

## **Welwyn Hatfield: Right Place, Right People**

The borough is one of Hertfordshire's most successful economic areas. It has excellent transport links to London and Cambridge, easy access to international airports, desirable places to live, lively shopping areas and beautiful parks and green spaces. It is no surprise that some of the UK's largest companies have chosen to locate here. But we need to work hard to maintain this enviable position amidst growing national and international competition. We need to build on and promote our assets and successes and address our weaknesses, so that Welwyn Hatfield continues to attract, retain and grow successful businesses in the future.

### **Foreword**

Welwyn Hatfield is already a good place to do business, but we want it to excel. To reach our goals will require strong effective partnerships across the borough and we will continue to work with our public, private and voluntary sector partners to identify and deliver a common vision efficiently and effectively. We will ensure that organisations that are best placed to deliver services are properly supported to do so, and will help to develop the infrastructure and environment that is needed to support business growth across the borough.

We recognise that it is the borough's businesses that will deliver future jobs and economic growth. They will need motivated staff with the right skills; an excellent transport and digital infrastructure; the right premises in the right places; opportunities to network, identify new markets, suppliers, and specific support at different stages of their development. The council cannot deliver all these itself, but it will support organisations that are best placed to do so, leading, influencing and co-ordinating where it is most appropriate.

We will ensure that departments across Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council consider the local business and economic impacts of the decisions that they make; that our regulatory services are business friendly; that we develop an on-going dialogue with local business representatives, and that wherever possible, our approaches to procurement and commissioning support local businesses.

Cllr Bernard Sarson  
Executive Member for Business, Partnerships & Public Health

### **Strengths of the local economy**

- The Welwyn Hatfield economy has benefited from increasing numbers of new businesses starting within the borough, with a 6.7% increase between 2014 and 2015.
- Welwyn Hatfield has a diverse range of businesses with a wide variety of small and medium sized companies spread over different sectors and more large businesses (over 250 employees) than the rest of Hertfordshire.

- Unemployment continues to remain well below the national average and the number of total jobs in the borough continues to increase significantly reaching 84,000. This is now well above the pre-recession jobs peak of 78,000, in 2008.
- Job density (the ratio of jobs to the working age population aged (16-64) also continues to increase year-on-year, and is now at 1.11. This is well above not only the national and county averages, but is higher than the London average as well, highlighting the continued attractiveness of the borough as a place to locate a business.
- The average earnings of people employed in the borough in 2015 was £577.20 per week, an increase on the previous year and significantly higher than those employed in the East of England and the average salary for the rest of Great Britain.
- We have a well-educated and skilled workforce; the borough has good transport links to London and Cambridge. The borough is also recognised as an attractive area to live which is often a factor in encouraging business start-up and inward investment.

### **Key facts**

- Large and well educated workforce
- Diverse range of businesses
- Highly accessible location
- Desirable place to live
- Strong tourism offer

### **A vision for the Welwyn Hatfield economy**

An economy with a thriving entrepreneurial culture that actively supports and promotes sustainable living and working communities which will make the most of its natural, physical, human capital assets; which attracts, retains and grows well connected businesses that are staffed by a highly skilled and motivated workforce, producing high value goods and services.

### **Strategic Priorities**

The Welwyn Hatfield Economic Strategy for 2017-2020) builds upon the first strategy and sets a common framework and vision towards which Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and its partners can focus their work in support of a robust and sustainable local economy.

The strategic priorities within the Economic Development Strategy will set the context for a three-year economic development action plan, identifying corporate actions and defining the work programme for the council's economic development function.

#### **1. Inward investment, care and retention**

The private sector is the engine of growth. Successful businesses drive growth, create jobs and pay the taxes that finance services and investment. We will: -

- Understand and respond to the needs of established businesses, supporting them to thrive and grow.
- Support new businesses to start and grow successful enterprises.
- Provide a clearly articulated and co-ordinated approach to inward investment activity that meets the needs of potential investors.
- Work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sector organisations to help build a strong local economy.

## **2. Land and premises**

Business growth is reliant on the availability and choice of a range of land and premises, from small serviced offices for business start ups and modern headquarter office developments, to fit for purpose manufacturing facilities and modern warehousing units. We will: -

- Set the strategic direction to create the optimal environment to encourage business growth through the council's Local Plan and Business Plan 2015 – 18, this, includes a corporate priority to 'help build a strong local economy'.
- Continue to build strong relationships with local commercial agents.
- Provide information on the council's commercial, corporate and community based property portfolio.
- Support new and existing businesses to identify suitable premises including virtual space.

## **3. Skills for growth**

We recognise that for Welwyn Hatfield to fulfil its economic potential, the importance of skills cannot be over-estimated. Skills are critical to all employers in all sectors. A highly skilled workforce will facilitate the growth of existing businesses and increase the attractiveness of the area to inward investors, generating job creation and fuelling economic growth. We will: -

- Work in partnership with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to deliver their revised Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Strategy with local Welwyn Hatfield focused targets.
- Work with businesses to understand their skills needs to influence delivery of provision that meets their needs.
- Support SMEs to overcome barriers to participating in and gaining the benefits of apprenticeships by acting as a conduit to impartial advice and guidance
- Provide quality up to date information to businesses to raise awareness about the business benefits of apprenticeships, the Apprenticeship Reform (including the levy) and increase opportunities for new and existing staff.
- Support the creation of a range of services that break down the barriers to unemployment, enabling people to participate in the labour market in a way that best reflects their needs at different life stages.

## **4. A business friendly council**

Council initiatives and services can have a significant impact on local business performance. We will strive to be sympathetic and supportive, to ensure companies flourish, generating wealth and employment for the area. We will: -

- Ensure that the council has an outward looking attitude to support and encourage business growth through the provision of all its services and functions.
- Ensure we are supporting businesses as 'customers' of council services.
- Listen to the needs of the business community.
- Boost communication and responsiveness by making information for businesses more easily accessible online.
- Continue to develop the WelHat Business Forum so that businesses can influence strategic direction and have a strong voice.
- Be part of the Better Business for All (BBfA) Partnership which builds on existing good practice of regulator supporting businesses and business growth.
- Continue to employ an Economic Development Officer to be a key point of contact for businesses seeking advice from the council or its partners with a remit to build strong relationships with the local business community and key stakeholders and support business growth.
- Ensure that our agreed policies are central to all decision making and that businesses receive a consistent approach.

## **Management and Monitoring**

The development of the Welwyn Hatfield Economic Development Strategy has been overseen by the Welwyn Hatfield Business Forum which is made up of local businesses. Meetings will be held regularly to review progress and take forward collective decisions to support the strategy's implementation.

We are committed to measuring the impact of our work, learning from our efforts and those of others, and communicating our progress. Working with partners in education, business and key stakeholders, we will continue to build a strong evidence base to underpin our work. Monitoring and measurement frameworks will be embedded within all major economic development initiatives, enabling us to capture key lessons and progress towards goals. We will also regularly communicate findings and impact to relevant stakeholders, whilst listening to others and building a bigger and better dialogue around supporting economic development.

## **How to get in touch**

To keep up-to-date with the economic development work, and other business news, sign up to our newsletter by emailing [econdev@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:econdev@welhat.gov.uk).

You can also get in touch by calling 01707 357269 or writing to:

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