

# Chorley's Economic Development Strategy

2012





## Background and Context

Chorley's economy performs well compared to the rest of Lancashire and the North West. It has significant economic assets, including its location, good connectivity, business growth and relatively low unemployment.

There are however, challenges that this strategy will address. While the borough has performed relatively well through the recession, it needs to exploit its assets and strengths to fully benefit when the economy recovers. The town centre needs to be revitalised to ensure that it is a place where people choose to visit and spend time, and that it complements the strengths of the rest of the borough. The strategic site at Buckshaw Village has supported economic growth in the borough, but plans need to be put in place to bring forward the strategic and employment sites, identified as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) process that will drive economic growth. While the borough is relatively affluent, there are areas of deprivation which need greater support to improve and reduce the gap.

Changes across Lancashire, the North West and nationally have been taken into account in this strategy. Working in partnership with others across the private, public and voluntary, community and faith sectors will be important in delivering improvements in the borough's economy. The council already has good links through the Chorley Partnership and the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership, which will be used in delivering this strategy. Legislative changes also make delivering this strategy important to the borough. The planned reforms to the welfare system and the way that local government is financed make it important to ensure that more people find sustainable work and that business growth is encouraged and sustained. This strategy aims to achieve that.

### Strategic Alignment

The economic development strategy will support the delivery of the following strategies:

- The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership's priorities
- The Chorley Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy

- The Council's Corporate Strategy

In addition, by strengthening the economy, increasing employment opportunities and reducing inequalities; the strategy will support the delivery of:

- The health and wellbeing partnership's priorities.
- Chorley and South Ribble Community Safety Partnership strategic assessment and partnership plan.
- Prevention of Homelessness strategy
- Chorley VCFS Network strategy

## Vision

Further economic development in Chorley is the key to improving the quality of life in the borough and as such has been identified as the Council's top priority.

Chorley's vision is to capitalise on Chorley's location in order to be the place of choice in the North West to do business. Chorley will attract employers to its key employment sites and together with a strong local business base; residents will have a greater opportunity to gain well paid employment locally.

In addition Chorley will be a thriving market town. Capitalising on its famous markets and wealth of independent shops, it will complement, rather than compete with neighbouring towns attracting visitors from across the region.

The vision will be delivered through five priority areas:

1. To have a thriving town centre - Improve and develop the town centre, attracting more visitors both during the day and evening.
2. To promote and increase inward investment in Chorley – providing a mix of high and low skilled jobs and attracting well paid employment.
3. To provide business support to new and existing businesses.

4. Supporting young people through education, training and fostering entrepreneurship - Develop, support and provide training and opportunities for young people to develop Chorley's businesses of the future or find employment in the borough.
5. Reducing the gap in our most deprived communities.

The context and actions to address the priority areas are provided below in more detail.

## Timescales

The overall vision for the economic development strategy is ten years, to be achieved by 2022; however the actions identified for each of the priority areas cover a two year period.

## Action Plan and Monitoring

For each of the priority areas a selection of the key actions being undertaken over the next 18-24 months make up the action plan. In order to monitor the progress in delivering against the priority areas, key long term outcomes and measures have been identified. These will be reported again on an annual basis, at the same time as refreshing the strategy and actions.

More regular and detailed monitoring of delivery of the actions will be carried out by the Councils and its partners.



Priority: To have a thriving town centre

## Context and issues

Chorley is a well-known market town. Market days on Tuesdays and Saturdays are the busiest days to visit the town centre with people travelling from neighbouring towns and regions to visit our famous markets. Recent investment in both the flat iron and indoor markets have further strengthened and re-invigorated Chorley's famous markets which have seen an increase in occupancy.

Chorley's location near key shopping destinations in urban centres and city regions such as Preston, Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool, together with its lack of large/well known retail stores, restaurants and entertainment venues mean that many people travel out of, or bypass Chorley en route to other destinations.

Despite this Chorley does benefit from a number of high quality independent shops and boutiques ranging from fashion, home and interior, restaurants, jewellery, butchers, florists, health and beauty to specialist bike, curtain and fire place shops.

While these independent stores are seen as a unique selling point for Chorley, the town's retail hierarchy does also show a proportionally high number of charity, gambling and value shops which can be seen as a sign of a declining town centre, however locally they do appear to be meeting demand.

The percentage of vacant town centre floor space has seen a gradual reducing trend since 2009. However, there are a number of long term vacant properties in key town centre locations. This, together with public realm issues such as poorly maintained premises and shop frontages, lack of seating and greenery, affect visitors' experience and give the perception that the town centre is in need of revitalising.

In addition, while the majority of the town centre is pedestrianised, the disparate mix and spread of shops in the town centre and the areas of poor quality townscape also impact on Chorley's shopping experience.

To address these issues the Council has already remodelled its town centre grant programmes to support the establishment of new enterprises within long term vacant properties. Overall the grants programme aims to fund a number of measures that will help retailers to improve their shop fronts, refurbish premises and generally improve their business. As well as supporting job creation and bringing investment into the town centre, the grants programme is already improving the town centre offer and public realm for our visitors, but more still needs to be done.

Figures over the last four years have shown a decline in the number of visits by 13%. This compares with an approximate 10% decline nationally most of which can be attributed to the impact of the recession and overall economic downturn.

Car Parking in Chorley is relatively cheap and conveniently located close to the town centre, providing a wide range of options for people visiting the town. The quality of the parking does vary and is predominantly off street, uncovered, and pay and display. Further improvements to the car parks and gateways into the town centre will support the priority of being a thriving town centre.

In summary, Chorley town centre's current strengths lie in its markets and quality independent shops, but it faces strong competition from other key retail areas across the sub region. To be competitive, further investment in the town centre is required to improve and diversify the experience including the offer of quality shops, eating establishment's and entertainment venues, as well as an improved public realm for visitors. This will partially be addressed through the development of a new ASDA store which is due to open in 2013. The development which will incorporate redevelopment of the Pall Mall Triangle and part of the Market Street public realm will help to regenerate the area as well as providing up to 400 new jobs. However, this opportunity needs to be exploited to gain the maximum benefits.



The table below details the key actions that will be delivered over the next 18 months, together with the measures that we will use to review the success.

Long Term Outcome
To create a vibrant town centre that attracts people from both the local community and visitors in the day and evening, for shopping, eating and entertainment.
Key Actions 2012/13 – 2013/14
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigate the opportunity to purchase town centre leases.</li> <li>2. Develop and implement a town centre marketing plan.</li> <li>3. Develop a town centre master plan.</li> <li>4. Re-open access to Market Street (Initial 12 month trial).</li> <li>5. Investigate ways to boost the early evening economy.</li> <li>6. Develop a programme of public realm improvements in the town centre.</li> <li>7. Carry out a review of town centre car parks and develop an action plan of improvements.</li> <li>8. Secure planning for the remodelled Market Walk II shopping development.</li> <li>9. Bring forward a development at Market St/Gillibrand St.</li> </ol>
Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in town centre visits</li> <li>• Increase in average length of stay of visits</li> <li>• Increase in the number of new businesses established and sustained.</li> <li>• Reduction in vacant town centre floor space</li> <li>• Increase in the number of jobs created</li> <li>• Increase in businesses operating in the early evening.</li> </ul>



## Priority: To promote and increase inward investment in Chorley

### Context and issues

Chorley is an excellent business location with some outstanding existing sites including the Revolution at Buckshaw Village. The existing sites have been key to supporting economic growth in the borough over recent years, however work is now needed to take forward and develop the strategic and employment sites, identified in the LDF, in order to continue to drive economic growth and prosperity.

Chorley is ideally situated in close proximity to the M61 and M6 while also benefitting from regular direct rail connections to Manchester, Manchester airport and the Manchester city region. This may be further strengthened by a high speed rail link on the line between Manchester and Preston as part of the national 'high speed two (HS2)' programme. HS2 should be operational between Birmingham and London by 2026, extending to Northern England later in the second phase by 2032 - 33. While this is beyond the life of this strategy Chorley will need to work with partners in the region to ensure that we are in a position to benefit from the high speed link in terms of jobs, growth and prosperity.

Broadband speeds are, in general highest in urban areas. In Chorley almost 85% of households are in an area with connections between 2 and 20 megabits per second, however 15% have no or low capacity connections. While almost no areas yet have superfast broadband, Lancashire County Council has agreed a £62.5m deal to roll-out superfast broadband across the county. The project will extend fibre broadband across the county, reaching 97% of premises by the end of 2014. This has the potential to ensure that local businesses can become global businesses. It will ensure that firms remain here and it will also attract a more diverse range of high growth, high value companies to the area.

Within Lancashire, Chorley is one of four districts that have seen the most significant employment growth and Gross Value Added (GVA) per population over the last five to ten years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lancashire County Economic Assessment 2011



Chorley has a higher than average number of jobs in the services and knowledge sectors and less in manufacturing compared with other districts in the region. The service sector, while being an important source of employment, is primarily low paid and low skilled work, as opposed to the knowledge sector which is seen as a key driver for future economic growth in the area.

The proposed changes to Business Rates in the Local Government's Finance Bill are currently progressing through the House of Lords and are expected to be enacted later this year. The Bill will see no change for businesses in the way their business rates are calculated, however it does incentivise Councils to grow businesses and encourage enterprise and job creation in their area, as Councils will get to keep 50% of the business rate income.

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership together with BAE systems has been successful in achieving Enterprise Zone Status for the BAE sites at Samlesbury and Warton. This is expected to attract investment and employment into the region and as such provides an opportunity for encouraging investment in Chorley of supporting supply chain companies, particularly in the advanced engineering and manufacturing sectors.

## Employment

Between 1999 – 2008 Chorley saw a 23.4% increase in employment growth, the second highest in Lancashire and well in excess of national and regional figures. Despite Chorley's strong performance in employment growth, there is a relative shortage of jobs in Chorley compared with other areas; the ratio of total jobs to population in Chorley is 0.66 per resident aged 16-64, which is lower than the Lancashire figure of 0.73.

Unemployment is less of an issue in Chorley than other areas, 19.4% (12,900 people) are economically inactive. This is below the regional (25.7%) and national (23.9%) averages. This is also shown through relatively low levels of working age people claiming job seekers allowance. In April 2012, Chorley's performance was 2.7% compared to the 4.6% regional rate, and 4% national rate.

The median workplace earnings in 2011 were £464 per week. The median earnings based on residency in April 2011 were £477 per week. Both were above the regional average, but below the national average. This difference reflects the commuter flows for the borough; residents commute out of the borough to higher earning jobs, while jobs within the borough are paid at less than the county average.

Overall, Chorley is already in a strong position. It benefits from an excellent location and transport infrastructure, and a track record in business growth and survival, employment growth and above regional averages for work place earnings. Chorley's central location also

makes it attractive as a place to live, with many highly educated and skilled people choosing to live in the borough, but travelling out to neighbouring cities to work, which can be seen through the higher residency based earning figures.

The table below details the key actions that will be delivered over the next 18 months, together with the measures that we will use to review the success.

<b>Long Term Outcome</b>
To promote and increase inward investment in Chorley to support economic growth in the borough and provide a mix of well paid, high and low skilled jobs.
<b>Key Actions 2012/13 – 2013/14</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritise employment sites identified in the LDF and develop a plan for bringing forward development and inward investment.</li> <li>2. Develop an inward investment marketing package for Chorley</li> <li>3. Develop and implement a grant reward scheme to encourage inward investment to Chorley</li> <li>4. Develop links with enterprise zones in the region and encourage inward investment of associated supply chain organisations.</li> <li>5. Investigate the feasibility of creating an additional M6 Junction for Chorley between J27 and J28.</li> <li>6. Monitor progress of the HS2 programme and establish links and respond to consultations as required.</li> </ol>
<b>Success Measures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of new businesses established and sustained.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of jobs created/safeguarded.</li> <li>• Increase in the median workplace earnings (residency based)</li> <li>• Reduction in JSA claimants in Chorley</li> <li>• Increase in the amount of investment brought into the borough</li> <li>• Increase in the job density ratio within the borough</li> <li>• Increase in the number of businesses re-locating to Chorley.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of grants provided</li> </ul>



Priority: To provide business support to new and existing businesses

## Context

Chorley's location makes it an excellent place to start a business which can be seen through strong rates of growth in business stock. The 2010 figures for active enterprises show 350 business births, the fourth highest number of all the Lancashire districts. Over recent years much support has been given to business start-ups in the form of advice and grants. This has directly supported 137 new businesses to start up between 2010/11 and 2011/12.

In addition to strong business start-ups, Chorley also boasts above national average survival rates. In terms of the businesses directly supported by the Council 95% of businesses survive after one year, and 91% after two years, five year survival rates are above the Lancashire and regional averages.

Chorley is home to a number of 'Gazelles'. Gazelles are small, fast growing businesses that can create a high number of job opportunities. They are defined as companies that have experienced at least 60% growth in employment over a three year period. Of the 50 identified 'gazelle' businesses in Lancashire, five are in Chorley. Supporting the development of gazelle businesses is a key aspect in strengthening Chorley's economy; however these businesses require complex levels of support which can place much higher levels of demand on business support provision and public sector agencies.

The Council and partners endeavour to procure locally in order to support local businesses. The Council's joint procurement strategy already supports and encourages local and third sector suppliers (within legal constraints) to engage in procurement exercises. In addition the new Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, once in force, brings in a statutory requirement for public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services (not goods or works) contracts and for connected purposes.

A high percentage of the borough can be classed as rural, making the rural economy important to Chorley in terms of employment, food production and supply, supporting the tourism economy, and generally maintaining the beautiful countryside. As in many areas across the county poor profits in the agricultural economy are leading to a general trend in diversification of farming activities, but support and investment is needed in order to facilitate these changes.

The table below details the key actions that will be delivered over the next 18 months, together with the measures that we will use to review the success.

Long Term Outcome
To provide support to new and existing businesses
Key Actions 2012/13 – 2013/14
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver small capital grants to support new business start-ups (£500-£1,000 each)</li> <li>2. Develop and deliver a grant/reward scheme for expanding businesses which are creating/safeguarding jobs</li> <li>3. Appoint a business adviser for existing business (three years plus trading)</li> <li>4. Develop a business support infrastructure, including 'ask the expert' breakfast meetings and seminars.</li> <li>5. Investigate provision of an enterprise hub managed workspace scheme.</li> <li>6. Investigate support provision to social enterprises and identify gaps and requirements.</li> </ol>
Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of businesses sustained for 12, 24 months and beyond.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of jobs safeguarded</li> <li>• Increase in the number of new jobs created.</li> </ul>



## Priority: Supporting young people through education, training and fostering entrepreneurship

### Context

Improving Chorley's economy is a long term goal, and while some actions can provide immediate support and impact, working with young people to foster entrepreneurship is a long term priority. The aim is to encourage and support young people of school age to achieve their potential, both in terms of educational attainment and wider skills. Alongside this, the actions to promote inward investment and support businesses should mean that Chorley can be more competitive in the offer of skilled and well-paid jobs to young people coming out of education and training, as well as supporting the entrepreneurs of the future to set up businesses in Chorley.

Education in Chorley is strong. Chorley has a well-qualified potential workforce: 33% of the population are qualified to Level 4 (Higher Education) or above (compared with 28.7% regional and 31.3% national). Only 7.8% of the population has no qualifications (compared with 12.1% regional and 11.3% national). 81.5% pupils achieve five or more GCSE A\*-C, placing Chorley in the top quartile of the national rankings.

Chorley benefits from one of the top colleges in the country. Runshaw College, based across Chorley and South Ribble, came top in the country in the exam table league (2011) and is rated outstanding by Ofsted. Linking in with UCLan (University of Central Lancashire) the college now offers university courses in state of the art facilities. Also within Lancashire are Lancaster, UCLan, Edge Hill and Cumbria universities.

More work needs to be done in building relationships with schools and universities and developing Chorley as graduate location of choice. Many graduates from outside of the North West currently leave the area after studying and the second key aim of this priority is to attract more skilled graduates into the borough to live and work.

Despite strong educational attainment Chorley has seen a steady increase in the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, employment or training. Increasing NEET figures has been an issue nationally due to its strong link to the economic climate. For this reason much is being done both at a national and local level. The impact of unemployment on younger residents can also be seen in the percentage of 18 – 24 year olds claiming job seekers allowance which is a higher percentage than other age groups, however still below regional and national averages.

The table below details the key actions that will be delivered over the next 18 months, together with the measures that we will use to review the success.

Long Term Outcome
Supporting young people through education, training and fostering entrepreneurship to develop the Chorley's businesses of the future or find employment in the borough.
Key Actions 2012/13 – 2013/14
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Deliver/organise the Chorley schools enterprise challenge, promoting entrepreneurship to pupils</li> <li>2. Deliver the LSP NEET project.</li> <li>3. Implement a programme of apprenticeships including RSL and private sector apprenticeship placements.</li> <li>4. Establish links with Further Education/High Educational establishments within the region and local businesses to match skills and jobs and create opportunities for young people and local businesses.</li> <li>5. Develop a jobs/career fair for young people.</li> </ol>
Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the % of 16-18 year olds who are NEET.</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of JSA claimants between the ages of 18 – 24.</li> </ul>



## Priority: Reducing the gap in our most deprived communities

Despite Chorley's overall strong economic position, there are growing economic disparities within the borough, with some areas facing severe social and economic deprivation and high levels of worklessness contrasting with areas of considerable prosperity. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation published in March 2011 demonstrates that Chorley can now be considered to be more deprived comparative to other areas than when the Indices were last produced in 2007. Overall, Chorley is considered to be the 156<sup>th</sup> most deprived of 326 local authorities in England. The key cause behind this are increases in employment and income deprivation and a significant increase in the level of health deprivation in the borough.

Clearly, overall unemployment and work place earnings figures for Chorley are relatively strong, which indicates that the issues in the worst 20% areas are being masked by more affluent areas of the borough. To ensure that the whole borough benefits from a strengthened economy, this strategy needs to take these issues into consideration. By ensuring that the most deprived communities are included in improvements in jobs, skills and businesses; this strategy will also contribute to a reduction in deprivation, and improved life chances for residents.

Another factor for consideration is Chorley's ageing population. The level of over 65s has increased by 26% (2,658) since 2001 and now makes up 17% of Chorley's population.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that this will rise further to 24.4% by 2020, which is above national and regional averages.<sup>3</sup> While this generally means reduced numbers of economically active people in the borough, which can place additional pressure on public services, it can also create opportunities to utilise the skills and spending power of this age group in terms of part time working, volunteering and spending within the borough.

A lot of work is already being done across the borough and by a range of partners to tackle this issues, including early intervention and prevention work around families and health and wellbeing issues. These actions are covered by other strategies and projects; therefore the focus of this priority is to address employment and income deprivation in these areas.

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<sup>2</sup> 2011 Census

<sup>3</sup> Subnational population projections 2008, ONS.

The table below details the key actions that will be delivered over the next 18 months, together with the measures that we will use to review the success.

Long Term Outcome
<p>To reduce the gap in Chorley's most deprived communities and support them in becoming economically active and self-supporting. This will result in reductions in employment deprivation, income deprivation, health and disability deprivation, education, skills and training deprivation, and crime and disorder in Chorley's most deprived communities.</p>
Key Actions 2012/13 – 2013/14
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a credit union for Chorley.</li> <li>2. Carry out a review of what jobs are available in Chorley and what skills are required.</li> <li>3. Develop a programme of targeted interventions in the most deprived areas including:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Skills training</li> <li>b. Business start-up advice</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Develop a 'Chorley Works' scheme to tackle unemployment by placing clients into work via a mixture of recruitment subsidies, travel expenses and diploma training</li> <li>5. Deliver the Uplift time banking project with Lancashire County Council and Spice</li> <li>6. Support a thriving Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector that can offer paid and/or volunteering opportunities to enhance job creation within the borough</li> </ol>
Success Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chorley's most deprived wards will see a:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduction in the claimant count;</li> <li>○ Reduction in those claiming for 6 months and over;</li> <li>○ Reduction in unemployment levels;</li> <li>○ Reduction in all crime figures;</li> <li>○ Reduction in drug and alcohol admission rates;</li> <li>○ Increase in affordable housing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase in volunteering opportunities.</li> </ul>