

Wakefield District Economic Wellbeing Strategy

One Year On



Introduction



In January 2024 we launched our new 5-year Economic Wellbeing Strategy for the Wakefield District. We are now looking back on what has been achieved over the last year to set the foundations for what we want to deliver. And making plans for the coming year of activity.

We plan to produce an annual progress report to review what has been achieved each year and to look ahead at plans for each forthcoming year. These reports will allow us to monitor progress against our ambitions and the impact being made. We will measure success using indicators appropriate for each of the five Strategy outcomes; increased earnings, reduced deprivation, reduced health inequality, thriving communities and higher quality environment.

Example indicators selected include; average earnings of the working age population, employment in our key sectors of health and social care, digital and low carbon as a proportion of employment overall, the level of engagement of key sector businesses with our business support offer around growth, qualification levels, the learning offer for skills related to low carbon industries, how optimistic young people feel about the future in terms of their job prospects and their health, healthy life expectancy, carbon emissions, use of green spaces, housing affordability and resident satisfaction with their local area as a place to live.

Our vision is 'To improve the wellbeing of people and communities in the Wakefield District by nurturing a just economy which builds on what works well and boldly tackles what doesn't'.

Introduction (Continued)



This means looking hard at how we do things and taking action to make sure that the wellbeing of people, and the need to look after the planet, are both central to the plans we make to help grow Wakefield's economy.

The Strategy is divided into nine 'missions' which sit under three bold ambitions designed to address the biggest issues that impact people's lives.

Our 'being greener' ambition is about helping low carbon businesses to grow and helping traditionally carbon intensive businesses to become more sustainable, in order to create more green jobs for people and a healthier environment.

Our 'better employment' ambition is about generating high-quality jobs in the sectors we want to grow and supporting employers and education providers to prepare young people with the skills they need for these jobs now and in the future.

Our 'keeping it local' ambition is about building local supply chains and connecting local people to local jobs, by encouraging the kind of business investment that will directly benefit Wakefield.

What we have done in the first year

Action planning

We have developed a working Action Plan with our partner organisations to design projects and set goals for each mission. Whilst the Action Plan provides a good foundation for delivery, we expect this to evolve and anticipate further engagement with partners to continually develop and grow the Action Plan as we progress.

Launching new schemes

We launched the Xcellerator Programme to provide bespoke resources for creative businesses. We also supported the launch of the CoSTAR immersive film technology lab in South Kirkby, and the launch of the Huddersfield University Incubator Hub at Pinderfields by introducing the hub to Health and Social Care businesses. The ENABLE scheme was launched to support Blue Light services in accessing underspent levy from private and public sector organisations, to benefit the local economy.



Delivering events

We delivered 12 key business events last year, including the Wakefield Top 100 Launch Event, a workshop on how to win contracts to supply goods and services to the public sector, a Wakefield Tech Expo to explore technology to support businesses to introduce new technologies to increase efficiency and growth, a ChatGPT online workshop to demystify the use of AI, and workshops on creative business support and starting as a freelancer.

What we have done in the first year

Collaborating with partners

We have supported Creative Wakefield to expand their network of businesses. We also facilitated a collaboration with one of our largest employers, the Health and Social Care sector, to understand the gaps in skills and employment and what higher education provision is required to support this.

On the same theme, we have worked with the NEET Strategy and Employment and Skills Boards to develop a portfolio of appropriate provision for young people.

Promoting sustainability

We have been promoting carbon reduction packages to businesses to support 2030 and 2038 net zero ambitions.

Additionally, we are underway with establishing a Working Group that will draw together our key stakeholders across services.

A key part of this group will be to look at new and creative ways to ensure our climate initiatives are supported in the delivery of the Action Plan.



What we have done in the first year

Supporting investment

We met with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to help understand inward investment opportunities at a regional level and ensure collaborative working around opportunities that are appropriate and beneficial for Wakefield.

This collaborative approach will be developed further through continued meetings between the local and regional authority to ensure all opportunities are maximised.

Throughout the year we have provided a dedicated inward investment and property search function for businesses looking to invest, and worked with the Climb 25 inward investment forum to help maximise investment opportunities for our businesses.

On top of this, we attended the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) to promote new employment site investment opportunities to potential investors and started making plans for UKREiiF 2025.

As part of our invest and key account engagements, we have pitched Wakefield to international investors in key sectors in collaboration with WYCA and welcomed West Yorkshire Mayor Tracey Brabin to businesses across the district.



What we have done in the first year

Providing business support

We refreshed the Wakefield First website and social media to create an easy to use space to find information about available business support and events. Enabling us to shine a light on our continued provision under Start-Ups, Growth and general SME support.

This has been further enhanced by our capital improvements to our local Markets along with the full Markets rebrand, allowing us to engage with our local traders and businesses to ensure continued growth of our high streets.

Additionally, we have delivered a grant programme under the Shop Security Grant Scheme, targeting security in our most vulnerable high streets to ensure our existing and new businesses feel safe and welcomed.

We have also been promoting the Fair Work Charter through business engagement to encourage business sign-up, and collaborated with Huddersfield University to begin work on developing an economic shock warning system to help us to support businesses.



What we have done in the first year

Our Year 2024

Through our Arts, Culture and Leisure team, we have carried out 366 days of activity for everyone in Wakefield.

Events, activity and engagement from this supports the creation of a thriving community space that encourages inward investment and economic growth from both a business and local spend perspective.

Completion and launch of our flagship Wakefield Exchange (WX) building acts as a legacy for the impact that Our Year 2024 has had and will continue to have on our community; creating a space for events and public engagement long term that can be utilised by local communities, our people and businesses for growth and development.

This raises the profile of our district and is integral to our plans to ensure our Place is promoted through strategy delivery and branding.



What we plan to do next

Implement projects

We plan to adopt the Action Plan across Council services and partner organisations, and work in partnership together to implement project delivery.

Undertake research

We plan to do more research into the opportunities and risks for our priority sectors: health and social care, digital and low carbon, to understand the quality of jobs available and what skills people need for them. We are also looking to understand local travel gaps better and to encourage local businesses to self-solve and collaborate to address travel to work challenges. We also plan to support developments on the Mass Transit Strategy and the West Yorkshire Bus Reform Strategy and work to influence this at a local level to address the access to work challenges the district is facing.



Upskill our people

Plans are being put in place to upskill our Business Support Officers specifically around the needs of our priority sectors, and to provide training for our teams about career pathways for these sectors to help us prepare people with the skills they need for jobs with these kinds of businesses.

What we plan to do next

Collaborate with partners

Plans are in place to work with the Public Health Healthy Sustainable Communities programme, to establish what communities need and deliver community based workshops to support upskilling in priority sectors.

In addition, a higher education feasibility study is planned to explore the most effective way to deliver higher-level skills provision to meet the demands of local residents and businesses.

We plan to develop a young person's pipeline by tackling some of the main concerns in the Health and Care sector around job retention and low recruitment. This will support the initiative to combat the needs of our growing aging community and the strain on primary care.

To support this, we plan to establish an economic wellbeing focussed partnership between the Adult Social Care sector and the NHS to help businesses in the local supply chain respond effectively to secure contracts with primary care organisations.

On the digital theme, a new network partnership and website called 'Film Wakefield' is to be developed to market Wakefield film resources and encourage film tourism.



What we plan to do next

Support investment

Through our Inward and Investment and Key Account Management team we will promote Wakefield as a business destination and market investment opportunities to business investors. We also want to encourage large businesses to invest in local supply chains by sourcing more goods and services locally. This will feed into WYCA plans to develop sector clusters whilst ensuring we are focusing on opportunities that will benefit Wakefield. We will also encourage public sector organisations to procure contracts and spend more of their money locally, for the benefit of the local economy.

Deliver enterprise support

We plan to deliver enterprise training in Wakefield schools and colleges and to encourage businesses to engage with the Green Economy Programme, to use a 'circular economy' approach in running their business, and to explore private investment to support their growth ambitions. We also aim to support the community wealth building agenda by embedding these principles within the local economy, focussing on anchor institutions and the small to medium-sized business base.



For more information and to read our strategy, click here:
[Wakefield District Economic Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2029](#)