

The Essex Prosperity and Productivity Plan

Final

January 2020



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1. Introduction

Welcome to the new Prosperity and Productivity Plan for Essex. This Plan sets out our framework for an economy in which productive businesses create high-value, sustainable jobs and in which everyone benefits from growth. Looking forward 20 years and setting out our priorities for the next five, it is flexible in the light of climate and technological change, collaborative in its approach to delivery and optimistic about the potential of our businesses, people and communities.

Prosperity and productivity: A new plan

- 1.1 Generating annual output of some £40 billion and supporting 700,000 jobs and 74,000 businesses, Essex is a substantial, growing and diverse economy. World leading R&D in quantum technologies, medicine, data science and manufacturing are underpinned by a strong corporate base and by growing universities. Beyond the county, we enjoy excellent connections to London, Cambridge and the M11 Corridor, East Anglia and the rest of the world – and we are growing rapidly as more people choose to make Essex their home.
- 1.2 This presents the county with significant opportunities. To make the most of them, partners in Essex – from local government, business and education – recognise that we need a shared and collaborative approach, to proactively drive a sustainable and inclusive economy at the same time as overcoming the barriers to growth.
- 1.3 This **Prosperity and Productivity Plan** sets out a framework for this approach. Jointly developed by Essex County Council and Success Essex, the county’s business-led partnership for sustainable growth, it outlines our aspirations for the next twenty years and identifies the key opportunities that we must pursue (and the issues we must address) in the short-to-medium term.

Prosperity and productivity: Mutually reinforcing

- 1.4 This Plan recognises that **long-term growth depends on our ability to take advantage of technological change to ensure that new employment is resilient, adaptable and increasingly productive**. Looking forward to the next few decades, the Government has identified four ‘grand challenges’ to which the UK will need to respond, related to demographic change, the growing importance of artificial intelligence and the data-driven economy, climate change driving the need for a new model of environmentally-sustainable ‘clean growth’ and the changing nature of mobility and transport¹. All of these are leading to demand for new goods and services (and the skills, infrastructure and technologies that will be needed to create them) – and future growth will depend on our ability to exploit them. Our ability to invest in the county’s ‘knowledge base’, develop a highly-skilled workforce and create the conditions in which businesses can both innovate and efficiently adopt existing technologies will be vital.

¹ HM Government (2017), *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future*
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>)

- 1.5 However, **creating a ‘prosperous’ county means more than increasing the aggregate value of output.** In the context of a rapidly growing and diverse population, we want to ensure that everyone has a stake in future economic growth, with well-paid, fair employment in every sector and access to opportunity in every part of Essex. We also need to ensure that those people and businesses ‘disrupted’ by technology change are resilient in accessing new opportunities. The UK’s ‘grand challenges’ are *social* and *environmental* as well as economic, so our framework recognises a balance (and a mutual relationship) between productivity and the broader concept of prosperity:

Figure 1-1: A framework for prosperity and productivity



Source: SQW

Long-term direction; flexible approach

- 1.6 Alongside the climate challenge and the technology and other environmental trends described above, changing policy will present further opportunities as well as challenges. This will include the Government’s commitment to investment in science and innovation, future transport and skills policies and, following the UK’s exit from the European Union, post-Brexit deals in relation to key economic sectors, regulation and the use of investment through the proposed Shared Prosperity Fund. At the same time, the county’s economy will need to adapt and adjust to fluctuations in international markets and the UK’s broader economic performance.
- 1.7 This Plan therefore sets out a broad approach to “where we want to get to” over the next twenty years. However, it does so in the knowledge that **we are in a dynamic, complex and changing economy**, against which we will need to keep our actions and strategy under review.

A ‘coalition for growth’ and a new approach to collaboration...

- 1.8 In this dynamic economy, no one agency is ‘in charge’ and the delivery of this Plan is not the sole responsibility of any single partner. There is also no *single* source of investment associated with it (although it should provide a basis on which Essex’s ‘asks’ for future investment can be built). Instead, **success in driving forward ‘prosperity and productivity’ across Essex will depend on the**

resources and capabilities of a range of partners (the County and District Councils, businesses, universities, further education and the third sector), working together in a spirit of collaboration and trust. The new Success Essex partnership is the start of this: over time, we will develop a strong and flexible ‘growth coalition’ across the county to support our shared ambitions.

... linked with wider strategy...

- 1.9 In building this ‘growth coalition’, **we will ensure that the priorities set out in this Plan influence and acknowledge other strategies developed within Essex and within the wider region.** These include the local industrial strategies developed by local enterprise partnerships across England in conjunction with Government, setting out how each area will contribute to productivity growth and respond to the ‘grand challenges’. Within Essex, work has also taken place in parallel with this Plan to develop an economic strategy for North Essex (stretching from the M11 to Harwich), and strategies are also in place for South Essex and the London – Stansted – Cambridge Corridor.
- 1.10 We also recognise that **much activity is happening already**, either as ‘business as usual’, or within plans being advanced at local level. We do not seek to duplicate this within this Plan: instead, our aim is to set out shared priorities relevant to sustainable growth across Essex, which partners can take forward and for which they can secure resources.

... and looking outwards

- 1.11 Finally, within a diverse and well-connected county, there are important strategic relationships with neighbouring areas (for example, with Cambridge and the M11 Corridor, London and the Thames Estuary, and East Anglia). These are a strength: partnerships are not mutually exclusive, and Essex will benefit from a strong, well-connected and dynamic Greater South East.

Plan structure

The remainder of the Prosperity and Productivity Plan is structured in three main sections:

- Chapter 2 outlines the county’s key **economic opportunities and assets** – and the challenges that we will need to address to unlock our potential
- Chapter 3 introduces **four ‘missions’** that will guide our shared activity over the next five years, and the key priority areas for action that will support them
- Chapter 4 explains **how we will work together** to deliver the priorities set out in the Plan, through a new, increasingly commercial approach to investment and an increasingly collaborative approach between business, government and our key institutions.

2. The opportunities ahead

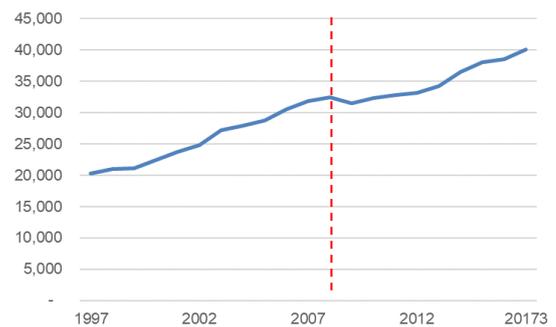
This Prosperity and Productivity Plan seeks to build on our assets and opportunities so that we can fully unlock the potential of technology change. This chapter provides an overview of the county's economy, its strengths and growth potential – and outlines the challenges that we need to overcome to reach our full potential.

A vibrant, resilient and growing economy...

2.1 Essex is one of England's largest counties. With a population of around 1.8 million and annual output of some £40 billion, 'Greater Essex' (including the county of Essex itself and the unitary authority areas of Thurrock and Southend) is the largest 'county economy' in the East of England. Diverse and containing a network of cities and towns and an extensive rural area, the county's economy is, in scale terms, comparable with many of England's city regions (for example generating output 25% above that of Liverpool City Region in 2017).

2.2 In terms of absolute growth, Essex's economy has performed well in recent years. After stalling for a few years following the 2008/09 recession, GVA growth has accelerated. Economic activity rates are higher than the national average, and employment growth has been impressive (between 2007 and 2017, the total stock of jobs in the county increased by around 14%: over the period, employment in manufacturing remained resilient – in contrast to a national fall – and there was especially strong growth in professional, scientific and technical services)².

Figure 2-1: Total GVA (£m), 1997-2017



Source: ONS. Figures relate to Greater Essex

2.3 The county is growing rapidly, and population growth is set to accelerate over the next twenty years. Between 2018 and 2045, our population is expected to rise by around 17% (equivalent to 327,000 additional residents)³. Although the population is ageing, our working age population will also increase (by around 8%) over the same period. Reflecting this growth in the working age population, jobs growth is also projected to be faster than the national average over the next couple of decades.

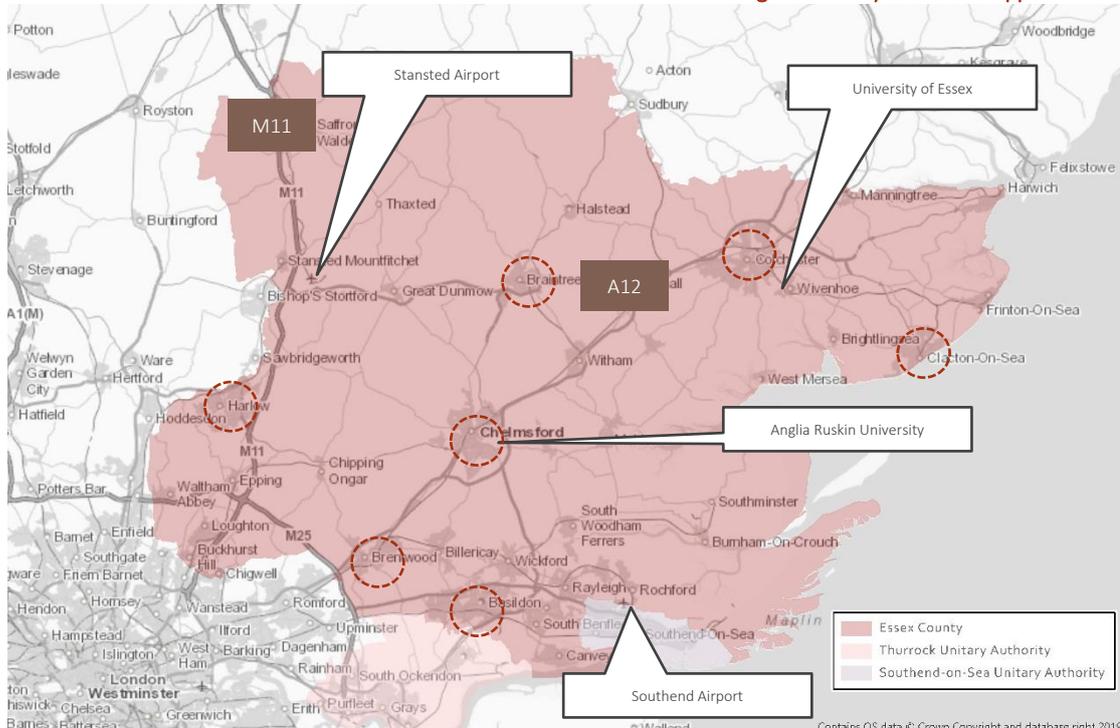
² Overall jobs: ONS, Jobs Density dataset; sector breakdown: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey (data relate to Essex CC area)

³ Cambridge Econometrics, East of England Forecasting Model. Data relate to Greater Essex.

...underpinned by key economic assets and opportunities

- 2.4 Our economy – and its recent and projected growth - is underpinned by key business, knowledge, connectivity and ‘quality of life’ assets.

Figure 2-2: Key assets and opportunities



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Business

- 2.5 **We have several established larger businesses** supporting headquarters and R&D activities across the county, many of which are at the ‘leading edge’ of technological innovation and build on an established heritage in advanced manufacturing. These include Ford’s R&D centre at Dunton, near Basildon; Raytheon at Harlow; and Teledyne e2v at Chelmsford, all of which have made recent investments in their technology capabilities in Essex.
- 2.6 **We have an entrepreneurial economy, with a large and growing SME base.** In 2018, there were around 66,000 businesses in Greater Essex, the great majority of which employed fewer than ten people. The overall business stock grew by around 17% in the four years to 2018, supported by good survival rates⁴. Reflecting the composition of the economy generally, the business base is diverse, with recent years seeing especially strong growth in the number of businesses in financial and insurance activities, information and communications, business services and construction⁵.
- 2.7 **There has been growth in emerging sectors.** Some of these are widely distributed across the county (for example in digital media), and some more concentrated in particular locations (such as the life sciences sector at Chesterford Research Park). This has been underpinned by significant

⁴ Business survival rates track the UK average, although since 2013 they have (for Essex County) been consistently marginally higher than for the UK as a whole. ONS, Business Demography dataset, 2018

⁵ ONS, UK Business Count

public sector investment in some cases (for example, in the relocation of Public Health England to Harlow).

Knowledge

- 2.8 **Essex benefits from an expanding higher education infrastructure.** Within the county, this includes the University of Essex at Colchester (and with an additional campus at Southend) and Anglia Ruskin University and Writtle College, both at Chelmsford, as well as the University Centres in Colchester and South Essex. The University of Essex has world-leading strengths in computer science, informatics and the application of data, all of which will be relevant to the growth of the county's technology capabilities, as well as in biological sciences and finance. Of particular relevance to the growth of the digital economy, Essex was one of the UK's first institutions to house a central research function in artificial intelligence, currently hosting the UK Data Service's national Secure Lab. Looking slightly further afield, there is an easily-accessible world-class higher education presence within the wider hinterland, through the universities in London and Cambridge.
- 2.9 **Our further education base has expanded in recent years,** for example through new provision linked with key local economic drivers. This includes the new Airport College at Stansted Airport (led by Harlow College); Colchester Institute's STEM centre at Braintree; and the Centre for Digital Technologies within South Essex College at Basildon.
- 2.10 **There are opportunities to support innovation and commercialisation.** The University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University have extensive business connections in Essex and beyond, and both are supporting the development of new physical infrastructure (for example, the University of Essex's new Innovation Centre at Colchester and Arise Harlow, Anglia Ruskin's new facility at Harlow Science Park).

Connectivity

- 2.11 **We are outward-facing and we benefit from our proximity to London and the rest of the Greater South East.** London is vitally significant as a commuter destination and a market for businesses based in Essex, with very strong commuter outflows to central London from those districts closest to the M25 and with the best rail connections (such as Epping Forest, Brentwood and Chelmsford). Relationships with neighbouring counties are also, in some cases, very strong (for example, Harlow's strongest commuter relationship is with East Hertfordshire)⁶, underlining the importance of looking 'outwards' to our economic neighbours. New infrastructure (such as the completion of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) to Shenfield) will also help to expand our accessibility across London and the South East.
- 2.12 With the growth of remote and flexible working, opportunities for 'part-time' commuting from further afield are likely to increase, potentially enhancing Essex's attractiveness as a residential base. The presence of a 'London workforce' also provides a pool which could be attracted to work

⁶ It should also be noted that commuter patterns with London are also complex, with significant travel flows between outer London boroughs (such as Redbridge) and neighbouring districts in Essex. Across the Greater South East, there is also a pattern of increasing commuting complexity between London and its hinterland, with increasing numbers of London residents out-commuting to neighbouring towns.

locally: in consultation as part of the development of this Plan, some businesses cited recent experience of London commuters increasingly taking jobs locally.

- 2.13 **Essex is also an important gateway to the rest of the world.** London Stansted Airport is the UK's fourth busiest passenger airport, handling some 25 million passengers in 2017 (as well as a large freight operation) and is a significant driver of economic activity in its own right; although much smaller, Southend Airport has also seen rapid growth in recent years. DP World's London Gateway facility near Stanford-le-Hope is the UK's "fastest growing" container port, supporting an extensive logistics park; the port at Harwich is also an important centre for freight (as well as passenger) activity.

Quality of life

- 2.14 **Rapid population growth is partly linked with the quality of life that the county offers,** in terms of its natural and built environment, relative affordability good access (in some places) to transport connections and services. Maintaining and enhancing this will be important in driving the balance between 'prosperity' and 'productivity' that this Plan seeks to achieve.

Challenges for prosperity and productivity

Addressing the long-term productivity challenge...

- 2.15 These assets and opportunities provide a strong platform for future growth. However, **the UK has faced a significant productivity challenge in recent years:** addressing this is a central driver of national strategy. Although employment rebounded rapidly following the 2008/09 recession, Britain's productivity (relative to that of its main competitors in Europe and North America) has largely failed to grow.
- 2.16 The picture in Essex largely reflects the national situation. In Greater Essex, productivity (measured as GVA per filled job) was around £49,000 in 2017, somewhat below the UK average and (together with Kent) below the productivity levels reported for other counties around the M25. There is also some evidence that the productivity gap between Essex and the UK as a whole has widened somewhat in recent years.
- 2.17 Addressing this productivity gap is essential if we are to raise living standards overall. In 2017, the **Essex Economic Commission** was established to consider the county's economic performance and to examine some of the barriers to productivity growth. The Commission highlighted several factors that underpin our productivity challenge. These include issues associated with:

Workforce and skills

- 2.18 The county's skills profile is improving, as new, better-qualified entrants to the labour market gradually replace those who leave. However, only around 31% of the workforce in the Essex County Council area are qualified to NVQ4 or higher, compared with 39% in Great Britain as a whole, and around 67,000 people have no formal qualifications at all. These county-wide figures mask significant divergence, with particular shortfalls in coastal districts such as Tendring and Castle Point. The implication is that a relatively poor skills base acts as a capacity constraint on

existing firms seeking to make productivity improvements, and potentially a deterrent to new firms seeking to invest: **in the context of a need to adapt to new technologies and a wider range of lifetime careers, access to re-skilling will be important, alongside support for people still in education.**

- 2.19 In aggregate, there is a net outflow of more highly skilled workers to job opportunities elsewhere. This reflects Essex's proximity to London (and the wider Greater South East), which is itself an asset and a location rationale for many people in the first place. But **supporting the growth of more knowledge-intensive activities should help to provide a greater choice of employment opportunities locally.**

Business stock and technology adoption

- 2.20 We have several major firms at the 'leading edge' of technology, parts of the county enjoy a high share of employment in professional and scientific services, and we have a large and growing higher education base. However, there is some evidence that large firms are often relatively 'isolated', without local supply chains (at least in areas of core technology and innovation. This is reflected in a relatively weak performance against conventional measures of innovation (such as access to Innovate UK funds). **Increasing 'scale' and capacity are likely to be important, alongside support for more 'knowledge intensive' activity through indigenous growth and inward investment.**

- 2.21 For those businesses that are able to take advantage of new technologies, the productivity gains could be considerable. However, nationally, the Government's *Made Smarter* review highlighted the extent to which the UK's productivity deficit is influenced by a lack of capacity for technology adoption (partly linked with management skills and time, as well as uncertainty regarding risks and benefits). **There is a growing recognition of the need to promote 'new to the firm' innovation within our wider stock of SMEs – supporting growth across the economy, as well as at the 'leading edge'.**

"Essex is a very enterprising economy, with many business starts, but there is evidence that smaller businesses experience a number of constraints in developing into more substantial higher-productivity enterprises"

Essex Economic Commission, 2017

Adapting to the climate change challenge

- 2.22 The need to be on the 'front foot' in adapting to new technology will be reinforced by the need to rise to the climate challenge. Achieving the UK's net zero emissions target by 2050 will mean radical change in resource consumption and production methods. Per capita emissions in Essex have already fallen substantially (from 6.8 tons per person in 2005 to 4.4 tons in 2017): businesses will need to be able to adapt to – and drive the opportunities from – an acceleration in this trajectory.

Wider capacity constraints

- 2.23 Finally, the Economic Commission identified two forms of 'capacity constraint' that act as a barrier to growth. First, despite our connectivity assets, congestion on the road and rail network presents a challenge, especially in the context of the complex travel flows connecting the county's network

of cities, towns and communities. In addition, recent research has highlighted the challenge that a general lack of 'grow-on' space presents to businesses once they have reached a stage at which they need to expand.

- 2.24 Across all these factors, there are also **significant spatial inequalities**, which are masked when looking at the county as a whole: broadly, coastal areas (including parts of the Thames Gateway) tend to have greater challenges across a range of indicators, reflecting both relative peripherality and historic industrial legacies.

However, all these productivity challenges should be placed in the context of a growing economy in one of the world's leading 'mega-city' regions. There are strong foundations from which we can address our challenges and constraints.

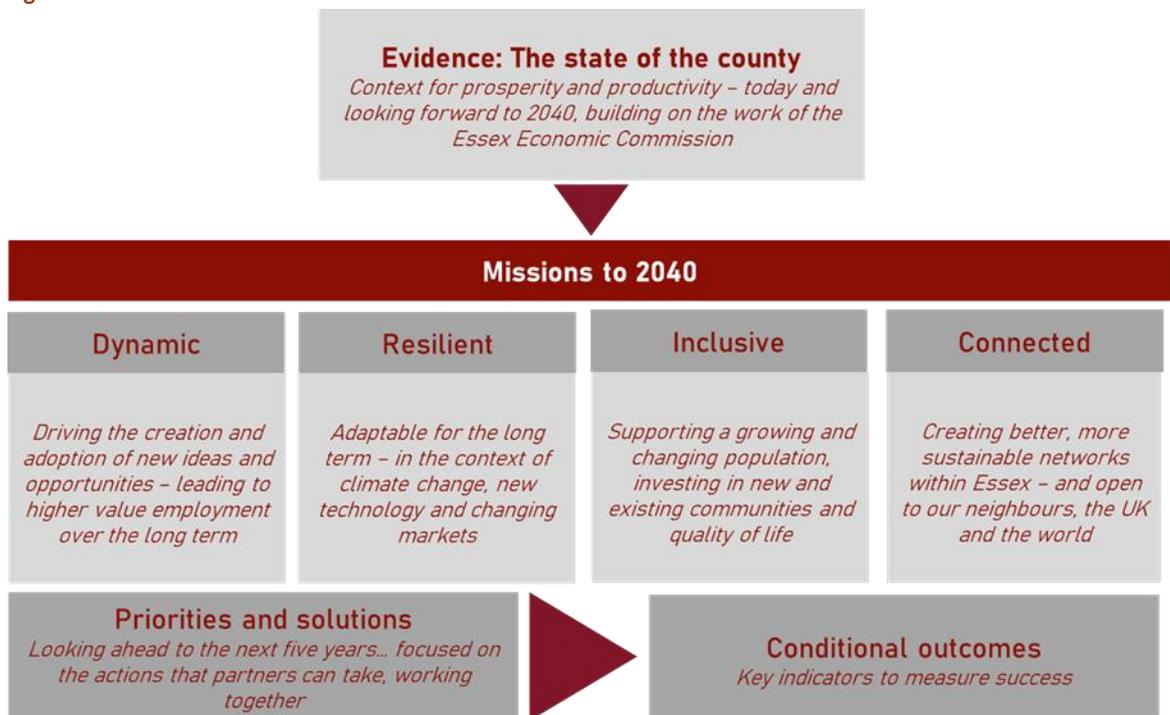
3. Missions for action

This chapter sets the direction for action over the next twenty years. Building on our assets and the opportunity for productivity growth in the light of technology change, it identifies four ‘missions’, setting out our ambitions for the long term and our priorities for action over the next five years.

From the evidence... to four Missions for action

- 3.1 The evidence presented in the previous chapter indicates that we have significant opportunities: Essex is a growing county, with important commercial, educational and infrastructure assets, many of them world class. We are an ‘entrepreneurial’ county (a feature that has been highlighted in several previous strategies) with a diverse and resilient SME base, and we benefit from our access to wider markets. However, we will only achieve the long-term prosperity that this Plan seeks if we are able to increase our productivity – and we will only be successful in achieving our ambitions if the *benefits* of productivity growth impact across the county.
- 3.2 In this context, we have identified four ‘**Missions**’, for a ‘dynamic, resilient, inclusive and connected’ economy, in the context of rapid technology change. Within each Mission, we describe the broad activity areas that we seek to progress over the next five years.

Figure 3-1: Our four Missions to 2040



Mission 1: A dynamic economy

Long-term Mission: Where do we want to get to?

We aim to create a more productive county, where more people are in knowledge-intensive, well-paid jobs, where strong demand for skills drives greater supply, and where innovation and rapid adoption of technology drive new opportunities across the economy.

Medium-term priorities: Areas of focus

- 3.3 Looking to the future, digital technology is already transforming the economy, and there are few industries that will not be impacted by automation and digital enabling technologies. This presents an opportunity for those firms and institutions that can develop and commercialise new solutions, and for those that can adopt new systems and adapt to change. But it is also a challenge to those that lack the capacity to evolve⁷. The same is true for individuals in the labour market, as careers become more diverse and some existing jobs become increasingly vulnerable to automation.
- 3.4 **We will strengthen industry clusters and supply chain relationships, within the context of a focus on innovation-led growth.** Where there is the potential to build stronger links between R&D-intensive ‘anchor’ businesses and the wider network of innovative SMEs, we will seek to support ‘cluster development’ activities. This might include investment in open innovation facilities or in wider network development, with the aim of developing a stronger innovation ecosystem within a (currently) dispersed and diverse business base. We will also seek to maximise business access to Innovate UK and other relevant funding and participation in national innovation initiatives.
- 3.5 **We will strengthen our innovation culture, driving technology adoption and adaption among our established and growing businesses.** We will encourage the process of knowledge transfer and support the development of initiatives that will enable Essex businesses to take advantage of university expertise, especially where it will lead to the adoption of new technologies and processes. More broadly, we want to extend the potential for business-to-business interaction, and **we will champion initiatives that seek to bring forward new technology solutions for public service challenges**, encouraging the participation of innovative small businesses.
- Driving technology innovation through public services**

There are growing public sector-led opportunities to trial new technologies and develop new solutions. In the west of the county, the **Herts-Essex Digital Innovation Zone** is a partnership between local government, the NHS and the private sector to embed digital technology in new infrastructure provision and in the delivery of government services, with the aim of creating new opportunities for commercial innovation as well as driving better public service outcomes.
- 3.6 **We will build our skills base to respond to (and drive) demand.** Working together with across existing institutions and partnerships, we aim to:
- **Increase the supply of industry-relevant qualifications**, encouraging greater specialist provision where it will meet local economic need. This will include making the case for additional capital investment to plan for the skills infrastructure that will be needed in the

⁷ See for example the report of the *Made Smarter* review, chaired by Jurgen Maier (2017)

future, especially in the context of technology change and our housing and population growth.

- **Develop new solutions to employer participation in the skills system**, ensuring that qualifications are relevant to industry needs and are accompanied by the skills for creativity and management that an innovative economy needs. Encouraging greater employer engagement is a priority at national as well as local level (with measures such as the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy designed to incentivise employer involvement). However, it is often hard for employers (especially small businesses) to effectively participate. Together with partners, we aim to encourage employers to engage with the new T-Levels, as they are introduced from 2020, and press for selective devolution to the most appropriate level when it can enable greater employer leadership and help to simplify the landscape.
- **Raise awareness of the career and employment opportunities that are available locally**, and which could become available in the future. This is a task for the ‘whole economy’: employers, schools (at all levels), colleges and intermediaries and the wider public, ensuring that young people are able to make informed choices.
- **Support those who are already in the labour market to access new skills** and adapt to changing technologies and working practices. Most of those working in 2040 – the long-term horizon of our vision – are already in the labour market today, and most of us can expect longer working lives, a more diverse range of working patterns and more frequent career changes. This can bring great benefits, as well as challenges – and it is important that our workforce is able to adapt. As part of this, we will support the delivery and take-up of the National Retraining Scheme, which we will seek to complement where possible. We will also work with employers (including medium-sized and larger firms) to ensure that our adult and community skills offer is geared to future economic opportunity.

3.7 **We will ensure that high-value businesses with the ability to expand have the physical capacity to do so.** This means taking a proactive approach to the provision of business workspace, recognising the lack of supply in the context of significant pressures on land. Some local authorities already take an active role in the market, acquiring and developing sites where this could support economic growth and deliver a commercial return: together, we will consider the potential for further intervention, potentially alongside the private sector.

Mission 2: A resilient economy

Long-term Mission: Where do we want to get to?

We aim to create an economy which is sustainable, where people, firms and institutions benefit from measures driven by technological and climate change and where the costs of change are managed effectively.

Medium-term priorities: Areas of focus

- 3.8 The concept of ‘resilience’ runs throughout this Plan. We want to ensure that we have a workforce and business base that is resilient to change driven by technology change and consumer demand. In industry terms, we want to ensure that our firms are increasingly networked and connected and we want to ensure resilient infrastructure networks. Overarching all of these is the need for environmental resilience and greater sustainability.
- 3.9 Over the period of this Plan, much of the drive for technology change will come from the need to decarbonise our production, construction and transport systems, so that our economy is to be resilient in the face of regulatory change and resource constraints and sustainable in the context of climate change.
- 3.10 **Across all economic growth interventions, we will support the development of new industries associated with the transition to a more energy-efficient, lower carbon economy:**
- We will promote investment into renewable and low-carbon energy (including that associated with our major energy infrastructure opportunities at Bradwell B and the offshore wind industry focused on Harwich).
 - Recognising the transformational nature of low carbon technologies in developing new goods and services and in supporting long-term economic resilience, we will seek to maximise the ability of Essex’s universities and businesses in maximising investment from Innovate UK and other relevant sources – and we will seek to support our wider SME base in investing in measures to improve their resource efficiency.
 - We will create opportunities through public procurement where new technology can result in reduced energy and transport costs and deliver public service improvements
- 3.11 **We will incentivise the development and use of sustainable materials within the construction and development process.** Our plans for eight new Garden Communities present an opportunity to achieve a higher level of environmental sustainability, in the physical design of the communities themselves, and in the Garden City principles that seek to ensure access to one sustainably accessible job per dwelling (with implications for more sustainable travel patterns).
- 3.12 **We will invest in the low carbon skills base.** Planned housing growth presents a specific opportunity to advance this, driving greater demand for businesses and individuals skilled in modern methods of construction and low carbon technologies. Rising demand will also present skills challenges, which our further education colleges are working to address through specialist facilities, such as Colchester Institute’s STEM Centre at Braintree.

Mission 3: An inclusive economy

Long-term Mission: Where do we want to get to?

We aim to create a county in which all communities and individuals have the opportunity to participate in, and share the benefits of, economic growth

Medium-term priorities: Area of focus

- 3.13 In Essex, economic activity rates are historically high at over 80% of the working age population, and there is a strong success rate in getting people into work. Given that this has coincided with a period of generally modest economic growth, this is an important achievement.
- 3.14 But despite the buoyancy of the labour market, there are barriers to a truly ‘inclusive’ model of growth. Wage growth has been weak in recent years, partly reflecting the rise of self-employment and less secure contracts, especially in lower skilled jobs. Disparities across Essex are sharp and are clearly visible between districts.
- 3.15 Resolving these differences is challenging, but in the context of a gradually tightening labour market and wider pressure to raise labour productivity, we will need to employ our available workforce more effectively.
- 3.16 We will promote measures aimed at ensuring ‘inclusive growth’ on a *workforce* and a *place-based* basis. From the perspective of the workforce:
- **We will support opportunities for retraining** for people in the current workforce, linked with the skills ambitions set out earlier, with the aim of supporting resilience to technology and organisational change. This could include advisory services to help people refocus their future careers.
 - **We will drive ‘fair work’**, through the promotion of voluntary commitments to follow best practice and progressively improve working conditions and greater equality in the labour market. The public sector can also have a role, in using the procurement process to drive working improvements (and in linking fair work provisions with access to publicly-funded advisory, inward investment or financial support)
- 3.17 Inequalities are also *place-based*:
- **We will seek to embed ‘anchor institutions’** as economic drivers within communities, especially within our coastal towns, including institutions in the voluntary and community sector. As part of this, we will explore the options for additional public sector employment through relocation, where this could offer wider economic benefits and help to stimulate additional private sector employment.
 - **We will respond to demographic change and evolving demand**, designing new and existing communities that build in opportunities for healthier lifestyles and travel patterns, and respond to changing lifetime needs.

Mission 4: A connected economy

Long-term Mission: Where do we want to get to?

We aim to ensure good quality, sustainable digital and physical connectivity, linking businesses to markets and people to opportunities – within Essex and the rest of the UK and internationally.

Medium-term priorities: Area of focus

- 3.18 Essex enjoys important ‘connectivity’ assets, but the county’s ‘polycentric’ geography creates complex travel patterns. While there have been significant transport investments in recent years, **the road and rail network is under pressure**, on the key radial corridors and on connecting routes. This is compounded by the county’s dispersed population base, which presents challenges in developing viable public transport systems that can achieve the modal shift that a more sustainable economy demands. To address some of these issues at strategic level, work is underway led by **Transport East** to develop a Strategic Transport Plan for Greater Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. Transport East has so far identified three priorities:

Transport East: Emerging priorities

- **Global Gateways:** better connected ports and airports to support access to international markets and support foreign direct investment. Essex contains the East’s only major international airport (and, at Southend, its second largest airport): improving access by road and rail to support Stansted’s passenger growth will be nationally and regionally important, as will better access to London Gateway and the Port at Harwich
- **Multi-centred Connectivity**, improving links between “our fastest growing places and business clusters”
- **Energised Coastal Communities**, delivering our ambitions for energy generation and the visitor economy – as well as improved access from relatively peripheral coastal locations to employment opportunities elsewhere in Essex and beyond

- 3.19 **We will work with Transport East to prioritise strategic transport investments.** As part of this, we will develop options for improved transport connectivity, for example through new rapid transit systems to link places that are not currently served by rail infrastructure)
- 3.20 **We will link our wider investment offer with stronger connectivity**, for example, in facilitating the development of business space in sustainable locations alongside sustainable transport infrastructure, where this could help encourage modal shift and meet demand.
- 3.21 **We will drive high-speed digital connectivity**, working closely with the fixed and mobile telecommunications network operators to remove barriers to the commercial rollout of full-fibre and 5G infrastructure. Where possible, we will encourage the use of available subsidies to extend the rollout of fibre broadband into commercially less attractive rural and harder to reach areas.

4. A framework for delivery

A high-level plan... linked with a process of project development

- 4.1 This Plan takes a high-level, long-term view, setting out a series of key areas for action over the medium term. We will seek to bring forward interventions that contribute to these action areas – recognising that initiatives will be led by a range of partners in business, education and the public sector.
- 4.2 **To support this, we will develop and maintain a project pipeline**, identifying those activities, over and above ‘business as usual’ that will contribute to the four Missions and the action areas contained within them. We anticipate that the Missions and action areas will form the basis for the future prioritisation of devolved economic growth funding in Essex (such as the future Shared Prosperity Fund, or other funding streams channelled via the local enterprise partnership or other local or regional bodies). However, we will never achieve our ambitions through a reliance on conventional public sector grant funding alone: delivery will need to be supported by the private sector and through an investment-driven approach to public funding.
- 4.3 **Where possible, we will aim to secure a return on public sector investment** to deliver our Missions and action areas (for example, by making commercial investments in new office or industrial space, or by investing in new technologies where they will yield a direct return on investment or savings to the public purse). Following the development of the project pipeline, all proposals for public investment will be subject to a full business case development process.

A collaborative approach...

- 4.4 **The economic growth of the county is the responsibility of a wide range of partners.** Businesses (through Success Essex Board, organisations such as Essex Chambers of Commerce, and individually); universities and further education providers; local authorities at all levels; and organisations in the third sector all have a role to play in delivery. **Starting with the creation of Success Essex Board, we will build a more collaborative, ‘coalition for growth’ approach**, in which emerging ideas can be developed, shared and challenged.

... with flexibility over the medium term

- 4.5 We anticipate that the Prosperity and Productivity Plan will be reviewed regularly, with the project pipeline kept ‘live’ so that emerging projects can come forward as initiatives and market potential are identified. We will develop a basket of productivity and sustainability indicators for the county as a whole: we will monitor these, as well as progress in bringing forward individual action areas, when we regularly review this Plan.