

Inclusive Growth Strategy

2025-2028



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Foreword

This Inclusive Growth Strategy is a long-term approach that encourages both sustained economic growth across the Borough and a more equitable distribution of the wealth that we generate.

The Strategy is centred on ten strategic 'levers'. These are the themes that will govern our work on inclusive growth and will ensure that we as a Council take a comprehensive approach that focuses equally on economic growth and inclusivity. The themes are wide-ranging and include developing new economic roles for Stockton-on-Tees and ensuring we become a place recognised for good work, fair pay and responsible business ownership.

The ten levers reinforce the ambition of other Council strategies including the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees framework, the overarching 2024-28 Stockton-on-Tees Plan, and the emerging Powering Our Future Strategy. We will also work with the Tees Valley Combined Authority to complement their emphasis on inclusive growth and inequalities contained within the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan.

Our aspirations for the local area are visionary and forward looking and we will work proactively with investors, developers and other stakeholders to create the right conditions for successful inclusive growth. Whilst this is the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy, we will work collaboratively with our partners, including the business community, to deliver our priorities for success. This will include our Business Ambassadors, who are working with us proactively as advocates for our people and our place.

The Strategy also includes a series of priority actions to ensure there are practical measures in place to realise our goals. Some of the measures I am most excited about are the delivery of our Care and Health Innovation Zone, the establishment of a Stockton-on-Tees¹ Good Employment Charter and our efforts to establish a B-Corp cluster in the Borough.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to helping broaden the distribution of economic wealth and addressing some of the profound inequalities we face in our Borough and recognise this needs to be a long-term commitment. We will need our other stakeholders, not least our local business community, to join us on this journey and make a similar long-term commitment.

This strategy, and the actions that flow from it, will enable us to join a group of best-in-class authorities who take inclusive growth very seriously. We will now be able to better engage with and learn from these other leading authorities.

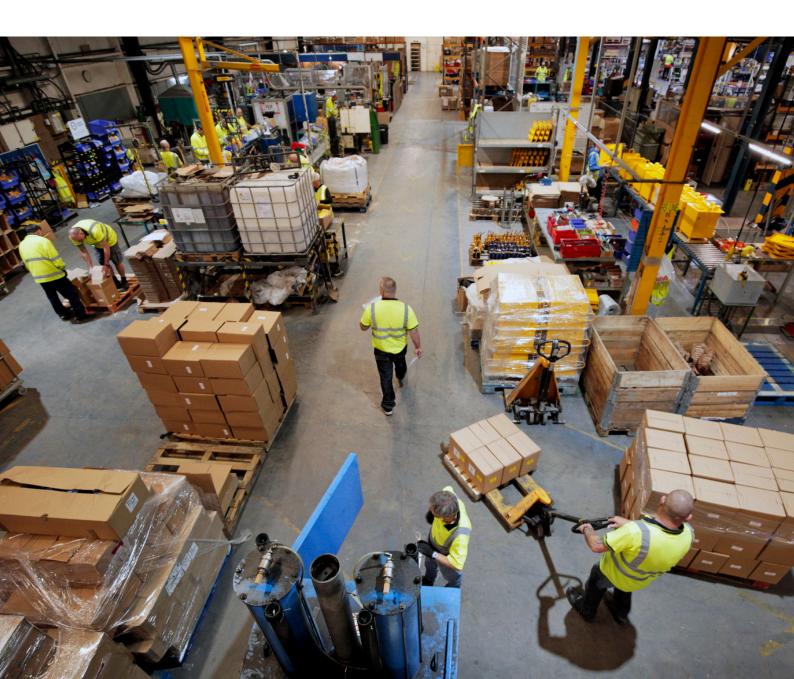


The

Councillor Nigel Cooke Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing

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1. Introducing the Inclusive Growth Strategy

Inclusive Growth refers to broad-based growth that enables the widest range of people and places to contribute to economic success, and to benefit from it too. There is a dual focus on securing economic growth and ensuring that all wealth that is generated is broadly distributed.

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and our partners are firmly behind this concept. We want to be continually building the size and scale of our economic base, and we want the benefits of this growth to reach more fully across the whole labour market spectrum and across all our communities.

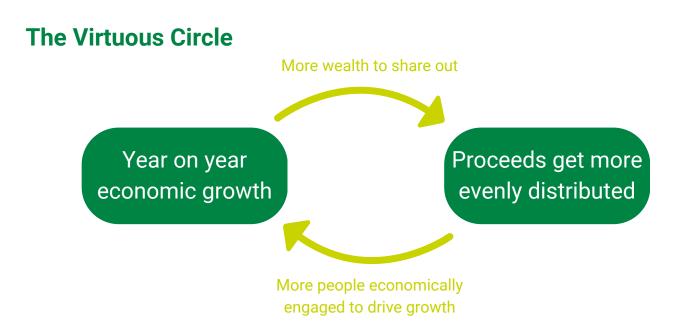
This strategy seeks to develop a virtuous circle where we keep growing our economic base and the proceeds of this growth get more and more equitably distributed. Specifically, the purpose of this strategy is to:

- Ensure we have the appropriate strategic framework in place to guide our own efforts on inclusive growth and to help us to shape the work of our other stakeholders.
- Identify a series of priority actions that will make a difference and trigger change.
- Establish a series of indicators to measure our progress in delivering inclusive growth.

The Strategy covers a three-year period between 2025 and 2028. Whilst elements of the Strategy will remain valid throughout the whole of this period other elements, such as the list of priority actions, will require periodic review and update.

The Strategy is one of the Council's core strategies and will directly link to the Fairer Stockton Framework, which aims to narrow inequalities gaps across the Borough. Access to better quality and higher value employment is identified as a key priority within that Framework and this Strategy will have a strong focus on increasing skills and training to support people into work.

Various other authorities have developed a strong reputation for their approach to inclusive growth, including Preston, Salford and various London boroughs. This strategy is designed to elevate Stockton-on-Tees into this leading group and ensure that we also become known for our commitment and innovation within the field of inclusive growth.





2. Setting the Scene: Our Growth Challenge

Stockton-on-Tees is located at the heart of the Tees Valley region and at the centre of one of the most significant, and highly productive, integrated industrial economies in the world.

We host some 94,000 jobs¹ including the self-employed and generate Gross Value Added (GVA) of some £3.9 billion per annum² according to the latest available data. The Borough accounts for nearly a third of all jobs within the Tees Valley economy. GVA per hour worked data is a key UK measure of labour productivity. GVA per hour worked stands at £39.8 in Stockton-on-Tees³, above the average for the whole of the UK (£37.8) and a significant 35% above the average for the other four Tees Valley authorities of £29.1. This high rate of labour productivity reflects the sectoral structure of the Stockton-on-Tees economy.

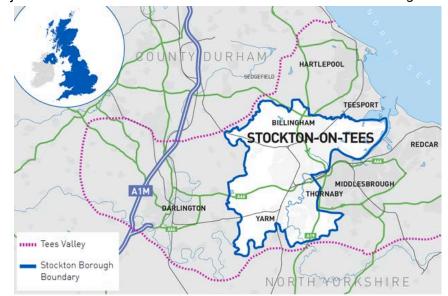
Our jobs are split across a range of public and private sector employers. We host just under 5,500 VAT registered businesses with 87% of these employing less than 10 people⁴. Stockton-on-Tees has 20 private sector businesses employing over 250 staff. The size structure of the local economy is typical of the UK which is heavily orientated towards smaller firms.

Stockton-on-Tees has excellent connectivity with the rest of the UK. The Borough is in close proximity to the national road network via the A1(M), A19 and A66. Rail connectivity is provided by both the Tees Valley/TransPennine line (with direct services through to Manchester) and the Durham Coast line (with direct services to Newcastle). These links provide easy access to London Kings Cross.

The Borough has a strong track record of attracting inward investment – recent examples include Amazon and Alfanar's Lighthouse Green Fuels Project. We have also benefitted from re-investment from existing

major businesses – most notably the recent £400 million investment from Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies at their Billingham campus.

Our target employment sectors for growth are Manufacturing, Health/Life Sciences/Social Care, Energy/ Environmental Technologies, Digital & Creative, Culture & Tourism and Chemicals/ Process Industries. These are the sectors where we believe we have most growth potential and where we will prioritise support.



We are well served by employment sites and growth locations. We anticipate that the majority of future employment growth will occur at:

- The central axis of Stockton Town Centre, North Shore, Teesdale Business Park and the Tees Marshalling Yards in Thornaby
- The Billingham, Billingham Riverside and North Tees area including Belasis Business Park
- Wynyard Business Park
- Sites in the south of the Borough (Durham Lane Industrial Estate, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Teesside International Airport & Teesside Industrial Estate)

Despite the numerous positives outlined above, our jobs density (the ratio of jobs to working age population) stands at 0.78 and is somewhat below the GB average of 0.87⁵. We need another 10,000 jobs locally to match the GB jobs density average. Recent employment levels have been largely static and we have not made any significant progress in boosting jobs density in recent years.

On average some 31,000 Stockton-on-Tees residents leave the Borough each day for work purposes⁶. That said, there is a broadly equivalent inflow of workers each day from other boroughs.



Stockton-on-Tees accounts for 1/3 of the Tees Valley economy, with an employment base of 94,000 jobs



We need an extra 10,000 jobs to meet the GB average employment density



We need to boost the number of jobs hosted within our area and take our employment levels well beyond the 100,000 mark.

Our economic growth push will come from a continued effort at securing new inward investment. Underpinning this effort will be the development of our major sites and premises, a focus on boosting external perceptions and work to further improve our strategic connectivity. Enhanced rail connectivity will be a major facilitator of future economic growth.

Growth will also be delivered by helping existing firms grow and innovate. Whilst official data is hard to source, our industrial configuration suggests that we already have a healthy proportion of firms that are engaged in either process or product innovation. We are committed to creating the conditions where more and more of our existing firms can expand and innovate.

We also need to retain and attract more higher level skills and more entrepreneurs into Stockton-on-Tees. Those with higher skills and an entrepreneurial streak are often wealth generators, and we need a housing and quality of life offer throughout Stockton-on-Tees that will attract more of these cohorts and reverse selective out-migration. As it stands, 35.6% of our residents are educated to degree level which is below both the North East average (39.6%) and national average (47.3%)⁷.

Our Target Growth Sectors:

Manufacturing - Health/Life Sciences/Social Care - Energy/Environmental Technologies - Digital & Creative - Culture & Tourism - Chemicals/Process Industries

Our Main Growth Locations:

Central Axis (Stockton Town Centre + Teesdale Business Park + Tees Marshalling Yards in Thornaby) - Portrack Lane - Billingham, Billingham Riverside and North Tees area - Wynyard Business Park - Key Sites in the south of the Borough (Durham Lane, Preston Farm, Teesside International Airport & Teesside Industrial Estate).



3. Setting the Scene: Our Inclusivity Challenge

Stockton-on-Tees has a resident population of some 197,000, 121,000 of whom are of a working age⁸.

The Borough provides circa one-third of the Tees Valley labour force and we can boast a relatively high volume of executive skills. Some 8.5% of residents are Managers, Directors and Senior Officials[°] (higher than the NE average) and 35.6% are educated to degree level or above.

The presence of executive skills reflects the high quality of life offer in certain parts of the Borough which has helped attract higher earning families for a number of decades.



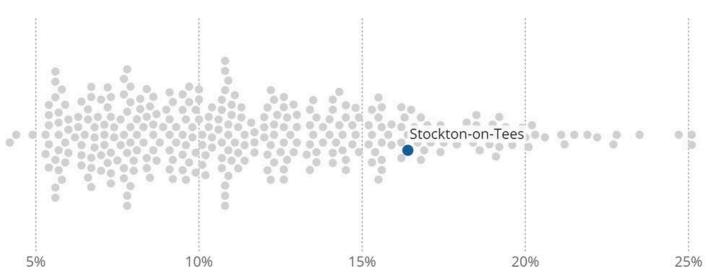


of residents are educated to degree level, also above average for the NE region.

of the Tees Valley labour force is in Stocktonon-Tees, including an above average share of Managers, Directors and Senior Officials.

Despite these labour market assets, there are pronounced issues of inactivity and low wages in certain communities within the Borough. 16.4% of the population was 'income-deprived' in 2019^{10} – this measures the proportion of people in an area who are either out of work or on low earnings. Of the 316 local authorities in England, Stockton-on-Tees is ranked the 50th most income-deprived – so in the top 15 percent.

The overall rate of economic inactivity amongst our working age residents is 27% – over five percentage points above the GB average of 21.4%¹¹. We are committed to reducing the rate of economic inactivity. This equates to 32,600 people and we are committed to reducing the rate of economic inactivity.



English local authorities by percentage of people in income deprivation, 2019

Data on average earnings in Stockton-on-Tees reveals a significant £4,200 gap between 'mean' and 'median' earnings¹². This is an often-used measure of an earnings gap.

If the median (i.e. mid-point average) can be raised then the gap will be reduced. Bringing up the earnings of the lowest paid will be the main mechanism for increasing median earnings.



gap between annual mean earnings and annual median earnings. This is often used as a measure of the earnings gap.

The earnings disparities in Stockton-on-Tees reflect the divergent occupational and skills profile of different communities within the Borough's labour force:

- Whist we have an above average share of managers and directors, we also have an above average share of care/leisure staff (14.4% of all residents in work) and staff in 'elementary occupations' (11.7% of all residents in work)⁹.
- Whilst we have an above average share of residents educated to degree level, we also have a stubbornly high share of residents with either no qualifications (6.8%) or with low qualifications⁷.

The communities where issues of inactivity, lower skills and low wages are most noticeable are in the nine wards of Billingham East, Billingham South, Hardwick & Salters Lane, Mandale & Victoria, Newtown, Norton South, Roseworth, Stainsby Hill and Stockton Town Centre.

Issues of low skills and low wages are also evident in certain labour market groups, including young people, the over 50s, those with disabilities and those with long term health conditions. Tackling poor health is vital in boosting employment rates. Some 9,700 (30%) of those who are inactive want a job¹¹ – a number which is broadly equivalent to the 10,000 additional jobs we will need to create to match the GB employment density.





We need to work intensively with these communities (both spatially and thematically defined) to boost their rates of participation and average earnings. Specific issues we need to work on include:

- Tackling low pay. Too many jobs in Stockton-on-Tees are locked in at the national minimum wage. Improved pay for those earning the least will make a huge difference in us building a more inclusive economy.
- Encouraging our business community to be more socially responsible alongside our continued push for them to be more environmentally responsible. The decisions of business owners, particularly around boosting staff pay, are one of the most important variables in building inclusive economies. We also need our business community to step up in terms of offering increased work experience, work tasters and work placements.
- Broadening business ownership. Any efforts to broaden the ownership base within Stockton-on-Tees should help us in our inclusivity challenge, as more and more residents get both improved access to company profits and a greater say in company decisions.

Our ability to recirculate more wealth locally will also boost inclusivity. Spending local directly supports small and independent traders and enables them to offer better pay and conditions to workers.

If we achieve all of the above then Stockton-on-Tees will be a fundamentally more inclusive economy with significantly reduced inequalities.

Our Target Areas for boosting the economic activity of residents:

Billingham East - Billingham South - Hardwick & Salters Lane - Mandale & Victoria – Newtown -Norton South – Roseworth - Stainsby Hill -Stockton Town Centre.

Our Target Labour Market Groups for boosting economic activity:

Young people - The over 50s - Those with disabilities - Those with long term health conditions - Those without qualifications – Care leavers

4. Our Strategic Response: Ten Key Levers

This Inclusive Growth Strategy has the twin goals of delivering sustained economic growth and substantially reducing the income and wealth inequalities that exist in Stockton-on-Tees.

We have identified ten main 'levers' that we will need to pursue if we are to meet this vision. All ten are essential and will need to be pursued with equal vigour and in tandem with one another.

We will deliver and sustain economic growth via:

1. Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Employment & Business Base

Attracting investment and creating jobs has and will continue to be a focus of the Council and is a key priority for the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA). We will be working closely with land-owners, developers and intermediaries to bring forward development that is of a high-quality, and to provide the infrastructure upgrades that further enhances the connectivity of Stockton-on-Tees into regional and national markets.

2. Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Skills & Enterprise Base

New cohorts of wealth generators are required in Stockton-on-Tees if we are to sustain economic growth. This means making sure we have the housing, quality-of-life, cultural and heritage offer to retain and attract higher earning families and those with higher skills. Developing good quality housing and ongoing place-making initiatives are essential. We also need to develop our Further Education and Higher Education offer in order that we attract more students into the Borough, a number of who are likely to be retained long term.

3. Helping our Businesses to Grow Faster and to Better Innovate

Continuing to support our local businesses to sustain and grow remains a key priority. This will include our work in shaping the business support infrastructure and funding landscape, assessing ongoing needs via business diagnostics, ensuring available premises and providing support for innovation. We also need to ensure that the necessary training provision is available locally to help our businesses address skills gaps and tackle recruitment difficulties and to support more start-ups.

4. Developing New Economic Roles and Functions within Stockton-on-Tees

It is essential that we continue to invest in regenerating and repurposing Stockton's town centres and developing new strategic development sites. With a target of 10,000 additional jobs we will need to create new economic roles and functions. This will include the flagship Care and Health Innovation Zone and also expanding the Belasis Business Park and wider Billingham/Billingham Riverside area as a location of excellence in life sciences, biotechnology and chemicals.

5. Changing the Image and Investor Perceptions of Stockton-on-Tees

In such a competitive world, the image and profile of Stockton-on-Tees needs continual management and investment. Raising the profile of the investment opportunities available locally through brand development, inward investment materials and strong brand ambassadors are all key. This will require a comprehensive Team-Stockton approach involving the Council, other anchor institutions and our residential and business community.

We will deliver and embed a fairer distribution of wealth via:

6. Ensuring All Our Target Communities Can Access Economic Opportunity

We want more residents to be in work by inspiring and enabling them to access the job opportunities available and being created by local businesses, and to feel confident in starting their own ventures. There are multiple barriers they face, including ill health, and we will work intensively in the main nine target Wards listed earlier in this strategy and amongst our priority labour market groups (also listed earlier). We also want to encourage young people to be aspirational in their career choices and for more of them to be making the right choice, first time.

7. Making Stockton-on-Tees a Recognised Place of Good Work & Fair Pay

There is a move across the UK to deliver better rewards for the low paid and to embed the principles of good work in local areas. Stockton-on-Tees needs to be firmly part of this movement. We require a far higher proportion of our businesses and anchor institutions to go beyond the statutory minimum wage and to reward hard work with fairer pay. We will develop a Stockton-on-Tees Employment Charter to help embed these principles throughout our economy.

8. Making Stockton-on-Tees a Recognised Place of Responsible Business & Local Ownership

Alongside the vital efforts to push our business community to be environmentally responsible, we also want our private sector partners to be more socially responsible. This will involve us establishing a deep and wide-ranging community of businesses who are striving for broader ownership structures, fair pay and a more substantive contribution to delivering local social impact. With this in mind, we will be implementing an initiative to spread the B-Corp movement throughout Stockton-on-Tees.

9. Ensuring More Wealth is Retained in Stockton-on-Tees and Circulates Locally

As a large procurer of goods and services the Council will be developing our approach to make it easier for local businesses to access trading opportunities and to develop further how we can grow and measure the social value impact of what we spend locally. We will develop the supply chain infrastructure locally so that large businesses/anchor institutions can find what they are looking for with ease. These measures will help us retain more of our spending on local suppliers. As part of our emerging 'Partnerships Powering Our Future' we will ensure all local anchor institutions also deepen their commitment to local procurement.

10. Putting More Economic Assets and Power into the Hands of our Local Communities

Wealth inequalities will, in part, be tackled by us supporting the growth and sustainability of a range of different business models - including social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals – to win and deliver contracts. These business models are also examples of how workers, service users and local communities can have a real say and benefit from the wealth that is created in Stockton-on-Tees. As part of this drive, we will also explore the potential of more Community Land Trusts to put economic assets into the hands of communities. This Lever is fully aligned with the 'Communities Powering our Future Mission' within the Council's emerging Powering Our Future Strategy.

Strategy at a Glance

We will deliver and sustain Economic Growth

2. Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Skills & Enterprise Base 3. Helping our Businesses to Grow Faster and to Better Innovate

4. Developing New Economic Roles and Functions within Stockton-on-Tees

1. Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Employment & Business Base

10. Putting More Economic Assets and Power into the Hands of our Local Communities This Inclusive Growth Strategy has the Twin Goals of **Delivering Sustained Economic Growth** and **Substantially Reducing the Income and Wealth Inequalities** that Exist in Stockton-on-Tees 5. Changing the Image and Investor Perceptions of Stockton-on-Tees

6. Ensuring All Our Target Communities Can Access Economic Opportunity

9. Ensuring More Wealth is Retained in Stockton-on-Tees and Circulates Locally

8. Making Stocktonon-Tees a Recognised Place of Responsible Business & Local Ownership 7. Making Stockton a Recognised Place of Good Work & Fair Pay

We will deliver and embed a Fairer Distribution of Wealth

5. Our Priorities for Action

The following pages provide a schedule of our main priority actions under each of the ten levers. As set out in previous sections of this strategy, it is essential that actions are progressed comprehensively under all ten levers in parallel. The schedule is not intended as an exhaustive list and other actions will emerge and be taken forward alongside this list. The list itself will be the subject of frequent review and update.

Levers	Priority Actions
Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Employment & Business Base	 Council to ensure the Borough has a strong portfolio of available land and premises for employment growth. Council to lobby for improved strategic transport connectivity into Stockton-on- Tees, for example through developing enhanced rail links. Ensure that all major business locations in Stockton-on-Tees benefit from first class digital connectivity.
Rapidly Growing and Broadening the Stockton Skills & Enterprise Base	 Council and partners to develop new and expanded FE/HE educational assets in Stockton-on-Tees, including for example supporting local ambitions for a new Medical School in Tees Valley. Council to use its powers/role to ensure more aspirational housing is developed in Stockton-on-Tees that will attract and retain higher value skills in the local area. Partners to continue with Town Centre place-making initiatives to further enhance the quality of life offer in Stockton-on-Tees – in order to attract and retain higher value skills and entrepreneurs.
Helping our Businesses to Grow Faster and to Better Innovate	 Targeted engagement from Council staff with existing strategic and key businesses - to help them develop, grow and consolidate their bases within Stockton-on-Tees. Develop a Business Knowledge Hub to support a high volume of businesses with non-financial support, engage them in new markets and provide bespoke support. Continue with the Care Academy and broaden skills gap work in relation to green skills and the low carbon/energy sectors, digital and health to bring forward the necessary training provision to fill skills gaps.
Developing New Economic Roles and Functions within Stockton- on-Tees	 Council and partners to deliver the Tees Valley Care and Health Innovation Zone proposal, creating a nationally significant cluster of employment. Continue to redefine and redevelop Stockton Town Centre for a variety of employment and related uses. Develop a new regeneration blueprint for Billingham Riverside and Chemical Complex, Seal Sands and North Tees sites, that are ideally positioned for servicing the North Sea and offshore industries. This will help achieve our ambition of becoming the world's first net zero industrial cluster by 2040.
Changing the Image and Investor Perceptions of Stockton-on-Tees	 Continue to fund the successful Invest in Stockton initiative and explore new ways of brand dissemination. Council to identify and support a cohort of brand ambassadors who will help promote Stockton-on-Tees throughout the UK and further afield. Engage with business to adopt the Council's new Place Branding, focussing on campaigns aimed at changing perceptions.

Levers	Priority Actions
Ensuring All Our Target Communities Can Access Economic Opportunity	 Broaden the reach of the extremely successful Employment & Training Hub by continuing the Hub on Tour to engage and support residents and businesses within the community. Develop and deliver a programme of support for business start-ups in the Borough to support potential entrepreneurs and business start-ups to develop the insight, skills, and confidence they need to start and grow a successful business. Continue the facilitation of targeted recruitment, apprenticeships and training initiatives aligned with the needs of new and existing sectors, through the Employment & Training Hub and the wider work of Stockton Council's Learning and Skills Service/Adult Skills Programmes.
Making Stockton a Recognised Place of Good Work & Fair Pay	 Under Council leadership, establish a Stockton-on-Tees Good Employment Charter. Stockton-on-Tees Council to become an active member of the UK Inclusive Growth Network. Launch a Stockton Good Employment Awards scheme that rewards socially responsible business leadership, possibly working with Tees Valley partners.
Making Stockton- on-Tees a Recognised Place of Responsible Business & Local Ownership	 Launch a place-based initiative to increase the number of businesses delivering responsible business practices and working with initiatives such as BCorp to establish a cluster of environmentally and socially sustainable businesses. Council to facilitate wider local understanding and application of employee ownership models/trusts. Encouraging Stockton-on-Tees businesses to consider their role in providing social value opportunities for local residents, and to maximise their social value and CSR contribution.
Ensuring More Wealth is Retained in Stockton-on- Tees and Circulates Locally	 Council to work with local anchor institutions through our existing partnerships to expand and deepen commitment to local procurement and add social value. Council to become active member of the UK Co-operative Councils Innovation Network. Work with TVCA and other partners on the development of an online Supply Chain Directory that will improve knowledge of, and access to, local traders.
Putting More Economic Assets and Power into the Hands of our Local Communities	 The Council and partners to build local community leadership skills – generating a new cadre of community/neighbourhood leaders capable of stimulating local change. Council will advance opportunities to create community land trusts – in order to put more economic assets under the direct stewardship of local communities. Continue to support and grow Catalyst Stockton-on-Tees in order to facilitate a vibrant and growing voluntary, community & social enterprise sector (VCSE) in Stockton-on-Tees.

6. Measuring Our Progress

We have identified a series of six metrics that we want to track to measure our progress in implementing this Inclusive Growth Strategy. If all ten levers of this strategy are implemented in tandem then we should begin to see positive movement on these metrics:



Income Deprivation¹⁰

Percent of residents classed as income-deprived. Measures the proportion of people who are either claiming income support or on low earnings.



-5.5% points decrease to meet England average

Economic Inactivity¹¹

Measures the proportion of residents aged 16-64 who are economically inactive.

23.5%

-2.3% points decrease to meet England average

Earnings Gap¹²

Difference between annual mean average earnings (£37K) and average median earnings (£32.8K). Measure often used to measure earnings inequalities. AMBITION

£4,200

-£2,100 reduction required to halve the gap



Data sources

- 1. Total jobs number includes employees, self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces. Taken from ONS Job Density data and relates to 2022.
- 2. GVA data relates to 2015 and is taken from the 2017 ONS release Regional GVA by local authority in the UK.
- 3. GVA per hour worked data taken from the 2021 ONS Subregional Productivity dataset.
- 4. Company size structure data taken from UK Business Counts for 2023 via the Inter Departmental Business Register from ONS.
- 5. Job density figure represents the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64. Taken from ONS Job Density data and relates to 2022.
- 6. Travel to work data taken from Census 2011 Location of Usual Residence and Place of Work. Census 2021 data on this topic unreliable due to COVID travel to work restrictions.
- 7. Qualifications data taken from ONS Annual Population Survey and is for the calendar year Jan 2023-Dec 2023.
- 8. Population data taken from ONS Population Estimates and relates to 2021.
- 9. Occupational Structure data is taken from the ONS Annual Population Survey and relates to 2023.
- 10. Income deprivation data is based on data from the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).
- 11. Economic inactivity data is taken from the ONS Annual Population Survey and relates to the period April 2023 to March 2024.
- 12. Earnings data taken from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (resident analysis) and relates to 2023.

