

# Economic Prosperity Strategy

## 2018-2028

**V1.0 March 2018**

**Note:** Please note that this document is presented in MS Word format for the purposes of consideration by the MVDC Executive. The document will be professionally designed and laid out for publication purposes.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page number</b>
Foreword	3
Strategy on a page	4
Introduction	6
Part One: Producing the strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the vision aimed at?</li> <li>• How were the strategy development process, consultation and engagement undertaken?</li> <li>• How were the vision, priorities and bank of projects agreed?</li> </ul>	8
Part Two - The national and regional economic policy context	10
Part Three - Interactions with other MVDC policies and strategies	12
Part Four - The Local Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mole Valley – well connected, productive and attractive</li> <li>• Mole Valley economy – where are we now</li> <li>• Mole Valley – a key economic contributor</li> <li>• Mole Valley – currently successful with potential to grow</li> </ul>	14
Part Five – Vision, Priorities and Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The economic vision</li> <li>• Economic Priorities</li> <li>• Bank of projects to 2023</li> </ul>	20
Part Six - Reviewing the Strategy	26
Notes <p>Within the document there will be, from time to time, reference numbers set in parentheses e.g.: (5) after a statement. This may be citing a reference or providing further explanations – these explanations will be found on the Notes on page 27 of the document.</p>	27

## Foreword

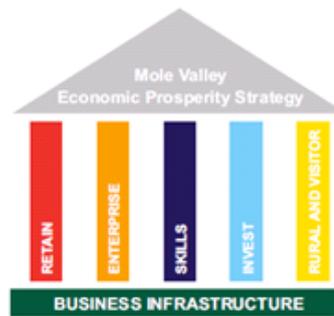
# Strategy on a page

## Mole Valley's Economic Prosperity Strategy 2018 - 2028

### Long Term Economic Vision

"By 2028, Mole Valley will be widely recognised as a prime business location which attracts the most creative and innovative talent. An environment that is vibrant, optimistic, enterprising and productive; enabling businesses to thrive and achieve their aspirations together with offering a great quality of life and beautiful countryside."

### Long Term Strategic Economic Priorities



### Bank of Projects 2018 - 2023

RETAIN	ENTERPRISE	SKILLS	INVEST	RURAL AND VISITOR	BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE
Business Contact Programme	Business Support Programme	Local Schools Engagement	Business Enquiries Service	Visit Dorking / Leatherhead Websites	Safeguarding Employment Land
Business Reference Group	Town Markets Strategy	Positive Action for Local Apprentices	Mole Valley Ambassadors	Visitor Economy Summary	North Downs Line Study
Business-Friendly Protocols	Creative Hub	Business Education Forum	Business Centric Website	Annual Rural Community Summit (ARCS)	Rent a Room Campaign
Engagement using Technology	Cycling Track and Hub (links to Rural & Visitor Economy)	Work Experience Drive	Invest in Mole Valley	Rural Business Road Show	Commercial Agents Forum
Business Directory / Database	Business Growth Hub	Social Enterprises and Upskilling (links to Enterprise)	Video Business Library	Destination Management Plan	Science and Research Park
Economic Monitoring Report	West Street Antiques (links to Rural & Visitor Economy)		Accessing and promoting sources of funding		Discretionary business rates relief
Exit Interviews					Enterprise Zone
Business Needs Survey (links to Infrastructure and Skills)					Clean growth and Environment

### First Year's Projects 2018 – 2019

These projects will be the essential elements which subsequent plans and projects can be built upon. They may expand in to following years. The next year's projects will be selected and considered annually based on ongoing deliverability versus impact studies.

- Business Contact Programme
- Business Reference Group
- GDPR Business Database and directory
- Economic Monitoring Report
- Business Support Programme
- Town Markets Strategy
- Local Schools Engagement
- Business Enquiries Service and Commercial agents forum
- Annual Rural Community Summit
- Safeguarding employment land
- North Downs Line Study
- Rent a Room Campaign

**“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”**

Henry Ford

## Introduction

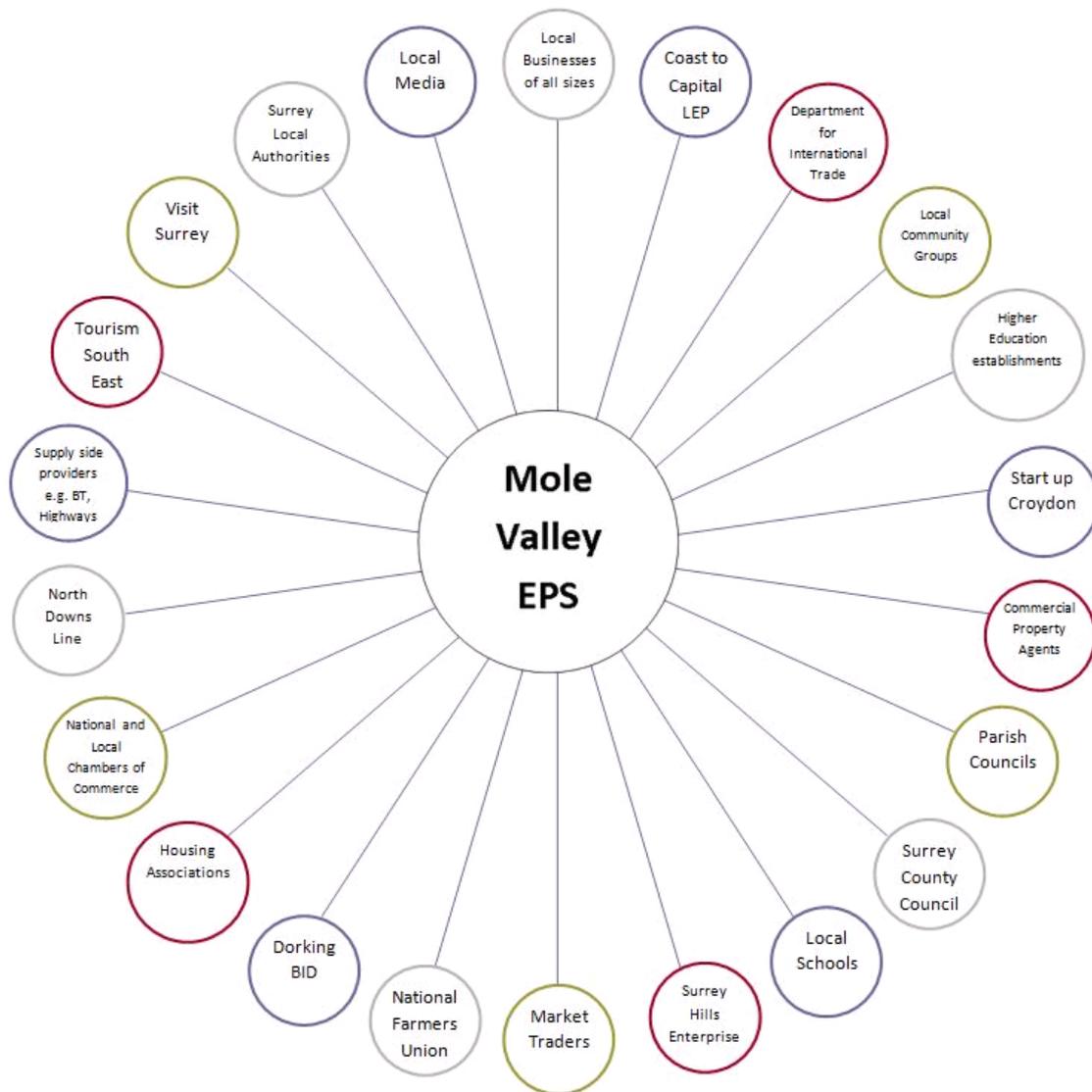
Following an extensive and interactive development process the Economic Prosperity Strategy (EPS) reflects the issues and challenges facing the business and wider community now and in the future. The EPS proposes a range of programmes and projects to take advantage of the anticipated opportunities whilst also helping to address areas of uncertainty and concern.

The EPS is not a panacea. It will not prevent businesses from going out of business; and it will not prevent buffeting from international and national trends and phenomena. The EPS has to operate within the prevailing business environment in the coming ten year period which is why it is structured as an overarching strategy document with a bank of projects which will be delivered over a five year period, supported by a series of annual plans (starting in 2018-19). The EPS and annual plans will be reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted on an ongoing basis.

The EPS gives effect to MVDC's view that there should be an effective framework put in place to create an economic environment within Mole Valley which is supportive, better informed and enlightened; in short, "business friendly". Such an environment is one where business leaders, entrepreneurs and wealth creators, generally, are confident to stay or come and nest their businesses, at whatever stage of their development. By creating such a positive business environment we want Mole Valley to provide a differential advantage that helps and supports budding entrepreneurs to start-up, for businesses that are already based here to stay and flourish and that those looking for somewhere to invest will choose to establish their business.

It is also important to be clear about MVDC's role in the EPS. Success can only be achieved through effective partnership working with the Mole Valley business community, partner organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce, Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Gatwick Diamond, other local authorities and other key stakeholders including schools, residents and Parish Councils and Residents Associations (Figure One illustrates some of the partners we work with). In some cases MVDC's role will be to **lead**, sometimes it will be to **support** others to achieve shared goals and on other occasions it will be to **influence**; this is particularly true of business infrastructure activities, like highways, rail and broadband, where MVDC does not have direct control over something and has to adopt a more lobbying and influencing role.

**Figure One: EPS and Partnership working: MVDC works with a wide range of businesses, partners and stakeholders to deliver the EPS. This illustration shows some examples:**



## Part One - Producing the Strategy

### (i) Who is this strategy aimed at?

The EPS is aimed at anyone who wishes to understand more about the Mole Valley economy and what we hope to achieve over the next ten years. This includes those with a stake in the economy - local business people, residents, potential investors from anywhere in the world, students and local, regional and national policy makers.

### (ii) How were the strategy development process, consultation and engagement undertaken?

The development of the EPS was highly consultative, interactive, collaborative and responsive involving key external and internal stakeholders and businesses. During 2017-18 we -

- Ran a series of **task-focussed workshops**, facilitated by an independent expert from Henley Business School. These workshops included:
  - An officer workshop;
  - Two elected member workshops;
  - A businesses workshop involving businesses of various sizes but mainly SMEs (fewer than 250 employees) and key stakeholder organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce, Surrey County Council and Coast to Capital LEP to gain a first-hand understanding of business priorities and get support and buy-in to the process.
  - Short workshops with the local youth councils - Youth Voice and Junior Youth Voice to ensure that young people (who will be affected by the EPS, over its lifespan) were fully engaged and consulted.
  - Presentations also took place with the Residents Associations, Parish Clerks and various business groups.
- Carried out **structured one-to-one telephone interviews** with senior executives from some of the largest businesses based within Mole Valley;
- Undertook extensive Economic **research and analysis**. We commissioned Grant Thornton to provide robust base line (comparative) economic data and examine other relevant sources held by Mole Valley including the Mole Valley Rural Community Strategy, the Tourist Information Panel (a panel set up by the Scrutiny Committee), and Future Mole Valley (the Local Plan process).
- Conducted a **consultation exercise** during February and early March 2018. A 12 page summary document of the draft EPS was produced. This was emailed to businesses and stakeholders; it was also published on the web site and promoted on social media so that anyone who was interested could participate.

### **(iii) How were the vision, priorities and bank of projects agreed?**

The **Economic Vision** was agreed based upon consideration of all the information collected during the strategy development process. The vision emerged through an iterative process shaped from the workshops, tested with members and through the consultation process.

The **Economic Priorities** were agreed as a result of a number of clear themes emerging during the strategy development process which required prioritisation, focus and action if MVDC was to achieve the economic vision for Mole Valley. The emerging themes were:

- It is evident that Mole Valley's economy is "small but mighty". It is home to some major companies and thriving smaller businesses. It is one of the most productive places in the country. It is critical to safeguard and build upon this success and to achieve better engagement and significant efforts must be made to **retain** existing businesses.
- The Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) sector is fundamentally important to the Mole Valley economy with the majority of firms and employment being generated by businesses employing less than 250 people. The continued good health of the enterprise economy is crucial and this is why this sector is prioritised within the EPS. Whilst it is clear that new businesses are created in Mole Valley, it is evident that a gap exists in support for those growing businesses to enable them to expand. The EPS will focus attention upon creating the right environment for **enterprise and entrepreneurs** to thrive.
- Attracting and retaining a supply of suitably **skilled people** within Mole Valley to ensure that the District prospers emerged as a consistent theme. Closer working with the world of education including schools through to universities should also be pursued more actively. This included providing sufficient affordable housing.
- For prosperity to thrive, it is crucial that the right conditions exist (or be created) where **investment** and re-investment can take place – the strategy will assist in reinforcing and augmenting these desirable circumstances.
- There was a strong desire to focus upon Mole Valley's **rural economy** linking to Mole Valley's Rural Community Strategy. In addition, the **visitor economy** and tourism economy emerged as areas that need better co-ordination and focus. The Economic Prosperity Strategy could contribute towards these work Streams
- Underpinning and linked to all of these priority areas, it was consistently identified that suitable **infrastructure to enable businesses to thrive** should be included within the strategy.

The bank of projects (to be delivered over the first 5 years of the strategy) was agreed because they all sit within one of the six Economic Priorities which, in turn, serve to help achieve the Economic Vision. The projects address some of the issues and challenges identified during the strategy development process, including key points raised on the evidence base and the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Originally a much longer list of projects was produced. Each project was scored in order to help identify those which were deliverable and would significantly contribute to achieving the priorities. This led to the identification of around 30 projects to be delivered over five years (the Bank of Projects).

## Part Two - The national and regional economic policy context

The Industrial Strategy<sup>(1)</sup> White Paper was published on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017. This identifies a number of “grand challenges” which need to be addressed in order for Britain to lead a global, technological revolution –

**Artificial Intelligence and the data-driven economy** – the government will undertake a significant drive towards developing this part of the economy by making funding and other resources available. Mole Valley needs to be equipped, ready and able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the “artificial intelligence revolution”.

**Clean growth** – aimed at continuing to grow smart and renewable energy, construction, sustainable agriculture and establish a Green Finance Taskforce to sustain UK leadership in green financing.

**The future of mobility** – includes a range of measures to progress the regulatory frameworks for new modes of transport (such as fully self-driving cars on UK roads by 2021) and digital highways innovation.

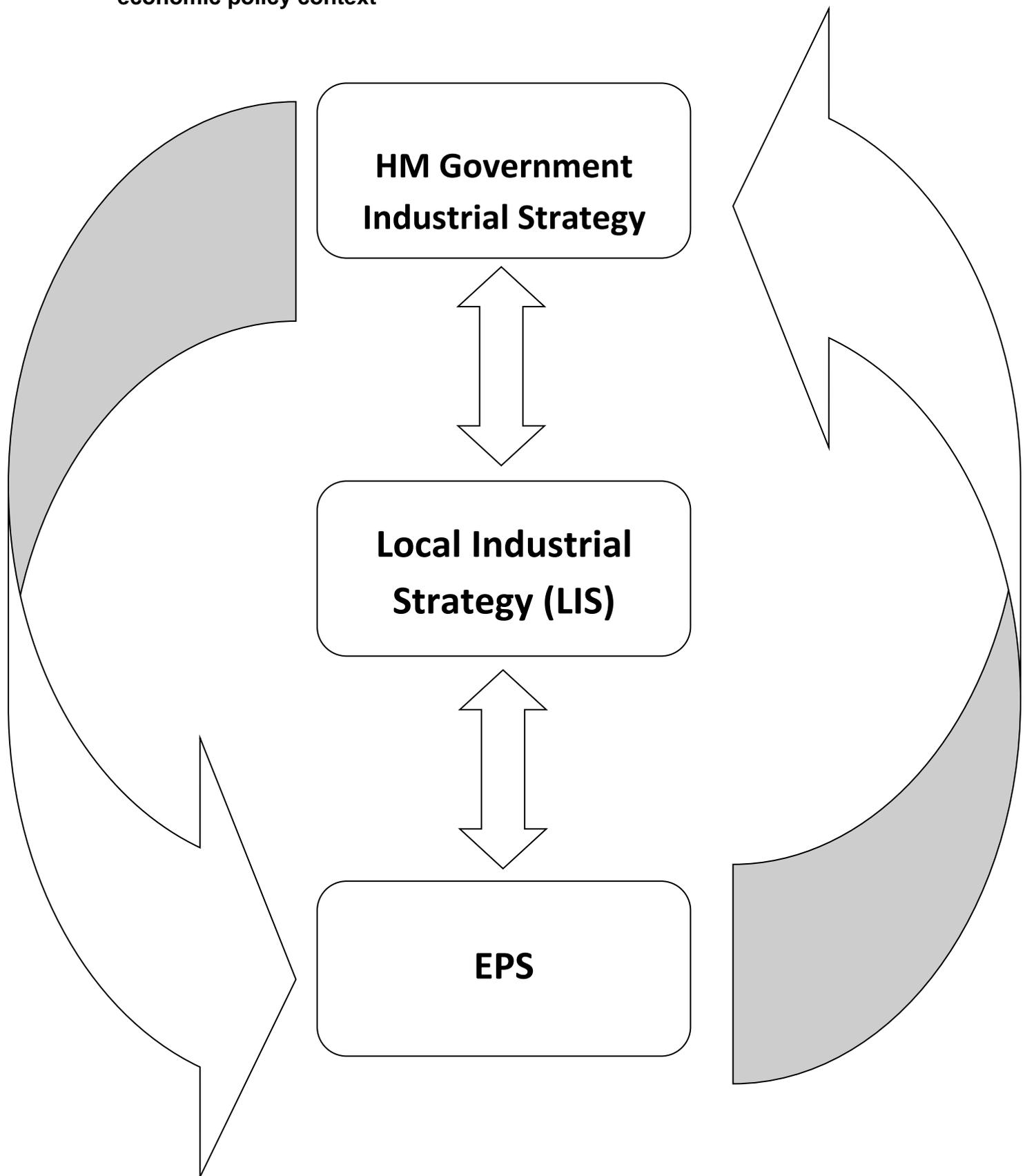
**Ageing Society** – the national Industrial Strategy recognises the challenges presented by an ageing society and sets out a number of initiatives to seize the opportunities that this presents, including a ‘Healthy Ageing’ innovation programme; workplace adaptation for an older workforce; better leveraging of health data; and new models for care provision.

In launching the Strategy, the Secretary of State talked about Britain’s great strengths – listing, amongst other things, our world leading universities, our success in sectors such as financial services, the life sciences and the creative industries and our reputation for being a dependable place to do business, with high standards, respected institutions and the reliable rule of law. But he also talked about the UK’s weaknesses – the most significant being the fact that in many areas of the country we have businesses, people and places whose level of productivity is well below what could and should be achieved.

The Industrial Strategy sets the national economic framework for all regional and local economic strategies and identifies where future government funding will be focused. As such, each of the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships has been charged with producing a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which will replace their current Strategic Economic Plans. Locally, Coast to Capital LEP will be consulting on the development of their LIS during 2018.

There are significant advantages, including our ability to attract funding, to the Mole Valley EPS, LEP plan and national framework all pulling in the same direction (Figure Two). As a result, the proposed vision, priorities and actions compliment national and emerging regional plans as far as possible.

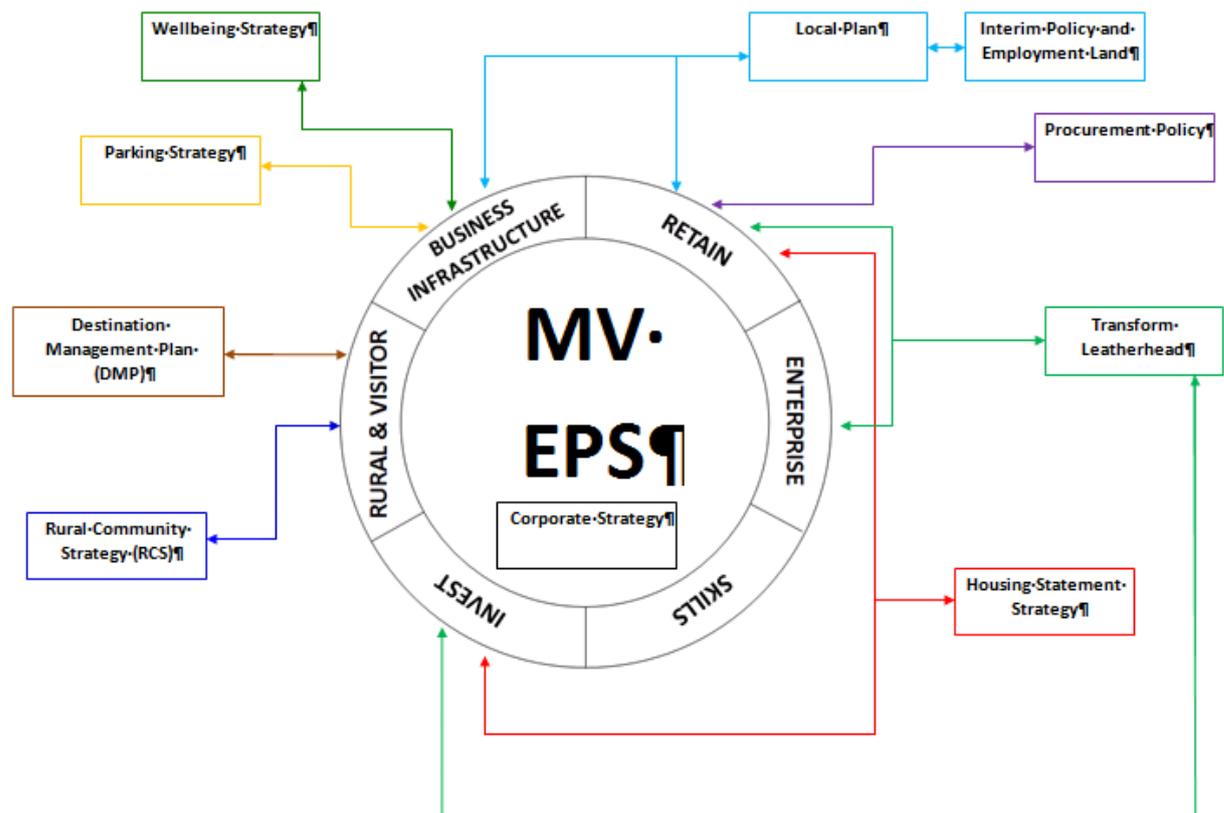
**Figure Two: Illustration showing how the EPS fits into the national and regional economic policy context**



## Part Three - Interactions with other MVDC policies and strategies

MVDC has a range of strategies and policies which already support economic prosperity throughout the district. The EPS cannot succeed in isolation but relies on these strategies and policies and complements them. Figure Three shows the interaction between them.

**Figure Three: Interactions with other MVDC policies and strategies**



While each of these contribute to the overall success of the EPS, two are particularly relevant -

Firstly, the **Local Plan**: The EPS is being drafted during a similar timeframe to that of the next Local Plan – known as “Future Mole Valley”. This is a great opportunity for the EPS (ten year) and Local Plan (15 year) to work in tandem together for the benefit of residents and businesses.

Existing Local Plan policies safeguard certain defined commercial and retail land for continued economic use. These policies have to be read in the context of more recent advice from HM Government in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which advises that local authorities should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. This is of particular relevance to

Leatherhead where a significant amount of office space remains unoccupied and there is pressure from developers to release currently safeguarded employment land for housing. Wherever appropriate, Article Four directives will be employed to protect valuable office space.

- The 2016 Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA - undertaken by MVDC's Planning Policy team) indicates that there is likely to be a small surplus of employment land to meet forecast demand for commercial and retail land over the plan period (2018-2033). While it remains important that the majority of employment land is retained and recycled to underpin economic growth in Mole Valley, there appears to be some flexibility to allow the reallocation of a modest amount of employment land for other uses. It has been agreed to explore this option in more detail, in consultation with the local business community and Economic Development colleagues, as part of the preferred options for the Local Plan. The intention is to keep any reduction in employment land to a minimum, and within the limits suggested by the EDNA.
- To guide plan preparation on the use and recycling of employment land, and to aid safeguarding of suitably located employment land in the meantime, MVDC has adopted an interim policy statement on employment land. The statement sets out the principles for assessing the continued use of employment land in the District, and is a material consideration for decision-takers on current proposals to develop employment land.

It is important to note that the EPS is a non-statutory document which has been adopted as the Council's strategic approach to guide and support economic growth in the District. The Local Plan is a statutory development plan document that shapes the use and development of land in the District in the interests of social, economic and environmental objectives. Decisions on the development and use of land are required to be made in accordance with the Local Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The EPS is, where relevant, one such material consideration in making decisions. The Council has ensured that the EPS and Local Plan are in general conformity with one another. However, if competing interests arise, the decision will be a matter of judgement based on the individual merits of the case.

The second relevant initiative is **Transform Leatherhead**: In partnership with Surrey County Council, Coast to Capital LEP, The Environment Agency and a number of other partners Leatherhead is being transformed into a modern market town where people of all ages can shop, eat, relax and have fun by the riverside.

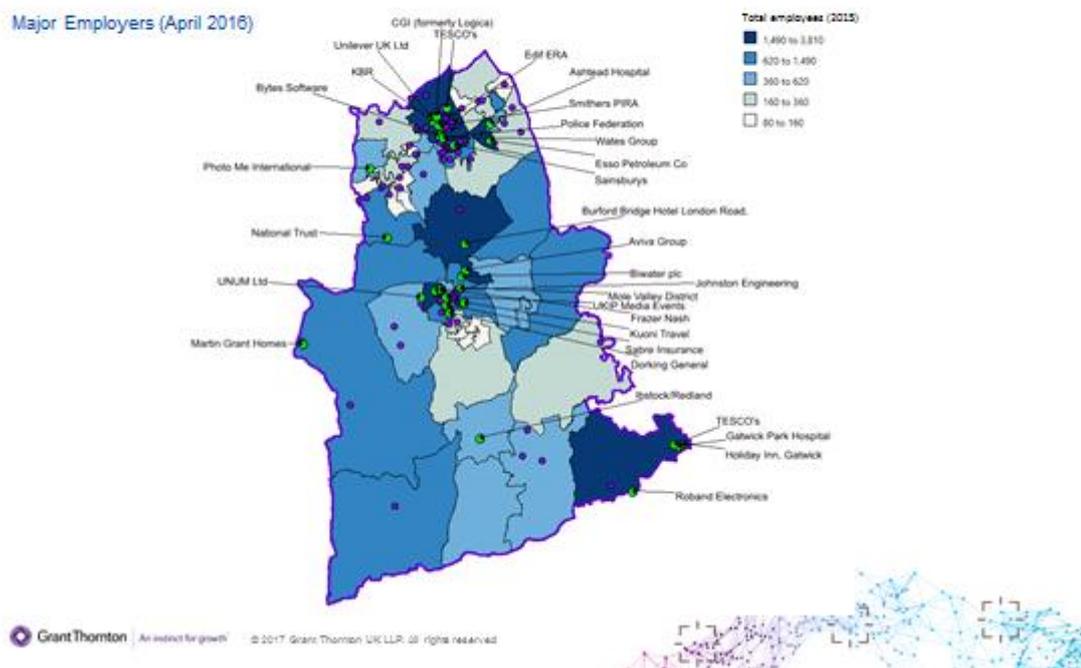
## Part Four -The Local Context

### (i) Mole Valley - Well Connected, Productive and Attractive

Mole Valley is a highly attractive District set amongst the rolling Surrey Hills in South East England. It offers convenient access to central London via excellent road and rail links and is situated close to Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

**Figure Four: Economic geography of Mole Valley**

#### Mole Valley Business focus



Mole Valley's principal towns are Dorking and Leatherhead. Dorking is currently home to a number of major companies, including Aviva, Unum and Kuoni Travel. Leatherhead boasts international organisations such as Unilever, KBR, and CGI (collectively employing over 4,000 people). Exxon Mobil has its European and Middle Eastern headquarters in Ashted.

Of Mole Valley's 258 square kilometres, 90% are considered rural with a substantial proportion of this being within the Metropolitan Green Belt<sup>(2)</sup> and/or within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty<sup>(3)</sup>.

## (ii) The Mole Valley Economy – Where Are We Now?

The table below shows how Mole Valley is ranked as a location for business in relation to the 324 other English Local Authority areas. It includes people, skills, environment and infrastructure measures.

**Table One Summary of Mole Valley's Business Location Index (Grant Thornton, 2017)**

Business Location Indicator	Mole Valley ranking vs English LAs (out of 324)	Mole Valley score (quintile(4) A = good, E poor)	Comments
<b>Economic performance</b>			
Productivity	7 <sup>th</sup>	A	Mighty!
Knowledge driven businesses	32 <sup>nd</sup>	A	Key strength – build upon this...
Business and enterprise	104 <sup>th</sup>	B	Stimulate enterprise?
Economic scale	160 <sup>th</sup>	C	Relatively small
<b>Economic performance score</b>	<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Small but mighty!</b>
<b>People and Skills</b>			
Skills and qualifications	78 <sup>th</sup>	B	Good but could be better?
Knowledge workers	28 <sup>th</sup>	A	Key strength – as above...
Labour market	101 <sup>st</sup>	B	Could be a significant inhibitor of economic growth?
Economically active workforce	283 <sup>rd</sup>	E	Clear evidence of an ageing population
<b>Human Resources score</b>	<b>71<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>B</b>	<b>High volume of knowledge workers tends to balance the relatively ageing population score.</b>
<b>Environment &amp; infrastructure</b>			
Transport connectivity	135 <sup>th</sup>	C	This bears out what workshops were reporting
Broadband	88 <sup>th</sup>	B	This is encouraging but may suggest variability?
Innovation	159 <sup>th</sup>	C	This is a disappointing result
Quality of Life	15 <sup>th</sup>	A	Excellent score!
Environment & infrastructure score	30 <sup>th</sup>	A	The quality of life balances the other scores
<b>OVERALL BUSINESS LOCATION INDEX</b>	<b>54<sup>TH</sup></b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Mole Valley: a great place to do business!</b>

Mole Valley is highlighted as one of the best performers in the country in terms of productivity<sup>(5)</sup>. It is ranked seventh out of the 324 other English local authorities. This measure shows how efficiently an economy can transform resources into goods or services. Strengths to build on have been identified as high quality of life<sup>(6)</sup>, environment, infrastructure and volume of knowledge workers<sup>(7)</sup>.

Recent research by Grant Thornton showed that economic growth in the District has been very slow in comparison to other Surrey authorities.

There are highly positive aspects of the economic landscape to be celebrated. For economic success to be sustained businesses must be valued and supported.

Areas for improvement include requirements for faster broadband speeds, increasing economically active workers (due to an ageing population), skills gaps and qualifications, nurturing innovation and better employment space more closely aligned to what local businesses and those looking to move into the area require.

Mole Valley's economy is "small but mighty" yet also potentially fragile. While small compared to national competitors, positive aspects such as a high level of productivity and relatively high volume of knowledge workers emphasise the strength of its economy.

Mole Valley's businesses continue to compete for both recruitment and retention of highly skilled workers and consider their business location decisions with a global outlook.

Mole Valley's Economic Prosperity Strategy must balance maintaining the District's highly attractive environment with growing a prosperous and thriving local economy.

### **(iii) Mole Valley – A key economic contributor**

Mole Valley plays a valuable part of the Gatwick Diamond<sup>(8)</sup> functional economic area. The recent Centre for Cities report<sup>(9)</sup> shows the area as generating a total Gross Value Added (GVA<sup>(10)</sup>) of £24 billion in 2015; accounting for c10% of the GVA of the South East region. Mole Valley was identified as a key contributor to this overall economic success.

The report highlighted some key issues for the Gatwick Diamond area, including Mole Valley as follows:

- Urban areas do not seem to be making as large a contribution to the economy as they could. While competitor areas such as Milton Keynes and Reading have a large number of skilled jobs at their core, in Mole Valley these tend to be in business parks (especially in Leatherhead). While this is not an either/or situation, **economic performance could be enhanced by attracting high skilled workers to both the business parks outside of town centres and the urban areas.**
- To maintain its strong economic performance, it is important to continue attracting investment in higher skilled jobs. **In order to help achieve this it is important to ensure that there is a good supply of high quality office space in the areas where it is needed.**
- Permitted Development Rights appear to be incentivising landlords and property owners to convert commercial space and land to residential. The report states that: ***"If (economic) growth is not to be constrained, it is essential that the area maintains an adequate supply of employment land"***.
- The **rising cost of housing** may make the area less attractive to workers in the future, impeding the ability to attract further business investment and create more high skilled jobs.
- There is a need to ensure that there is an **adequate supply of workers with the skills required to maintain economic prosperity**. While Leatherhead, in particular, fared well in this aspect there is more that could be done.

## **(iv) Mole Valley – Currently successful with potential to grow**

During 2017/18 Mole Valley District Council held a series of task-focussed workshops and telephone interviews with local businesses and a wide range of other relevant stakeholders. The information gathered at these events, together with the findings of the evidence-based studies; confirm that Mole Valley already has a number of economic strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities.

### **Mole Valley's Economic Strengths**

- It is highly productive (7th in the country, out of 324 other English local authority areas) and has a high degree of knowledge based workers with some amazingly creative and entrepreneurial talent
- There are a significant number of employers of scale, headquarter buildings and world class companies based in the District
- There is a high correlation between the characteristics of Mole Valley's economy (dynamic economy, knowledge workers and high productivity) and the kind of economy the UK Government's Industrial Strategy envisages. The Industrial Strategy includes artificial intelligence, automation, big data, clean and sustainable growth, future of mobility and meeting the needs of an ageing population, this correlation should be exploited
- There is very low unemployment and a high number of "value-added" jobs;
- The countryside is beautiful – an attractor for business and assists in recruiting staff and is something to preserve;
- It is excellently located with good links to London, close proximity to Gatwick and Heathrow airports, major motorway networks and the coast.
- An ageing population reflects great experiences and knowledge and this is a strength

### **Mole Valley's Economic Weaknesses**

- A highly constrained built environment for business space and employment land
- Relatively low economic growth over past ten years
- An ageing population and lack of technically skilled local workforce
- A shortage of appropriate local commercial and industrial premises
- A lack of appropriate and adequate support and coaching for start-up and growing businesses, locally
- A lack of tertiary or higher education provision within the District
- A lack of "start-up" and "grow-on" space
- A lack of affordable housing/accommodation
- A number of infrastructure inadequacies

## **Mole Valley's Economic Threats**

- Real (and potential) loss of “business habitat” and business space in an already tightly constrained environment. The going rate per acre in Mole Valley for housing land is many multiples greater than that for industrial and commercial land
- A risk of becoming a “Dormitory District” by failing to put in place effective mitigations for the loss of business habitat
- A loss of business habitat through national policies that incentivise landowners to convert offices to residential such as Permitted Development Rights and an overwhelming demand and pressure for housing. Permitted Development Rights constrain economic growth by reducing the number of commercial properties available for local businesses to utilise; furthermore, there is evidence that it also constrains the ability to provide additional housing<sup>(11)</sup>.
- The need to strike a balance between protecting the natural environment, supporting employment and meeting housing need
- Failure to address the provision of a supply of suitably trained and motivated young people to work in our businesses, attracting and retaining talent with skills in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics
- Inability to provide suitable affordable accommodation for trained and motivated young people to work in our businesses
- Failure to prepare for the opportunities afforded by the changing needs of the modern and emerging economy (e.g. automation, artificial intelligence etc.)
- Failure to ensure that a business-friendly mind-set is maintained and widely supported
- Uncertainties that arise which are associated with the UK exiting the European Union
- Other uncertainty provoked by external/international socio-economic factors (such as energy related crisis, terrorism, stock market fluctuations, war etc.)

## **Mole Valley's Economic Opportunities**

- Develop a long-term plan, the Economic Prosperity Strategy
- Ensure that local planning policies effectively safeguard employment sites, to protect against loss of “business habitat”. Ideally benefitting from good public transport accessibility and proximity to local shops and services, particularly where it forms part of a cluster of employment use.
- Generate an open, prosperous, enterprising and entrepreneurial environment
- Support businesses in a well-networked environment where they can access sources of funds, talent and overcome barriers to success
- Create an environment that is conducive towards encouraging the brightest and most creative talent to nest within the District to grow and thrive
- Explore whether there is a need for tertiary/higher education provision within the District

- Improve engagement with businesses of all sizes working towards achieving common aims and aspirations
- Encourage future economic growth in sectors that are space efficient
- Develop innovative and imaginative ways to engender prosperity without adversely affecting or damaging the environment
- Develop a set of progressive planning policies (via the new Local Plan) to effectively balance the needs of housing and business (employment) whilst protecting the natural environment
- Cultivate the business-friendly environment where businesses feel welcomed and valued
- Establish systems, procedures and networks for helping business move within the District
- Create new systems, procedures and networks helping young people and talent of all ages fulfil their potential within the District
- Bring together the various agencies to become more coordinated, reduce duplication, and be more effective and efficient at supporting the business community
- Seizing opportunities associated with the UK exiting the European Union

## Part Five – Vision, Priorities and Projects

### (i) Economic Vision

“By 2028, Mole Valley will be widely recognised as a prime business location attracting the most creative, entrepreneurial and innovative talent. A productive environment that is optimistic, dynamic and vibrant enabling businesses to thrive and achieve their aspirations whilst offering a great quality of life within beautiful countryside.”

### (ii) Economic Priorities

MVDC has identified the following six economic priorities to help deliver the long term economic vision

**Table Two: Long Term Strategic Economic Priorities**

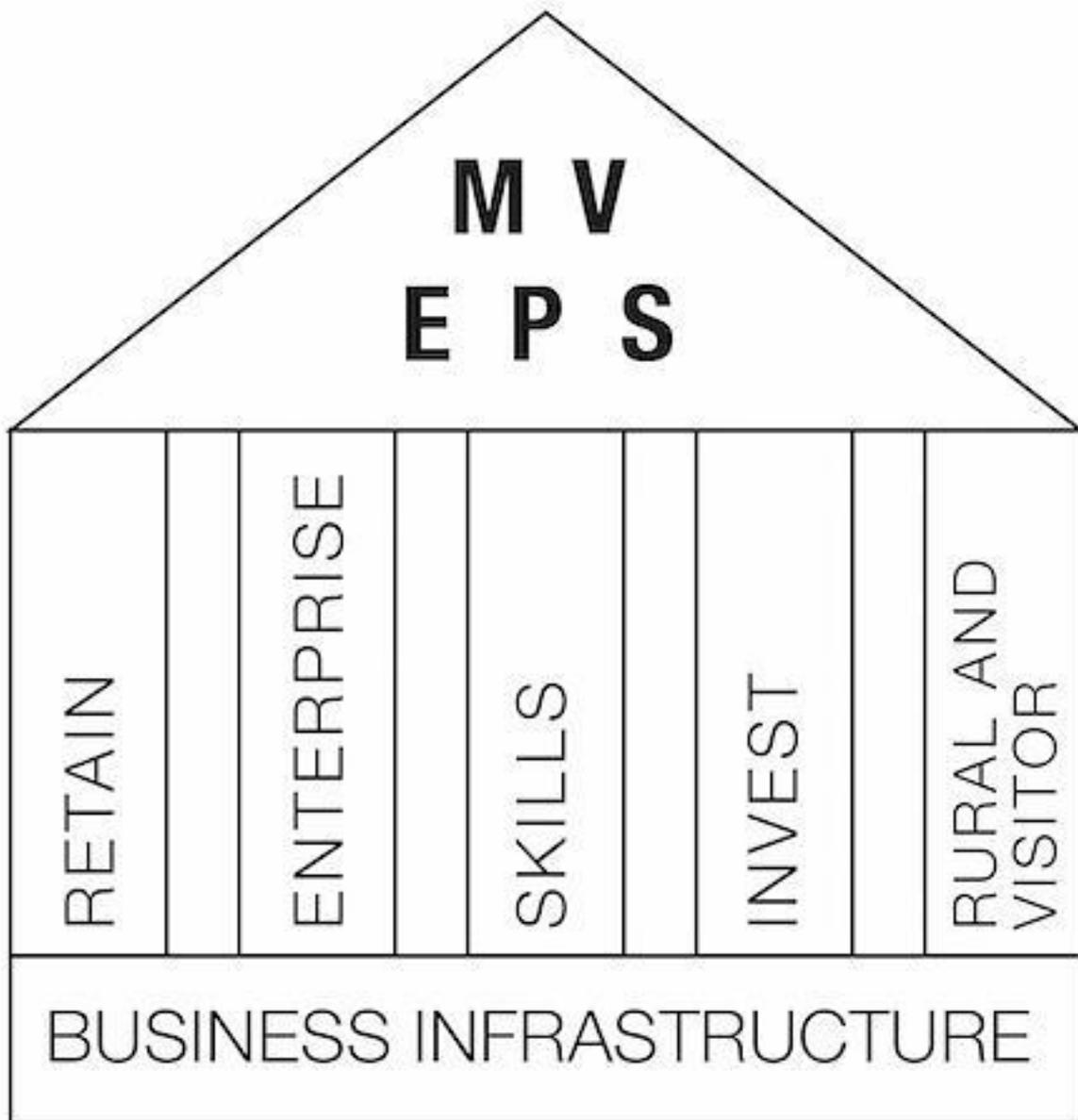
Priority	Priority flag
Retaining and growing existing businesses.	Retain
Encouraging a more entrepreneurial and enterprising business culture.	Enterprise
Improving the skills and education of the current and future workforce	Skills
Improving the re- and inward-investment opportunities for business.	Invest
Improving the rural and visitor economy	Rural and Visitor
Improving the business infrastructure within Mole Valley <sup>(12)</sup>	Business Infrastructure

These priorities are not presented in an order of precedence, but are those which need to be pursued to help put Mole Valley in the best position to tackle the issues and challenges that it is likely to face over the coming ten years or so.

The intention is that all of the projects (set out in the next section) under these Economic Priorities will, over the medium term (five years) once delivered, significantly contribute towards achieving the long term economic vision (set out above).

**Figure Five: Economic Priority Framework**

The above priorities are diagrammatically represented as a coherent strategic economic framework:



### **(iii) Bank of projects (to 2023).**

Whilst the scope of this strategy is on the long term (ten years), the focus is on the medium term (five years ahead to 2023). This section outlines a bank of projects designed to contribute, positively, towards achieving the overall vision over that 5 year period . Project ideas are encouraged and a page on the MVDC web site will be created to enable people to contribute ideas for projects to be considered to be a part of the EPS in the future.

### **RETAIN: Retaining and growing existing businesses.**

R1 **Business Contact Programme:** Establish a business contact programme and account management system to improve engagement with decision makers from business – this will increase dialogue, engagement and mutual understanding and provide an early warning of any issues arising for that business.

R2 **Business Reference Group:** Establish a Business Reference Group – this will promote closer engagement and more open policy formulation.

R3 **Business-Friendly Protocols:** Introduce new internal business-friendly protocols and introducing new ways of working with the business community – this will ensure that business issues and the local economy are systematically fully considered when developing programmes, projects and policies.

R4 **Engagement using technology:** Establish more effective and better engagement with the local business community utilising new technology and new ways of working – this will enable businesses of all sizes to engage with MVDC as well as well as accessing useful sources of information and knowledge sharing best practice and unleashing other, as yet unknown, benefits.

R5 **Business Directory:** Create a Mole Valley Business Directory and General Data Protection Regulation compliant business database – this will help to promote inter-trading and can assist in generating business growth within Mole Valley.

R6 **Economic Monitoring Report:** Produce a regular Economic Monitoring Report – this will have internal and external benefits promoting and disseminating key information about the local economy and its progress.

R7 **Exit interviews:** Initiate a programme of “exit interviews”[1] where companies have left – this will help officers to understand what factors influenced these companies to leave and to learn valuable lessons.

R8 **Business Needs Survey:** Undertake a district-wide comprehensive business needs survey to include skills and infrastructure – this will help MVDC and other policy makers and influencers to understand and quantify what are the specific needs of small, medium and larger employers are in the district.

### **ENTERPRISE: Encouraging a more entrepreneurial and enterprising business culture**

E1 **Business Support Programme:** Initiate a business support programme for start-up, small and medium sized businesses through “quality certified” providers – this will assist those looking to

start their business by being able to access experts before and in the early stages of establishing their businesses; it may help to reduce early stage business mortality.

**E2 Town Markets Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive markets strategy for both Dorking and Leatherhead to include teenage and farmers markets and the possibility of creating a Sunday “flea market” in West Street (Dorking) – this will help to provide business opportunities and create a new, exciting, experience for shoppers coming to Mole Valley. This will cross-over with Transform Leatherhead, as well.

**E3 Creative Hub:** Explore the possibilities of establishing a “creative hub” in Mole Valley – this may encourage and engender more creative businesses this may also help engender a Creative Mentor Network in Mole Valley.

**E4 Cycling Hub and Track:** Explore the possibilities of establishing a “cycling hub and track” in Mole Valley – this will provide a potentially exciting development creating a “destination” experience and building upon Mole Valley’s cycling expertise built up over the previous ten years.

**E5 Business Growth Hub:** Create a Mole Valley growth hub bringing together key agencies such as funders and other enablers to assist small and medium sized enterprises in Mole Valley – this will help to augment and generate a more enterprising culture within Mole Valley especially for those who may otherwise have to leave the District.

**E6 West Street Antiques:** Explore revitalisation strategies with West Street (Dorking) with a special emphasis upon stimulating the antiques trade – this will help to address some of the issues facing this sector and important identity of Dorking.

## **SKILLS: Improving the skills and education of the current and future workforce**

**S1 Local Schools Engagement:** Initiate closer working with schools – this will help to promote enterprise education.

**S2 Positive Action for Local Apprentices:** Develop a programme that encourages local businesses and trades to promote young people from Mole Valley for apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience and include as a requirement placed upon suppliers to MVDC where proportionate to the contract.

**S3 Business Education Forum:** Establish a properly resourced and supported forum, partnership or organisation to bring the worlds of business and education together – this will ensure that there is a proactive match between what businesses require and the people looking for jobs possess, including appropriate skills, experience and attitude.

**S4 Work Experience Drive:** Establish a large scale work experience drive within local schools – this will ensure that young people and the business community gain positive benefits and make a positive investment in the future to the benefit of all.

**S5 Social Enterprises and Upskilling:** Work with various business support organisations and housing providers to explore opportunities to address employability issues in areas of deprivation. Options could include providing support to create social enterprises.

## **INVEST: Improving the re- and inward-investment opportunities for business**

- I1 **Business Enquiries Service:** Establish a Business Enquiries Service, including an up-to-date vacant property register – this will enable positive response and engagement with internal and external business investment enquiries and help maximise the opportunities to reduce vacant commercial, industrial and retail properties within Mole Valley.
- I2 **Mole Valley Ambassadors:** Establish a Mole Valley Ambassadors scheme – this will help to disseminate, in a cost effective manner, the “Mole Valley” message that it is open for business – it also creates a feeling of momentum and positivity amongst influential decision makers and influencers.
- I3 **Business Centric Website:** Explore the possibility of creating a dedicated business-centric web site for Mole Valley – this will support and underpin many of the investment priority projects and indeed the wider EPS objectives. This work might develop into creating a comprehensive digital business strategy
- I4 **Invest in Mole Valley:** Initiate a programme to produce a suite of appropriate promotional materials and assets – this will help to build the business case for investing within the District and for use in multiple platforms and purposes (including resources for the Mole Valley Ambassadors to utilise).
- I5 **Video Business Library:** Initiate a programme of “video business library” mainly using business leaders from critically important businesses explaining why they chose to base their business in Mole Valley – this will, over time, create a powerful and compelling story involving some of the most influential people in the district about Mole Valley as the ideal business location.
- I6 **Attracting and Promoting Sources of Funding:** Build capacity and capability to access relevant sources of funding either for direct delivery of projects linked to the EPS or linking up with other partners including local businesses to pursue appropriate projects and programmes to improve the overall prosperity of the district.

## **RURAL AND VISITOR: Improving the rural and visitor economy**

- RV1 **Visit Dorking / Leatherhead Websites:** Overhaul and redevelop all of the visitor economy web sites such as Visit Dorking and Visit Leatherhead – this will assist in promoting Mole Valley as an attractive visitor destination.
- RV2 **Visitor Economy Survey:** Undertake a regular survey of visitors (as MVDC had commissioned Visit Surrey to undertake) – this will ensure that the visitor economy offer provided by Mole Valley generally is in tune with what people are looking for.
- RV3 **Annual Rural Community Summit (ARCS):** Support the organisation of an Annual Rural Community Summit each year bringing together key members of the rural community and crucial delivery agencies and organisations – this will help keep the rural and visitor economy at the top of the agenda.
- RV4 **Rural Business Road Shows:** Organise rural business roadshows, when appropriate, to ensure that Information on funding and other opportunities are disseminated and communicated to rural businesses and communities.

RV5 **Destination Management Plan:** Consider developing a plan for the visitor economy resulting from the work for East Surrey and Wheels Feet and Hooves exploratory Destination Management Plan work.

## **BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE: Improving the business infrastructure within Mole Valley**

BI1 **Safeguarding Employment Land:** Work closely with Planning Policy colleagues to ensure that employment land benefitting from good public transport accessibility as well as proximity to local shops and services is retained and safeguarded in the next Local Plan, particularly where land is located on a business or research park and forms part of a cluster of employment uses – this will ensure that colleagues are fully engaged with the local business community and aware of their needs whenever developing any plans or policies which will affect business and the local economy.

BI2 **North Downs Line:** Part fund a study to establish a third hourly train service on the North Downs Line.

BI3 **Rent-a-Room campaign:** Initiate a rent-a-room campaign – this may stimulate the market to encourage people with spare rooms to rent them to key workers such as teachers and nurses and this is a good way of increasing the capacity of affordable accommodation in Mole Valley.

BI4 **Commercial Agents Forum:** Establish a Commercial Agents Forum – this will build closer links and improve mutual knowledge and understanding between MVDC, the agents and the local business community.

BI5 **Science, Research, and Development:** Explore the possibility for the provision and development of facilities to accommodate firms engaged in science, research and development of new technologies. Accessible from the M25 this would build on Mole Valley's legacy of world renowned businesses engaged in research and development and signal Mole Valley's ambition and appetite for economic growth".

BI6 **Discretionary business rates relief:** Explore the provision of a discretionary business rates relief scheme for specific kinds of businesses within Mole Valley - this will help to address an issue raised regularly by the business community.

BI7 **Enterprise Zone:** Evaluate the feasibility of creating an Enterprise Zone within Mole Valley – this may assist in stimulating economic growth within Mole Valley.

BI8 **Clean economic growth and environment:** Develop a project to focus upon the clean economic growth and environmental aspects to link in with a key Industrial Strategy theme.

## **Part Six - Reviewing the Strategy**

The EPS spans a ten year period from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2028. It will be reviewed during 2027.

The bank of projects to be delivered over the first 5 years of the strategy will be formally reviewed in 2023. However, it is anticipated and, perhaps, inevitable that over time and with changing economic environment that the relevance of some of these projects will change and that new ones may emerge. It may be necessary to re-prioritise, or even withdraw anticipated activities in the light of changing needs and requirements.

A progress report on the previous year's activities, together with details of the projects to be delivered over the following 12 months, will be compiled, reported to members, and issued on an annual basis starting in 2019–20".

## Notes

1 HM Government Industrial Strategy, Building a Britain fit for the future. (November 2017)  
[www.gov.uk/beis](http://www.gov.uk/beis)

2 The Metropolitan Green Belt policy aims to prevent urban sprawl through openness and permanence.

3 An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) aims to conserve, enhance and protect the landscape for

current and future generations

4 A = Top 20%. B = 20% to 40%, C = 40% to 60%, D = 60% to 80%, E = 80% to 100%

5 Productivity: measuring the relative performance of the economy of an area, by combining GVA (Gross Value Added) per head with average earnings.

6 Assessing the quality of life of an area is based upon assessments related to the health of the population, the amount of crime, school performance, access to local amenities and access to an attractive natural environment.

7 Knowledge workers: assessing the proportion of the resident workforce that are professional, managerial or technical workers.

8 The Gatwick Diamond is a business-led partnership in the Coast to capital Local Enterprise Partnership area and includes the districts of Crawley, Epsom and Ewell, Horsham, Mid Sussex, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge.

9 The Economic Geography of the Gatwick Diamond, Centre for Cities, October 2017.

10 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) definition of GVA is the value generated by any unit engaged in the production of goods and services. It is an indicator of wealth creation in an economy. In national accounts GVA is output minus intermediate consumption. It is one of the most commonly applied indicators of economic impact and provides a measure of the wealth generated within the economy, over time, resulting from direct investment in economic activity.

11 The LGA have produced a study (January 2018) showing that some 7,500 affordable homes are lost in England due to conversions of offices that do not go through the conventional planning system due to PDR.

12 Business infrastructure focusses upon those areas which specifically affect business (as well as sometimes affecting residents) and these include such things as broadband provision, highways, traffic and parking provision issues, business rates etc. Infrastructure, in the general sense, is a very wide ranging subject so it is important to provide a defined scope for business infrastructure.