



## **Summary – Worcestershire Partnership Economy and Transport Theme Group Workshop – Worcestershire Economic Priorities on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

### **1. Purpose of the workshop**

A workshop was conducted at the sidelines of Worcestershire partnership Economy & Theme Group meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Representatives from other theme groups of Worcestershire Partnership also attended the workshop. The primary purpose of the workshop was to identify the top economic priorities for Worcestershire for next few years in view of many changes taken place or on the horizon in the future which have/will have significant impact on the County's economy.

This summary of the workshop includes following:

- a. Strategic Context
- b. Vision and objectives of the revised Worcestershire Economic Strategy 2008-2018
- c. Worcestershire's Economic Delivery Plan
- d. Worcestershire's Economic Priorities for coming years

### **2. Strategic Context**

#### **Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy**

Worcestershire Partnership has reviewed the Worcestershire's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2013. The primary purpose of the strategy is to set out the strategic vision for the future of Worcestershire and to focus on activities needed in the short term to make it happen. This vision is based on what Worcestershire's residents considered important to them in making our County a great place to visit, work or live in:

*A County with safe, cohesive, healthy and inclusive communities, a strong and diverse economy and a valued and cherished environment*

To achieve this vision and emphasise the commonality of purpose Worcestershire will address the following six themes:

- Communities that are safe and feel safe
- A better environment for today and tomorrow
- **Economic success that is shared by all**
- Improving health and well being

- Meeting the needs of children and young people
- Stronger communities – covering a range of issues including housing, culture and volunteering

**West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy**

The revised Regional Economic Strategy “Connecting to Success” was published in November 2007 and sets an ambitious vision for the region:

*“To be global centre where people and business choose to connect”*

To achieve the vision the Regional Economic Strategy identifies three main strategic components of the economy (business, place and people) with a fourth underpinning component (powerful voice):

<p>Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seizing market opportunities</li> <li>✓ Improving competitiveness</li> <li>✓ Harnessing knowledge</li> </ul>	<p>Place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increasing Birmingham's Competitiveness</li> <li>✓ Improving infrastructure</li> <li>✓ Sustainable communities</li> </ul>	<p>People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sustainable living</li> <li>✓ Raising ambitions and aspirations</li> <li>✓ Achieving full potential &amp; opportunities for all</li> </ul>
<b>Powerful Voice</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improving the evidence base for policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Engaging UK and International decision makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Position the West Midlands as a global centre where people and businesses</li> </ul>

A significant change in the revised Strategy, is a spatial focus with the following spatial priorities identified:

Primary:

- i. Areas of market failure and disadvantage (Regeneration Zones including the Rural Regeneration Zone)
- ii. Concentrations of knowledge assets (including the Central Technology Belt)
- iii. Birmingham

Secondary (more limited investment)

- I. Growth Points and strategic centres (including Worcester)
- II. Towns undergoing economic restructuring (including Kidderminster and Redditch)
- III. Market towns as a focus for rural regeneration

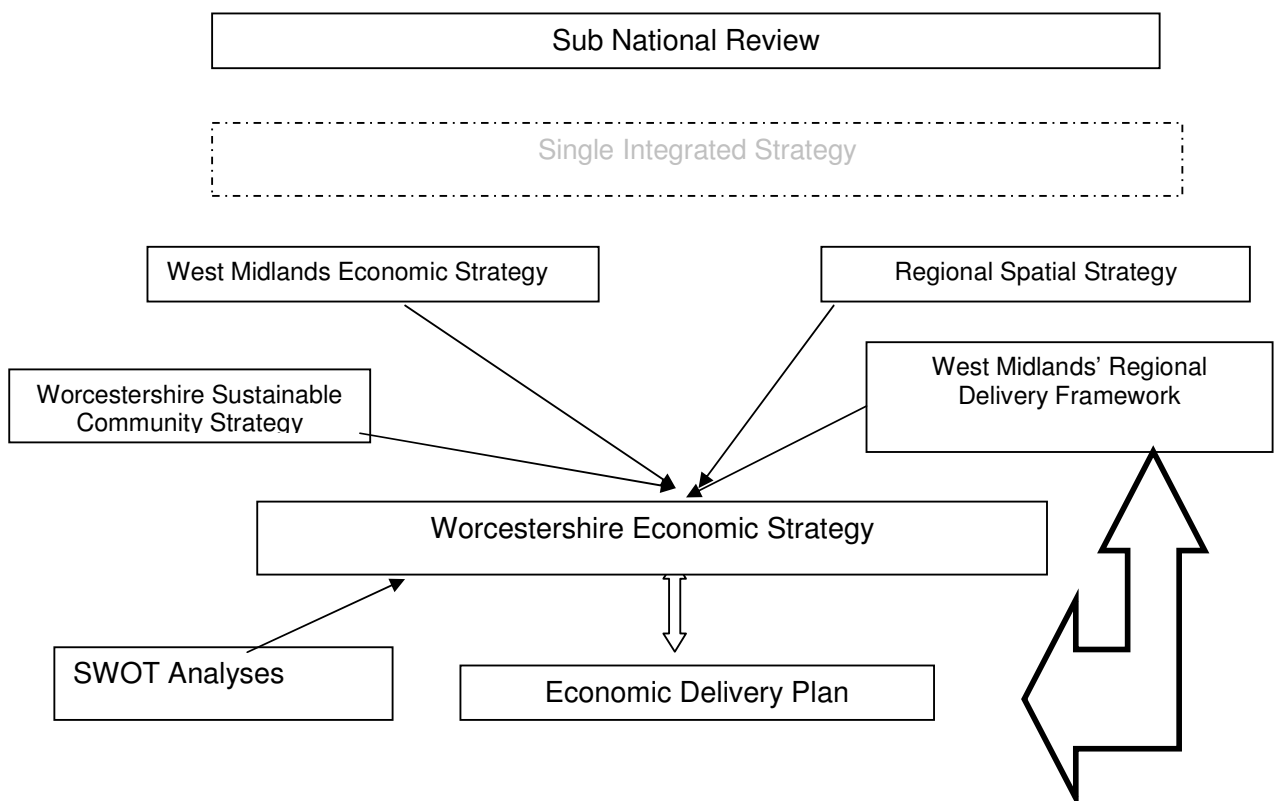
**The Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration**

The Government published its draft Sub National Review of Economic Development in October 2007, which may have some important consequences for both the County Economic Strategy and its delivery. The proposals in the review, if implemented, are far reaching and could mean

better integration of planning, economic development, housing, transportation and environment development in Worcestershire – Resources may be delegated to the County to deliver proper sustainable development. By 2010 review proposes:

- Moving responsibility for the regional planning strategy from the Regional Assembly to the Regional Development Agency, to be integrated with economic development, housing, transportation and environment into a single strategy.
- Abolishment of the Regional Assembly but creating a forum of Local Authority Leaders to help develop and sign off the Single Integrated Strategy, and scrutinise the work of Regional Development Agency
- Delegating resources to County level to deliver strategy, based upon a County level Economic Assessment (a new duty for the County Council)

The need for delegation of responsibility and resources to the sub –region to deliver agreed economic priorities has gained significance as a result of the review. The delegation of resources would fundamentally be based on our capacity to deliver. This strengthens the need for a very clear Economic Strategy, identifying top economic priorities and detailed Economic Delivery Plan for the County. Worcestershire Economic Strategy helps to deliver the economic priorities of the County’s Sustainable Community Strategy, and contributes to the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy in the County. Under the Government’s Sub National Review, a Single Integrated Regional Strategy will be developed by 2010, bringing together the Regional Economic and Spatial Strategies:



### 3. Worcestershire Economic Strategy 2008 – 2018

The agreed vision for the Worcestershire Economic Strategy is that:

*“In ten years time, technology-led growth will have contributed to the sustainable development of Worcestershire and strengthened its role as an economic driver for the region – acting as a catalyst for all sectors of the economy and areas the County to benefit and providing well paid and highly skilled jobs and high quality of life for residents”*

This is a very bold and aspirational vision and identifies key area of work i.e. diversifying the County’s economic base and developing a knowledge driven economy. This transformation is already underway, and the vision can be strengthened and broadened through highlighting a stronger emphasis on sustainable development, and using the technology led growth underway to strengthen economic competitiveness across all sectors of the County. To achieve this vision following economic objectives have been agreed by the Economy & Transport Theme Group which are also aligned with the Regional Economic Strategy Objectives

#### Strategy Objectives

Business - *Promoting technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County*

Place – *Supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development (especially transport) and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point*

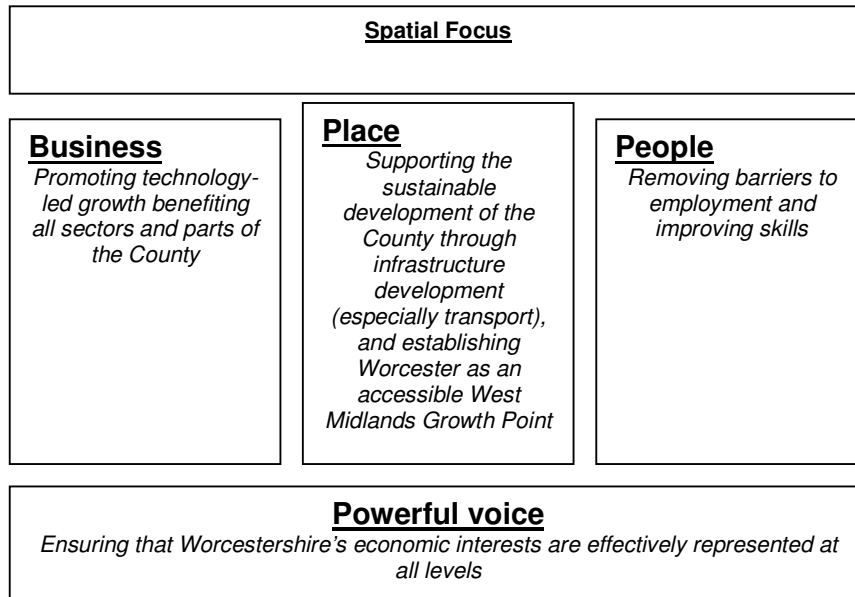
People – *Removing barriers to employment and improving skills*

Powerful Voice – *Ensuring that Worcestershire’s economic interests are effectively represented at all levels.*

The following spatial focus is suggested:

- Areas of market failure and disadvantage – Rural Regeneration Zone
- Concentrations of knowledge assets – Central Technology Belt
- Strategic growth centre – Worcester City
- Towns undergoing economic restructuring – Kidderminster, Redditch
- Larger towns providing a focus for economic activity – Bromsgrove, Droitwich Malvern
- Market towns as a focus for rural regeneration – Pershore, Evesham, Bewdley, Stourport, Tenbury

Worcestershire’s Economic Objectives and Spatial Focus can be shown as:



The table below illustrates how the Worcestershire's Economic objectives relate to the Regional Economic Objectives. It is recognised that these objectives are interlinked and interdependent on each other.

Worcestershire Strategic Objectives	Regional Economic Strategy Objectives
<p><b><u>Business</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promoting technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Business</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seizing market opportunities</li> <li>✓ Improving competitiveness</li> <li>✓ Harnessing knowledge</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Place</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development, and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Place</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increasing Birmingham's Competitiveness</li> <li>✓ Improving infrastructure</li> <li>✓ Sustainable communities</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>People</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Removing barriers to employment and improving skills</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>People</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Sustainable living</li> <li>✓ Raising ambitions and aspirations</li> <li>✓ Achieving full potential &amp; opportunities for all</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Powerful voice</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensuring that Worcestershire's economic interests are effectively represented at all levels</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Powerful Voice</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Improving the evidence base for policy</li> <li>✓ Engaging UK and International decision makers</li> <li>✓ Position the West Midlands as a global centre where people and businesses choose to connect</li> </ul>

#### 4. **Worcestershire Economic Delivery Plan**

The Worcestershire Economic Delivery Plan has been developed in order to address the 'action gap' between Worcestershire's Economic Strategy (WES) and delivery identified through process mapping. The Plan will also help partners active in Worcestershire identify the top economic priorities for their actions and their own roles. Partners should aim to build on the strengths of current activities and integrate initiatives across Worcestershire and where

appropriate with the regional partners. It will also prepare the way to enable delegation of delivery to the sub-region (under Sub National Review) and secure partner investment in activities to deliver against the Strategy objectives.

The Delivery Plan is an opportunity to review the objectives and actions of the new Worcestershire Economic Strategy and to focus measurable activities in the light of West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy (RES).

This Plan has following features:

- Three year rolling timescale (revised and rolled forward annually)
- Identifying a limited number of priority activities and projects to deliver sub regional objectives
- Identifying and developing Local Area Agreement outcomes
- Providing a basis for monitoring, review and evaluation

Wide-ranging research has informed the development of the Delivery Plan by analysing our future economic aspirations, relative strengths & weaknesses and threats & opportunities. The work has involved:

- An assessment of the current state of Worcestershire economy
- Regional Economic Strategy and opportunities it offers to Worcestershire
- Initial consultation with Internal and Districts stakeholders
- Detailed Consultations/Workshops with Worcestershire Economic Partnership and Economy & Transport Theme Group
- Wider web based consultation with stakeholders

This Plan has been developed specifically focusing on the priorities and activities which will deliver/support the New Worcestershire Economic Strategy. It shows our commitment and capacity to deliver strategic projects to benefit Worcestershire and the Region for continuing sustainable development of the County. This Plan contains objectives to identify the economic priorities and guide the actions of economic partners of Worcestershire in the future. The detailed Plan is attached with this paper having objectives with number of priorities identified. This is a 'long-list' of most of the proposals made during the research, however it demonstrates the range of potential actions partners could develop over a number of years.

After detailed discussion during the workshop a consensus was developed and participants identified following top priorities for the Worcestershire under each Economic Strategy Objectives.

## **5. Worcestershire's Economic Objectives & Top Priorities**

*Business – Promoting technology-led growth benefiting all sectors and parts of the County*

The Central technology Belt forms the cornerstone of the Strategy, the catalyst for modernising and diversifying the County's economy. This will be supported by cluster development directly related to the Belt and also

spreading/transferring the benefits of the technology-led growth to all sectors throughout the County including the underperforming sectors such as Agriculture and Manufacturing. We will support existing and formation of new businesses through growth of SMEs, self employment and social enterprises. All endeavours will be made to develop environmentally sustainable economy through supporting Environmental Technology Cluster and having more environmentally friendly businesses in the County. Tourism is the third largest industry in Worcestershire and this sector attracts 10 million visitors to the County each year, attracted by our historic towns and cities, its outstanding landscapes and its diverse and natural environment. Continuous focus on this sector would make it more viable and economically beneficial for our economy. Following are the top priorities under this objective:

- Technology Development / Transfer
  - Central Technology Belt
  - QinetiQ
  - Longbridge
- Developing Strategic Employment Sites
- Supporting key growth sectors particularly Environmental Technologies and Tourism
- Promoting enterprise, business growth, diversification and retention

*Place - Supporting the sustainable development of the County through infrastructure development (especially transport) and establishing Worcester as an accessible West Midlands Growth Point*

Worcester City offers unique opportunities vis-à-vis the development, redevelopment and with the higher status of the University, all elements are in place to support the expansion of the city and making it regional growth point. It is also envisaged that other towns such as Kidderminster and Redditch undergoing economic restructuring would need support and also benefit from the work done with the Worcester city. The revitalisation of other towns, promoting rural renaissance through regeneration of rural parts of the County and providing/developing adequate infrastructure support would also be the focus of our future interventions. Following top priorities have been identified under Place objective:

- Investment Priorities
  - Worcester City
  - Kidderminster and Redditch
- Rural towns as a focus for rural renaissance and regeneration
- Infrastructure especially transport

*People – Removing barriers to employment and improving skills*

We would have to ensure that the residents of Worcestershire, through quality job opportunities, enjoy the benefits of the technology-led growth. To achieve this we would have to remove barriers to employment faced by disadvantaged groups and communities. Furthermore, to support the knowledge driven economy we would have to develop skilled workforce and keep the graduates

in the County. At the same time we would have to work to improve the quality of training provision, with improved facilities and much greater flexibility to meet employer and learner needs. Following top priorities have been identified under this objective:

- Addressing Worklessness
- Graduate retention and training
- NVQ 3-4 skills (including apprenticeships)
- Management and Leadership Skills
- Facilitating employer engagement with the skills agenda

*Powerful Voice – Ensuring that Worcestershire’s Economic Interests are effectively presented at all levels*

One of the great strengths and opportunities for Worcestershire lies in the diversity as well as uniqueness of its people, places and Economic Growth. It is considered paramount to highlight these and protect our interests at the regional as well as national levels. All endeavours would be made to explore and be part of sub-regional, regional and national programmes. We would also take limited opportunities offered by the existing and new EU programmes matching our economic and social objectives. Engagement with businesses and providing good leadership and governance is considered paramount to the economic success of the County. Following are the top priorities under this objective:

- Business Engagement
- Leadership and governance
- Raising ambitions
- Broadening horizons/expectations
- Developing cross-boundary working

Worcestershire priorities under each Economic Strategy Objectives can be shown in tabular form below:



### **Business**

- Technology Development / Transfer
  - Central Technology Belt
  - QinetiQ
  - Longbridge
- Developing Strategic Employment Sites
- Supporting key growth sectors particularly Environmental Technologies and Tourism
- Promoting enterprise, business growth, diversification and retention

### **Place**

- Investment Priorities
  - Worcester City
  - Kidderminster and Redditch
- Rural towns as a focus for rural renaissance and regeneration
- Infrastructure especially transport

### **People**

- Addressing Worklessness
- Graduate retention and training
- NVQ 3-4 skills (including apprenticeships)
- Management and Leadership Skills
- Facilitating employer engagement with the skills agenda

### **Powerful Voice**

- Business Engagement
- Leadership and governance
- Raising ambitions
- Broadening horizons/expectations
- Developing cross-boundary working

Detailed activities/interventions to deliver the Worcestershire Economic Priorities with responsibilities such as lead organisations and timescale for delivery are contained in the Economic Delivery Plan. Copy of the Worcestershire Economic Delivery Plan and for more information please feel free to contact:

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