

URN : 23-118

Report Title : Great Yarmouth Skills and Employability Strategy

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting : 11 June 2024

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Daniel Candon

Responsible Director / Officer : Executive Director of Place, Natasha Hayes

Is this a Key decision ? Yes

Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 24 July 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / INTRODUCTION FROM CABINET MEMBER

Skills, qualifications, aspirations, ambitions and a reliance on certain forms of employment are all limiting the opportunities available to our residents. It is essential that people can access the kinds of skills and qualifications that employers actually need. These requirements are changing as the wider economy and the way we do business changes, opening up new skills gaps – and new opportunities.

As part of our wider programme of regeneration, the Council will deliver a Library and University centre in early 2025 – *The Place*. A Skills and Employment Strategy is a key element of driving a change in skills, aspirations and employability in the Borough, ensuring residents are able to access sustainable and rewarding employment opportunities, and that employers are able to access a skilled workforce.

A new Skills and Employability Strategy is presented for consideration by Cabinet. This sets out the evidence base, challenges and opportunities and provides a collaborative blueprint for the Council, the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, partners, educators, trainers, communities and employers to design projects and activities that achieve its aims, supporting learning and progression throughout people's working lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS :

That Cabinet :

1. Reviews and adopts the annexed Skills and Employability Strategy and directs officers to maintain the Skills and Employability Delivery Plan as a 'live' document to track progress against its aims.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Officers were directed to develop a Skills & Employability Strategy to help ensure that local learning and skills provision meets the needs of our communities and employers, is fully inclusive and plays a key role in reducing structural inequalities and deprivation by extending individual potential and opportunity.

- 1.2. The Strategy provides a framework for the Council, its partners, providers, residents and employers to design and deliver specific activities and projects to tackle skills and educational attainment, barriers to lifelong learning, economic inactivity and current and emerging skills gaps identified by local employers.
- 1.3. Its design integrates extended stakeholder dialogue within and outside of the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce – including colleges, skills providers, the DWP, the County Council, relevant VCSEs and existing employability projects. Two pieces of independent research were also commissioned to:
 - identify and describe the local barriers that our residents face in getting the skills and qualifications that lead to secure and rewarding employment and the practical steps that we can take to tackle these;
 - identify which skills at which level our local employers need now and in the future, where the gaps are and what needs to be done to ensure that the local skills system provides the right support at every learning stage.

2. Work to Date / Proposal

- 2.1. The Skills and Employability Strategy and Delivery Plan are annexed to this Report for consideration.
- 2.2. *Section 3, Our strategic priorities* draws together all the research and stakeholder engagement to inform the design and delivery of actions that lead to an improvement in local skills and employability outcomes for local residents and employers.
- 2.3. *Section 4, Our call to action* expands upon the three strategic priorities to set out nine actions for the Council, its partners, providers, residents and employers to use to design projects and activities.
- 2.4. A summary of key intelligence on local demographics, the local labour market, local economy and local skills provision is provided in *Appendix A, Setting the scene*. A summary of local employers' key skills challenges is provided in *Appendix B, Delivering the right skills mix for our labour market*.
- 2.5. The separate Skills and Employability Delivery Plan summarises current projects and activities and is intended as a 'live' document to track progress against the Strategy's implementation, with new items added as required.
- 2.6. The Strategy has been designed to align with the Council's Economic Growth Strategy and Annual Action Plan 2024-2025. It also supports the Government's *Skills for Jobs* policy, the Local Skills Improvement Strategy (LSIP) and the emerging Norfolk County Council strategy for adult education.
- 2.7. It also reflects the three UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) contracts currently being commissioned, as set out in Cabinet report *URN 23-186 UKSPF People & Skills Commissioning Strategy* presented on 4 December 2023:
 - *E33: Skills & Employability Package*: Employment Support for Economically Inactive Residents
 - *E35: Skills & Employability Package*: Supporting Residents Furthest from the Labour Market

- *E37: Skills & Employability Package: Tailored Support for Residents in Employment*

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. There is no request for new funding to support the delivery of the Strategy. £280,000 of UKSPF has been allocated in 2024/25 to commission the three interventions set out in Paragraph 2.7.
- 3.2. Resources to deliver new activities and projects in support of the Strategy would need to be agreed by the Council, its partners and funders on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.3. The Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce was set up to help meet this challenge – bringing together employers, training providers, schools, colleges and universities to co-ordinate activity and collaborate on projects to ensure that residents can access the jobs that employers need to fill.

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1. There are no specific risks conferred by the adoption of the Strategy.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. There are no specific legal implications conferred by the adoption of the Strategy.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. A new Skills and Employability Strategy is presented to Cabinet for consideration. This provides framework for the Council, its partners, providers, residents and employers to design and deliver specific activities and projects to tackle skills and educational attainment, barriers to lifelong learning, economic inactivity and current and emerging skills gaps identified by local employers.

7. Background Papers

Draft Great Yarmouth Skills and Employability Strategy
Draft Great Yarmouth Skills and Employability Delivery Plan

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Consultations	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	As part of ELT review
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	As part of ELT review
Existing Council Policies:	None; does not replace or replicate an existing strategy
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	No EQIA undertaken; the Strategy addresses barriers to employment for all groups



Strategic Priority 1: nurturing local aspiration and ambition; fostering a learning and development culture within communities and workplaces that raises aspirations and enables residents to reach their full potential

Aim	Action	Output / Measure	Lead
Careers advice and guidance is widely available and easy to access	<p>Promotion of 'The Place' as a central location for careers advice and information in Great Yarmouth</p> <p>Full use of newly-commissioned SEETEC service 'Support residents Furthest from the Labour Market' into work</p> <p>Clear referral pathways from support agencies into employment and skills programmes</p>	<p>100 people per month receiving careers advice and guidance</p> <p>88 people familiarised with employers' expectations including standards of behaviour in the workplace</p> <p>Integrate SEETEC into GYBC community collaboration meetings that happen weekly so that anyone with a skills or employment need can access a dedicated service</p>	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>SEETEC</p> <p>GYBC Community Hub</p>
Outcomes for young people are improved and they aspire to achieve and seek good careers	<p>HE providers to provide careers advice support in schools</p> <p>Employer networks used to link local businesses with schools to provide advice at skills fairs</p> <p>Create a body of local influencers and role models established to visit schools and communities that represent each local priority employment sector</p> <p>Delivery of ACE Project service 'Employment Support for Economically inactive Residents'</p>	<p>Each high school in the Borough has a careers advice session delivered by an HE provider in the 2024/25 academic year</p> <p>Reduction in the number of children at risk of becoming NEET by the 2026/27 academic year; this is currently 10% higher in GY than for Norfolk as a whole</p> <p>By the end of the 2026/27 academic year, the proportion of GY students achieving GCSE grades 4-9 in English and mathematics increases from 57.2% towards the English average of 60.5%</p> <p>38 people supported to engage in job-searching</p>	<p>ACE Project</p> <p>Head of Inward Investment</p> <p>Economic Development Manager</p> <p>Health & Wellbeing Partnership</p>

Employers offer a range of work experience opportunities and people have the experience they need to access well paid jobs	<p>Increase employer take up of skills bootcamps</p> <p>Full use of newly-commissioned SEETEC service 'Support residents Furthest from the Labour Market' into work</p> <p>Full use of newly-commissioned East Coast College service 'Tailored Support for Residents in Employment'</p> <p>Full use of newly commissioned ACE service 'Employment Support for Economically inactive Residents'</p>	<p>40-80 employers engaged and providing work tasters/placements, volunteering opportunities and 19 job outcomes by end of March 2025</p> <p>44 people taking part in work experience programmes</p> <p>20 people retraining</p> <p>39 people in employment, including self-employment following support</p> <p>15 people sustaining employment for 6 months who received support from this service</p>	<p>SEETEC</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>ACE Project</p> <p>Head of Inward Investment</p>
Increased reach of apprenticeships in the Borough	Embed the use of the apprenticeship 'levy share' scheme in the Borough to enable more small businesses to offer apprenticeships to fill their skills gaps	Full use of the levy share budget in 2024/25 academic year	Apprenticeships Norfolk



Strategic Priority 2: a responsive skills and employability ecosystem; working with employers to ensure that the local skills system is responsive, innovative and produces the right skills mix for longer-term economic growth and resilience

Aim	Action	Output / Measure	Lead
There is a clear understanding of the help available to develop skills and access employment	<p>Mapping of skills providers to understand gaps and duplication in provision</p> <p>Establish 'The Place' the place to go for careers and skills advice and guidance</p> <p>Fully embed DWP 'Work Coaches' scheme delivery for over-50s with tailored support including 'Midlife MOTs', careers, training, pensions, wellbeing and meetings with employers</p> <p>Return to work support schemes</p>	<p>Progression pathways developed that focus on the top 10 job roles / vacancies in the Borough</p> <p>The Place to open in 2025; Great Yarmouth is a University Town</p> <p>A shared marketing and engagement programme with social media targeting of key demographics</p> <p>DWP to examine options to replicate the 'Return-to-Work Scheme' pilot with Parkdean Resorts in GY</p>	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>East Norfolk Sixth Form</p> <p>DWP</p> <p>Head of Inward Investment</p>
Employers are regularly engaged with to understand their recruitment needs and skills gaps	<p>Quarterly 'business breakfasts' held in the Borough</p> <p>Monthly engagement newsletter delivered to 1,500+ businesses and relevant organisations to include regular updates from skills providers and Apprenticeships Norfolk</p> <p>Cohort of key local businesses are visited/contacted at least 3 times a year to discuss their future growth plans</p>	<p>Regular networking opportunities for at least 50 key local, enabling intelligence sharing and future planning</p> <p>Information is regularly distributed to 1,500+ businesses and relevant organisations about opportunities to take part in developing local skills and opportunities, alongside initiatives taking place in the Borough</p> <p>Detailed understanding of employer need that is continuously used to develop future planning and approaches; 150 business engagement touch points per annum</p>	<p>Head of Inward Investment</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>ACE Project</p> <p>DWP</p>

	<p>Delivery of East Coast College Tailored Support service for Residents in Employment</p> <p>Delivery of ACE service 'Employment Support for Economically Inactive Residents'</p> <p>Active promotion of DWP/JCP 'Sector-Based Work Academy Programme with 6-weeks' pre-employment training, placements and guaranteed interviews</p> <p>Active promotion of DWP employer and partnership teams support for applicant sifting/interviewing</p>	<p>50 people in employment engaging with the skills system in order to progress into higher paid jobs and careers</p> <p>15 people receiving support to sustain employment</p> <p>Delivery of joint GYBC/East Coast College/DWP Sizewell Opportunities event in Great Yarmouth in 2024/25</p>	
Skills and education providers work together to deliver a curriculum that responds to resident need and key skills gaps	<p>Shared planning of the skills offer in 'The Place'</p> <p>Delivery of East Coast College service 'Tailored Support service for Residents in Employment'</p>	<p>A 12-month forward curriculum plan exists for the Place that has been developed by Adult education, East Coast College and the University of Suffolk</p> <p>60 people supported to participate in education in order to progress into higher paid jobs and careers</p>	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>University of Suffolk</p> <p>East Coast College</p>
People in Great Yarmouth have the basic and soft skills they need for employment	<p>Full promotion of and signposting to the Multiply programme in the Borough</p> <p>Delivery of SEETEC service 'Supporting Residents furthest from the Labour Market'</p> <p>Delivery of East Coast College tailored support service for residents in employment' commission</p>	<p>The Multiply programme is fully utilised and hitting its target of 442 interactions with learners in the 2024/25 academic year</p> <p>38 people supported to participate in education</p> <p>50 people gaining qualifications, licenses and skills</p> <p>30 people supported to access basic skills courses</p>	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>SEETEC</p> <p>ACE Project</p>

	Delivery of ACE service 'Employment Support for Economically Inactive Residents'	15 people with basic skills following support 15 people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills	
There are a range of options to gain skills outside of more traditional academic routes	Develop and launch a rolling campaign on apprenticeships in the Borough both for employers and potential apprentices Delivery of SEETEC service 'Supporting residents furthest from the labour market' Active promotion of DWP/JCP Apprenticeships tailored, bespoke support	More employers are confident to offer apprenticeship and more people consider the apprenticeships route to develop their careers The number of apprenticeship starts increases by the 25/26 academic year (away from the current trend of reducing numbers of apprenticeship starts) 38 people in education/training following support	Apprenticeships Norfolk SEETEC DWP
Residents have the soft skills for work gained from volunteering	Use the 'Cultural Connections' and 'Volunteer Passport' schemes to provide those who volunteer with a volunteering CV improving their chances of gaining work	112 volunteers registered but not yet participating 145 volunteers registered and undertaking at least one volunteering opportunity 73 people undertaking regular volunteering and self-reporting positive social impacts 20 people new to volunteering taking up training 25 hyper-local cultural events/workshops 10 cultural events/workshops	



Strategic Priority 3: addressing barriers and inequalities; ensuring that all residents can participate in, progress, and achieve success in the labour market and skills system

Aim	Action	Output / Measure	Lead
Employability support is available to economically inactive residents	<p>Maximise participation in the 'Working Well' project</p> <p>Delivery of SEETEC service 'Supporting Residents Furthest from the Labour Market'</p> <p>Delivery of ACE service 'Employment Support for Economically inactive Residents'</p>	<p>75 people with reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision</p> <p>80 economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services</p> <p>20 economically inactive people supported to engage with the benefits system</p> <p>20 people receiving support to gain employment</p> <p>15 economically inactive individuals engaged with benefits system following support</p> <p>45 people engaged in job- searching following support</p>	<p>SEETEC</p> <p>ACE Project</p>
Residents understand the skills support available to them and that much of it is free at the point of access	<p>Skills providers to provide training and briefings to GYBC Communities, Housing, Benefits teams and VCSE organisations</p> <p>Embed 'The Place' as the place to go with widely available drop in access for skills and employment support</p>	<p>550 people learners/students/trainees gaining certificates, graduating or completing courses in Year 1 of operations at The Place, rising by 5% annually</p>	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>East Coast College</p> <p>University of Suffolk</p>
GYBC Communities team and wider VCSE organisations are briefed regularly by skills providers and skills and	Skills providers to provide training and briefings to Communities, housing, benefits teams and VCSE organisations	Every contact is made to count; skills advice and information is included in all community conversations as part of wider advice on things like benefits and housing	<p>Adult Learning</p> <p>East Coast College</p>

<p>employment information and signposting is regularly included in community conversations</p>	<p>'Better off' calculation training is provided to Communities, Housing, Benefits teams and VCSE organisations</p> <p>Delivery of ACE Project 'E33 Employment Support for Economically inactive Residents' commission</p> <p>Development of new collaborative workstreams under 'supporting educational attainment, skills and aspirations' theme of the Locality Strategy, including cross-cutting links of skills/employability into healthy living and community outreach functions</p> <p>Clear referral pathways from support agencies into employment and skills programmes</p>	<p>More people will understand that work will make them better off; Great Yarmouth moves towards the national average of 79% of the working age population being economically active (currently 73%)</p> <p>15 socially excluded people accessing support</p> <p>10 people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment</p> <p>8 people engaging with mainstream healthcare services</p> <p>15 active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support</p> <p>40 people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services</p> <p>Integrate SEETEC into GYBC community collaboration meetings that happen weekly so that anyone with a skills or employment need can access a dedicated service</p>	<p>GYBC Communities team</p> <p>ACE Project</p> <p>GY Health & Wellbeing Partnership</p> <p>GYBC Communities Team</p>
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GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Great Yarmouth Skills and Employability Strategy 2024-2029

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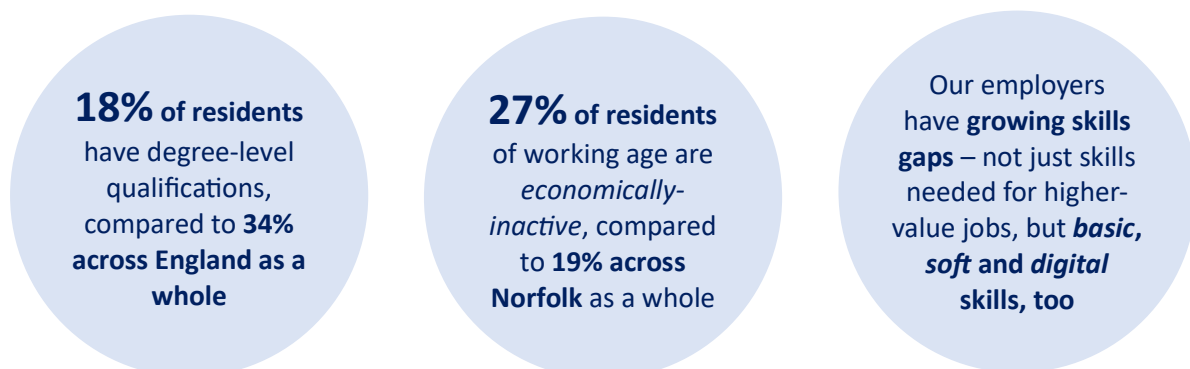
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1. Introduction

Residents and employers are at the heart of the Council's ambitions to foster a vibrant and inclusive coastal economy that **builds** upon our successes and our strengths in clean energy and tourism, **capitalises** upon our culture and our communities and **responds** effectively to new challenges.

"Skills, qualifications and aspirations are leading factors in secure employment, earnings and economic growth. It's essential that our residents can access the kinds of skills and qualifications that employers need. Their requirements are changing as the wider economy – and the way we do business – changes, opening up new skills gaps and new opportunities. Our ambition is that residents of all ages and backgrounds can flourish here and reach their full potential" – Cllr Daniel Candon, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Growth, Great Yarmouth Borough Council

We share a number of complex problems with other seaside towns – an ageing population, pockets of local deprivation, lower wages and higher unemployment rates. These result in an *inequality of opportunity* for our residents. Skills, qualifications, aspirations, ambitions and a reliance on certain forms of employment are all limiting the opportunities available to our residents.



It is essential that people can access the kinds of skills and qualifications that employers actually need. These requirements are changing as the wider economy and the way we do business changes, opening up new skills gaps – and new opportunities.

There needs to be a better way of co-ordinating skills and qualifications at a local level, with support that is simpler for residents of all ages and all levels of attainment to access, where they are able to find their way through the support available to them and enter – or progress in – an ever more complex labour market.

Through extensive engagement and research our residents and employers have told us that they need a skills system that not only provides access to jobs, but also supports learning and progression throughout people's working lives – from inspiring and encouraging young people in our schools through to supporting older people to re-enter the labour market.

The Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce was set up to meet this challenge, bringing together employers, training providers, schools, colleges and universities to co-ordinate activity and collaborate on projects to ensure that residents can access the jobs that employers need to fill.

Those projects include new and upgraded training and education facilities and new ways for residents to attain skills and qualifications – lifelong learning that is easier to access and better understood by both residents and employers.

The Great Yarmouth Skills & Employability Strategy sets out the challenges and opportunities and provides a collaborative blueprint for the Council, the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, partners, educators, trainers, residents and employers to design projects and activities that achieve its aims.

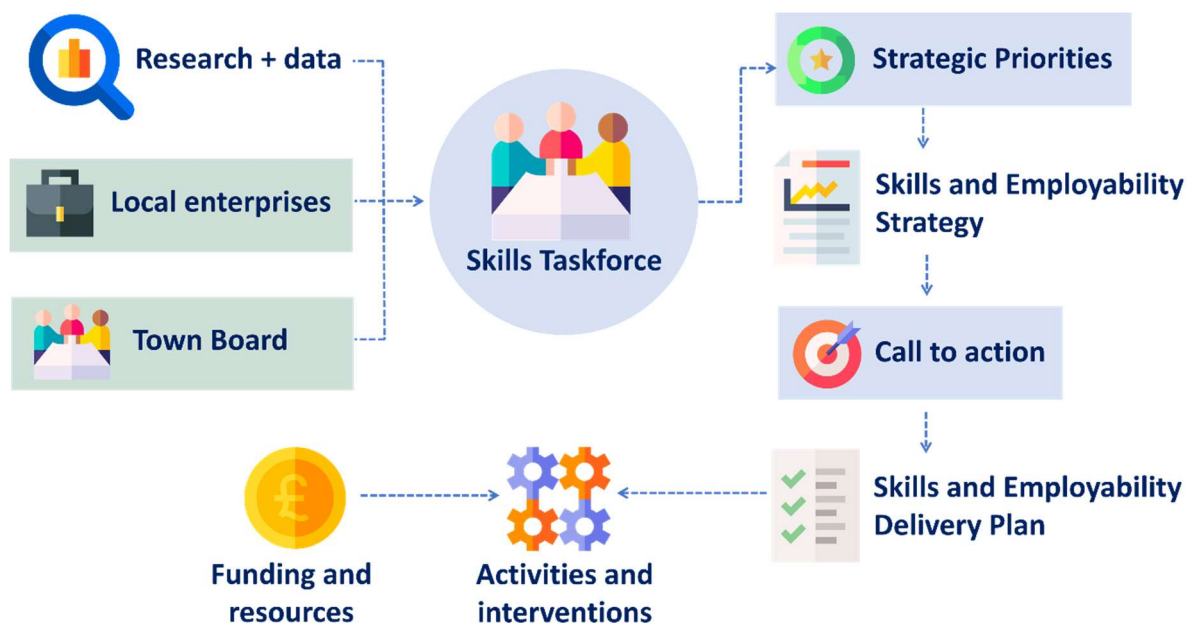
2. Our strategic vision

*Great Yarmouth's learning and skills provision **meets the needs of all our residents and employers** and plays a role in **reducing local inequalities** and deprivation by harnessing our residents' potential and the opportunities available. We foster ambition and aspiration at every level, with paths through learning, qualifications, and re-skilling creating **secure and rewarding jobs***

Skills are absolutely central to social, economic and community renewal. Our collaborative work brings together the Council, colleges, businesses and academics as the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce.

- **Our residents and communities** recognise that skills, qualifications, aspirations and a traditional reliance on certain forms of employment can be limited their employment opportunities and earning potential.
- **Our skills and qualifications providers**, including schools and colleges, recognise the need to match skills and qualifications with the needs of our employers and growth industries in order to enable residents to take advantage of local opportunities – providing the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time.
- **Our employers** recognise that that they also have a key role to play in inspiring, attracting, retaining and developing those starting or re-starting jobs in a rapidly-evolving labour market, including *hard-to-reach* groups and those that are *furthest from the workplace* – for example, those lacking basic experience and work skills.

The Strategy has been designed through an extensive dialogue with the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, which represents our key employers and skills providers. It includes *best practice* – what's worked well elsewhere – new data and analysis, new and established partnerships and new research. The following diagram summarises the process through which this was all brought together:



The specially-commissioned research focused on two areas:

- identifying and describing the **local barriers that our residents face in getting the skills and qualifications** that lead to secure and rewarding employment and the practical steps that we can take to tackle these
- identifying **which skills at which level our local employers** need now and in the future, where the gaps are and what needs to be done to ensure that the local skills system provides the right support at every learning stage

Barriers for residents: The first piece of research found that, although barriers to accessing skills and employment varied between different groups of residents – those who aren't *work-ready*, those who are *work-ready* and those who are in work but 'under-skilled' – four clear themes emerged. These are explored in more detail in **Appendix A, Local challenges and opportunities**, alongside summaries of the local labour market, economy and skills system:

- a lack of motivation to take up skills provision and employment opportunities
- underlying health conditions that make accessing skills and employment more difficult
- a lack of 'basic' skills – including maths and English – 'digital' and 'soft' skills alongside a lack of awareness of local skills development opportunities
- practical barriers to accessing skills and employment, such as childcare and transport costs

Issues facing employers: The second piece of research found that different industries – such as manufacturing, construction and healthcare – have very specific challenges relating to recruiting, retaining and developing suitably-skilled workers. These are summarised in **Appendix B, Delivering the right skills mix for our labour market**, which also identifies cross-cutting requirements that apply to most employers, such as 'basic' and 'soft' skills.

The Skills and Employability Strategy has been carefully designed to support the Borough Council's **Economic Growth Strategy** and **Corporate Plan**. It also reflects the Government's **Skills for Jobs** policy, the **Local Skills Improvement Strategy** (LSIP) and the new Norfolk County Council strategy for adult education.

It also complements the work of the **Great Yarmouth Health & Wellbeing Partnership** and the Great Yarmouth Locality Strategy. ‘Low Educational attainment, skills and aspirations’ is one of four priority themes in the Locality Strategy, which aims to improve youth education and skills pathways, attainment and create career ambition.

The **Great Yarmouth Community Hub** operating model has the potential to integrate skills and employability into wider community support, including *healthy living*, wellbeing and other Council and voluntary outreach.

Information about our residents and communities, the local labour market, our local economy and local skills provision is provided in **Appendix A, Local challenges and opportunities**. A summary of our employers’ key skills challenges is provided in **Appendix B, Delivering the right skills mix for our labour market**.

Section 3, Our strategic priorities brings together all the research and dialogue to help the Council and its partners design and provide projects and activities that lead to an improvement in local skills and *employability* for our residents and employers.

Section 4, Our call to action provides more detail about the three Strategic Priorities and sets out nine actions for the Council, its partners, providers, residents and employers to use to design projects and activities. The **Skills & Employability Delivery Plan** summarises these and our collective progress on those projects and activities.

3. Our strategic priorities

The Skills & Employability Strategy has been developed in collaboration and is a blueprint for the Council, the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, partners, educators, trainers, residents and employers to develop, provide and track the impact of projects and activities. Three **Strategic Priorities** have been identified to tackle the issues identified in **Sections 1 and 2**.



Strategic Priority 1: nurturing local aspiration and ambition; fostering a learning and development culture within our communities and workplaces that raises aspirations and enables our residents to reach their full potential

- Breaking cycles of unemployment and low-skilled jobs by demonstrating that entering into work is a stepping stone to improved earning potential and opportunity for residents and their families
- Re-enforcing the value of paid employment, recognising that a ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work and that work experience and support need to be meaningful and impactful
- Working together to change the narrative; some residents are discouraged from work and gaining new skills because the short-term costs for them outweigh the financial benefits
- Influencing perceptions; parents and schools have a key role in inspiring our children and young people and their relationship to education and skills – and linking this with rewarding employment, as well as improving school attendance rates and fostering young people’s desire to learn
- Extending this to workplaces, with employers recognising the value of developing their employees’ skills, resulting in a culture of learning and development



Strategic Priority 2: ensuring that our skills and employability system is fit for purpose; working with our employers to ensure that the local skills system meets the needs of our residents and employers, is innovative and produces the right mix of skills and qualifications for the Borough's longer-term economic growth and resilience

- Ensuring that the skills and qualifications provided in the Borough match the current and future skills needs of local employers, recognising that local schools, colleges and skills providers cannot provide all the skills and qualifications required – especially more specialist courses
- Boosting residents' existing skills and also *re-skill* them to close local *skills gaps* and also meet employers' changing requirements, such as the digitalisation and automation of workplaces, artificial intelligence and low-carbon business – where the low-skilled are at greater risk of redundancy
- Ensuring that the skills system provides clear and flexible ways for residents to access skills and qualifications at every level to support *lifelong learning*
- Integrating residents' wider needs, including mental health, financial advice and information and other guidance to provide *wrap-around* support for sustainable employment



Strategic Priority 3: tackling inequalities and barriers to skills and employment; ensuring that no-one is *left behind*, that all our residents are able to participate in, progress and achieve success in the labour market and skills system

- Tackling the barriers that limit individual residents' opportunities to acquire skills and secure rewarding employment
- Building aspirations and ambitions, alone, will not bring about a fully inclusive labour market or skills system – our research highlighted significant, sometimes complex, obstacles for some of our most disadvantaged residents that included issues such as *in-work poverty* resulting from low wages and childcare support costs
- Ensuring *equality of opportunity* for all our residents through targeted and personalised support, much of which is already available locally, making it easier for residents to find the help they need

4. Our call to action

To support the delivery of these three **Strategic Priorities**, *calls to action* have been developed to guide the Council, its partners, providers, residents and employers in designing and providing projects and activities. The **Skills & Employability Delivery Plan** summarises these and our collective progress on those projects and activities.



Strategic Priority 1: nurturing local aspiration and ambition; fostering a learning and development culture within our communities and workplaces that raises aspirations and enables our residents to reach their full potential



Action A: Action for employers to guide and influence the local skills system.

National policies have led to qualifications being designed in partnership with employers. There needs to be an ongoing dialogue between local employers and our schools, colleges and skills providers to set out which skills – and at what level – they need in order to tackle local *skills gaps* before they become a problem. For many smaller businesses, this may require support for ‘workforce planning’ that recognises that obtaining technical qualifications can take a long time. In the short-term, collaboration may be required to attract higher-skilled workers into the Borough, alongside longer-term work to improve the level and relevance of our residents’ skills.



Action B: Action to enhance careers advice and guidance. It is essential that employers work with schools to inspire our young people and encourage them to see learning and qualifications as a way to access more secure, better-rewarded jobs – as well as meet future skills gaps. Employers and sector representative bodies (the groups that represent different industries) can help enhance local careers, information and guidance in partnership with skills providers, educators and those working in our communities – improving the quality and breadth of careers advice. This could include meaningful and inspiring work placements, site visits, mentoring, careers fairs and ‘taster’ days. There is also an opportunity to provide these kinds of activities to adults and older workers – including those at risk of redundancy.



Action C: Action to extend *social mobility*. There is a need to foster a more inclusive labour market where young people from deprived or disadvantaged backgrounds – or those where their families’ are unable to support them or lack social connections – can access opportunities and reach their full potential. There is a clear role for an ongoing dialogue with our employers to inspire, support and mentor young people and build on what families and schools are able to provide, themselves.



Strategic Priority 2: ensuring that our skills and employability system is fit for purpose; working with our employers to ensure that the local skills system meets the needs of our residents and employers, is innovative and produces the right mix of skills and qualifications for the Borough's longer-term economic growth and resilience



Action D: Action to embed good employment practice. Our employers must ensure that learning is embedded into workplaces, enabling workers to develop their skills without having to change job or return to college. Workplace *talent streaming* can identify employees and either develop existing skills, or *re-skill* them – obtaining new skills or qualifications. They can also adopt good practices that provide more secure working environments that recognise and support equality, diversity, wellbeing, in-work progression – i.e. development and promotion – and appropriate reward, in terms of wages and other incentives, as well measures to support older workers looking to re-enter the labour force. It's been found that employers need to see clear *return-on-investment* – the longer-term benefits exceeding the short-term costs – in order to do this, despite clear links between workforce development and higher productivity, improved staff recruitment and retention and competitiveness.



Action E: Action on 'basic' and 'soft' skills. There is a need to widen residents' participation in obtaining 'basic' skills – such as English, English for speakers of other languages and maths. There's also a need to enhance access to support for 'soft' skills – the general skills and *people skills* that most employers look for when they're recruiting – and 'digital' skills to meet employers' requirements and enable employees to progress within those organisations and go on to obtain higher skills. There are clear opportunities for *skills outreach* – taking learning opportunities out into our communities and workplaces.



Action F: Action on 'green' skills. 'Green' skills are required to support our businesses and communities reduce their environmental impact and carbon emissions in line with our national 'net zero carbon' ambition. The low-carbon economy – 'greener' goods and services – will become more important and provide a range of opportunities for our residents and businesses. These include more-specialist higher-value jobs to install and maintain things like energy-efficient heating systems in our homes, energy generation, electric vehicle (EV) charging and energy storage. More general 'green' skills will be required as individual businesses seek to reduce the carbon footprints of their workplaces and operations in order to meet their customers' expectations.



Strategic Priority 3: tackling inequalities and barriers to skills and employment; ensuring that no-one is *left behind*, that all our residents are able to participate in, progress and achieve success in the labour market and skills system



Action G: Action to tackle *economic inactivity*. Around half of our *economically inactive* residents – people not in employment who are not seeking work – have long-term health conditions, mental and physical disabilities. Flexible skills and employability projects and activities are required to bring these residents *closer to the labour force*, including a work-readiness and supported-employment approach for adults and older residents, with more online and out-of-hours learning options that fit around family life.



Action H: Action to help residents access employment. Projects and activities to support the unemployed and *economically inactive* adults into paid work – personalised support across the full range of employment skills linked to local employers' needs. Approaches might include coaching, mentoring, confidence and resilience-building, workplace behaviours, work experience, job-matching, job searching, CV design and interview preparation alongside introductions to providers of support for 'soft' and 'basic' skills.



Action I: Action to ensure that no-one is *left behind*. It's recognised that skills and employability projects and activities are not always *joined-up*, which can make them difficult for residents and employers to understand and participate in. There is a clear need to continue monitoring skills provision for – and uptake by – those at greatest risk of *falling through the net*; marginalised or disadvantaged residents and communities, especially those with specific educational needs and/or disabilities (SENDs) and those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

5. Conclusion

The Skills and Employability Strategy sets out evidence of the challenges and opportunities for residents and employers and provides a positive, collaborative blueprint for the Council, the Great Yarmouth Skills Taskforce, partners, educators, trainers, communities and businesses to design projects and activities that tackle skills and educational attainment, barriers to lifelong learning, economic inactivity and current and emerging skills gaps identified.

Appendix A: Local challenges and opportunities

Our communities



Pockets of local deprivation: several areas within the Borough are amongst the most deprived in the country. Local deprivation in comparison to other areas has been increasing for several years, meaning that Great Yarmouth risks being ‘left behind’. That longer-term decline has slowed since 2015. Whilst most ways that we measure deprivation, including ‘income’ and ‘crime’, deteriorated here between 2015 and 2019, most neighbourhoods within the Borough actually improved in terms of ‘education & skills’. Low levels of *social mobility* – people’s ability to access opportunities to improve their livelihoods and security – can increase inequalities and it is vital that disadvantaged residents and communities are supported to access better paid jobs.



High levels of unemployment: unemployment has traditionally been higher in Great Yarmouth than in other areas. For most of the period since 2004, the peaks and the troughs have broadly mirrored the situation elsewhere. The COVID pandemic accelerated some of the underlying challenges or made them worse. There are other periods when our unemployment has been unusually high, such as a spike around mid-2018, where the Office for National Statistics noted that ‘the local authorities with the highest unemployment rate estimates in Great Britain were Hartlepool at 8.9%, followed by Great Yarmouth at 8.4% and Wolverhampton at 7.5%’.



High levels of *economic inactivity*: local rates of *economic inactivity* – the proportion of residents not in employment and not seeking work – are higher than in other, similar areas and there are a number of things that contribute to this, including deprivation and physical and mental health, which may have led to an overall increase *in economic inactivity* amongst men compared to the period before the COVID pandemic. In 2022, over a third of Great Yarmouth’s school children in years 10 and 11 were identified as *RONI* (Risk of NEET Indicators – i.e. they are at risk of becoming *not in education, employment or training*) which is about 10% higher than for Norfolk as a whole.



An ageing population: The Borough’s population is growing more slowly than in other areas and this growth is focused on urban areas. The Borough also has an older population than other areas, with a median age – the ‘middle’ value of all our residents’ ages – of 46, compared to 41 for the East of England and 40 for England as a whole. The challenges of providing services to an ageing population are likely to be greater in Great Yarmouth than elsewhere, with a higher proportion of *economically inactive* individuals that aren’t working, paying taxes, or providing care for those who need it.

Our labour market



A reliance on certain industries: there is strong evidence that a reliance on certain forms of employment or industries – such as tourism – are limiting our residents’ wealth, employment opportunities and job security. Healthcare, accommodation and food services and retail provide a greater proportion of employment here than elsewhere in the region or nationally. This reflects both the needs of an ageing population and the importance of tourism to the local economy and residents’ opportunities.



Inequality of opportunity: Great Yarmouth has some of the highest-paying jobs in the County – many of which are in the energy sector. Workers commuting into the Borough typically earn more than residents. This indicates that they are more successful than our residents at securing better-paid local jobs that often require higher technical or professional qualifications. Nevertheless, there are also many high-wage jobs in areas such as construction and welding requiring only NVQ Level 2-3 skills. There are several disadvantaged and marginalised groups within the Borough that require more intensive and personalised support into education and work.



Full-time and part-time workers: our residents earn less than their counterparts elsewhere. A reason for this is the availability of seasonal or more casual employment opportunities in lower-skilled, lower-paying jobs or industries. Our residents typically work longer hours than their counterparts elsewhere, too. In accommodation and food services and retail, there are more part-time employees than there are full-time employees. In the health sector there is a more even split. Local part-time workers earn less and work slightly fewer hours than their counterparts elsewhere.



Self-employed workers: whilst the local economy is fairly *entrepreneurial* – in other words, there is a comparatively high business start-up rate and new businesses tend to survive longer here, the number of self-employed workers in the Borough is lower than elsewhere. Self-employed individuals are typically more highly-skilled than those in employment.

Our local economy



Local strengths in energy and maritime: Great Yarmouth is at the centre of the world's largest market for offshore wind, with extensive clusters of businesses working in clean energy and maritime services. Clean energy has huge potential for ongoing growth and employment if investors' skills needs can be met by attracting and retaining young people, graduates and higher-skilled individuals within the Borough.



Local strengths in culture and the visitor economy: Great Yarmouth is the third most important seaside resort in the UK and adds around £600 million to the local economy every year. Whilst many of the job opportunities are seasonal, there are clear opportunities for residents and businesses within a vibrant heritage, arts and culture scene.



Local businesses: local business numbers reflect Great Yarmouth's economic reliance on tourism- and energy-related industries, with scientific, technical, construction, accommodation and food services dominating our local economy. Further diversification – i.e. broadening the types of businesses that can thrive here, year-round and not just during the summer season – will improve our *economic resilience* and provide new opportunities for employment and *social inclusion*.



Our overall economic fitness: our local economy is defined by the types of businesses that that operate here, their contributions to *economic output* and gross value-added (GVA) – the *financial contribution* made to a local economy by its businesses – their *productivity* and the number of people that they employ. There is a risk of the Borough being 'left behind' unless a long-term divergence from the economic output and productivity of other local economies can be tackled and reversed.



Limiting factors on resilience and growth: the local economy's growth and resilience to *economic shocks* and challenges – such as the COVID pandemic and *cost of living crisis* – has been affected by labour shortages, by wider changes in consumers' tastes and expectations and by specific skills gaps – including 'basic skills', 'soft skills' digital skills, 'green' skills and the specialist skills required by certain types of business. The *foundation economy* – the part of our economy that creates and distributes goods and service that we rely on for everyday life – is also affected by skills shortages and high job vacancy rates. Skills gaps in higher technical qualifications cross different industries and affect local productivity, competitiveness and growth. Increased demand for workers from industries such as energy, construction and engineering – and competition between them for staff – makes staff recruitment and retention more difficult and affects further *digitalisation* and automation of our workplaces and progress towards a low-carbon or *net-zero* economy.



Emerging workforces: it's recognised that workforce requirements are evolving – due to things like including automation and *digitalisation* – and that big investments like the Sizewell nuclear project in Suffolk are an opportunity for local residents and workers. They can also distort the local labour market, making it harder for our employers to attract and retain staff in areas like engineering and construction. There is a need to ensure that residents and employees are able to attain the necessary skills to enable them to benefit from the new opportunities that will emerge from wider changes in businesses and the requirements of employers, including a 'green skilled' labour force.

Our education and skills



Educational underperformance: local education levels directly affect the strength of the local economy, how successful residents are in securing employment and how much they're likely to earn. Education leads to higher individual rewards and is necessary for longer-term economic growth and resilience. Despite improvements, local GCSE pass rates and the highest level of education achieved are still lower than for the rest of Norfolk and England as a whole.



Qualification levels: of the 318 district councils in England Wales, Great Yarmouth has the lowest proportion of residents with degree-level qualifications and the sixth highest proportion of residents with no formal qualifications. Despite improvements over the past twenty years, especially in the proportion of residents with higher qualifications – those likely to be required for higher-value jobs – the Borough is less successful than other areas at producing, or retaining, highly-qualified people.



Investment in skills and learning: including physical buildings such as the new University Learning Centre in the Town Centre, an £11 million East of England Offshore Energy Skills Centre, the multi-million-pound rebuild of East Coast College's Great Yarmouth campus and Energy & Engineering Skills Centre of Excellence in Lowestoft and – slightly further afield – the University of East Anglia's energy engineering course. It's recognised that alongside new facilities, the ways in which residents can access and participate in skills development must be easier to access and better understood by both residents and employers.



Workforce development and in-work learning: apprenticeships are a proven way for people to get skilled and secure jobs for employers to ensure that they have better-skilled and more-productive workforces. Local businesses also recognise the value of short courses, including ‘skills bootcamps’, with simple, modular courses aimed at specific skills. Businesses’ investment in this is well supported by funding through the *apprenticeship levy* and a *levy share* facility, where larger organisations can support smaller businesses to set up apprenticeships. Despite some evidence that staff recruitment and retention are difficult in the current economic climate, businesses in Great Yarmouth have not been choosing to invest more in their existing workforces’ skills through apprenticeships or by getting experienced, productive staff to mentor less-experienced employees. Improving graduate and skilled-worker retention to work in our growth industries – along with *work returners* – especially older residents – and other *economically inactive* people – is a key priority.

Appendix B: Delivering the right skills mix for our labour market



Engineering: engineering businesses compete for skilled workers against both other engineering businesses and other industries that employ people in engineering-related roles. This includes traditional roles such as mechanical and electrical jobs, with skills in fabrication and welding in high demand. Basic hand-skills and machine operation skills are needed in manufacturing businesses and there is high demand for maintenance operations. NVQ Level 2/3 skills unlock a range of opportunities and ways for people to progress to specialist and highly-skilled or technical roles.



Civil engineering and construction: demand for civil engineering skills remains high due to ongoing building projects across the region, including the Sizewell scheme. Nuclear newbuild at Sizewell in Suffolk will provide a range of opportunities for local businesses of different types – and for workers across a range of skills-levels, including low/mid skilled work. The demand for staff and skills at different stages of this massive project will produce peaks of demand for specific skills, which could distort the labour market and make it even more difficult for other businesses to attract and retain the right staff. This may have knock-on effects – for example, on house builders where a lack of available, skilled labour might result in project delays.



Energy and maritime: maritime and energy-related skills support high-value, resilient jobs, with a range of different roles at sea and onshore with progression and promotion opportunities. Current skills shortages include areas like the installation and maintenance of offshore energy projects, able seamen, qualified engineers and various technical and professional services, such as environmental analysis, lifting and helicopter/boat pilots. A general shortage of skilled engineers is a key challenge for these businesses.



Manufacturing: around two thirds of manufacturers have reported a lack of technical skills among job applicants and almost as many report an insufficient number of people actually applying for jobs. There are current or predicted shortages in technical skills such as robotics, artificial intelligence, software, data analysis, and electrical/electronic engineering. Before Brexit, it was common practice to respond to these shortages by moving highly-skilled engineers at short notice across the EU.



Health and social care: the policy of freedom of movement and mutual recognition of professional qualifications within the EU meant that many health and social care professionals working in the UK came from other EU countries. The NHS and care homes are struggling to recruit and retain permanent staff, with particular gaps in nursing, midwifery and health visitors. There are issues at various levels within these organisations, not only in highly-skilled roles, but in the vast body of healthcare assistants that make up a large portion of the NHS workforce.



Hospitality and tourism: in addition to social media skills and specialisms such as cheffing, the hospitality sector recognises that business management and leadership skills are required for employees to progress within businesses. In terms of workforces, the biggest challenges for businesses are front-of-house staff and chefs. The significant number of people employed within this industry – and the variety of roles – in addition to the number of smaller, newer businesses requires a personalised approach to designing and providing training that recognises the industry’s importance in developing ‘soft’ skills and ‘people’ skills in young people.



Education: education and skills providers, schools and colleges, themselves, face big recruitment challenges, particularly in more specialist or technical areas. This is often because people with those skills and experience are better paid in industry than they would be in teaching. Finding ways to close this salary gap and ensuring that industries, themselves, can support the teaching and skills development that they need is essential. Aside from supporting education, there is a clear need for industries, themselves, to get into schools to inspire our young people and encourage them to see learning and qualifications as a way to access more secure, better-rewarded jobs.



Cross-cutting ‘green’ skills: aside from supporting the local cluster of businesses involved in renewable energy, ‘green’ skills are essential to meeting the Government’s low-carbon or *net-zero* ambitions. There are also new business opportunities in energy efficiency housing *retrofit*, including new energy efficient heating systems. In order to meet Government ambitions, the number of people with ‘green’ skills will need to increase and provision tied into new courses, classes and qualifications.



Cross-cutting digital skills: these are increasingly essential to modern workplaces – including those that offer *hybrid working* – and advanced digital qualifications provide routes to highly-skilled careers. Intermediate digital skills are required for workplace automation and specialisms such as digital marketing. Basic digital skills equip residents to access employment across a range of different roles and industries. The national school curriculum is still slightly mis-matched to the actual needs of employers. Local *digital exclusion* and *digital poverty* – where people aren’t able to use or access the internet in ways that are needed to participate fully in modern society – is more common in more deprived areas.



‘Basic’ skills: A lack of English, maths and ‘English for speakers of other languages’ qualifications are a barrier to residents securing many jobs and can affect their ability to progress to higher-level qualifications or more senior roles within employers. Basic skills also support *community cohesion* and *integration*.



‘Soft’ skills: employers across a range of industries highlight the importance of – and a lack of – ‘soft’ skills, which are the general skills and *people skills* that most employers look for when they’re recruiting. ‘Soft’ skills boost people’s initial employability, their ability to remain in employment and the opportunities they have for career progression. ‘Soft’ skills include teamwork, problem-solving and *active listening*. Employers also highlight poor quality behaviours, particularly in young people, such as attitude and work ethic. Tourism businesses tend to employ younger staff, which presents a significant opportunity to nurture local soft skills.



Entrepreneurial skills: entrepreneurial skills will support the growth of local businesses and their diversification into new goods and services, drive innovation and support the creation of new businesses – *start-ups* and *spin-outs*. Better business management and leadership skills will improve local productivity and sustainability. It is important to maintain the Borough’s entrepreneurial culture and this will require business support and mentoring beyond business start-up and launch.