
To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 26 November 2025

Subject: Report on Progress Made Against Coventry Economic Development and Skills Strategies and Coventry & Warwickshire Economic Plan

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide detail on the progress Coventry City Council (CCC) has made on delivering against the key objectives of its Economic Development Strategy and Skills Strategy that were launched in late 2022, as well as the Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Plan which was approved in March 2025. The links to the strategies are as follows:
- Coventry Skills Strategy: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/employment-support/coventry-skills-strategy>
 - Coventry Economic Development Strategy: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/council-democracy/economic-development-strategy-2022-2027>
 - Coventry & Warwickshire Economic Plan: Appendix 1.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) is recommended to:
- 1) Consider the content of the briefing note.
 - 2) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member.

3 Economic Context

- 3.1 The UK economy has encountered significant headwinds over the past twelve months that has limited GDP growth. In August 2025, UK GDP was 1.3% higher than it was in the same month the previous year. Inflation has risen steadily in the past 12 months, from 1.7% in September 2024 to 3.8% in September 2025. In that time the Bank of England interest rate has dropped from 4.75% to 4%. Historically high inflation and high interest rates, coupled with persistently elevated energy costs, have made for a challenging business environment over the past twelve months. Increases to the minimum wage and the rate of employers' National Insurance Contributions that came into effect in April this year have proved an additional challenge for businesses, particularly SMEs. The imposition of US tariffs from April this year also led to a period of high uncertainty for UK exporters. While the UK has avoided the most punitive tariff rates, concerns remain in certain sectors, particularly in the steel and automotive industries.

- 3.2 The challenging business environment over the past twelve months has been reflected in the UK labour market. Unemployment has risen from 4.0% in August 2024 to 5.0% in September 2025. Over that time the claimant count in Coventry has fallen from 14,065 to 13,660, suggesting that the local labour market remains robust in the face of national challenges. According to the NatWest Regional Growth Tracker, business activity in the West Midlands has experienced a modest contraction over the past twelve months, from a score of 51.2 in September 2024 to a score of 48.1 in September 2025 (a score above 50 indicates growth). In that time the average score of all twelve UK regions has fallen from 53.2 to 48.6.

4 Skills Strategy

- 4.1 The Skills Strategy was launched in November 2022. It takes a holistic approach to the skills system from early years through to lifelong learning to achieve the best outcomes for our residents and businesses. It serves as a 'Framework for Action' with partners learning and developing creative solutions to skills challenges together to meet our three Strategic Ambitions and the eight priority areas within them:
- **Strategic Ambition 1: A comprehensive, citywide skills offer that raises aspirations and allows each and every resident throughout their lives to reach their full potential.**
 - 1. Skills Levels:** To improve the overall skills levels of Coventry residents.
 - 2. Aspiration:** Further develop a skills system that inspires residents to achieve from primary school through to lifelong learning.
 - 3. Progression Pathways:** Providing a clear line of sight for people to progress through Coventry's skills system.
 - **Strategic Ambition 2: A skills ecosystem which ensures that all, including those most in need, are able to participate in, progress and achieve success.**
 - 4. Community:** A skills system which meets the needs of all residents and is widely accessed by all Coventry communities, including newly arrived communities.
 - 5. Inclusion:** A skills system which is fully inclusive and representative of our diverse City.
 - 6. Highest Needs:** A skills system which supports those most in need, with a 'proportionate universalism' approach, helping people out of poverty and creating a more equal city.
 - **Strategic Ambition 3: A flexible and responsive system that works together with our growing, investing and local businesses to deliver the right skills mix for our dynamic labour market.**
 - 7. Skills for Business:** A skills system which provides the skills required by Coventry's businesses, both current and future and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the city and region.
 - 8. Social Value and Sustainability:** A skills system which is well positioned to maximise increased commitment to social justice, respect, community, and responsibility including Coventry's commitment to tackling climate change.

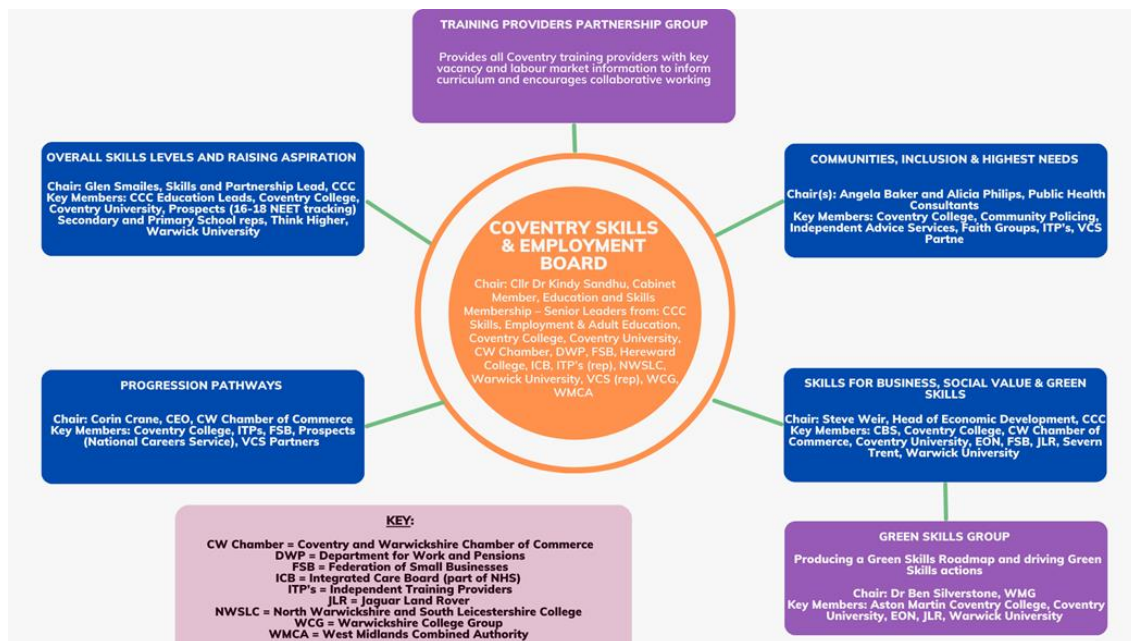
Shared Goals with the Economic Development Strategy

The Skills Strategy is fully integrated with Coventry City Council's Economic Development Strategy 2022-2027. Through the two strategies we will achieve three common goals:

1. **Getting the skills and opportunities right for investment:** Develop a 'team around' approach for investments and large developments with expertise brought together from across the Council to ensure early, comprehensive planning better meets business need and ensures maximum benefit for Coventry
2. **Co-designing skills solutions with businesses:** Designing together with industry and skills partners to ensure the skills system is responsive, innovative and produces the right skills mix for now and the future. This includes supporting employers to maximise social value commitments.
3. **In-work upskilling with local employers:** Collaborations which encourage access to skills and workplace development at all levels.

4.2 **The Coventry Skills and Employment Board:** Oversees the delivery of the city's Skills Strategy and its four 'Framework for Action' Groups. Chaired by Cllr Dr Kindy Sandhu, the Board provides strategic direction and support across all employment and skills initiatives in Coventry, holding key stakeholders accountable. Over the past two years, the Board has achieved the following:

- **Secured and Shaped Over £21 Million Annually in Employment & Skills Funding:** Ensured sustained investment in Coventry residents through strategic funding streams that support inclusive growth, lifelong learning, and pathways into quality employment.
- **Achieved Full WMCA/CCC Co-Commissioning Commitment (from April 2026):** Successfully lobbied for a joint commissioning model with WMCA, unlocking more locally tailored provision and improving outcomes for Coventry residents.
- **Enabled Coventry College's Ofsted 'Good' Rating:** Worked closely with the college to reshape provision around resident needs, strengthen employer partnerships, launch future-focused skills panels, and develop innovative green skills programmes – all contributing to the improved Ofsted outcome.
- **Delivered Over 1,600 Residents into High-Quality Paid Employment:** Through the Coventry Job Shop, supported residents into meaningful work and expanded reach via Coventry Job Fest, engaging 1,700 residents across three vibrant community events.
- **Launched 'Connect to Work' and 'Youth Trailblazer' Programmes:** Introduced intensive, person-centred support for economically inactive young people, including those with disabilities and health conditions. Programmes offer holistic job coaching and subsidised paid placements to unlock potential and build confidence.
- **Strengthened Anchor Employer Partnerships:** From opening NHS career pathways and supporting unemployed residents through Severn Trent's Job Rotation and Youth Trailblazer schemes, to delivering innovative VR workshops at the Job Shop, E.ON-led sessions and developing new Supported Internship collaborations with JLR – the Job Shop is driving forward impactful employer-led initiatives that create real opportunities for Coventry residents.
- **Governance Visual:** The below visual shows the Governance Structure for the Skills Strategy including the four 'Framework for Action Groups'. The visual below shows Group Chairs, key members, hierarchy and relationships.



4.3 The key Skills Strategy Framework for Action activity and achievements in 2024/25 were:

- **Launched the Green Skills Roadmap (Jan 2025):** In partnership with the University of Warwick and key stakeholders, providing a strategic framework to embed and grow green skills across education and business. Community input was strengthened through a consultation with Coventry Green New Deal in Nov 2025, ensuring local voices shape the framework.
- **Accelerated Green Skills Momentum:** Delivered Primary and Secondary Green Skills Summits, enhanced school resources, trained Careers and Business Advisors, launched Sustainability Leadership Training, launched schools 'Green Team' award, and expanded Retrofit skills provision at Coventry College.
- **Expanded Primary School Aspirations:** February's *Primary Aspirations Week* engaged 1,000+ children in person and 2,500+ online. Employers including JLR, Severn Trent, NHS, EON, and Coventry Building Society delivered inspiring, hands-on activities.
- **Summer Holiday Food Activity Skills Clubs – Inspiring the Next Generation:** Over 50 young people, aged between 8 and 16, gained hands-on trade skills this summer through HAF clubs, exploring plumbing, welding, tiling, carpentry, and flooring - sparking creativity, confidence, and practical know-how for the future.
- **Implemented Coventry Alternative Provision (CAP) Model:** Supported rollout of a graduated, multi-tiered framework offering tailored support for students struggling in mainstream education. Currently supports 495 young people across 70 schools and 34 providers.
- **Built 6 Sector Pathways – 5 More in Development:** Co-designed with employers, visual career pathways in Construction, Electrification, Hospitality, Creative (Film & Theatre), Primary Education, and Logistics. Available in multiple formats including AI-enhanced audio, supporting both schools and adult learners.
- **Maintained Low NEET & Not Known Rates (16–18):** Strong partnership working has kept Coventry's NEET and Not Known rates well below national and regional averages.
- **Strengthened SEND Employment Programmes:** Coventry Adult Education Service continues to grow *Step Into* and *Supported Internship* programmes,

supporting up to 40 young adults with SEND annually. New employer partners include Amazon (80% progression rate) and Coventry City Council, with placements in Bereavement, Waste, and Parks services.

- **Improved Adult Education Outcomes:** Strengthened links between training providers and the Job Shop have improved learner tracking and employer engagement, reducing non-progression rates by 6%.
- **Ensured a Region-Leading Adult Education Service:** In the 2024/25 academic year, Coventry Adult Education supported over 7,500 learners, surpassing its WMCA target. An additional 1,000 learners also received high-quality support through DfE-funded programmes – including 16–19 study routes, apprenticeships, and specialist provision for migrants and refugees, delivered through Home Office funding and a partnership with SEGRO who provided social value funding.
- **Widening Access to Civil Service Careers:** The Job Shop, in partnership with the FDA Trade Union, delivered the Public Sector Development and Mentoring Scheme - supporting over 60 participants with tailored sessions on applications, success profiles, and behaviour-based interviews. This initiative has already achieved six job outcomes in tax, law, and energy, despite some roles attracting over 30,000 applicants - demonstrating the programme's effectiveness.
- **Taken Action on Graduate Retention through Coventry University's 'Discover Coventry' Programme:** Helped launch a graduate retention initiative connecting students to the city. Post-grad research informed future development, with joint events planned for Spring 2026.
- **Amplified Resident Voice:** Thousands of residents continue to shape local skills provision through our Annual Skills Surveys, ensuring programmes reflect community needs.
- **Increased Employer Co-Designed Courses:** Skills mapping and employer engagement have driven growth in *Into Employment* programmes, including:
 - **Sector Work Academy Programmes** (Level 1–2): Fast-track unemployed residents into jobs.
 - **Skills Bootcamps** (Level 3): Upskill low-paid workers or support unemployed residents into new roles.

5 Economic Development Strategy

5.1 The Economic Development Strategy was launched in October 2022. It acts as the framework for creating a strong and resilient economy, where inclusive growth is promoted and delivered, businesses are enabled to innovate and grow, and new local jobs are created. The Strategy covers 8 priority areas:

1. **Deliver a sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and challenging economic climate** driven by inflation, the rising cost of living and cost of doing business, and international trade and supply chain challenges.
2. **Deliver a first-class support infrastructure** that responds to our businesses' needs and opportunities.
3. **Secure maximum public and private investment to deliver infrastructure projects** that create the conditions for economic growth, job creation and that can "level up" Coventry's neighbourhoods.
4. Secure job creation, growth and prosperity for Coventry through **attracting and supporting business investment from both the UK and overseas**.

5. Ensure that **social value and sustainability** are incorporated into all of our Economic Development work.
 6. Support the **development of a skills ecosystem which provides the skills required by Coventry's businesses**, both current and future, and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the city.
 7. **Ensure Coventry is a leader in the green industrial revolution** by supporting our businesses, residents and partner stakeholders to tackle the challenges and opportunities presented by climate change.
 8. **Build on existing strong partnerships** in delivering all elements of this strategy.
- 5.2 The following sections detail **the key activities carried out to deliver these objectives during 2025/2026**, encompassing our work in supporting businesses to grow, supporting local businesses to improve their energy efficiency and advance their path to net zero, and work to attract new investment into the city.
- 5.3 Following our work with WMCA in establishing **Business Growth WM in Coventry** after the cessation of EU Structural Funds in June 2023, we have continued the strong progress in supporting Coventry businesses to tackle barriers to growth, innovation and their path to net zero through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) activities. Following the delivery of in-depth support to 531 Coventry businesses in 2024/25 (through a Part 1 Diagnostic of their current position and support needs), we have already delivered 257 Part 1 Diagnostics to Coventry SMEs between April and September for the 2025/26 financial year. This is 91% of our overall target for 2025/26 of 283, as the Business Growth WM service has sought to play a stronger emphasis on providing more intensive support to firms that have more potential to transform and/or create more growth and jobs for the regional economy.
- 5.4 We have continued to successfully award grants to enable Coventry SMEs to accelerate vital investments to boost their growth, thereby creating new jobs and/or safeguarding existing jobs. In the 2024/25 FY we paid out £1.15m in grants to Coventry SMEs which yielded £1.52m in private investment and led to the creation of 66 new jobs - this included a £450k top-up to the fund due to high demand from Coventry businesses and CCC's ability to claim funds and outputs promptly. In the first 6 months of 2025/26, we have allocated £306k of the £628k fund, and £106k has already claimed by Coventry SMEs, which has resulted in an additional £176k in investment into growing their business.
- 5.5 We continue to work with our external partners to deliver specialist **Startup and Growth Support and Social Enterprise Support** through CCC's UKSPF allocation. The Startup and Growth support is delivered by CW Chamber of Commerce, and offers a blend of workshops and 1:1 business coaching and mentoring. In 2024/25, CW Chamber engaged with 80 businesses and has engaged with 89 businesses across the first 6 months of 2025/26. The Social Enterprise support is delivered by the Coventry and Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency (CWEDA) and delivers 1:1 advice and a peer-to-peer scheme, and it worked with 34 social enterprises in 2024/25 and 27 social enterprises in the first 6 months of 2025/26. These two services have also assisted a total of 84 potential entrepreneurs to be 'enterprise ready' in 2024/25 and 39 over the first 6 months of 2025/26.

- 5.6 We have also made significant progress in **supporting Coventry businesses on their path to Net Zero and decarbonising their activities** through the Business Energy Advisory Service (BEAS) funds via the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero. The aim is to support businesses across the city to mitigate against raising energy costs through two elements:
- A *free Standard Energy Audit* delivered by our in-house Decarbonisation Business Advisers, which highlights areas of improvement for energy savings and details recommendations on saving money on energy bills. After 151 Coventry SMEs received an Energy Efficiency Audit during 2024/25, we have delivered a further 23 audits to small businesses in Coventry in the first six months of 2025/26 and have 13 currently in progress, against a year-end target of 100. These Audits have collectively supported local businesses to reduce their carbon emissions by 286 tonnes a year. In 2025/26, the funder has only permitted SMEs who consume at least 25 MWh of electricity per year to be eligible for support – for context, in 2024/25, 39% of SMEs receiving an audit consumed less than this figure.
 - *Capital Grants* – if a business decides to take forward one or more of the recommendations highlighted in the energy audits, they can access a grant covering 50% of the costs of such improvements (solar, LED lights, new windows, etc) up to a maximum of £100k, with the business needing to provide the remaining funds. As of 30/9/2025, £167k in BEAS Grants had been awarded, out of the £1.283m allocation, with a strong pipeline of grant projects either in full application or expression of interest stage.
- 5.7 The Economic Development Service continues to deliver **Business Sustain – an environmental consultancy providing chargeable environmental management services** to firms across the West Midlands and beyond. The service supports firms of all sizes and from all industrial sectors to meet current UK legislation relevant to their businesses. This includes complying with management system requirements and maintaining certification, improving pollution control methods, and improving awareness of potential enforcement measures that regulatory agencies might take. By maintaining compliance with the latest regulations, businesses supported both avoid punitive fines and are better placed to win contracts that require strict adherence to environmental regulations.
- 5.8 Through our Invest CW offer in partnership with Warwickshire County Council, we have ensured that **Coventry & Warwickshire remains a very attractive location for inward investment, especially Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**. The latest data released by DBT shows that in 2024/25 Coventry & Warwickshire attracted a total of 41 FDI projects (representing 32% of the West Midlands region's FDI projects), supporting 2,818 jobs (representing 48% of the West Midlands jobs). Coventry and Warwickshire attracted 65 jobs per project against a national figure of 58 per project. Key sectors for Coventry & Warwickshire included 13 projects for automotive and future mobility, 11 digital creative and software (up from eight last year), eight e-commerce and logistics (four projects last year) and three energy-related projects and two tourism projects. Altogether, the area again accounted for over 20% of UK automotive projects.
- 5.9 **Notable FDI successes for Coventry & Warwickshire in 2024/25 include:** Corona Energy locating in the Bourn building (150 jobs), Octopus Energy expanding in Two Friargate (450 jobs), Nurol Makina (defence company) locating in

Leamington Spa (150 jobs) and several successes from the West Midlands Global Growth Programme: Sanlab (80 jobs), ID Safe Ltd (10 jobs), K Factory (10 jobs) and Xeed (10 jobs).

- 5.10 The FDI data marks another positive landmark for Coventry and Warwickshire. Earlier this year, **FDI Intelligence Magazine recognised the strength of the local area**, placing Coventry & Warwickshire in the top 10 for two categories in its annual FDI European Cities and Regions of the Future Awards 2025. Coventry ranked 9th for Economic Potential and Coventry & Warwickshire ranked 3rd for FDI Strategy. The rankings benchmark European cities and regions according to their economic, financial, and business strengths.
- 5.11 A further key catalyst for attracting additional inward investment from electric vehicles, batteries and wider advanced manufacturing and related supply chains is the **Coventry & Warwick Investment Zone (CWIZ), including Greenpower Park**. The CWIZ is part of the wider West Midlands Investment Zone and covers approximately 240 hectares of land straddling the border of Coventry and Warwick District that is now designated as a tax incentive and business rate retention zone. A separate item on the Investment Zone is on the Scrutiny Board 3 work programme for later in the municipal year.
- 5.12 **£23m of Investment Zone funding** has now been secured to deliver a 30MVA power supply to the site which will enable the first phases of the targeted development to take place at Greenpower Park. Route proving works for the power supply are in the final stages of completion with installation works commencing in November 2025. Works will take just under two years to complete with the new power supply going live in August 2027. Works will then continue to add additional capacity increasing the available power supply to 50MVA by 2029. In parallel, we are working collaboratively with WMCA, the West Midlands Growth Company and landowners / developers to promote the site to key markets and target industries in order to continue to develop a pipeline of potentially interested investors with a view to securing commitment at the site and creating new job opportunities for local residents.
- 5.13 The Investment Zone has also commissioned a **supply chain, R&D and leadership skills programmes** to ensure that local businesses are best supported to diversify and develop in the advanced manufacturing sectors that have been prioritised by the West Midlands Growth Plan and UK Modern Industrial Strategy.
- 5.14 We continue to advance our work in **maximising the social value** from key development projects taking place in the city. Our Economic Development Service has worked with developers on 33 projects across the city in 2024/25, with key impacts being:
- 153 local people employed on site
 - 24 new local apprentice starts
 - 65 hours supporting young people (18–24) into work
 - 9 site visits for school children and local residents
 - 89 staff hours spent on local school and college visits
 - £12m spent in the local supply chain
 - 62 local companies sub-contracted on projects
 - £930,400 donations or in-kind contributions to local community projects

- 9 community organisations supported
- 406 hours of volunteering to support community projects

5.15 We have seen a wide range of community activities from the developers we work with, including financial contributions, donations of books to schools, supporting the Grace Academy Big Build through volunteering and donations, speaking at an International Women's Day event at the Job Shop, and donations to a Children's charity and a bereavement group.

6 The Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Plan

6.1 Approved in March 2025, the Plan provides a foundation for sub-regional activities to **further economic growth through the functional geography of Coventry and Warwickshire**, and notable activities have already taken place in response to the Plan's objectives.

6.2 In May 2025, **CCC, WCC and the CW Growth Hub hosted a roundtable event**, attended by ten local businesses and regional stakeholders and partners to **discuss ways to mitigate the impact of US tariffs**, helping businesses meet the new challenges they faced with international trade. **CCC and WCC have also been working together to grow the sub-region's creative sector** by joining the steering group for the Coventry and Warwickshire Exchange (CWX), supporting the new WM CreaTech Frontiers programme, and supporting the design of VentureFest and Mobile Hub events through the WM Innovation Programme.

6.3 The CW Economic Plan identifies **scale-up growth as a key opportunity** to grow the economy of the sub-region. To that end, CCC has been working with WCC to establish the CW Growth Hub's new CW Peer-to-Peer Network, a dedicated forum for scale-up business leaders. Another key growth area identified in the Plan is the **creation of more employment land**. CCC has been working with WCC and the CW Chamber of Commerce to discuss how such shortages in grow-on space can be addressed in Local Plan processes.

6.4 Most recently, CCC has been working with partners in WCC, WMCA and the CW Chamber to **understand the impacts of September's cyber-attack at Jaguar Land Rover** and subsequent production shutdown on the local economy. We are continuing to monitor the impact on local manufacturing supply chains through surveys facilitated by CW Chamber and evidence emerging from interactions with Business Advisors and will remain active in signposting affected businesses to the various support options available to them.

7 Health Inequalities Impact

7.1 The jobs that have been created for the local economy through these services will play an important role in reducing local health inequalities. Giving local people greater access to good employment will play an important role in improving health, and through the Coventry Job Shop, we are continuing to match as many local residents as possible with new job and training opportunities that are being created. In 2024/25 the Job Shop supported over 1,600 people into work.

7.2 In addition, Coventry City Council's Employment, Skills and Adult Education and Economic Development Services have been working closely with Public Health and the Health Determinants Research Collaboration to raise awareness of 'A Fairer Coventry' among local businesses. We're also drawing on learning from other areas

to explore how we can increase the social value generated through our services – and how best to measure it. Alongside this, we're identifying ways to better target our employment, skills, and enterprise support to reduce inequalities and unlock the potential of residents from deprived communities and traditionally excluded groups, helping them access improved employment or successfully launch new enterprises.

Appendix 1: Coventry and Warwickshire Economic Plan

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