusters of Retail Hubs that Serve as a Great Place to Live, do Business and Invest

The town centre is vital to the successful economic prosperity of the Borough and broader sub-region. It is performing well as a shopping destination, but more needs to be done to combine a high-quality retail offer with a wider positive and accessible leisure, cultural and social experience during the day and into the evening. Additionally, there is a need to support retail hubs outside of the town centre, helping to ensure benefits are distributed more widely within the Borough.

Key Performance Indicators:

There is an absence of reliable, publicly available data at local level that is collected nationally on a regular basis and that can be benchmarked. Local retail studies and private sector datasets on town centre footfall and vacancy rates are available, but will need to be commissioned separately.

1. Town centre vacancy rate to be below the 2023 baseline rate

Baseline: Eastbourne: 12.4%²³ (2023)

Data Source: Eastbourne Retail & Leisure Study; Cushman & Wakefield & CPW Planning (2023)

Regularity: Irregular

2. Town centre footfall to increase at a faster rate or decrease at a slower rate than the England average

Baseline: To be established by Your Eastbourne BID and Eastbourne Borough Council

²³ 54 of the 434 units were vacant in the town centre, including 22 out of 149 the Beacon Centre & Surrounds; 4 out of 36 on Cornfield Road; 9 out of 56 on Terminus Road; 10 out of 78 at the Railway Station and Surrounds; and 9 out of 115 at Little Chelsea

Data Source: Your Eastbourne BID and Eastbourne Borough Council
Regularity: Annual

3. Monitor vacancy levels in retail hubs outside the town centre²⁴

Baseline: 9.0%
Data Source: Eastbourne Retail & Leisure Study; Cushman & Wakefield & CPW Planning (2023)
Regularity: Irregular

Action Areas

Action Area 3.1: Encourage a mix of uses in the town centre to generate greater footfall and vibrancy

Rationale

Eastbourne town centre serves the wider sub-region. However, over a quarter of retail sales are now conducted online, compared with just over 10% a decade ago²⁵. Digital and in-store shopping are becoming increasingly integrated with a shift towards shops and venues that provide experiences and services that cannot be provided online.

The town centre needs to diversify through well-designed mixed-use developments, including a broader range of accessible workspace, leisure, cultural and tourism uses that complement existing facilities around the seafront and Devonshire Park and which strengthen the evening and night-time economy.

Action Area 3.2: Improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre to support sustainable growth through design excellence and quality public realm

Rationale

Significant investment has been made to improve the attractiveness of the town centre, particularly around Terminus Road and Seaside. However, parts of the town centre and seafront still need public realm investment to improve accessibility and safety, including on Grove Road and South Street.

²⁴ Green Street (Albert Parade); Hampden Park (Brassey Avenue); Langney Shopping Centre; Meads Street; Old Town (Crown Street); Seaside (Langney Road to Springfield Road); Sovereign Harbour Retail Park; Rodmill; St. Anthony's (Beatty Road); Seaside (Seaford Road to Channel View Road); The Broadway (Hampden Park); Queens Parade (Hampden Park); Old Town (Victoria Drive); Grand Hotel Buildings (Meads); Carlisle Road (Meads); St. Anthony's (Winston Crescent, Including Lidl)

²⁵ Retail Sales Index time series (DRSI); Office for National Statistics; 2025

There is evidence of an increase in acquisitive crime in Eastbourne in recent years. Your Eastbourne, the Eastbourne Business Improvement District (BID) continues to invest to improve trading conditions in the town centre, where it can, but funds are limited.

Making the town centre cleaner, greener, more accessible and attractive, including removing graffiti will increase dwell time and strengthen local place-making. Neighbourhood shopping areas, outside the main town centres, also need upgrading and improving.

Action Area 3.3: Enhance bus, cycle, and pedestrian networks to secure an improved environment and reduced congestion

Rationale

The town centre is relatively compact with few significant inclines and changes in level. The railway station and key bus arrival points are within close proximity.

As the town centre diversifies into a central activity space that brings the community together, there will be an increasing need to enable visitors to access it safely and securely on foot, by bike or by public transport, alongside connecting the town centre with other retail hubs in the Borough.

However, vehicular access will remain key to local traders who rely on reliable and accessible car parking for pick-ups and drop-offs, whilst the needs of people with mobility challenges must be central to all interventions that aim to improve town centre access.

Action Area 3.4: Develop and strengthen retail hubs outside of the town centre

Rationale

Local and neighbourhood retail hubs have a key role in providing services to local communities. Remote and hybrid working and online shopping mean that many people are spending less time in central business locations and more time in residential areas, on the periphery of main commercial centres²⁶.

Retail hubs outside of the town centre, such as those in Langney, Hampden Park, Old Town, Meads, and Seaside, can deliver significant social and economic benefits. They provide convenient access to everyday goods and services, reducing the need for car journeys and supporting more sustainable, walkable neighbourhoods.

They help to develop and maintain a sense of community identity, support local employment opportunities, nurture independent businesses, and help to increase the resilience of the wider

²⁶ Remote working and the new geography of local service spending; CEBR; 2022

economy by spreading commercial activity beyond a single focal point, creating more balanced patterns of growth.

Theme 4: Upskill and Empower Residents to Thrive in the Modern Eastbourne Economy

Acquiring skills and inspiring lifelong learning are essential for economic growth and social inclusion. How people work and what people do is changing rapidly, driven by new technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning. The longer term impact of AI is still uncertain, but the capacity to learn and adapt is likely to be central to delivering economic growth and in ensuring that its benefits are shared across all the Borough's communities.

Skills levels and educational attainment in Eastbourne are currently modest. Businesses, the public sector, and learning and community sector organisations all have a strong role in developing and delivering a skills system that inspires and engages people to learn the skills that they need to access and thrive in better paying and more productive work.

Key Performance Indicators:

Educational attainment within Eastbourne's schools is mixed and the Borough's 19 year olds are less likely than their counterparts across England to hold a Level 3 qualification. This inhibits many local residents from accessing good quality jobs, and limits the supply of talent that is available to the Borough's businesses and potential investors. The working age population, too, is less qualified than the England average.

1. Percentage of 19 year olds with Level 3 to match or exceed percentage in England

Baseline: Eastbourne: 50.4%; England 57.6% (2023/24)
Data Source: Explore Education Statistics; Department for Education (2025)
Regularity: Annual

2. Percentage of 16-64 year olds without level 3 qualifications to be below the percentage in England

Baseline: Eastbourne: 44.2%; England 41.1% (2024)
Data Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics (2025)
Regularity: Quarterly

3. The employment rate to reach the Government's 80% national target

Baseline: Eastbourne: 76.0%; England 75.7% (2024)
Data Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics (2025)
Regularity: Quarterly

Action Areas

Action Area 4.1: Improve access to work

Rationale

Eastbourne needs over 2,400 more people to be in work to meet the Government's 80% employment rate target. The Sussex Get Britain Working Plan and East Sussex Action Plan is being developed to prioritise interventions that enable more people to find and keep good quality jobs. These are likely to focus on supporting people with health conditions and disabilities, people with caring responsibilities, those with low level qualifications, and people who have traditionally had a weak attachment to the labour market.

Worklessness is strongly linked to poor health and well-being outcomes and can undermine self-confidence, resulting in wider impacts on the provision of public services. Fewer than half (43%) of the Borough's working age residents who have work-limiting disabilities are in employment. Technological advances mean that there are now more ways in which people can access work, so that it aligns with other aspects of their lives. Additionally, due to a rising pension age and economic conditions, people are often working for longer. There is, therefore, a need to ensure that accessible retraining and digital access opportunities are provided to older workers to ensure they can remain active in the labour force.

Community organisations have a crucial role in building confidence amongst those who have not previously had secure work, and in making the case to employers to design roles that attract a wider range of applicants.

Action Area 4.2: Develop skills for the new economy, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills

Rationale

The way people work and the skills they need is under-going major change. The impact of Artificial Intelligence on jobs is still unclear, but digitalisation is extending its reach into all sectors of the economy. For Eastbourne to truly diversify its economy away from lower value service sector jobs, it needs to embrace technology and develop the technical skills that its higher value businesses need.

Future Skills Sussex, the Sussex Skills Improvement Partnership, provides regular and detailed insights into the skills that employers need and Skills East Sussex has sector task groups that enable skills provision to be jointly planned between businesses and providers.

Initiatives, such as the Green Training Hub at Hampden Retail Park, need to be supported to ensure that the local workforce have the new skills required to support the transition to a green economy.

Action Area 4.3: Inspire learning and placemaking amongst young people to nurture mutually beneficial social and economic connections with schools and centres of learning

Rationale

Attainment levels in Eastbourne's schools are not where they need to be, and too many people are not achieving Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 years. The closure of the University of Brighton's Eastbourne campus risks closing off a local pathway to higher learning. East Sussex College Group is the main post-16 education provider in the Borough, but aspirations need to be raised well before then.

Strengthening education and business links, providing work experience opportunities and job tasters, developing joint projects that inspire learning, and showcasing opportunities and career pathways to young people all help to raise aspirations and demonstrate what is possible with the right mindset and dedication.

The Skills East Sussex sector groups provide an existing route to pursue closer ties between Eastbourne's businesses and learning providers.

Theme 5: Promote and Ensure Investment in Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure to Deliver Long-Term Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits

Road and rail links between Eastbourne and other commercial centres need to improve: Journey times, including to London, Ashford and Gatwick Airport, can be long; there is traffic congestion into and out of the town at peak times; and conditions on the A259 and A27 trunk roads along the Sussex coast constrain economic growth.

Digital connectivity in Eastbourne is, generally, good but expectations are constantly rising as technology evolves. As a coastal town, climate change and flood risks expose Eastbourne to further infrastructure challenges, whilst environmental constraints limit development opportunities.

A shortage of strategic sites and fit-for-purpose premises limits space for businesses to grow and to attract inward investment.

Much of the investment that is needed is long-term and challenging to secure, with decisions made at national or regional level. Eastbourne needs to ensure that longer-term infrastructure challenges remain firmly on the agendas of strategic decision-makers at the right spatial level, whilst working

within existing constraints to secure investment where it is most feasible to make a tangible difference.

Key Performance Indicators:

Transport in Eastbourne is currently overseen by East Sussex County Council, the local transport authority. The East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 sets out the transport investment priorities, how these will be funded and financed, and how success will be measured.

Infrastructure success measures should, therefore, be made in agreement with East Sussex County Council, using metrics for Eastbourne, where and when they become available to the County Council.

1. Secure investment in transport, capital and infrastructure projects in line with or above that proposed for Eastbourne in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4

Baseline: To be agreed with East Sussex County Council

Data Source: East Sussex County Council

Regularity: Annual

2. Reduce minutes delayed and improved journey time reliability on road and rail networks, in line with performance measures agreed with East Sussex County Council

Baseline: To be agreed with East Sussex County Council

Data Source: East Sussex County Council

Regularity: Annual

3. Increase active travel mode share by different user groups, in line with performance measures in the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4

Baseline: To be agreed with East Sussex County Council

Data source: East Sussex County Council

Regularity: Annual

4. Deliver commercial floorspace in line with Local Plan requirements

Baseline: 13,000 sq.m of developable office space; 40,000 sq.m of developable industrial & warehousing space

Data source: Land Availability Assessment; Eastbourne Borough Council (2022)

Regularity: Irregular

Actions Areas

Action Area 5.1: Promote investment in the strategic transport network

Rationale

Eastbourne is not well linked to major trunk roads, rail journey times to and from London and along the south coast are slow, and traffic congestion often makes entering and leaving the town centre challenging. However, the Borough benefits from having a centrally located railway station.

Government investment in the road and rail network is unlikely in the foreseeable future. However, Eastbourne will need to continue to lobby for investment to address transport deficiencies, including improvements to the A27 and A259, and support for high-speed rail services to and from the town.

Action Area 5.2: Develop the commercial floorspace needed to support businesses to grow and be retained locally

Rationale

Environmental constraints and its coastal location mean that Eastbourne has limited space for development. Correspondingly, there is a shortage of strategic sites and fit-for-purpose premises. This restricts space for businesses to set up and grow in the Borough.

The most recent Eastbourne Land Availability Assessment (LAA) was published in 2022. Seventeen sites were assessed as being deliverable, developable or potentially developable, with a capacity of over 73,000 sq.m of employment space. This included 12,800 sq.m of employment floorspace in the town centre, 10,300 sq.m at Roselands & Bridgemore, 20,000 sq.m at Sovereign Harbour and 30,000 sq.m at Eastbourne Park.

The existing stock is old and dated and there are viability gaps which inhibit businesses from investing in their premises to support growth and increase energy efficiencies.

Action Area 5.3: Develop green and blue infrastructure, including green corridors, to encourage active living and to better connect communities with centres of learning and commerce, while collaborating with key partners, including Eden and the Environment Agency.

Rationale

Green corridors which effectively connect ecology, people, and places are good for health and well-being, good for environmental sustainability, and good for the economy.

The King Charles III Coastal Path runs from Eastbourne Pier, whilst National Cycle Route 21 connects to various locations in Eastbourne, including Sovereign Harbour, Pevensey Bay, and the District General Hospital.

Other designated or planned cycle routes in the Borough include Horsey Way, Town Centre, Stone Cross to Royal Parade, Willingdon Drove and Langney Rise. The largely flat topography of much of the Borough lends itself to encouraging more active methods of travel, as long as the supporting infrastructure is in place; whilst the seafront can be further strengthened as a space for outdoor activity and community gathering.

The East Sussex Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (2020-2030) provides details of the walking and cycling schemes that are proposed for the Borough.

Finally, it is vital that close collaboration is maintained and deepened with key partners, such as Eden and the Environment Agency. These represent transformational inward investment and environmental opportunities for the Borough that will safeguard the coastline, promote ecological rehabilitation, and support local livelihoods.

5. Governance, Partnerships, and Delivery

5.1 Governance

This Economic Strategy provides the framework for public, private, and voluntary sector partners in Eastbourne to work collectively to deliver agreed economic growth ambitions and priorities for the Borough. It makes the case for investment to the emerging Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority, to the proposed sub-regional Unitary Authority, and to public and private sector investors.

The Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board, in collaboration with Eastbourne Borough Council, our Member of Parliament, and East Sussex County Council, will establish a collaborative framework that brings together local business leaders, key organisations, community representatives, and expert external advisors to oversee and deliver the objectives of this economic strategy. This will be underpinned by three core commitments:

1. **Sustainable Economic Growth** – Driving long-term prosperity through responsible development and investment.
2. **Business Responsiveness** – Ensuring this strategy evolves to meet the changing needs of local businesses and market conditions.
3. **Evidence-Based Decision Making** – Commissioning research and analytical studies to inform decisions, measure impact, and guide future interventions.

Through these commitments, the aim is to secure Eastbourne’s economic resilience, enhance competitiveness, and create an environment that supports opportunity, innovation, and a high quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

The £20 million, 10-year Plan for Neighbourhoods initiative empowers the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board to drive regeneration in the Borough. Both the evidence base and the Economic Strategy will assist the Board in shaping its vision and investment plan that will deliver tangible improvements to the everyday lives of communities across Eastbourne.

This Economic Strategy and Action Plan also sets Eastbourne Borough Council’s future economic priorities over the short-medium term, aligning public and private sector investments with existing strategies and plans, and helping to inform the development of the Local Plan. Eastbourne Borough Council also has a key role to play in the delivery of the Economic Strategy as:

- An employer and landowner, including making best use of its land and assets, and by adopting inclusive and progressive recruitment and training practices;
- A strategic leader that influences, lobbies, showcases, and advocates best practice;
- A provider, procurer, and commissioner of local services;
- A lead for place making, promoting a positive planning approach, and using its powers to promote sustainable development;
- A key partner that enables others to deliver where they are best placed to do so; and

- A civic leader providing key insights and knowledge of both the needs and wants of the town and its citizens.

5.2 Partnerships

Collaboration and partnership working will be central to unlocking economic potential and driving growth through pooling resources, sharing expertise and aligning on common goals. All of Eastbourne's communities must benefit from this Economic Strategy. Ongoing contributions, ideas, and thoughts from a wide range of stakeholders, residents, and community and business organisations will ensure that this happens.

Working closely with neighbouring local authorities, this Economic Strategy provides an opportunity for the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board to build effective partnerships to:

- Enable interventions and projects to be designed in a **cost effective way**;
- Improve common understanding, facilitate knowledge exchange and enable new and **innovative approaches** to delivery;
- **Broaden ownership** of actions, outputs, and outcomes, based on shared visions and a common purpose;
- Strengthen the range of **expertise** that can be applied to priority actions and delivery; and
- Enhance opportunities to **access funding** to deliver projects and tangible benefits for local residents, communities, businesses, and visitors.

5.3 Delivery Options

The Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board will facilitate the delivery of the Economic Strategy and Action Plan, alongside Eastbourne Borough Council and other local partners.

The effective implementation of this Economic Strategy and Action Plan is likely to be achieved through a combination of policy levers, investment, and strategic initiatives.

There are a range of options for delivering the Action Plan, several of which will depend on the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation, resource constraints, and the appetite for risk and reward.

Delivery models that could be assessed include:

- **Direct Delivery:** By the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board or Eastbourne Borough Council to directly manage and deliver the strategy and action plan.
- **Arm's-Length Delivery Vehicle:** The establishment of a company or organisation wholly or partially owned by Eastbourne Borough Council (e.g. a Local Authority Trading Company or Special Purpose Vehicle).

- **Economic Development Community Interest Company (CiC) or Trust:** The establishment of an independent not-for-profit organisation focused on delivering the Action Plan.
- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP):** Collaborative delivery of the Action Plan involving both public, community bodies, and private sector organisations in Eastbourne.
- **Commissioning Model:** The Action Plan's themed activities are commissioned from local third-party providers.

In allocating the £20 million Plan for Neighbourhoods funding, the Neighbourhood Board could consider allocating resources to a Community Wealth Fund initiative – a revolving investment vehicle to support local entrepreneurs, business start-ups, community interest companies, and charities to deliver economic growth projects.

To coordinate and animate the design and delivery of the Economic Strategy Action Plan programme, and working closely with local partners, a new Programme Manager could be appointed by Eastbourne Brough Council and Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of this Economic Strategy will follow clear logic chains that will assess progress against the expected outcomes and impacts under each theme and action area.

For each theme, progress will be measured against the relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (outcomes) and a short review of how this is delivering sustainable change (impacts) will be provided. This will be reported on annually to the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board and Eastbourne Borough Council, where possible.

Other indicators may be identified during the implementation stage, including those that relate to health and well-being or community wealth building. Some of these, such as civic participation or life expectancy are likely to lend themselves more closely to the Eastbourne Neighbourhood Board's wider community priorities.

The approach to using metrics to monitor and evaluate progress in delivering the strategy must be proportionate, not incur undue costs, and be based on publicly-available datasets that can be benchmarked nationally, updated easily, and which are sufficiently robust.

It should be acknowledged that most national datasets are survey based. This means that data are often less reliable at district & borough level. It will, therefore, be important to consider the whole basket of indicators together to help assess the relative health of Eastbourne's economy over time.

This Strategy and Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated, as necessary, when relevant documents, such as the Local Plan and the Plan for Neighbourhoods Investment Plan, are produced, updated and implemented.

The Action Plan is a dynamic document that should be refreshed annually. Progress against the actions within it will be reported on quarterly to the Board and the Council. Each action will be guided by a clear, timebound, logic chain, which describes each action, the timeframe for delivery, a summary of the financial and other costs (inputs), a quantitative assessment of the activities that the investment has delivered against agreed targets (outputs), what it has achieved (outcomes) and how it has contributed to the strategy's Action Areas (impacts). This process will support transparent reporting and informed decision-making on future interventions.

Eastbourne Economic Strategy 2025 – 2035 Action Plan

The Action Plan sets out a programme of interventions to turn the Economic Ambition into reality. These interventions will drive growth in key sectors, foster a robust entrepreneurial and small business support ecosystem, enhance skills development, and promote sustainable infrastructure investment for the benefit of businesses and the local community. It is a pragmatic plan, based on actions which will:

- Have the greatest influence using the limited resources;
- Have the greatest effect on meeting the economic priorities of the area; and
- Have the greatest opportunity to find funding or partners to work on its delivery.

This is a dynamic Action Plan, and opportunities may emerge for new interventions that contribute to the delivery of Eastbourne's Economic Ambition.

Timeframe

The timeframes indicated for each action are:

- Short: less than 1 year;
- Medium: between 1 and 3 years; and
- Long: 3 or more years.

Funding

Success will depend on delivery and funding from a range of partners. A key imperative will be to seek further funding to deliver the scale of transformational change required in Eastbourne. The current public sector funding landscape for economic development is ever-changing, and generally orientated towards less prosperous parts of the country.

The allocation and application of the £20 million investment from the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods programme will be important in stimulating early action. Securing new sources of investment will be crucial to allow programmes of activity to be extended and enhanced, and new programmes to be delivered. Delivery of the Action Plan will also require new funding mechanisms and models.

Delivery

Roles and responsibilities for delivering the Action Plan will be subject to further discussions between key partners and stakeholders. This could include the establishment of specific themed 'task and finish' groups to consider programmes and interventions.

In the short term there will be a need to work closely with East Sussex County Council in the delivery of the sub-regional Economic Prosperity Plan for the county. In the medium term, once it is established, these discussions will progress with the Sussex & Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority.

Partners will also need to consider reviewing delivery mechanisms, action plan priorities, and ways of working to ensure the Borough remains agile in responding to changing needs.

This Economic Strategy demonstrates the importance of Eastbourne to the regional economy, and investment support is required from the new Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority and proposed Unitary Authorities to realise the economic ambition to transform the Borough's business base, attract higher value jobs, increase economic participation, and reduce inequalities.

Theme 1: Develop and Diversify Eastbourne's Sectors and Clusters for a Prosperous Economy

Action Area	Action	Timescale	Partners
1.1: Support innovation in the health and care sector	Develop a Health and Care Sector Cluster Working Group to ensure collaborative working to enhance the economic contribution of the sector to deliver improved health outcomes.	Short	EBC / HEIs / ESC / Sussex NHS Integrated Care Board
	Work with the University of Brighton Health Hub and the Sussex NHS Integrated Care Board to develop a programme of business support tailored to local health and care sector SMEs.	Short – Medium	EBC / HEIs / Sussex NHS Integrated Care Board
	Promote collaboration and knowledge sharing to foster innovation and new solutions to delivering new health and care services.	Short – Medium	EBC / HEIs / Sussex NHS Integrated Care Board
	Support the extension and development of the NHS Career Pathway Academy between East Sussex College Group (ESCG) and East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT).	Ongoing	ESCG / ESHT
1.2: Develop Eastbourne into a creative & digital hub	Work with Chalk Eastbourne to promote and grow Eastbourne's Digifest.	Short	EBC / Chalk
	Support the development of a world-class culture and education centre at Black Robin Farm.	Short	EBC
	Develop a Creative & Digital Industries Cluster Plan for growth, including actions to promote the Eastbourne creative and digital brand to attract new businesses into the Borough.	Short	EBC / ENB / ESCC
	Promote education and training programmes to include digital literacy, data science, and Artificial Intelligence literacy for businesses and adult learners.	Short – Medium	EBC / ESCG
	Work with East Sussex County Council to establish a Creative Opportunity Zone in Eastbourne.	Short – Medium	EBC / ESCC
	Assess opportunities to bring forward a range of workspace options to support creative and digital businesses of different stages and sizes.	Short – Medium	EBC
1.3: Raise the profile of advanced engineering in the Borough	Establish a business-led Engineering Advisory Group to engage key employers to better understand their growth requirements.	Short	East Sussex Growth Hub / EBC

	Promote STEM subjects in schools and improve understanding of engineering opportunities, building on the work of the Skills East Sussex Engineering & Manufacturing Task Group.	Short - Medium	EBC / ESCG / ESCC
	Develop an inward investment profile to attract new engineering businesses to the Borough.	Medium	Team East Sussex / EBC
1. 4: Increase the value of the visitor economy	Prepare a new Destination Management Plan to set local priorities and identify a new model for local destination development within the countywide Experience Sussex / LVEP ecosystem.	Short	EBC / Visit Eastbourne / Experience Sussex
	Investigate the potential for a Seafront Business Improvement District to raise the profile of the area as a year-round quality destination.	Short	EBC / Eastbourne Hospitality Association
	Prepare and implement a Seafront Strategy to establish a new vision and plan for a world class seafront leisure and recreation offer across the 7 miles of coastal landscape.	Short – Medium	EBC / private sector
	Design and develop an enhanced gateway to the South Downs National Park to attract local, national, and international visitors.	Medium	EBC / SDNPA
	Develop a Culture and Events Plan to focus resources on existing and new events and festivals designed to attract high spend stay visitors, whilst minimising environmental pressures from day visitors.	Medium	EBC / Visit Eastbourne / Trafalgar Theatres
	In partnership with Trafalgar Theatres, support the ongoing recovery of the Meetings, Incentives, Conference, and Events (MICE) sector.	Medium	EBC / Visit Eastbourne / Trafalgar Theatres
	Work with ESCC and transport providers to facilitate and support the development of convenient and environmentally-friendly active travel throughout the Borough.	Ongoing	ESCC / EBC
1. 5: Strengthen the economic and social potential of health, leisure, and sporting facilities across the Borough	In collaboration with Active Sussex, develop a local action plan to increase the number of people participating in sport and physical activity.	Short	EBC / Active Sussex
	Ensure that the Sovereign Centre realises its full potential as a major centre for sport, leisure, and recreation, supporting health and wellbeing outcomes and contributing to economic growth.	Short - Medium	EBC / GLL
	Identify new major event opportunities which help support the local economy and create a dynamic year-round events calendar.	Short - Medium	EBC / Active Sussex / Experience Sussex

	Identify locations for major leisure and recreation development that will sustain the town's tourist role as well as offering opportunities for the local population.	Short – Medium	EBC / private sector
	Support Motcombe Pool CIC to realise their vision to transform the Pool House into a local community Wellbeing Centre.	Short - Medium	Motcombe CIC / EBC

Theme 2: Nurture Community Wealth Building, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Action Area	Action	Timescale	Responsible
2.1: Develop and implement a Community Wealth Building Framework and Action Plan to tackle poverty and inequality	Establish a Community Wealth Building Working Group to steer the development of a new community wealth building programme and oversee its implementation.	Short	ENB / EBC / Community & Voluntary Sector (CVS)
	Adopt a Community Wealth Building procurement strategy – engage anchor institutions (NHS, council, colleges) to prioritise local suppliers; develop a “Buy Local” charter and supplier readiness programme.	Short - Medium	ENB / EBC
	Explore strategies and support mechanisms to encourage smaller local firms to bid for procurement opportunities.	Short - Medium	ENB / EBC
	Investigate business models to support community purchase of key heritage buildings/land, including the feasibility of creating an Eastbourne Community Asset Trust for long-term stewardship.	Short - Medium	ENB / EBC
2.2: Provide world-class business support and opportunities to freelancers, start-ups and SMEs	Develop a local Entrepreneurship Strategy to strengthen the entrepreneurial talent pool and achieve higher success rates for new businesses.	Short	EBC / Growth Hub / ENB
	Improve signposting support, advice, and inward investment services available to businesses (specifically via an enhanced East Sussex Growth Hub) to simplify access to grants, funding, business advice, sites, and premises.	Short	EBC / Chamber of Commerce / Growth Hub
	Identify and work with local businesses with high growth potential to develop programmes to support job creation.	Short	EBC / Chamber of Commerce / Growth Hub
	Work with partners to develop ‘Brand Eastbourne’ and promote the Borough as an entrepreneurial and ambitious location for new business start-ups.	Short	EBC / ENB
	Work with partners to design, develop and commission a small number of joint business support programmes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Starting a business ▪ Achieving net zero ▪ Innovation support ▪ Supporting international trade 	Short - Medium	EBC / Chamber of Commerce / Growth Hub

	Grow the capacity of local and social enterprises – provide business support, seed funding, and mentoring; encourage co-operatives, CICs, and worker-owned businesses.	Short - Medium	EBC / Chamber of Commerce / Growth Hub
	Assess options for developing an Eastbourne Angel Investment Fund programme to connect entrepreneurs, start-ups, and small businesses with local angel investors to facilitate growth and innovation.	Medium	EBC / ENB
	Develop a circular economy action plan to address the core principles of: eliminating waste and pollution; circulating products and materials; and regenerating nature.	Medium	EBC / ENB
	Hold an annual Eastbourne Business Forum to enable partners to engage with the business community on economic development matters.	Ongoing	EBC / ENB / Chamber of Commerce
2.3: Provide good quality accessible, flexible and affordable business accommodation	Set in place a principle of prioritising economic growth and diversification when managing Eastbourne Borough Council's and other publicly-owned assets, industrial / employment sites.	Short	EBC / ENB / Team East Sussex
	Assess options to develop a viable financial model to deliver affordable and flexible workspace in key opportunity sites in the town centre.	Short	ENB
	Work with site promoters, local developers, and investors to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote Eastbourne as a competitive environment for attracting new businesses. ▪ Provide high-quality commercial property to meet local demand. 	Short - Medium	EBC / ENB / Team East Sussex
	Work with the planning policy team to ensure appropriate new commercial space (including strategic sites) is allocated in the Local Plan.	Short - Medium	EBC / ENB
	Work with business owners and building owners to develop plans to retrofit and regenerate ageing commercial premises.	Short - Medium	EBC / Team East Sussex
	Secure high value employment through a proactive development management approach and the use of Planning Performance Agreements.	Short - Medium	EBC
	Develop a compelling investment proposition in collaboration with partners to secure investment in the commercial property market.	Medium	EBC / ENB / Team East Sussex

Theme 3: Develop a Vibrant Town Centre and Clusters of Retail Hubs that Serve as Great Places to Live, do Business, Invest, and Visit

Action Area	Action	Timescale	Partners
3.1: Encourage a mix of uses in the town centre to generate greater footfall and vibrancy	In partnership with land owners, promote key opportunity and vacant sites in the town centre to realise their potential and contribute to diversifying the town centre as a creative, cultural, and leisure hub, specifically: Debenhams and TJ Hughes sites.	Short	EBC / ENB
	Work with the Business Improvement District to develop initiatives to promote the town centre to boost consumer demand and generate increased footfall.	Short	EBC / ENB / BID
	Work with the BID and Visit Eastbourne to enhance the annual programme of events in the town.	Short	EBC / ENB / BID
	Work with the BID to commission a night-time economy strategy and action plan.	Short	EBC / ENB / BID
	Develop and implement a business capital grants fund programme to support the refurbishment of business and employment space, including low carbon emission projects.	Short	EBC / ENB
3.2: Improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre to support sustainable growth through design excellence and quality public realm	Work with the Business Improvement District to develop and promote initiatives to deliver enhanced public realm improvements and to reduce street homelessness.	Short	EBC / ENB / BID / ESCC
	Commission a feasibility study to investigate the potential for underground waste collection bins to improve the appearance of the town centre.	Medium	ESCC / Chamber of Commerce / BID
	Refresh the Eastbourne Townscape design guide to encourage a high standard of design for new development.	Medium	EBC
3.3: Enhance bus, cycle, and pedestrian networks to secure an improved environment and reduced congestion	Lobby and influence central government and East Sussex County Council to secure investment to improve bus, cycle, and pedestrian routes.	Short	EBC / ENB
	Work with partners to ensure that people (including visitors) can access the town centre using clean, green forms of transport, including consideration of how to support the rollout of electric vehicle charging points.	Medium	EBC / ENB / ESCC

	Promote and lobby relevant authorities for public transport connectivity improvements between the Borough's settlements, town centre, and key employment sites.	Medium	EBC / ENB
3.4: Develop and strengthen retail hubs outside of the town centre	Encourage investment in retail hubs outside of the town centre.	Medium	EBC / ENB
	Investigate potential options to support growth, build resilience and diversify the retail offer in retail hubs outside of the town centre.	Medium	EBC / ENB

Theme 4: Upskill and Empower Residents to Thrive in the Modern Eastbourne Economy

Action Area	Action	Timescale	Responsible
4.1: Improve access to work	Work with the Department for Work & Pensions, Sussex Integrated Care Board, and the voluntary & community sector to develop programmes that enable carers and people with disabilities to access employment in flexible ways.	Short	EBC / ENB / DWP / SICB
	Promote new models of volunteering as routes into employment.	Short	EBC / CVS
	Support the implementation of actions in the emerging Get East Sussex Working Plan.	Short - Medium	EBC / ESCC
	Work in partnership with DWP and other local providers to hold regular job fairs to promote careers and skills opportunities in the Borough.	Ongoing	EBC / DWP / local providers / ESCG
4.2: Develop skills for the new economy, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills	Promote access to skills training, apprenticeships, and career pathways in key sectors, working with the Skills East Sussex Sector Task Groups, the Careers Hub, and the Sussex Local Skills Improvement Partnership.	Short	EBC / ENB / DWP / SICB
	Support the Green Training Hub to design, develop and deliver new technological skills for the green economy.	Short	ESG / Ohm Energy
	Develop digital and Artificial Intelligence adoption programmes to enable digital transformation in local businesses.	Short	EBC / ESCG
	Develop employment and skills plans that maximise opportunities for local people through Planning Legal Agreements.	Short - Medium	EBC
4.3: Inspire learning and placemaking amongst young people to nurture mutually beneficial social and economic connections with schools and centres of learning	Collaborate with Eastbourne schools to understand and respond to students' needs in skills and development.	Short	EEBP
	Support the Eastbourne Education-Business Partnership, the Careers Hub, and other providers to design and deliver work-related learning opportunities in schools and colleges.	Short	EBC / EEBP
	Promote the opportunities created by Eastbourne Football Club and East Sussex College Group to create work experience opportunities in sport, media, and business.	Short	EBC / ESCG

Theme 5: Promote and Ensure Investment in Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure to Deliver Long-Term Economic, Social, and Environmental Benefits

Action Area	Action	Timescale	Responsible
5.1: Promote investment in the strategic transport network	Work with East Sussex County Council to secure investment in key road and cycling infrastructure priorities across the Borough.	Short - Medium	EBC / ENB / ESCC
	Support the development of the business case for highway improvements to the A259.	Short - Medium	EBC / ESCC
	Support active travel enhancements, including planned investment in footpaths and cycle paths.	Medium	ESCC
	Lobby and influence central government to secure investment to improve transport links and connectivity between Eastbourne and other commercial centres, particularly London and Ashford.	Ongoing	EBC / ENB
5.2: Develop the commercial floorspace needed to support inward investment and business growth	Undertake a strategic sites employment feasibility study to assess the viability of developing specific locations for employment use.	Short	EBC
	Develop an Invest in Eastbourne promotional brochure and online platform to help promote key sites to investors and developers.	Short	EBC / Team East Sussex
5.3: Develop green and blue infrastructure, including green corridors, to encourage active living and to better connect communities with centres of learning and commerce, while collaborating with key partners, including Eden and the Environment Agency.	Work with Sussex Bay partners and the Environment Agency to deliver the flood defence initiatives in the Pevensey Bay to Eastbourne Coastal Management Scheme.	Short	EBC
	Investigate opportunities for greening routes throughout the Borough, including by tree and shrub planting, and community gardens.	Medium	EBC / ENB / ESCC
	Lobby and influence central government and East Sussex County Council to secure investment to improve cycle and pedestrian routes.	Ongoing	EBC / ENB / ESCC
	Collaborate with Eden and the Environment Agency to help safeguard our coastline and Downland, while fostering and expanding the benefits of these valuable partnerships.	Ongoing	EBC / ENB / Environment Agency / Eden Trust

Plan for Neighbourhoods Pre-Approved Interventions

Themes	Action Areas	Primary Alignment with the Plan for Neighbourhoods: Pre-Approved Interventions
1: Develop and diversify Eastbourne's sectors and clusters for a prosperous economy	1.1: Support innovation in the health & care sector 1.2: Develop Eastbourne into a creative & digital hub 1.3: Raise the profile of advanced engineering in the Borough 1.4: Increase the value of the visitor economy 1.5: Strengthen the economic and social potential of health, leisure, and sporting facilities across the Borough	1.1: Work, Productivity and Skills 1.2: Work, Productivity and Skills 1.3: Work, Productivity and Skills 1.4: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage 1.5: Health and Well-Being
2. Nurture community wealth building, enterprise, and entrepreneurship	2.1: Develop and implement a Community Wealth Building Framework and Action Plan to tackle local poverty and inequality 2.2: Provide world-class business support and opportunities to freelancers, start-ups and SMEs 2.3: Provide good quality, accessible, flexible, and affordable business accommodation	2.1: Cohesion 1.1: Work, Productivity and Skills 2.3: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage
3: Develop a vibrant town centre and clusters of retail hubs that serve as great places to live, do business, invest, and visit	3.1: Encourage a mix of uses in the town centre to generate greater footfall and vibrancy 3.2: Improve the accessibility and attractiveness of the town centre to support sustainable growth through design excellence and quality public realm 3.3: Enhance bus, cycle, and pedestrian networks to secure an improved environment and reduced congestion 3.4: Develop and strengthen retail hubs outside of the town centre	3.1: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage 3.2: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage 3.3: Transport 3.4: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage
4: Upskill and empower residents to thrive in the modern Eastbourne economy	4.1: Improve access to work 4.2: Develop skills for the new economy, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills 4.3: Inspire learning and placemaking amongst young people to nurture mutually beneficial social and economic connections with schools and centres of learning	4.1: Work, Productivity and Skills 4.2: Work, Productivity and Skills 4.3: Work, Productivity and Skills

<p>5. Promote and ensure investment in sustainable and resilient infrastructure to deliver long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits while collaborating with key partners, including Eden and the Environment Agency.</p>	<p>5.1: Promote investment in the strategic transport network 5.2: Develop the commercial floorspace needed to support businesses to grow and be retained locally 5.3: Develop green and blue infrastructure, including green corridors to encourage active living and to better connect communities with centres of learning and commerce, while collaborating with key partners, including Eden and the Environment Agency.</p>	<p>5.1: Transport 5.2: Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage 5.3: Transport / Regeneration, High Streets and Heritage</p>
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