

Working Together for Sustainable Economic Prosperity



A Local Economic Development Strategy for Bracknell Forest 2011-2014

Bracknell Forest Economic and Skills Development Partnership

Foreword

Bracknell Forest is a fantastic place for business. The area hosts one of the most successful knowledge economies in the country. The Borough enjoys an unrivalled location in the prosperous Thames Valley and is a great place to live, work and visit. Nevertheless, in recent years the national economic picture has changed at an unprecedented rate and local authorities, businesses, agencies and the voluntary sector have become all too aware of their roles in helping to lead their communities out of economic difficulty. The Bracknell Forest Economic and Skills Development Partnership has grasped this challenge and through this Strategy, hopes to ensure that the Borough remains resilient and proactive to the future challenges facing the area.

In response to the changing economic picture, a new partnership was established with the principal aim of helping the Borough's residents and businesses through the recession. This was the first time any such partnership had been formed and in September 2008, the Economic and Skills Development Partnership was launched to help sustain economic prosperity for the Borough's residents and businesses. The partnership, consisting of key representatives from the Council, partner agencies, including Jobcentre Plus and Connexions; business representatives, including Business Link, Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and the voluntary sector set in place a priority action plan designed to immediately help local businesses and the community ride the worst of the recession.

In 2010, a review of the priority action plan was undertaken and the partnership agreed that more was needed to provide support for businesses and residents over the next three years. This Local Economic Strategy aims to provide that support.

This Strategy is an important milestone in the partnership's commitment not only to sustain economic prosperity for our residents and businesses, but also to support the wider partnership work with our partners and Councils in Berkshire and surrounding counties. Our Strategy outlines the issues that face us all, sets out a vision for the future, and highlights some specific actions which we propose to take in the next three years and will help pave the way for Bracknell Forest to become an even better place in which to live, work and play.

The Economic and Skills Development Partnership set up the Economic Development Strategy Steering Group, which has been key in delivering this document and our thanks to our partners who have committed their time and expertise throughout the process.

Contents

1 Executive Summary	page 6
2 Introduction.	page 7
3 The Bracknell Forest Economy – Issues	page 9
4 Strategic Framework for Local Economic Development	page 13
5 Action Plan.	page 18
• Business Growth	
• Skills and Learning	
• The Green Economy	
• Infrastructure	
• Older People	
6 Implementation of the Strategy	page 24
Annex	page 25
• Detailed Action Plan	page 26
• Delivery Partners.	page 30
• Glossary.	page 31

Executive Summary

Bracknell Forest is one of the most successful knowledge economies in the country. The Borough has long been seen as an economically prosperous area maintaining a good standard of living for its residents and attracting high profile international businesses providing a sound and enviable global business base.

Like many areas of the country, Bracknell Forest has not been immune to the effects of one of the deepest recessions to hit the UK economy and action was quickly taken by the Council in order to mitigate the worst of the effects for the local community and businesses. Bracknell Forest, whilst relatively prosperous, still faces important issues which need action in response. The Economic and Skills Development Partnership was set up in order to tackle and monitor these challenges and much of its work has been done through a priority action plan. The issues highlighted by the partnership are set out in this Strategy which, based on consultation and university-led research, identifies the challenges for the future. This research has shown that whilst Bracknell Forest remains one of Britain's most successful knowledge economies, there is work to be done to sustain and enhance the Borough's economic prosperity.

This Strategy therefore, looks to address these issues through partnership working; a way to make the best use of scarce financial resources. The Strategy's overarching vision reflects Bracknell Forest's ambition to achieve 'sustainable economic prosperity through innovative and dynamic partnerships between businesses and communities' and creating 'an excellent place to live and work'. The vision is heavily place-based and business-centric, which is echoed across Berkshire area through the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the national Government's policies.

The action plan builds on pre-existing momentum and work programmes. The five broad areas for action are set below and reflect the Strategy's cross-cutting themes:

- Business Growth
- Skills and Learning
- The Green Economy
- Infrastructure
- Older People

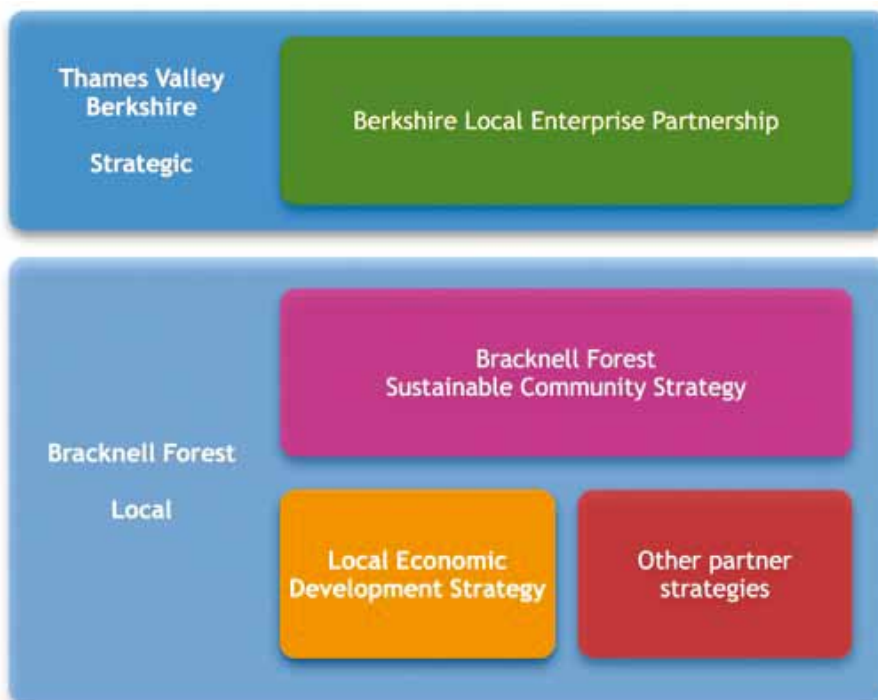
For each area of action, an overall aim has been established followed by a set of proposed actions. These actions have been the result of research and agreement through the Economic and Skills Development Partnership and its Economic Strategy Steering Group. Implementation of the actions has been agreed through consultation and the detailed action plan aims to deliver the objectives of the partnership.

The Strategy identifies our key aspirations to 2014 and beyond, in line with the aspirations of the partnership and the aims and objectives of partners. We have brought together a wide range of agencies and individuals across the Borough to develop our approach which focuses on innovation and strategic direction in the light of scarce financial resources. This document reinforces the commitment of the Council and its partners to drive forward the Borough's economy, making it dynamic and accessible to all.

1 Introduction

Why do we need a local economic strategy?

- 1.1 Bracknell Forest is a fantastic place for business. It is home to some of the most important sectors for growth in the UK economy. Nevertheless, like other areas of the UK, Bracknell Forest faces tough and highly uncertain economic conditions over the next three years. The UK economy is still weak and public spending reductions are expected to have an impact on jobs and work within the community and voluntary sector. There is clearly no room for complacency at the local level, everything that can be done locally to strengthen Bracknell Forest's economy and the employability of its residents should be done.
- 1.2 In response, the Economic and Skills Development Partnership has prepared a Strategy and action plan for Bracknell Forest, for the next three years. The partnership recognises that the Borough's businesses have a crucial role in creating jobs and wealth in Bracknell Forest. The partnership brings together representatives from the private, public, community and voluntary sectors, to sustain the Borough's economic prosperity. This adds real strength and capacity to economic development in the Borough. As a partnership and through this Strategy, the Economic and Skills Development Partnership is looking to shape and guide the future of its businesses and residents helping to ensure sustainable growth and dynamism in the local economy.
- 1.3 The Economic Development Strategy is highly focused on Bracknell Forest as a unique place to live and work. The "Localism Bill" underlines the need for communities to take the initiative in improving well-being through direct local action. A healthy local economy is fundamental to community well-being, since it is the main source of income and job opportunities for many local residents. Therefore, this Strategy reflects the wider trend towards localism, thinking locally and action locally to ensure Bracknell Forest remains an attractive place to live and work.
- 1.4 At the same time, Bracknell Forest works closely with its Berkshire neighbours given that local economies and labour markets are highly interdependent. The new basis for this external collaboration will be the Local Enterprise Partnership for the Berkshire Thames Valley sub-region. Similar business-led partnerships have been set up across England under the "Local Growth: Realising Every Place's Potential" White Paper (October 2010), replacing the Regional Development Agencies. Covering Reading, Wokingham, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest, the Thames Valley Berkshire area is the most powerful sub-regional economy in the UK, outside London. Bracknell Forest's interests, particularly with respect to inward investment, innovation and strategic infrastructure will be pursued through the Local Enterprise Partnership on behalf of Bracknell Forest and its neighbouring areas. It is worth noting that Bracknell Forest Council is in a strong position to tackle all aspects of local service priorities for residents and businesses, unlike county and district authorities. This makes the links with the Local Economic Partnership as effective as possible.





This Document

1.5 This document was produced by the Economic and Skills Development Partnership following consultation with Bracknell Forest businesses, public service agencies and community and voluntary groups. It reflects a strong coordinated and focused approach to local economic development across sectors and also within Bracknell Forest Council itself. In an austere climate for business and public services, the strategy is based on mobilising social capital within the Borough and working together across boundaries for a common purpose to achieve sustainable economic prosperity’.

The document is organised as follows:

- Section 2 summarises the challenges and issues facing Bracknell Forest’s future economic development
- Section 3 sets out the values and thinking behind the Bracknell Forest strategy, including its vision of “Sustainable Economic Prosperity”
- Section 4 presents an Action Plan for Bracknell Forest’s economic development over the next three years
- Section 5 explains how the Economic and Skills Development Partnership will move forward in implementing the Strategy and Action Plan

1.6 We have tried to make this document concise to encourage wide readership. The Economic and Skills Development Partnership welcomes new ideas and initiatives for improving the strategy and the action plan. It favours an ‘open innovation’ approach which encourages everyone to participate in keeping Bracknell Forest an excellent place to live and work.

2 The Bracknell Forest economy – Issues

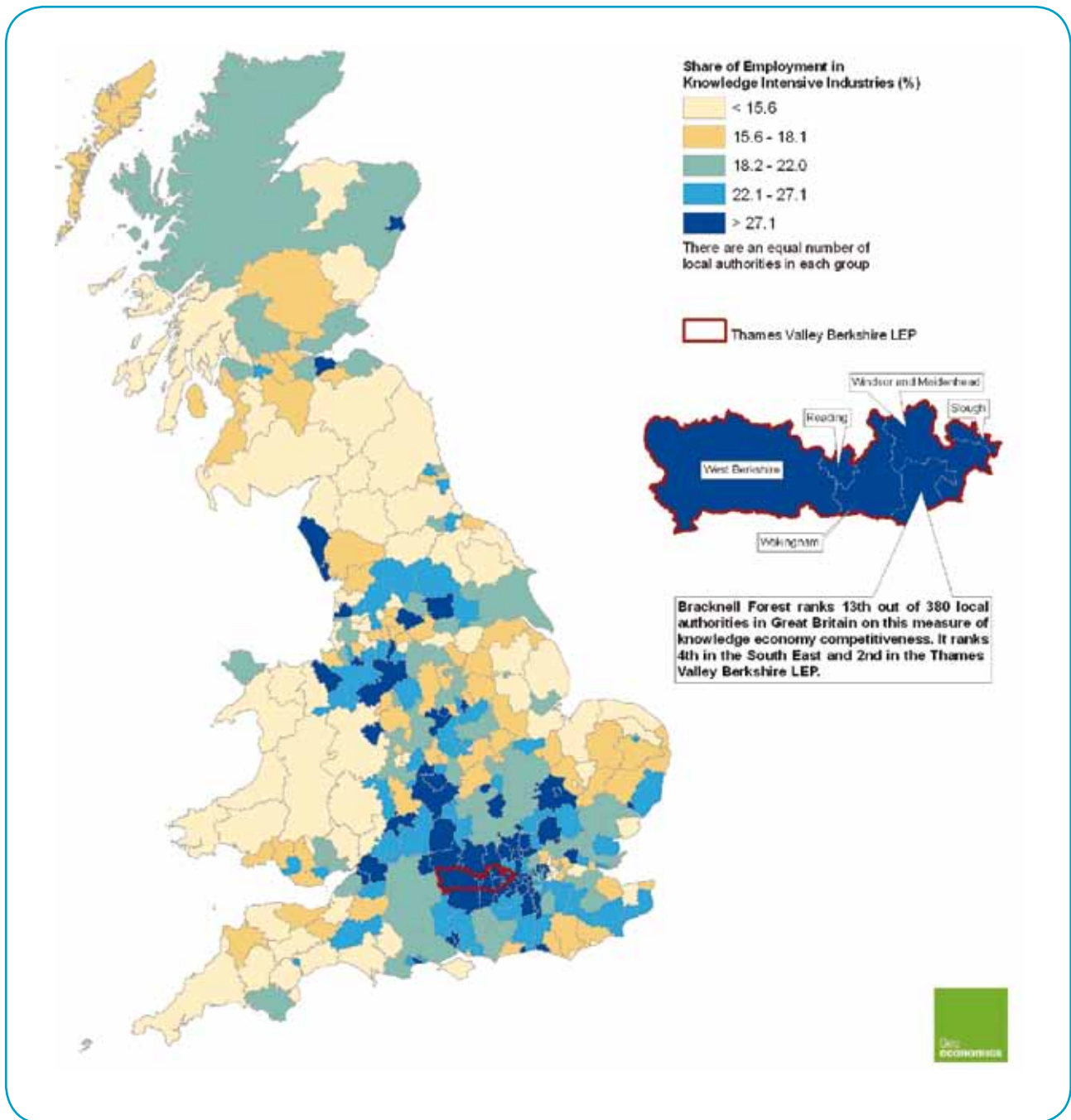
2.1 The Strategy is informed by a range of Government data, evidence from research studies and local knowledge. The most up-to-date information available has been used. In the few instances where the most recent data is itself some years old, it has been “sense checked” against local knowledge and other more recent information. Of particular note, are the “Reading Diamond” Local Economic Assessment carried out by the University of Reading, and the high-level vision and Strategy report prepared for the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board by Professor Mark Hepworth, Geoeconomics - The University of London.



Decades of Growth and Change

- 2.2 From its origins focused on a post-war New Town, with a strong manufacturing base, Bracknell Forest has evolved into one of Britain’s leading ‘knowledge economies’ – characterised by concentrations of high value skill/technology industries, such as advanced engineering, ICT and pharmaceuticals and financial business services. The Borough’s knowledge economy is anchored by the UK and European headquarters of major companies, including BMW, Boehringer Ingelheim, Cable & Wireless, Dell, Hewlett Packard, Panasonic, 3M and Waitrose, as well as a myriad of small and medium sized businesses.
- 2.3 Bracknell Forest lies at the heart of the Berkshire Thames Valley sub-region (Chart 2.1). The Thames Valley is the most competitive sub-regional economy outside London, and one of Europe’s most successful areas for attracting inward investment in knowledge-based industries. As a result of the strong presence of knowledge-based sectors, with growth and export potential, Bracknell Forest was identified in 2010 by the Work Foundation as one of the most resilient local economies in the UK, capable of leading the South East out of the recession.
- 2.4 As a result of these economic characteristics, Bracknell Forest workers are, on average, more highly paid than employees in the rest of the country, the South East and the rest of Berkshire and despite the average earnings level residents being lower than workers commuting into Bracknell Forest, on the whole, residents have benefited from the Borough’s economic success.

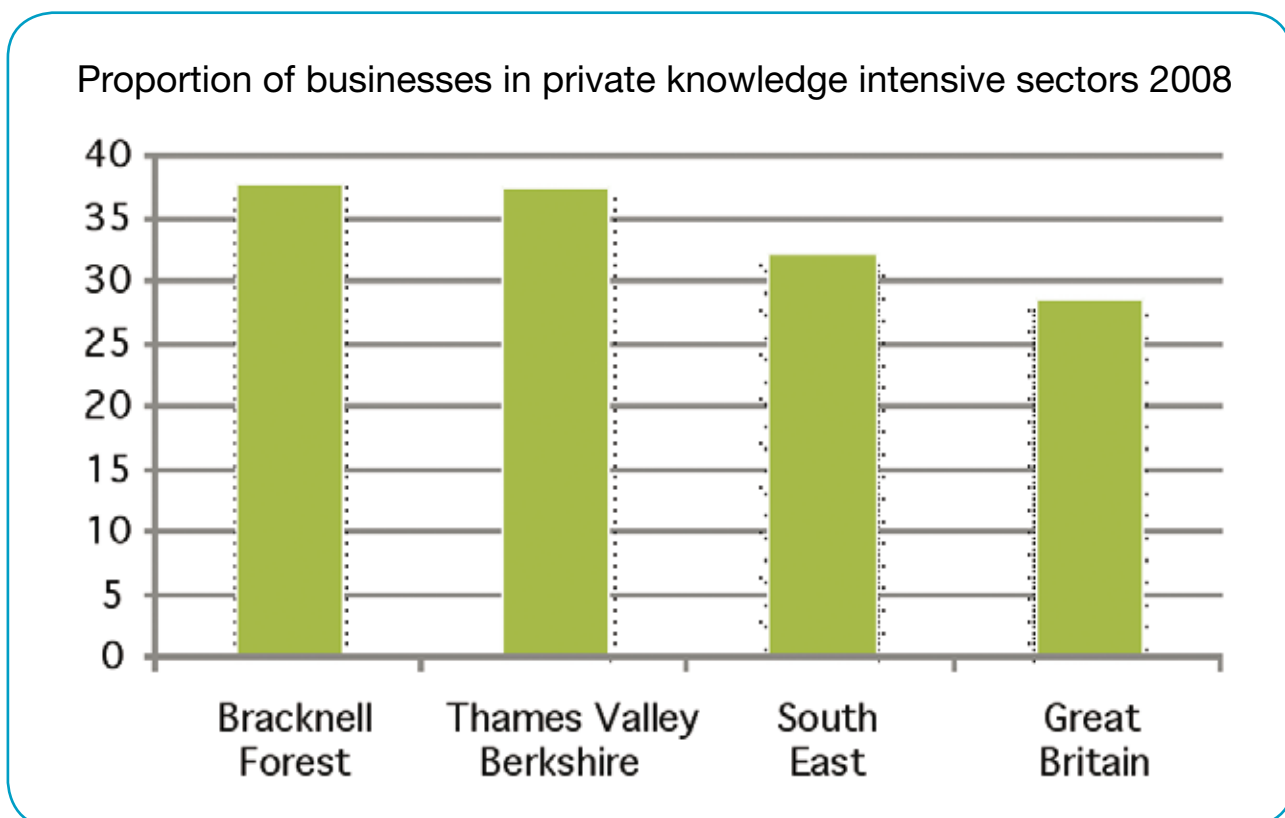
Chart 2.1: Bracknell Forest lies at the heart of Britain's knowledge economy, 2008
 (The dark blue-coloured areas are where knowledge-intensive industries are most highly concentrated.)



Knowledge-intensive sectors are defined as industries where 25% of the workforce has a degree and 30% are employed in professional, managerial, scientific and technical occupations. Spanning high productivity manufacturing and services, they include: oil & gas extraction, tobacco products, printing, & publishing, coke, petrol, nuclear, chemicals/products, office machinery, computer, electrical machinery, radio, TV, & communications, medical, precision & optical instruments, motor vehicles and other transport (incl. aerospace); finance, real estate, computer services, R&D and other professional services; travel agencies, radio and TV and other entertainment, news agencies, motion picture and video and museums, libraries, archives; electricity, gas, water and waste; and transport and communications, including telecommunications.

- 2.5 Looking at the Borough as a whole, the average earnings for residents are significantly higher than the South East and the UK and remain among the highest in the UK average (ASHE 2009 figs). Job quality for people commuting into the Borough appears to have stayed high in the decade leading up to the recession.
- 2.6 Issues associated with the Bracknell Forest economy were raised by University of Reading researchers: reducing levels of traffic congestion dependence on car commuting, house affordability and choice, as well as labour shortages in service occupations (below graduate level). There are also emerging issues around economic exclusion, particularly amongst young people not in education, employment or training. The latter have been the hardest hit by the adverse economic climate and tightening labour market conditions, not only in Bracknell Forest but across the UK as a whole. At the other demographic extreme, Bracknell Forest's population of older people risks being vulnerable to economic exclusion at a time when many pensions are being eroded by fuel and food inflation.
- 2.7 The Economic and Skills Development Partnership places importance on the economic well-being of Bracknell Forest residents, including the most vulnerable and those people who depend more on the local labour market for work. By contrast, with the discontinuation of other regeneration projects around the UK, Bracknell's major redevelopment plans are still proceeding. Steps have also been taken to keep Bracknell town centre attractive for businesses and residents through a new partnership. Recent years have seen developments across the whole Borough, including the construction of the new, state of the art, Bracknell and Wokingham, and Garth Hill colleges as well as significant improvements to the railway station. A new sixth form centre has been built at Edgbarrow School in Crowthorne, and new neighbourhoods have sprung up at Jennetts Park and The Parks in Bracknell.

Chart 2.2: Trends in Business Growth, 2008



Source: Geoeconomics, BERR, ONS

- 2.8 The Government expects small firms and higher levels of entrepreneurship to compensate for the negative job and wealth effects of public spending reductions. The Hepworth Report for the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board (2010) highlighted the increasing importance of small business growth and new firm formation, in knowledge-based sectors particularly, to the future health of the sub-regional economy, including Bracknell Forest. Chart 2.2 suggests that whilst the Borough benefits from its strong base of large 'blue chip' companies, there are opportunities to help the small business sector become even more dynamic and reinforce entrepreneurial culture. Between 2002 and 2008 Bracknell Forest's overall enterprise performance was overtaken by the rest of the sub-region, the region and the country. The greatest opportunities are presented in the knowledge-based industries.
- 2.9 At the opposite extreme, the Hepworth Report raised concern over the future role of multinational corporations in job creation. Interviews with the Thames Valley's flagship companies underlined the high level of economic and financial uncertainty in the global economy. Business retention is therefore as important as attracting inward investment, together with developing a more balanced and diverse range of growth sectors. The Bracknell Forest Economic and Skills Development Partnership not only recognises the importance of retaining the Borough's global business base to ensure that the area continues to remain attractive to firms as it has done in the past, but also acknowledges the vital role that its small and medium sized enterprises play in realising the opportunities that Bracknell Forest offers to all types of businesses. This document as a forward-looking economic development strategy for Berkshire and Bracknell Forest will seek to develop these areas through enterprise promotion and support.

Summary

- 2.10 In 2010, the Work Foundation concluded that Bracknell Forest has one of Britain's most successful knowledge economies, providing one of the best jobs market in the UK. Bracknell Forest's proximity to London and accessibility to the European and international markets, including the new emerging super-economies, ensures that the Borough can continue to compete locally and nationally and remain attractive to inward investors.
- 2.11 However, there is a need to ensure that the Borough can achieve sustainable economic prosperity given the social and environmental costs of recent patterns of growth. The Economic and Skills Development Partnership understands that there is a clear need to address these emerging concerns all of which could undermine the Borough's ambition for sustainable economic prosperity. The need for a more proactive local economic strategy is of course amplified by the state of the UK economy and the housing and labour markets.
- 2.12 This strategy is therefore a response to the challenges and issues facing Bracknell Forest's economic development.

3 A Strategic Framework for Local Economic Development

3.1 This section explains the guiding vision and core themes behind Bracknell Forest's strategic approach to economic development. It begins with an overview of economic development functions – what the Economic and Skills Development Partnership can do locally and sub-regionally. This is a time of 'policy flux' as the Government implements its agenda for localism in the provision of public services, and the new Local Enterprise Partnerships get underway as business-led economic development agencies.

The Scope for Action

- 3.2 The scope for English local authorities to influence economic development in their areas is set out in the Government's White Paper "Local Growth – Realising Every Place's Potential" (October 2010). The Borough Council can work at the level of the Borough and the Berkshire wider area.
- 3.3 As a unitary authority, Bracknell Forest can strengthen the Borough's local economy through planning, housing, infrastructure, supply of business premises, and other areas of action. Importantly, by taking the lead and working in partnership with businesses, other public sector organisations and the community and voluntary sector, the Council can have a direct and indirect influence on Bracknell Forest's economic development. The scope for the Council to act proactively in leading, enabling and bringing people together is shown in the left-hand column of Chart 3.1.
- 3.4 The scope for action is becoming clearer following the publication of the Government's Localism Bill and through the emerging "Big Society" agenda, whereby more public services will be provided by businesses and charities, although the practical implications still need to be assessed. Planning reforms are proposed. Local development plans will be complemented by community-driven 'neighbourhood plans'. Last October, the 'Local Growth' White Paper recommended financial reforms, such as "rewarding" local authorities for new housing and pursuing economic development. The New Homes Bonus, starting in 2011-12, will match-fund the additional council tax for each new home and property brought back into use for each of the six years after that home is built. Further, a new Business Increase Bonus scheme could allow local authorities whose growth in the business rates yield exceeds a threshold, to keep the increase for a period of six years.



Chart 3.1: Promoting economic development in Bracknell Forest

The Role of the Local Authority

Leadership and coordination to set out a framework for local development

Supporting growth and development through supply of land that supports business growth and a housing supply that meets the Borough's needs

Using land assets to leverage private funding to support growth

Directly and indirectly influencing investment decisions via the use of statutory powers, particularly through the planning system

Supporting local infrastructure which is a key enabler for growth

Support for local people and businesses providing high quality services that directly support businesses investment confidence maintaining trading standards to keep markets fair

Leading efforts to support and improve health and well being of the local population to ensure that all individuals have the maximum opportunity to benefit work and contribute to the local economy

The Role of Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Skills – tackle skills gaps, skills for growth sectors, graduate retention and champion apprenticeships

Innovation – build 'community of innovation' for business growth with University of Reading

Strategic planning – ensure a coordinated and consistent approach across Berkshire authorities

Infrastructure – identify key requirements and formulate delivery plans

Transport – develop a Berkshire-wide transport strategy based on understanding of critical business needs

Housing & community – coordinate housing and planning decisions within a sustainable economic development framework

Inward investment – promote TV Berkshire to potential inward investors

Business retention & aftercare – develop client-centred approach, networking and business in community initiatives

Business support & enterprise – remove barriers to innovation and growth, business rate flexibility

Advocacy, strategic leadership & efficiency – champion Berkshire economy and coordinated delivery to reduce duplication of functions

- 3.5 The right-hand column shows the additional influence the Council can exert through its membership of the new Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The functions listed in Chart 3.1 are actually proposed actions as they appear in the submission to the Secretaries of State in September 2010. Governance and strategies and action plans for the Local Enterprise Partnership are being firmed up, with Bracknell Forest Council and Chamber of Commerce integrally involved.
- 3.6 As shown in Chart 3.1, the Local Enterprise Partnership will concentrate its efforts on delivering business growth across the whole of the sub-region by promoting innovation, enterprise, skills, infrastructure, lobbying and coordinating local policies and funding. Bracknell Forest has a significant stake in the future success of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The Economic and Skills Development Partnership will, therefore, ensure that Bracknell Forest's economic development strategy is congruent with that of the Local Enterprise Partnership as its takes more definite shape in the coming year.
- 3.7 Direct funding for economic development has always been relatively scarce and over the life of this strategy (2011-14) discretionary money will be even more limited. Therefore, the Economic and Skills Development Partnership (and the Local Enterprise Partnership) will depend on their ability to influence decision-making in all sectors, and persuade people to work together across boundaries. Aligning and targeting available funding and resources more intelligently and effectively will be vital. Scanning the horizon for UK and EU funding opportunities will have to go hand in hand with discovering innovative funding solutions for economic development projects.

A Vision of Sustainable Economic Prosperity

- 3.8 A compelling vision for Bracknell Forest's economic development is valuable as a 'rallying cry'. It should convey the 'long view' local interested parties have agreed on for taking the Borough's economy forward beyond 2014.
- 3.9 For the purpose of this strategy, the Economic and Skills Development Partnership's vision is intended to reflect and ambition for Bracknell Forest sustainable economic prosperity.

Bracknell Forest Local Economic Development Strategy Vision

Bracknell Forest will be an excellent place to live and work – where sustainable economic prosperity has been achieved through innovative and dynamic partnerships between the Borough's businesses and communities.

- 3.10 This economic development vision for Bracknell Forest resonates strongly with the place-based vision for the Borough to be found in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2014, and also the business-centric vision that has been adopted by the Thames Valley Berkshire Partnership. These complementary visions are set out in the grey box below.

Sustainable Community vision

Bracknell Forest will have a reputation for its distinguished green landscape and contemporary, vibrant town centre. Contributing to this unique identity will be many neighbourhoods offering accessible facilities to meet individuals' needs. Local communities will be strengthened with people feeling safe and getting on well together. Ensuring everyone has similar opportunities and is included in public life will enhance confidence in public services. The borough will have a prosperous and diverse economy, offering local jobs, personalised public services and a range of ways to spend leisure time. This is a bold vision for all of us which will be achieved through nurturing future and existing generations.

Thames Valley Berkshire vision

Berkshire will be a diverse knowledge economy based on a spirit of entrepreneurship, enterprise, innovation and low carbon technology. We will be the ideopolis of the UK and Europe. Building on the economic success of previous decades we will work towards removing the barriers to business growth, innovation and job creation. Standing still is not an option for Thames Valley Berkshire.

- 3.11 The phrase sustainable economic prosperity is sufficient to keep in mind and in the forefront of economic development debates. 'Sustainable' conveys the Borough's ambition for balanced economic development – a dynamic, fair and green pattern of growth and change.

Cross-cutting Themes

- 3.12 Four themes cut across the economic development strategy. They reflect wider policy and market trends and priorities identified by the Economic and Skills Development Partnership.

Business Growth

- 3.13 Bracknell Forest has performed strongly on business growth for the last two decades. However there is a need to guard against any possible loss of economic dynamism, and any vulnerability in the local labour market. Of particular importance is the need for stronger business growth to compensate for a medium-term decline in the public sector as a source of direct employment.
- 3.14 Business growth can be enhanced by diversifying Bracknell Forest's local economic base and promoting the small business and enterprise start-up sectors. Keeping businesses in Bracknell Forest is vital as globalisation speeds up. Business retention measures are more place-based and hence more central to this economic development strategy; inward investment, particularly when linked to promoting key growth sectors, needs to be primarily driven by the Local Enterprise Partnership to carry sufficient weight and thrust.

The Future of Public Services

- 3.15 The public sector, as a direct employer and procurer of goods and services, is a major actor in the Bracknell Forest economy. High quality public services are also important to a high quality of life, since they are part of what economists call 'the social wage' – a source of economic well-being that is additional to the individual 'pay packet'.
- 3.16 The big challenge facing Bracknell Forest (and everywhere else) is to ensure that the health of the local economy and the economic well-being of residents are safeguarded. Businesses, social enterprises and community and voluntary agencies will need to be properly equipped to compete successfully as future providers of public services. This will require management development, business mentoring, skills training and innovative financing schemes.

The Green Economy

- 3.17 The green economy refers to a diverse range of economic activity associated with tackling climate change, improving resource efficiency and conserving biodiversity and ecosystems. Technology and regulatory drivers are creating markets in four broad areas: clean energy, green buildings, sustainable transport and resource management and conservation. The Government, which has declared its intention to become 'the greenest government ever', is backing the green economy as a source of growth and diversification. The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership has made the green economy one of its priority areas for innovation and business growth.
- 3.18 The Sustainable Community Strategy vision for Bracknell Forest seeks to make the Borough a greener place to live and work. The challenge is to exploit emerging opportunities to 'green and grow' that is, to create new jobs and new business opportunities in the context of improving the local environment. Bracknell Forest Chamber of Commerce is particularly alive to the economic and business potential of the green economy.
- 3.19 For any business to be competitive it must cut its carbon and become energy efficient. Those businesses that can demonstrate a 25 % cut in consumption whilst maintaining performance will out-perform their competitors. So a green economy is an efficient and highly competitive economy. Those organisations that fail to take up the challenge are wasting their own resources. Bracknell has some of the companies that are leading the way in terms of developing the technology for green efficiency and Bracknell Forest Council should work closely with them.
- 3.20 The green economy is already a focus of partnership activity such that the Action Plan will build on existing effort and learning. For example, Scottish & Southern is championing a flagship low carbon smart grid project involving various partners from business, academia and the local community. The Council is already promoting home energy efficiency improvements with the involvement of local suppliers, and in March 2011, with the local Climate Change Partnership, will be promoting renewable technologies in the community (eg solar photovoltaics scheme). Green economy activities are embedded in the Local Development Framework/Core Strategy, as well as in the Council's sustainable procurement practices. Thus, the Action Plan has good foundations on which to build 'green and grow' initiatives.

Older People and Inter-generational Working

- 3.21 In this strategy, Bracknell Forest's population of older people is treated as an important economic asset in its own right. There are several areas of opportunity:

The high growth care sector - health-related jobs and management and service jobs; the construction of appropriate housing and modern care homes fit for purpose with particular attention paid to dementia needs.

Wisdom and human capital - the older population provides a reservoir of skills that it is important not to lose, for example engineering-related knowledge. Their experience could well be channelled in mentoring and coaching of young entrants to the job market. Moreover with increased emphasis on flexible and part-time working older people can stay in the workforce well into their seventies and contribute vast experience to industries here.

Inter-generational working - with young people being involved in internships in care homes and with older people mentoring young people can provide some of the mortar that makes for a thriving sense of community and interdependency.

3.22 Bracknell Forest has the opportunity, through this economic development strategy, to demonstrate that an ageing population can be a vital part of a healthy economy. Moreover it can become the best place in the country for ensuring that care for older people and inter-generational working is dynamic areas of the local economy. The Council already has an imaginative forward looking strategy for older people which are built upon in the Action Plan presented in Section 4.

Summary

3.23 A more proactive locally-driven approach to Bracknell Forest's economic development is consistent with the Government's policies. This place-based strategy for strengthening the Borough's economy will be reinforced by the sub-regional economic strategy of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Leadership, influence, partnerships and intelligent use of scarce resources are key to delivering this strategy.

3.24 The vision for this strategy is Bracknell Forest becoming a place where the ideal of sustainable economic prosperity has been realised. Social capital and human capital, the ability of people to work together for a common purpose and their knowledge and ingenuity, are the intangible resources that will make the strategy a success.

3.25 Finally, four themes cut across the economic development strategy. Business growth offer dynamism and resilience. Radical reforms in public services offer opportunities for local enterprise. The green economy could be a recipe for 'greening and growing' businesses, workplaces and sustainable transport options. Bracknell Forest could become a model for making care of the older people and inter-generational working sources of economic dynamism.

4 Proposed Action Plan 2011-2014

4.1 This section sets out an action plan for implementing the economic development strategy. A detailed implementation plan, including priority actions and timescales has been prepared following collaboration with key players in the local economy. The actions are not for any single organisation alone; it is a partnership plan.

Overview of Scope and Content

4.2 The proposed action plan is based on initial stakeholder consultations carried out by the Economic and Skills Development Partnership. Wherever possible, recommendations for action build on the momentum and knowledge generated by existing programmes.

4.3 There are five broad areas for action:

- Business Growth
- Skills and Learning
- The Green Economy
- Infrastructure
- Older People

4.4 The boundaries between these areas are porous and there are strong linkages across the areas.

4.5 It should be further noted that the "Business Growth" section below includes generic measures to enhance business growth in Bracknell Forest, that is to say, measures that apply to all businesses rather than to targeted sectors. A sharper sector focus is to be found in the Green Economy (the environmental sector), older people (the health and care sector) and the Infrastructure (the digital economy sector) sections.

4.6 For each area of action, there is an overall aim and a summary of the issues being addressed, and a list of proposed actions. The detailed action plan which covers lead partners and time-frames can be found at appendix A. This action plan is designed to be refreshed on an annual basis and changes will be made accordingly in response to economic conditions, funding and completion of actions.



Aims

To ensure Bracknell Forest continues to be an attractive location for major businesses not only to retain its existing businesses but to promote future enterprise development.

Issues

Globalisation is underlining the need to retain existing companies and to compete for new sources of mobile investment. Diversifying the local economic base and improving enterprise performance are also key aspects of future business growth.

Actions

- 1 Actively promote Bracknell Forest as a premier International Business Location, particularly for high value knowledge-based sectors, through the new Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- 2 Bracknell Forest Council to work closely with partner agencies to promote links to the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies in order to support growth for Small and Medium sized Enterprises. Bracknell Forest to be a strategic partner in securing the links to China with the British Chamber of Commerce.
- 3 Establish a Bracknell Forest Business Network with a centrally-located one-stop shop and a branded web portal through which local businesses and businesses located outside the Borough can access/be signposted to local economic information, events schedules, directories and support services.
- 4 Create an Enterprise Hub in Bracknell Forest town centre by converting empty office and retail space into flexible low cost accommodation, alongside a business sustainability plan. The 'Hub' would provide flexible and well-designed space for people to work, meet, innovate, learn and relax and start and grow new business ideas.
- 5 Help people to start up their own businesses through:
 - A Signposting Service for start up funds and support services, e.g. advice on Jobcentre Plus funding, applications to Frederick Foundation, or to banks and resource links such as marketing experts, HR professionals and so on.
 - Specific training sessions for individuals and not for profit organisations to understand business start up, what is involved and how to take forward.
- 6 Develop a Capacity-building Service for local businesses and local voluntary and community organisations to become public service providers under the Big Society reforms – including the promotion of social enterprise as alternative business growth model.

Aims

To ensure that everyone has access to appropriate work and skills development opportunities regardless of age allowing them to play a part in Bracknell Forest's economic future.

Issues

Skills and learning issues cut across all generations. Too many young people are not in employment, education or training. There are re-training needs among people in mid-career (45-60) and women re-entering the labour market. Older people will have to work longer due to the higher retirement age and pension pressures. These issues are exacerbated by the adverse economic and jobs outlook in Britain.

Actions

- 1 Engage employers more deeply, actively and purposefully in Bracknell Forest's skills, learning and employment initiatives, focusing on:
 - Increasing the range of all-age apprenticeships by getting local employers more involved and more informed (eg. host National Apprenticeship Service information breakfast meetings).
 - Identify the skills needs of local employers and work with providers to invest in delivering relevant skills courses and improve links between schools and business.
- 2 Ensure all-age training and development placements are included in tenders for building work, wherever appropriate, and to include apprenticeships, adult apprenticeships and work trials.
- 3 Create a 'Knowledge Bank' that captures the accumulated practical and commercial knowledge of semi-retired, retired or even working residents who may be looking for opportunities act as mentors and skill builders.
- 4 Promotion of careers service from Grow Your Own and Next Step for all ages to obtain information as developing skills or employability and career developing skills or employability and career change transition.

The Green Economy

Aims

To develop the green economy in Bracknell Forest as an important future driver of business growth and job creation.

Issues

The green economy requires technological, organisational and social innovation for markets and industries to reach a critical threshold. Governments at all levels have an important role in encouraging innovation and breaking through market bottlenecks – finance, skills, research and development etc. Importantly, the green economy calls for 'green and grow' initiatives.

Actions

- 1 Establish a Green Economy Forum for the Borough which brings together large and small businesses from the Environment Goods & Services Sector as well as social enterprises and non-profit groups. The mission of the Forum would be to develop 'green and grow' initiatives for the Borough.
- 2 Pursue a Local Clean Energy Strategy for Bracknell Forest based on a shift to renewable sources and neighbourhood/micro energy generation schemes, creating opportunities for new skills and jobs and new businesses and social enterprises.





Infrastructure

Aim

To develop a modern communications infrastructure and a requisite variety of housing options that meet the changing needs of Bracknell Forest businesses, employers and residents.

Issues

Increasing traffic congestion is frequently reported by employers and commuters in terms of cost and time. Housing pressures can exacerbate these mobility/connectivity problems, making it difficult for businesses to attract/retain people with degree, supervisory/skilled craft and even basic qualifications. Sustainable mobility is also needed to realise the Borough's environmental and green aspirations which will also improve its attractiveness to businesses and employees.

Actions

- 1 Promote a distinctive housing offer which explicitly addresses the demands of residents, from senior management executives to families wishing to live and work in the Borough, by providing tenures that are not only affordable but are a type attractive to all who work in Bracknell Forest. This would include housing design such as live-work units, where demand exists and will complement the wider Town Centre regeneration.
- 2 Ensure that Bracknell Forest's Broadband infrastructure is world-class and equally accessible to all residents and businesses located within the Borough helping to develop the 'Digital Economy' as a diverse area of enterprise development around the green economy.
- 3 Pilot a Telecommuting Initiative for the Borough, with the major employers taking the lead; demonstrate the real, measurable economic, social and environmental benefits of the transport-telecommunications trade-off. Develop roll-out plans accordingly.
- 4 Promote a faster train service from Bracknell to London.

Aims

To ensure that older people play an active and fully-recognised role in the Borough's efforts to achieve sustainable economic prosperity.

To develop care for the Older People as an important growth sector of the Bracknell Forest economy.

Issues

Ageing population and pension issues mean people have to work longer. Older people's households may be asset-rich but income-poor. There is a demand for suitable accommodation as well as retrofit requirements to reduce the operating costs of their homes. Older people are also highly active in community and voluntary work which should be recognised more. The Borough could become a leader in 21st century Care for older people, where business and job growth is assured owing to demographic forces.

Actions

1 Building on Bracknell Forest's existing strategy for older people:

- Ensure that support is available in Community Settings that are person-centred and designed to promote independence, dignity, respect and choice for all.
- Ensure that families who face financial hardship are offered benefits and advisory services.
- Collaborate with local landlords to improve outcomes for older people, through exploring housing options, adaptations and the introduction of Telecare where the person's current housing is a barrier to independence.
- Volunteering will be encouraged and people will be supported and encouraged to participate in initiatives such as Time and Wisdom banks.

2 Ensure that Bracknell Forest becomes a model place for the Care Sector, developing ICT and low carbon technologies that will enable older people to stay safe and able, and winning business from around the country. The Sector will be an arena for innovative partnerships with businesses (corporate social responsibility) and inter-generational working through apprenticeships and graduate placements.



5 Implementing the Strategy

- 5.1 The Strategy is not the responsibility of any one partner; it will be implemented by a range of organisations and individuals and will be used to secure commitment to action from partners. Detailed implementation will be achieved via a co-ordinated approach and close working across Berkshire with partner organisations and through specific working groups including the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Berkshire Economic Development Officer's Working Group (BEDOG). This co-ordinated approach will ensure that actions remain fit for purpose and relevant to the needs of the Borough.
- 5.2 Lead partners are identified for each action that will develop the detailed work needed to deliver the Strategy's objectives. This Strategy is intended to be a living document, it will be reviewed on an annual basis to respond to change as necessary.



APPENDIX A

Local Economic Development Strategy
Detailed Action Plan



Action	Lead	What is being done at present?	Year
Business Growth			
1.1 Actively promote Bracknell Forest as a premier international business location, particularly for high value knowledge-based sectors, through the new Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.	Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise	Collaborative work already underway with local property agents and Chamber of Commerce	2011
1.2 Bracknell Forest Council to work closely with partner agencies to promote links to the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) economies in order to support growth for Small and Medium sized Enterprises, Bracknell Forest to be a strategic partner in securing the links to China with the British Chambers of Commerce.	Chamber of Commerce/ Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise	Collaborative work already underway	2011
1.3 Establish a Bracknell Forest Business Network with a centrally-located one-stop shop and a branded web portal through which local businesses and businesses located outside the Borough can access/be signposted to local economic information, events schedules, directories and support services	Chamber of Commerce		2011
1.4 Help people to start up their businesses through: A signposting service for start up funds and support services, e.g. advice on Jobcentre Plus funding, applications to Frederick Foundation, or to banks and resource links such as marketing experts, HR professionals and so on.	Shop Support/ Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise		2011
1.5 Help people to start up their own businesses through: Specific training sessions for individuals and not for profit organisations to understand business start up, what is involved and how to take forward.	Shop Support/ Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise		2011
1.6 Create an Enterprise Hub in Bracknell Forest town centre by converting empty office space into flexible low cost accommodation, alongside a business sustainability plan. The 'Hub' would provide flexible and well-designed space for people to work, meet, innovate, learn and relax and start and grow new business ideas.	Chamber of Commerce/ Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise		2012
1.7 Develop a Capacity-building Service for local businesses and local voluntary and community organisations to become public service providers under the Big Society reforms – including the promotion of social enterprise as alternative business growth model.	Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action	Already part of core work for Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action to encourage members to work collaboratively	2014
Skills and Learning			
2.1 Engage employers more deeply, actively and purposefully in Bracknell Forest's skills, learning and employment initiatives, focusing on: Increasing the range of all-age apprenticeships by getting local employers more involved and more informed (e.g. host National Apprenticeship Service information breakfast meetings).	Jobcentre Plus/ Bracknell Forest Council Lifelong Learning/ Education Business Partnership	Work being done as part of 'Get Britain Working' campaign and also with the introduction of the Service Academies in August 2011.	2011
2.2 Engage employers more deeply, actively and purposefully in Bracknell Forest's skills, learning and employment initiatives, focusing on: Identifying the skills needs of local employers and work with providers to invest in delivering relevant skills courses and improve links between schools and business.	Jobcentre Plus/ Bracknell Forest Council Lifelong Learning/ Education Business Partnership	Work being done as part of 'Get Britain Working' campaign and also with the introduction of the Service Academies in August 2011.	2011
2.3 Promotion of careers service of local employers and work with providers to invest in delivering relevant skills courses and improve links between schools and business.	Bracknell Forest Council Lifelong Learning/ Jobcentre Plus	Careers service already offered by Grow our Own and signpost to Next Steps. Greater promotion is now needed around this.	2011

Action	Lead	What is being done at present?	Year
2.4 Ensure all-age training and development placements are included in all tenders for building works, wherever appropriate, and to include apprenticeships, adult apprenticeships and work trials.	Bracknell Forest Council Lifelong Learning/ Procurement	Discussions already underway	2012
2.5 Create a 'Knowledge Bank' that captures the accumulated practical and commercial knowledge of semi-retired, retired or even working residents who may be looking for opportunities to act as mentors and skill builders.	Jobcentre Plus/ Bracknell Forest Council Lifelong Learning	A national initiative is being investigated by the Workers Educational Association which could provide the framework for a local project.	2014
Green Economy			
3.1 Pursue a Local Clean Energy Strategy for Bracknell Forest based on a shift to renewable sources and neighbourhood/ micro energy generation schemes, creating opportunities for new skills and jobs and new businesses and social enterprises.	Bracknell Forest Council Climate Change, Spatial Policy	Promotion of Photovoltaics to local residents and employees. Partners with Scottish and Southern Electricity's Thames Valley Vision smart grid project	2011
3.2 Establish a Green Economy Forum for the Borough which brings together large and small businesses from the Environment Goods and Services Sector, as well as social enterprises and non-profit groups. The mission of the Forum would be to develop 'green and grow' initiatives for the Borough.	Chamber of Commerce		2011
Infrastructure			
4.1 Promote a faster train service from Bracknell to London.	Bracknell Forest Council Regeneration and Enterprise	Bracknell Forest Council Local Transport Plan review complete. Further lobbying and promotion being developed as part of Action 1.1	2011
4.2 Ensure that Bracknell Forest's Broadband Infrastructure is world-class and equally accessible to all residents and businesses located within the Borough helping to develop the 'Digital Economy' as a diverse area of enterprise development around the green economy.	Bracknell Forest Council ICT/ Bracknell Forest Regeneration and Enterprise	Initial talks underway and looking at a co-ordinated approach across Berkshire through BDUK Broadband Delivery Project	2012
4.3 Pilot a Telecommuting Initiative for the Borough, with the major employers taking the lead; demonstrate the real, measurable economic, social and environmental benefits of the transport-telecommunications trade-off. Develop roll-out plans accordingly.	Chamber of Commerce		2012
4.4 Promote a distinctive housing offer which explicitly addresses the demands of residents, from senior management executives to families, wish to live and work in the Borough, by providing tenures that are not only affordable but are a type attractive to all who work in Bracknell Forest. This would include housing design such as live-work units, where demand exists and will complement the wider Town Centre regeneration.	Bracknell Forest Council Housing		2014

Action	Lead	What is being done at present?	Year
Older People			
5.1 Building on Bracknell Forest's Strategy for Older People: What is being done: Older Persons Accommodation Strategy complete. Ensure that support is available in Community Settings that are person centred and designed to promote independence, dignity, respect and advisory services.	Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care and Health	Work is being done as part of the existing service plans and will continue as such.	2011-2014
5.2 Ensure that families who face financial hardship are offered benefits and advisory services.	Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care and Health	Work is being done as part of the existing service plans and will continue as such.	2011-2014
5.3 Collaborate with local landlords to improve outcomes for older people, through exploring housing options, adaptations and the introduction of Telecare where the person's current housing is a barrier to independence.	Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care and Health	Work is being done as part of the existing service plans and will continue as such.	2011-2014
5.4 Volunteering will be encouraged and people will be supported and encouraged to participate in initiatives, such as Time and Wisdom banks.	Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care and Health	Work is being done as part of the existing service plans and will continue as such.	2011-2014
5.5 Ensure that Bracknell Forest becomes a model place for the Care Sector, developing ICT and low carbon technologies that will enable older people to stay safe and able, and winning business from around the country. The Sector will be an arena for innovative partnerships with businesses (corporate social responsibility) and inter-generational working through apprenticeships and graduate placements.	Caring for Care Homes/Bracknell Forest Council Adult Social Care and Health/ Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action		2014

Delivery Partners

Bracknell Forest Council

Provides a range of services for the residents and businesses of Bracknell Forest. Also co-ordinates the production and implementation of the Local Economic Assessment Strategy.

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce Group

Works with businesses across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire to help them achieve their full business potential. We do this by offering members a range of services including business advice, networking events, training and international trade support.

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce is recognised as the leading voice of business, representing micro to major multi-national organisations; a 'Centre for Excellence' providing international trade services and global representation; committed to long-term relationships with member and providing them with relevant, value added services that help, support and protect regional, national and international business.

One of the largest Chambers accredited by the British Chambers in the UK, and the only accredited Chamber in the region. The Chamber leads the UK chambers in the 'Link to China' project and leads inward investment on behalf of the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership.

Jobcentre Plus

Provides a wide range of information and services, like benefits, loans and grants and help with finding a job. Find out how to contact Jobcentre Plus and other ways of finding the information or online service you are looking for.

Support Shop Ltd

The Support Shop is a highly successful social enterprise providing premises, facilities, services and support to micro businesses, the self-employed and people who work from home.

Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action

Provides central support for voluntary and community action in Bracknell Forest Borough. BFVA are a local agency, which is non-profit making and independent of national and local government.

Glossary

Berkshire Economic Strategy Board (BESB)

The Berkshire Economic Strategy Board was established to act as the overarching economic strategic partnership for the sub-region and works to ensure sub-regional economic sustainability.

Berkshire Functional Economic Area (FEA)

Functional Economic Area's are areas in which the local economy and key markets operate and extend beyond administrative areas i.e. Unitary Authority boundaries

Big Society

The aim of the Big Society is to create a climate that empowers local people and communities taking power away from politicians. It is primarily designed to allow communities to solve problems in their neighbourhoods, having the freedom to influence and discuss topics that matter to them, and a more local approach to social action and responsibility.

Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy

The strategy sets out the long term vision for the Borough. The vision, produced by the Bracknell Forest Partnership, covers all aspects of life for people on the Borough, examining where we have come from, where we are now and where we want to be in 2030.

BRIC Economies

BRIC refers to the countries of Brazil, Russia, India and China who have been identified for their economic potential to become the four most dominant economies by 2050.

Get Britain Working Campaign

As part of its drive to Get Britain Working, Jobcentre Plus is replacing existing employment schemes, pilots and projects with one new Work Programme. The Work Programme will support a wide range of customers - from Jobseekers Allowance recipients who have been out of work for some time, to customers who may previously have been receiving incapacity benefit for many years.

Grow Our Own

The aim of Grow our Own is to help local employers recruit and retain the best in Windsor, Bracknell and Maidenhead by providing them with the local workforce they need. They provide support, advice, guidance and training to local residents who want to find employment in their home area and matches local people to local jobs, whatever their background or circumstances, at every skill level - from junior operative to senior executive.

Grow Our Own is a joint venture between the Learning Partnerships of Bracknell Forest Council and The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Knowledge Economy

A knowledge-based economy refers to the use of knowledge technologies such as knowledge engineering and knowledge management to produce economic benefits as well as job creation.

Localism Bill

This Bill will shift power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils and contains a number of important packages including community empowerment, changes to the planning system and changes to social housing policies.

Next Steps

Next Steps provides information and advice to support adults in making appropriate decisions on a full range of learning and work opportunities.

Photovoltaic's

Photovoltaic's (PV) is a method of generating electrical power by converting solar radiation into direct current electricity using semiconductors that exhibit the photovoltaic effect. Photovoltaic power generation employs solar panels composed of a number of cells containing a photovoltaic material.

Reading Diamond

The term Diamond is used to define the most significant and largely urban functional economic areas that have the potential to act as a catalyst to stimulate prosperity across wider areas, and which offer scope for further sustainable growth based on targeted investment in their infrastructure. The 'Reading Diamond' is best described as ranging from the west of Theale, through Reading and along the A329(M) corridor to encompass Bracknell town, and extending approx 3 - 5 miles to the north and south of the urban boundary of Reading. Such 'boundaries' are intended to be indicative, permeable and fluid.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting is a work arrangement in which employees enjoy flexibility in working location and hours. Many work from home, while others, occasionally also referred to as nomad workers or web commuters utilise mobile telecommunications technology to work from coffee shops or other locations.

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Local Enterprise Partnerships replace the abolished Regional Development Agencies. They are locally-owned partnerships between local authorities and businesses and will play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. They are also a key vehicle in delivering Government objectives for economic growth and decentralisation, whilst also providing a means for local authorities to work together with business in order to quicken the economic recovery.

Workers Educational Association

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is the UK's largest voluntary provider of adult education. Ever since it was founded in 1903, in order to support the educational needs of working men and women, the WEA has maintained its commitment to provide access to education and learning for adults from all backgrounds, and in particular those who have previously missed out on education.

Work Foundation

The Work Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation whose independence, expertise and networks provide a strong platform for engagement. Their aim is to improve quality of working life and the effectiveness of organisations by equipping leaders, policymakers and opinion-formers with evidence, advice, new thinking and networks.

Copies of this document may be obtained in large print, easy read, Braille, on audio tape or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format, please telephone 01344 352000.

Nepali

यस प्रचारको सक्षेपं वा सार निचोड चाहिं दिइने छ ठूलो अक्षरमा, ब्रेल वा क्यासेट सूनको लागी । अरु भाषाको नक्कल पनि हासिल गर्न सकिने छ । कृपया सम्पर्क गनुहोला ०१३४४ ३५२००० ।

Tagalog

Mga buod/ mga hango ng dokumentong ito ay makukuha sa malaking letra, limbag ng mga bulag o audio kasette. Mga kopya sa ibat-ibang wika ay inyo ring makakamtan. Makipag-alam sa 01344 352000

Urdu

اس دستاویز کے خلاصے یا مختصر متن جلی حروف، بریل لکھائی یا پھر آڈیو کیسٹ پر ریکارڈ شدہ صورت میں فراہم کئے جا سکتے ہیں۔ دیگر زبانوں میں اس کی کاپی بھی حاصل کی جا سکتی ہے۔ اس کے لیے براہ مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 01344 352000 پر رابطہ کریں۔

Polish

Streszczenia lub fragmenty tego dokumentu mogą być dostępne w wersji napisanej dużym drukiem, pismem Brajla lub na kasecie audio. Można również otrzymać kopie w innych językach. Proszę skontaktować się z numerem 01344 352000.

Portuguese

Podemos disponibilizar resumos ou extractos deste documento em impressão grande, em Braille ou em audiocassete. Podem também ser obtidas cópias em outros idiomas. Por favor ligue para o 01344 352000.

Contact Details:

Chief Executive's Office, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1AQ

T: 01344 352173

www.bracknellforestpartnership.co.uk

BFP@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

