



BCP Futures – Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole

Unleashing our potential

2021-2026

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Foreword

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) is the UK's newest city region and it is brimming with prospects, positivity and pride.

This is not 'business as usual', we are facing extraordinary challenges and opportunities for a better future. We are doing all we can to unleash our potential - placing the city region in the best position possible for rapid economic recovery and ultimately, achieving our Big Plan ambition to create a world class city region – one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.

We want to harness the potential of our coastline of opportunity and make BCP a place where people and businesses want to be – because of the vibrancy of our communities, the strength of our economy, the skills of our people, the wealth of our culture and the quality of our infrastructure, our environment and quality of life.

Working with a shared passion and commitment for the city region and its communities, BCP Council has created BCP Futures, a brand to unite key initiatives, projects and programmes that will help us deliver the Big Plan. A key strand of BCP Futures is this innovative and future looking economic development strategy, our commitment to the business community of BCP. An essential feature of the deal will be an enhanced concierge service for businesses provided by the economic development team. It is our 'deal' which recognises that business are the engines of our economy – delivering jobs and prosperity. This has not been an easy time for anyone – let alone achieving business growth or even business survival. We are committed to ensuring that BCP Council will do all it can to ensure businesses have all the best levers and support to deliver a resilient recovery, clean growth and, ultimately, helping us improve the prosperity of people in the BCP city region.

We believe this is the right strategy for a real place with hardworking people and great businesses – it's designed to deal with the critical issues of today with ambition for tomorrow. It will foster the already shared passion and commitment across our region and bring together our organisations and partners to provide one common voice, leading to better economic outcomes, greater investment and new opportunities for immediate recovery, long-term improvements and levelling up.



**Councillor Drew Mellor,
Leader BCP Council**



**Councillor Philip Broadhead,
Deputy Leader BCP Council**

1. Introduction

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) economic development strategy (EDS) comes at a critical time for the communities of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, with current and on-going economic impacts of the covid pandemic, a global climate emergency, adapting to Britain's new global position outside of the EU and delivering the government's levelling up agenda.

We are well-placed to respond to these challenges.

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP area or city region)¹ is a vibrant and beautiful place. We are home to nearly 400,000 residents and over 15,000² businesses, many in growing and innovative tech sectors. We have an outstanding education sector, with world-leading research, higher and further education capabilities. In 2019 our annual economy was worth almost £12 billion³ – with millions of visitors each year enjoying our outstanding environment, perhaps appreciated more than ever most recently. We have a strong asset base, with a growing 5G and digital capacity, an international airport and significant UK passenger and freight port capabilities – as well as a prime gateway position with our proximity to the South West and Central South regions of the UK. We are emerging as the newest coastal city region in the UK under a unitary authority, BCP Council – the tenth largest urban local authority in the UK.

Whilst we understand our growing strengths, even without the significant external economic factors of recent years, the BCP economy still faces a number of challenges which need to be addressed to reach its full potential. In particular, productivity levels across the area are below average – and by early 2020 were losing ground. This is compounded by wider factors in the area including an ageing demographic, the significant gap between average wages and house prices, a challenging labour market in terms of skills and availability, pockets of significant deprivation and a transport infrastructure in need of update and expansion, whilst delivering against a commitment to carbon neutrality.

Our economic strategy is aligned to the two primary regions that the BCP city region has an economic functional relationship with, the Central South and the Great South West. The BCP city region has important economic links to the Central South area to the east, including the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth, enabling physical access to a market of over 18 million people (including greater London within 90 minutes), and shared key strengths and clusters including financial services, medical technology, advanced engineering and manufacturing, culture and creativity. Given our important role with the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, the BCP city region also benefits from connections into the Great South West, with its strong 'powerhouse' brand as the leading UK region for the blue and green economy.⁴

¹ BCP area and City Region are interchangeable

² 15,240 UK Business Count, 2021

³ £11.893bn GDP at current market prices, 2019, ONS

⁴ https://www.dorsetlep.co.uk/userfiles/files/UKTI_Fin_Exc_South%20Coast_TAGGED_REV1.pdf

We are challenging ourselves to identify the best solutions for the city region - including new ways of delivery via our urban regeneration company, new ways of working inspired by the impacts of covid, re-inventing BCP city region with an innovative seafront strategy, achieving well-being for all, alongside an active response to the climate emergency, including a 'smart place' initiative which is embedding digital and technology solutions to improve the lives of our residents and the prospects of our businesses.

The aim of this strategy, therefore, is to balance the many economic opportunities within the BCP city region – whilst addressing impacts of global, national and local challenges. This strategy will help deliver the government's levelling up ambitions to strengthen local leadership to drive real change and raise living standards.

Our goal is to ensure the council's work is effective and meaningful and focuses on supporting the engines of our economy - business and industry - to drive recovery and future prosperity. We recognise that BCP Council alone cannot deliver all the many opportunities across the city region – nor can it solve all the issues. We will set and monitor ambitious, but realistic, targets to ensure we are delivering our aim and goal - including for the city region to become a top 20 ranked city region in terms productivity by 2026 - it is currently ranked 32 out of the 62 cities.

We set out our economic strategy as a '**prosperity deal with business**'. Our approach is to invest in removing barriers, using all the levers at our disposal to encourage business-led growth through better productivity via a set of specific business pledges – delivering prosperity and improved living standards for all. We want to develop an exemplar relationship across the council and our business community which sees a united partnership approach to achieving sustainable growth and prosperity for the future.

This is a high-level strategy outlining our future priorities and ways of working with business. A detailed action and investment plan setting out how this strategy will be implemented is due to be published in early 2022.

2.Context: Strategic

There are four primary external factors shaping this deal:

Covid-19 economic impacts:

- supporting those sectors most at risk of failing to recover to at least pre-pandemic levels
- immediate and longer-term labour market issues heightened as a result of employment ‘shocks’ and responding to fundamental changes to how we work.
- BCP exposure to particular levelling up issues as a coastal community with an older demographic.
- harnessing an opportunity to “Build Back Better”: Improving infrastructure, skills, and innovation – with a focus on levelling up communities and places left behind.

The UK’s new global position and impacts for our trading environment and labour markets:

- supporting business to adjust to a new trading landscape and export regime
- understanding the wider opportunities for inward investment and growth of foreign direct investment.
- tackling immediate and longer-term impacts of change to the labour market, particularly for seasonal and uneven labour requirements.
- building on the work of our world-class universities to continue to develop new Intellectual property (IP) and cutting-edge innovation, maintaining and growing competitive identity across our exemplar industries.

Significant and emerging changes to the national economic development context, including a new, post-EU public investment regime and delivering the Government’s levelling up agenda:

- preparing for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other competitive national regeneration programmes.
- making best use of innovative and alternative finance mechanisms – including maximising public assets and non-grant investment options.
- supporting businesses in new ways, particularly influencing the future of subsidy control and identifying better ways of doing business with national government, such as devolved responsibilities.
- delivering the Government’s levelling up agenda

Responding effectively to the climate emergency and transitioning to a net zero economy by at least 2050.

- Building on the [announcement](#) in 2021 by CPD that BCP Council is one of the top 88 performing cities in the world in terms of sustainability.
- identifying effective ways for all business, irrespective of size and sector, to improve resource efficiency and minimise carbon use, including logistics, production and processes
- unlocking new business opportunities in the clean growth economy
- supporting new 'ways of working' – maximising digital connectivity and reimaging our towns and cities.

Beyond these external factors, a number of significant local economic challenges and opportunities also shape our prosperity deal.

BCP Council is the tenth largest urban local authority in England and our communities are vibrant and diverse, with an outstanding quality of life, where everyone plays an active role – a globally-recognised coastline of opportunity, where people love to live, learn, work, explore, invest, relax and play. The council's priorities are outlined within the BCP Council corporate strategy, with a focus on sustainability, wellbeing, investment and vibrant communities. Our prosperity deal will be a key element of re-establishing our already good business relations into a 'best in class' approach to achieve shared ambitions for the BCP area.

We are committed to creating a leading city region – one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play. To achieve this the 'Big Plan' was created in 2021, comprising **five iconic projects** that will deliver big changes across the whole BCP area and support the **creation of 13,000 jobs** across all sectors of our economy – good jobs for local people – creating wealth for our businesses and livelihoods for our families. Our prosperity deal targets the business potential to realise this commitment alongside the Council.

Understanding our economy is an important part of ensuring our responses are effective and impactful.

3.Context: Economic

The impacts of the covid pandemic have been profound in the city region's economy, with significant negative exposure across a number of sectors, particularly given our strong reliance on hospitality, leisure, retail and health and care. This has been balanced to an extent by the resilience and rapid adaption (in part underpinned by our excellent digital infrastructure) of other sectors, including financial services and tech-based companies in creative and engineering.

Over 74,000 employments have been supported since the furlough scheme started in spring 2020 in BCP. At its peak nearly a third of people were supported through this scheme locally. At the end of August this figure had fallen to 7,600 with around 28% of this number in the wholesale and retail and hospitality and food services sector. It is widely expected that as furlough ends there will be some increase in unemployment.

Over the last year, BCP Council has delivered a comprehensive package of economic support. It has provided advice and guidance to businesses, strengthened local partnerships, facilitated business rates relief and launched campaigns to assist with the safe reopening of local high streets. Over £150 million from government has also been successfully issued by the council to local businesses through a series of mandatory and discretionary grant schemes.

As we come out of the immediate response initiatives, including furlough and BCP Council support packages⁵, we will continue to monitor the direct impacts on the BCP area's economy. These could include lower employment levels (particularly for our younger workforce), increases in benefit take-ups and higher risks of business failures in impacted sectors for some time to come.

The effects may be felt for some time to come. However, early indications are that the BCP city region is bouncing back strongly, with city centre footfall and spend levels above pre-lockdown baseline levels in our town centres (with high percentages coming from people outside the area)⁶. We will continue to monitor this situation across our communities – particularly following the end of the summer period.

The crisis may also lead to more permanent behavioural changes in the way we work, with evidence suggesting firms may be more open to remote working (with a right to request flexible working for every employee now imminent), while firms previously reliant on integrated global supply-chains may review these operating models. The BCP city region has good digital connectivity, yet its sectoral structure may limit higher rates of home working in the future.

This immediate situation is compounded by longer term economic issues linked to low levels of productivity⁷ in the BCP City Region - including a challenging local labour market, brought into starker relief given the impacts on a previously significant migrant labour workforce

⁵ Organised via the [BCP R³ Taskforce](#) and programme

⁶ Centre for Cities, High Streets recovery Tracker.

⁷ Broadly measured as the efficiency of the rate of output/value per unit of input/cost (often measured by bottom line improvement).

before 2016. Even before the pandemic, average earnings for residents in the BCP area were around 95% of the national average, with productivity levels per hour worked on average 89.7% of the UK figure (outside London). Early figures (ONS, May 2021) indicate that, whilst productivity levels have improved markedly since the height of the pandemic, they remain below pre-pandemic levels, which were actually in decline – and had not recovered substantially since the recessionary period post-2008. Despite high numbers of vacancies now emerging across the business base, these remain ‘hard to fill’ with a lack of appropriately skilled people able to meet business demands. **Business feedback is clear that this is now the top issue in terms of future stability - let alone growth.**

Given the critical importance of skills and labour, BCP Council will work closely with key stakeholders to address the issues relating to the BCP area and Dorset economies. We recognise⁸ that, as well as external factors on labour market supply, it is not always possible to rapidly adjust labour markets when demand for goods and services increase (or decrease) rapidly. It can be difficult to plan what, when or where labour demand might be in the future – particularly for smaller employers. In relatively small economies such as the city region, there are a number of constraints to effective supply of labour – a situation made more stark given an ageing population and a smaller migrant workforce. Improving productivity will be one solution for business – as this will decrease reliance on labour. However, for most the need for a strong supply of skilled and available labour will remain a critical priority. **We recognise this and prioritise action for this across the strategy.**

This all has a knock-on effect to many other aspects of people’s lives, including housing and health, and greatly reduces the social mobility and progression of many residents. Currently there are 9.5% in receipt of housing benefit in BCP (May 21) compared to 10.1% in England. However, with the changeover to universal credit there are also a further 11.1% in BCP in receipt of universal credit housing entitlement. The growth in inward migration has slowed significantly since 2016, perpetuated by the huge negative impact covid has had on the significant number of active language schools within the BCP area. All indications in terms of demographic trajectory show that the BCP area and Dorset will maintain their position as having the oldest population and lowest proportion of under 50s anywhere in the UK. The latest available data (2019⁹) illustrates that the largest sectors in terms of employment tend to be those associated with public sector delivery, with the ‘care sector’ (human health and social work) activities the largest with 30,000 employed (16.0%). Wholesale and retail is estimated to employ around 29,000 people (15.4%) followed by accommodation and food services 17,000 (9.0%) and education at 15,000 (8.0%).

There is a direct link between the high proportion of employment in these sectors and BCP city region’s low productivity levels. In short, by the nature of these sectors, productivity is harder to improve - they are labour intensive and may have less obvious ways to drive innovation in terms of increasing automation. However, the city region has the potential to lead the way in taking forward new opportunities in these sectors. For example, the Dorset integrated care system is amongst the most cutting-edge in the UK, particularly in its approach to utilising technology in health and care.

New opportunities are also emerging in Dorset and BCP area’s approach to healthy ageing, with a growing specialisation in research and treatment in this area. These are opportunities

⁸ See also Skills and Labour Market Analysis, Dorset Skills Advisory Panel, Moor Economics, 2019.

⁹ BRES - ONS

which are explored in more detail below – but provide a platform for both exemplary services for residents as well as supporting higher productivity and prosperity. It is important to note the economic contribution of these sectors to the local economy, beyond productivity.

The BCP area's tourism sector makes the region one of the top performing coastal resorts in the UK in terms of business turnover (£1.07bn in 2018) and Gross Value Added (£598m in the same year)¹⁰. In BCP in 2019 the biggest contributors to the overall Gross Value Added (GVA¹¹) were real estate activities (17%), financial and insurance activities (13%) and wholesale and retail including the repair of motor vehicles (10%). Other important sectors in the BCP economy, in terms of numbers employed, include manufacturing, finance and insurance, professional/technical and administration - all individually contribute c. 14,000 employees (7.4%). Of these sectors, finance and insurance are significantly more represented in BCP (7.4%) than in the South-West (3.2%) and England (3.5%) – in fact BCP is one of the largest UK finance centres outside London and Edinburgh and a significant local GVA contributor (13.8%¹²).

There are also a number of emerging and specialist sectors which are difficult to capture using traditional Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC codes). A significant and growing presence in marine, digital and creative cannot easily be reflected in published data. They also 'cross-cut' many other sectors. For example, Tech Nation estimated in 2018 that the creative and digital sectors contributed £363m to the local economy with another report identifying that 28% of all new BCP business start-ups in 2019 were digital tech-related¹³. This reflects some of the recognised strengths in our local universities. Bournemouth University, Arts University Bournemouth, AECC University College and Bournemouth and Poole College all have globally recognised research strengths in these emerging sectors as well as the more traditional sectors in the area (such as health and care). Improving links between the wider business community and the knowledge and expertise within our research institutions (including apprenticeships, work placements, internships and better skills) is a key priority if we are to improve productivity and prosperity in the city region.

In terms of overall productivity, it is not just the industrial structure of the BCP area which pulls back performance. Data across all sectors¹⁴ shows that, "in-firm level productivity – rather than industrial structure – mostly explains differences at a regional level". The Office of National Statistics¹⁵ suggests, "a region's industry structure appears to only play a relatively small role in productivity differences... it is the differences between a firm's productivity within industries which has the most significant effect". As such, a manufacturing business in the BCP area is likely to be less productive than one in Bristol or Leeds. There are many factors for this including labour, transport costs, markets and innovation.

¹⁰ Tourism Volume and Value Survey, South West Research Co., 2019

¹¹ Gross value added (GVA) measures the contribution made to an economy by one individual producer, industry, sector or region. The figure is used in the calculation of gross domestic product (GDP). Figures 2018 Regional GVA – ONS.

¹² 2019, Regional GVA, ONS.

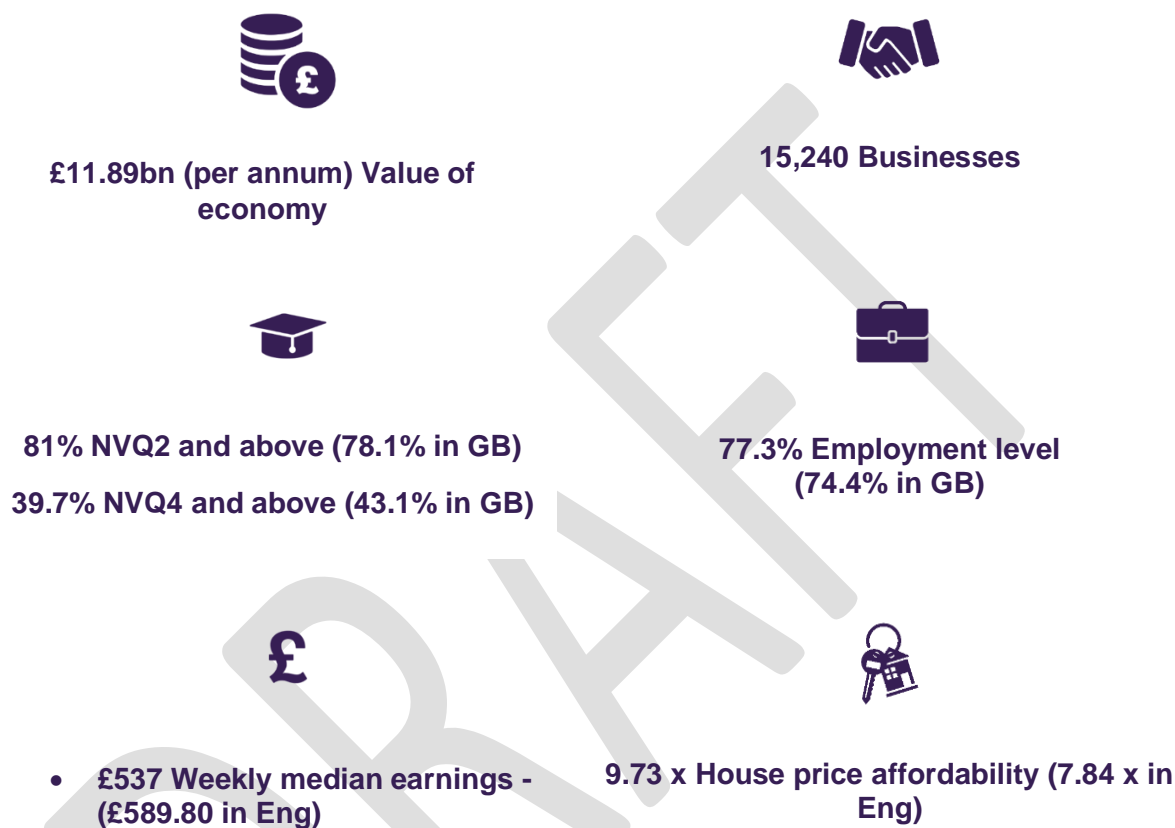
¹³ Centre for Entrepreneurs, 2019

¹⁴ Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership, [Local Industrial Strategy Evidence Base](#), 2019.

¹⁵ Regional firm-level productivity analysis for non-financial business economy, ONS, 2017.

Forecasts¹⁶ highlight anticipated GDP growth rates of around 5 – 6% for the UK. We must ensure that at least these levels of recovery are felt in the BCP economy. We will unleash the potential across all sectors which this strategy and prosperity deal seek to achieve.

Economic Headlines



Sources: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current market prices 2019 from ONS. Business count (Enterprises) 2021 from ONS. NVQ from ONS Jan 20-Dec 20 – NVQ2 is 5 x GCSE (A-C) NVQ4 is HND, Degree or Higher Degree. Employment level Annual Population Survey (APS), Jul 20 – Jun 21 ONS. Residence based wages 2020 (ASHE). House Price affordability workplace ONS 2020 - Ratio of median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings

¹⁶ HM Treasury, Forecasts for the UK economy, September 2021.

4. The BCP Council response: BCP Prosperity Deal – *unleashing our potential*

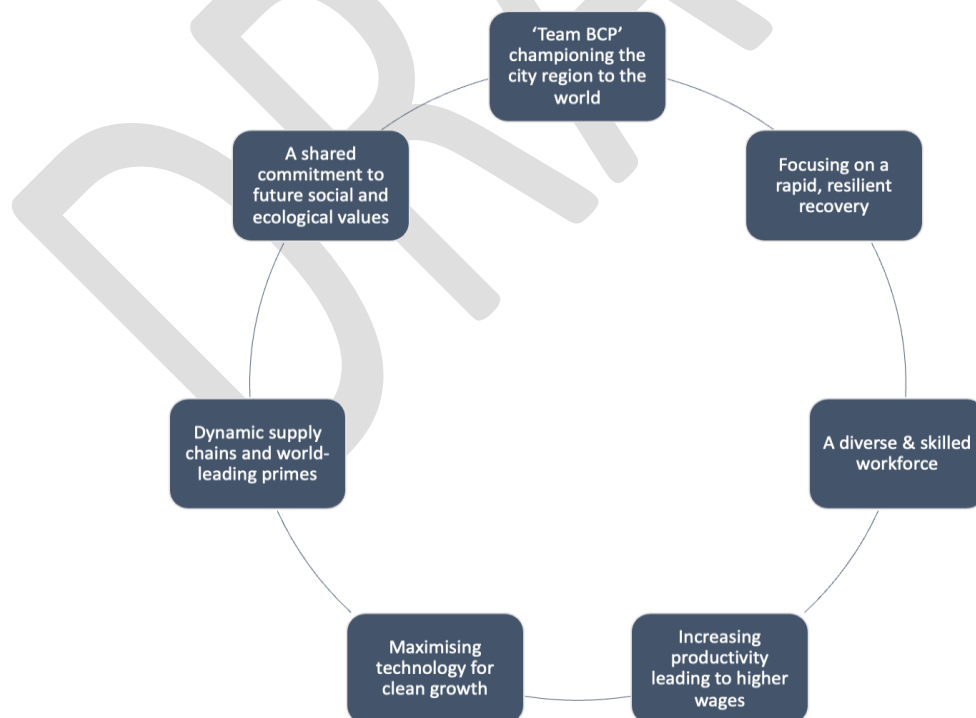
We understand the size of our task – unleashing our economic potential whilst, in parallel addressing issues of low productivity and national and global economic ‘shock’ factors described above.

We’re not alone in facing these issues, but we are uniquely placed as a unitary council and emerging city region with both the scale and simplicity to adopt a different response.

We recognise that we can only achieve our ambitions and unleash the potential of our businesses, people and place through a strong collaboration with the ‘engines’ of our economy – our business community. Our strategy is to respond in partnership with the business community, striking our BCP Futures Prosperity Deal together.

We will be launching our detailed implementation and investment plan in early 2022. We will target investment across core pillars of growth – including skills, infrastructure and innovation¹⁷. We aim to expand on previous and current investments, using all the levers at our disposal to encourage sustainable growth – raising both productivity and prosperity.

Our Prosperity Deal has seven overarching, linked objectives which form a solution-based approach to unleashing our potential and addressing key challenges.



¹⁷ These are also in line with the UK Government’s plan for growth, “Build Back Better”, March 2021.

Each element of our deal encompasses these objectives.

1. Initially, targeting a rapid and resilient recovery, with particular support to those sectors most impacted by covid. Completing the job of our R³ Programme.
2. It is clear that one of the biggest limiters to growth and prosperity is a lack of both overall capacity and the right skills in the local labour market. BCP Council, working with stakeholders across education, learning and skills, locally and nationally, will make this an immediate objective to address.
3. Central to all of our priorities will be a laser focus on productivity improvement across all businesses. To drive overall prosperity, this improvement must directly lead, ultimately, to higher wages.
4. The city region has the potential to utilise technology to address clean growth opportunities. Work will focus on the further roll out of the 'Smart Places' programme – including smart integrated travel, smart energy use and generation as well as cutting-edge developments in sustainable construction.
5. Maximising the catalyst potential of our exemplar industries to increase market share and generate growth across clusters and supply chains.
6. Linking to the BCP emerging '[Empowering Communities Strategy](#) (2021-24) to better understand local needs and co-design ways to build resilient communities, ensuring that all communities, of interest and of place, across the BCP area are represented and reflected in our economic responses – and that all activity protects and enhances the outstanding quality of our environment and biodiversity.
7. BCP Council leading an opportunity to bring all stakeholders together, from across all sectors, to promote the city region to a global market – speaking with one voice and championing our potential.

BCP Council already has a number of emerging priorities and is taking action to deliver regeneration and enhanced place-shaping to support its emerging city region ambitions. Our prosperity deal objectives and priorities will align and embed within our approach to place. These include:

BCP Council Emerging Priorities	
1	Big Plan and investment across five big projects in the city region, including an iconic cityscape, enhanced seafront, rejuvenated Poole and significant infrastructure investment.
2	Emerging BCP Local Plan – setting out the scale, quality and location of future growth, adoption scheduled for 2023.
3	A suite of investments across towns in the BCP city region, linking Business Improvement Districts, the Boscombe Town Deal and the recently launched BCP High Streets and District Centres Strategy .
4	Investment into regeneration – the creation of an Urban Regeneration Company “FuturePlaces” to enable pace and scale of investment – delivering quality,

	sustainable development; delivery of the Boscombe Town Deal; and the continuation of the Bournemouth Development Company .
5	BCP Housing Strategy 2021-26 : Our commitment to our communities – setting out 5 key priorities across future growth needs, preventing homelessness, empowering neighbourhoods and improving safety and sustainably across BCP's housing.
6	BCP's Cleaner, Greener, Safer Programme , supporting vibrant communities and quality of place.
7	Emerging Seafront Strategy enhancing the coastal dividend across BCP.
8	Transforming Travel : Over £100m investment in a low carbon transport system for the city region, including connectivity corridors, improved public transport network management and infrastructure.

BCP Council (and its predecessors) have achieved a significant step forward in economic prosperity across the area with major achievements and investments over recent years. We will use this as a catalyst to achieve our objectives. Achievements include:

- Business support – creating a free one-stop shop for business support. Key Account Management (KAM). Delivering support including accessing finance, exporting, cyber security and Research & Development (R&D) tax credits
- Covid response – R³ programme, additional resources to support re-opening (Information Officers), providing discretionary and non-discretionary grants to businesses
- Boscombe Town Deal - Employment and Skills Hub
- Skills support – T-Levels, apprenticeships, skill shortages, skills escalator and Technical Skills Development Group (TSDG)
- Site identification and support with planning applications (e.g. Parvalux)
- Supply chain support – organising 'Meet the Buyer' events (e.g. BAE, NHS and Siemens)
- Poole Maritime Festival (Including European Maritime Day 2017) and Bournemouth Air Festival Business Programmes
- Sector Support – Dorset Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster, Poole Marine Hub, Silicon South, Partners in Care, Dorset Aviation Group and Chambers and Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (DLEP)
- Town & District Centre Support – establishing new Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and helping existing BIDs achieve extensions
- Superfast Broadband roll out and Sigfox network (including connection voucher schemes)

The BCP city region has the foundations to become one of, if not *the most* sustainable city region in the UK – a direct response to the significance of the global climate change emergency. Working over a number of years with the global initiative [CPD](#), BCP was recently [listed](#) as one of the top 88 performing cities in the world in terms of sustainability.

This is despite the stresses on inter-regional and intra-regional travel, including infrastructure constraints leading to severe congestion (amongst the worst in England) and modest levels of low and zero emission transport options. Congestion costs the local economy some £250m per year in lost productivity. If the BCP City Region can improve its share of low and zero carbon travel, extend renewable energy sources and encourage more households and businesses to decrease carbon use, it will further cement its sustainability position and improve overall productivity and prosperity.

To support a rapid and profound economic recovery and enhanced prosperity for all, BCP Council will do all it can to unleash the potential of the BCP business community. Our premise is simple, if the council does all it can to remove barriers for business, supporting recovery and enhancing opportunities, business will help unleash the potential of our city region, driving rapid, resilient recovery, clean growth and, ultimately, improving the prosperity of all of the region’s communities.

We ask the BCP business community to pledge to an increased focus on lifting overall productivity levels¹⁸ to achieve sustainable growth, year on year - leading to carbon reduction and higher wages across the BCP workforce. **Achieving productivity levels within the top 20 of all 63 primary UK cities by 2026.**

We want to work together with business, - leading by example. Whilst there are many bespoke solutions for business, at a headline level, we outline a seven-point pledge to kick-start improved productivity and prosperity.

7 Point Pledge	
1	A commitment to in-work training and active support for pathways to employment initiatives - including participation in the Dorset Enterprise Network with local schools and increasing the use of apprenticeships and ‘kick start’ careers.
2	Increasing levels of diversity in the BCP workforce and supporting an inclusive approach to employment for all.
3	A commitment to delivering net zero carbon targets before 2050 and leading the ambition to make BCP one of the most sustainable coastal city regions in the world.
4	Actively championing the BCP city region to the world – to our future talent, investors, and customers.

¹⁸ Measured by GVA per head. Improving bottom line return – increasing value of outputs to cost of inputs.

5	Continued investment into new technology and innovation to retain the leading competitive edge (such as tech investment into financial services and future health and care).
6	Championing business collaboration and clusters to support the growth of a thriving local supply chain.
7	Increased quality across the local business offer, particularly in meeting and surpassing minimum standards and customer expectations.

Priority actions

To deliver a focused and ‘at pace’ response, BCP Council will be prioritising the following headline priorities across the prosperity deal.



Priority areas of action:

- 1. Supercharging our business community:** Focusing on supporting increased productivity across our small and medium sized business community.
- 2. Supporting the BCP exemplar industries:** Encouraging growth in BCP priority sectors and clusters as the catalysts to success.
- 3. Opening doors to prosperity:** Creating the best local economic conditions to achieve a world-class, sustainable city region and one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.
- 4. Business matters @ BCP:** Achieving an outstanding economic development service, acting as the concierge for all Council business-facing functions.

Supercharging our business community

This priority focuses on our small and medium sized (SME) business community – and encompasses all sectors. We recognise that the vast majority of our business base is driven by smaller companies who bring breadth and depth to our economy – and give all communities across the BCP area a uniquely distinctive character.

Our goal

Supporting actions to increase productivity across our SME business community. Achieve top 20 GDP per capita of UK Cities by 2026.

Our aims

- **Leading a rapid, resilient recovery.** Turbo-charging acute support for SMEs and sectors at risk (post-Covid).
- **Supporting a great workforce:** Working across business, education, learning and skills providers to provide an exceptional local workforce with the right skills, talent and capacity - meeting the needs of business.
- **Business support that makes a real difference.** Engaging the business community in a review of future business support – ensuring it is demand/market driven and simplified, to influence the future investment of business support through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other investment opportunities.
- **Maximising BCP innovation assets.** Working with universities, the college and other research partners to create an easy to access innovation eco-system across the city region, enabling business of all sizes and sectors to utilise the right knowledge and expertise.

Headline actions to 2026

1. On-going delivery of the R³ Programme including small business grant fund. **Economic Development Team (EDT) lead.**
2. Creation of a skills task force to meet urgent vacancy demands in critical sectors. Developing a new framework for skills and labour for investment via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and emerging UK Skills Programmes. **Dorset Skills Commission. EDT/Adult Community Education support.**
3. Review current business support provision and develop a future framework of support for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other programmes targeting SME productivity improvement, including access to finance, start-up and scale-up, export growth, management and leadership support. **EDT lead.**
4. Improve understanding of market demand and new ways of working to unlock the supply of strategic employment sites, including the growth of available commercial land and property. **Planning Service lead/FuturePlaces delivery lead/EDT support.**

5. Working with the university sector and specialist institutions to support new opportunities for knowledge-based business growth and diversification. Increasing research investment to business and driving the potential of existing and future innovation hubs, such as the Arts University Bournemouth [Innovation Studio](#) and the emerging Living Lab at the Dorset MedTech Science Park. **EDT lead.**

BCP Exemplar Industries

We recognise that large parts of our economy have on the whole, remained relatively resilient throughout 2020 and 2021 and have the potential to bounce back robustly and rapidly. This is helped by our 'exemplar' sectors who are consistently strong performers and/or are of critical importance across the area in terms of employment, supply chains, overall economic contribution and key services.

Our goal

Encouraging growth in the city region's priority sectors and clusters as catalysts to success – impacting on local supply chains, employment and overall prosperity, maintaining and expanding BCP Council's role as a leading area for success in these sectors.

Our 'exemplars' and aims

- **Financial services and fin-tech:** Enhancing BCP's role as a premier financial district outside of the City of London.
- **Advanced engineering and manufacturing (AEM) (inc. marine/aerospace):** Growing a resilient, 'smart-enabled' AEM cluster via an economic acceleration zone incorporating the Port of Poole and Bournemouth Airport Aviation Business Park.
- **Health and care:** Creating a total business environment for the future of integrated health and care exploiting new technology and innovation. The BCP area to become a secondary national hub for the Department of Health and Social Care.
- **Environmental Technologies (inc. sustainable construction):** Unlocking the zero-carbon dividend for new environmental technologies and establish BCP as a globally leading sustainable coastal destination.
- **Creative and Digital Tech:** Growing BCP as one of the best destinations for creative, cultural and digital entrepreneurs.
- **Retail, hospitality & leisure (RHL):** Working with the sector to underpin an exceptional local and visitor offer across the day and night-time the BCP area's economy.

Headline actions to 2026

1. Working with relevant sector representatives, existing business groups and the Dorset LEP to finalise detailed sector plans. **EDT lead.**

2. Continuing to underpin these priority sectors with the best infrastructure to support continued growth including our increasingly comprehensive smart digital capability and identified transport priorities such as minimising journey times to key centres such as London and an excellent sustainable integrated local transport network.
Transport lead/Smart Places lead.
3. Prioritising a bespoke talent and skills programme(s) across the sectors, targeting future demand and growth (including within supply chains). **EDT lead.** Take forward catalyst opportunities including:
 - MACE: Manufacturing and Advanced Engineering Centre of Excellence for skills and innovation.
4. Innovation and business leadership support. **EDT lead co-ordination.** Support includes:
 - business support which offers bespoke solutions for sectors and aligns to wider opportunities, for example, ‘reinventing the high street’ and support for retailers.
 - supporting growth across the three BCP universities and college in areas of specialist strengths and embedding this within sector plans, for example, in medical science, environmental technologies, creative, cultural and digital innovation.
5. In partnership with others, developing nationally significant economic assets to underpin exemplar industries, including:
 - The Dorset MedTech Science Park @ Wessex Fields
 - Bournemouth cultural quarter and seafront
 - Talbot Village Trust land – film studio and other business links to Uni’s

Opening Doors to Prosperity

There are a number of ‘enablers’ and bespoke opportunities that we must unlock to achieve our stretching target to become one of the most prosperous city regions in the UK – with all of our communities benefitting. We recognise that some activity will be consistent across the city region, whilst others will need a more targeted approach according to individual businesses, communities and place. This priority action is all about investing in the drivers of productivity, ensuring future resilience, enhancing our exceptional environment and celebrating what is best – and distinctive - about Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

Our goal

Creating the best local economic conditions to achieve a world-class, sustainable city region and one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.

Our aims

- **Increasing prosperity across our people and communities:** Driving strong social values, community wealth and social mobility through a larger, skilled workforce.
- **Supporting a widespread business response to the global climate change emergency:** Achieving new business opportunity and greater efficiencies resulting in a net zero city region by 2050.

- **Place-based prosperity:** Ensuring effective alignment between investment in place-based development (including regeneration, homes and the high street) and local economic growth priorities.
- **Resilient and future-proof infrastructure:** Recognising critical infrastructure requirements that also meet zero carbon targets – including digital connectivity, sustainable transport and renewable energy.
- **Embedding creativity and cultural innovation:** Maximising the BCP Cultural Compact opportunity across economic opportunities to give a strong flavour of the BCP 'brand' in all that we do - reflecting our coastal location, diverse communities and extraordinary creativity.
- **Promoting BCP to the world!** A co-ordinated approach to place and content branding to investors and visitors.

Headline actions to 2026

1. Skills to meet demand and future growth. Supporting the Dorset LEP, Dorset Skills Board and Dorset Skills Commission to develop at pace skills and talent support **EDT lead.** Actions include:
 - a. Talent attraction and retention: Develop a BCP 'talent agency' to meet recruitment needs and embed employment opportunities into place branding and marketing materials.
 - b. Integrate a Dorset Skills Hub into future simplified arrangements for business support: A one stop shop for all business needs.
 - c. Support business to grow more flexible working solutions for staff – responding to the imminent employee right to request.
 - d. Providing bite-sized lifelong learning solutions based on demand.
 - e. Diversity and accessibility enhancing interventions across job opportunities.
 - f. Re-skilling and re-training programmes.
2. Underpin the council's central ambition to create *'vibrant communities with outstanding quality of life where everyone plays an active role'* and priorities within the BCP [Empowering Community Strategy](#) with a dynamic business and economy response. Recognising opportunities for community wealth generation through assets. **Communities lead/EDT/Adult Community Education support.**
3. Developing alternative finance mechanisms and incentive packages in partnership with private investors (including a low carbon fund, Smart Place investment plan and asset-based community-led economic development). **EDT lead.**
4. Target additional support to our high streets and district centres in areas which need additional support, in terms of viability and 'levelling up' [BCP High Streets and District Centres Strategy](#). **EDT lead.**
5. Work with partners to take forward ['Decarbonising Dorset'](#) – with opportunities in low carbon generation, energy networks, energy efficiency and decarbonising heat and transport. **Environment lead/EDT support.**
6. Aligning with the council's new approach to regeneration and Housing Strategy, linking investment in regeneration and homes to local economic growth priorities. For example, creating new commercial sites to attract high value jobs in our exemplar industries, support delivery of housing supply fit for purpose for current and future employees and entrepreneurs, aligning opportunities in future developments with the construction sector. **EDT support to FuturePlaces and Housing Team.**

7. Maximising the economic opportunities of the Smart Places programme - focus support on creating a 'smart accelerator in BCP, part of the UK Future Network's Lab Accelerator Programme. **Smart Places lead/EDT support.**
8. Work alongside the council's Transport team to increase businesses take-up of the BCP low carbon transport system. **Transport lead/EDT support.**
9. Support opportunities to embed the Cultural Compact into economic activity – including place branding, maximising the opportunities of festivals and events, alignment to our work in high streets and town centres as well as an innovative tool to support a wide and diverse community of interest to invest and/or work in the BCP area. **Communications and Marketing Directorate to lead and co-ordinate / EDT and Destination and Culture support.**
10. Leading all place branding in the BCP City Region to develop a clear and impactful brand, supported by an effective 'soft landing 'programme for investors. **Communications and Marketing Directorate to lead and co-ordinate.**

Business Matters @ BCP

As part of our wider transformation programme, we recognise that all council services can work even smarter with business. To support delivery of the prosperity deal we will commit to achieve the very best level of service to all our communities – particularly ensuring that the council supports the pace and quality of its interactions with the business community.

Our goal

Achieving an outstanding Economic Development Team (EDT) within BCP Council, acting as the concierge for council business-facing functions.

Our aims

- The council 'in step' with business. Ensuring the business voice is embedded across all relevant council functions.
- Outstanding service delivery. Achieving improvements across business facing services, including response times and automation of services.
- Council investment as leverage for future prosperity. Aligning the BCP Council Future Investment Fund to unlock key business barriers and opportunities.

Headline actions to 2026

1. Revamp business access to council services and review the approach of transactional services such as procurement. **EDT lead**, all council services support.
2. Further strengthen the key account management (KAM) function to engage effectively with strategic business. **EDT lead.**
3. On-going recovery actions (including investment). **EDT lead.**
4. Alignment of appropriate council regulatory services with future business support provision (Better Business for All¹⁹ model). **EDT lead/Regulatory Services support.**

¹⁹ BBfA: Bringing together businesses and regulators to consider and change how local regulation is delivered and received.

5. Implementation and conclusion

This exciting and ambitious strategy demonstrates how BCP Council and businesses will work together to capitalise on the many economic opportunities within the BCP city region, whilst addressing impacts of global, national and local challenges.

Through our Prosperity Deal with businesses, we will remove the barriers to productivity and invest in the environment for growth in return for businesses improving their productivity, raising wages and therefore living standards.

This is the right strategy for a real place with hardworking people and great businesses leading to better economic outcomes, greater investment and new opportunities for immediate recovery, long-term improvements and levelling up.

We will track our progress against a suite of KPIs to ensure we maintain a laser focus on delivery and achieving our overarching goal - to see the city region move into the top 20 ranked cities in terms of productivity by 2026 (as listed by Centre for Cities).

Together, we will unleash our potential - placing the city in the best position possible for rapid economic recovery and ultimately, achieving our Big Plan ambition to create a world class city region – one of the best coastal places in the world in which to live, work, invest and play.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1

KPIs (BCP Council Corporate Performance Plan)

KPI 1: Top 20 ranked City Region in terms productivity by 2026

KPI 2: No. of businesses engaged per quarter

KPI 3: No. of business that sign-up to pledge

KPI 4: Specific KPIs related to our priority areas of action (to be determined on project-by-project basis)

Other related KPIs are measured through the council's Performance monitoring in the Corporate Plan.

Non-KPI macro measures to monitor

1: Percentage of higher-level qualification (NVQ4 and above)

2: Percentage of qualifications (NVQ2 and above)

3: Footfall in 3 x town centres

4: House Price affordability

5: Employment (and unemployment) level

6: Wages