

Please help us with our new Economic Development strategy for Dartford by completing this survey when you get back to the office.

In Dartford, we're proud to be a diverse, enterprising and hard-working Borough – a place where businesses can start and grow and where there are opportunities for everyone to progress in work.

We're at the early stages of preparing a new Economic Development Strategy for Dartford. Looking ahead to the next five years, this will set out how we can help to grow the local economy, working together with business and with other parts of government.

We welcome your ideas. We'd like to know your thoughts on what makes Dartford a great place to do business, what holds our economy back, and what needs to be done differently. In this paper, we've set out our initial ideas – and we would value your input.

Where we are now

Dartford is a growing Borough. In the last twenty years, our population has seen one of the fastest rates of growth in the country, and we're still growing. We're working hard to support this growth.

We have a very strong record on job creation. Over the past twenty years, jobs growth has been faster than population growth – and although many Dartford residents commute to London and elsewhere, lots of people from outside Dartford travel to the Borough for work.

We're also home to some 5,600 businesses, most of them small and working in a diverse range of sectors. Over the past decade, our business stock has grown at double the national rate, and our 'productivity' (the amount of output generated for every person in work) is higher than the UK average.

Why we're developing a new strategy

So in many ways, we're a high-performing Borough: a dynamic place, where people want to live and where business is expanding.

But we know that our economy is often held back, by transport congestion and infrastructure constraints, and by firms' ability to access the skills they need. We also know that the 'bigger picture' for the economy is changing rapidly: structurally, we're adapting to the transition to a lower-carbon energy mix, the new opportunities of digitalisation, and changes in working patterns

and people's expectations of work. We are also an increasingly diverse Borough, and we are outward facing to the opportunities of the Thames Estuary and the wider South East. Looking to the future, we want to ensure that Dartford is ready for the challenge, so we continue to be Kent's most industrious, most enterprising Borough – and that the benefits of this support our whole community.

Our focus

Responding to these areas of opportunity and challenge, our Economic Development Strategy will focus on what the Council and its partners will do to support responsible economic growth, recognising that good jobs and good business opportunities will help make Dartford a place where everyone can thrive.

Our current thinking is focused on four themes:

Table 1: Emerging strategy themes

Theme	Focus
Supporting productive and dynamic businesses	<p>Enabling businesses to start up and expand, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Dartford's key employment sites • Supporting new opportunities for business expansion, including for cultural and creative industries • Delivering a quality and attractive environment in our key employment locations for business growth, new investment and entrepreneurship
Building quality and distinctive places	<p>Building on success to make Dartford an attractive, high-quality place to live and work, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre regeneration, bringing forward key investments • Developing Dartford's cultural, creative and environmental offer as a drive to investment
Creating opportunities to access and progress in work	<p>Ensuring that businesses can access the skills and talent they need by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing participation in 'work-based' learning (such as apprenticeships, traineeships, etc.) • Helping businesses help people to progress in the workplace
Overcoming infrastructure barriers to growth	<p>Removing some of the constraints that hold back sustainable growth, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing investment in local transport and environmental infrastructure • Making the case for major regional and national projects that will benefit Dartford in the longer term

The Council will not be able to deliver all these themes alone. But we want to set out our priorities for the Borough, and to work with our partners in business, education and other parts of government to bring them forward.

What happens next?

We would like your thoughts on the opportunities and challenges that businesses face in Dartford, and what needs to be done to address them. There is a short survey attached to this paper: we would be grateful if you could complete it – and please let us know if you would be willing to discuss further.

We will then be developing the detail of our draft Economic Development Strategy, which we will publish early in the new year.

Thanks very much for your help. Dartford's dynamic, diverse economy is a source of strength and benefits our whole community. Together we'll make it stronger.

We would welcome your views!

As we develop the new Economic Development Strategy, we would welcome input from businesses in Dartford. Please complete the short survey below – and if you would like to participate in a further discussion, we would be very grateful for your views!

About your business	
What sector does your business mainly operate in? (e.g., manufacturing, retail, media, etc)	
Approximately how many people do you employ in Dartford?	
Survey questions	
What are the three main challenges facing your business currently	
What do you consider to be the key advantages of Dartford as a place to do business?	
What do you think needs to be done to encourage your business and businesses like yours to invest in Dartford?	
Would you be willing to participate in a short interview to discuss your views in greater detail? If so, please let us have your contact details, and we will be in touch.	Name: Business name: Email:

The results of this survey will be stored electronically by Dartford Borough Council and its contractors. Access to this is limited to members of the team working on the Economic Development Strategy. Any presentation of responses will be in the form of aggregate results, not individual responses. In some cases, we may choose to use specific quotes; in these cases, we will ensure that the information is completely anonymous and cannot be used to identify any individual that has responded to the survey.

If you have any queries about this survey or our study, please contact businesssupport@dartford.gov.uk

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