



Annual Review 2017/18



The
Skills & Growth
Company

A Cheshire East Council Company



Chairman
Cllr George Hayes

Chairman's Foreword



The second year of the Skills & Growth Company has been just as exciting as the first – with a demonstration of how applying our skills and expertise creates meaningful and sustainable change across the Cheshire & Warrington economy and wider community.

Often, it seems that many organisations can start to stagnate or solely drive more efficiency in their second year of operation. I am pleased to share that this has not been the case for us; we have not only continued to deliver against our outcomes for Cheshire East Council, but also driven growth, efficiency and commercialisation throughout our organisation. This provides us with a solid foundation to continue our progress and help secure our sustainability.

I am delighted that the company continues to provide excellent services; highly valued by the Council, our residents and businesses. This has been reflected in the continued economic strength of the borough; with Cheshire East

now defined as the sixth fastest growing economy outside London.

This year has also seen the continued development of a shared culture, vision and values; which the Board and I welcome, valuing colleagues' input to define our culture statement as *"Respecting each other and working as a team, we will achieve excellence."* I truly believe that this encompasses all of what we are about.

As I reflect on the year past and look forward to another exciting year ahead, I remain grateful to colleagues within the company who all continue to actively contribute and drive forward our performance. As the company has grown, we have retained a very strong team

ethos, focussed on a supportive culture and providing the best services for our customers.

I am resolutely confident that we are well-positioned to continue driving growth and opportunity both within Cheshire East and the wider region. I hope that you enjoy sharing in our successes and I would value further engagement to discuss potential partnership opportunities. If this is of interest to you, or your organisation, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr George Hayes
Chairman



Managing Director
Julian Cobley

Managing Director's Report



The Skills & Growth Company continues to make great progress against the delivery of its strategic objectives aligned to our vision and values.

Performance has met or exceeded targets set out in our business plan, generating over £126,000 profit, before profit share arrangements. This has been achieved through efficiencies in the delivery of our core contract with Cheshire East Council and securing new commercial opportunities.

In 2017-18 we helped 242 Cheshire East businesses to generate 1,080 new jobs, safeguard 1,200 jobs, and invest £28m of capital and £33m revenue. This has led to 201k sqft of new floor space taken and a projected £82m increase in Gross Value Added.

In addition, we have developed and delivered digital and energy infrastructure projects to support the growth of the local economy; specifically the rollout of broadband infrastructure through the Connecting Cheshire programme and business case development for alternative sustainable energy, including heat networks. During the year we were also delighted to take over the Fairpower contract from Cheshire East Council, which has allowed us expand the excellent service into Lancashire, further disrupting the domestic energy market monopoly dominated by the "big six".

We have continued to focus on enhancing skills and shaping economic policy and worked with

policy makers, local businesses, the Cheshire & Warrington LEP, schools and education providers. This has been achieved through the delivery of the Careers & Enterprise Company, Enterprise Adviser Network, the Pledge and the Belnspired Project, coupled with stimulating sector boards (e.g. digital and creative industries) and an engaging events programme including 6 Weave Town Talks and our 'Your Say' survey.

In the last 12 months we have continued to grow our commercial income as an economic development and skills consultancy business. This has helped raise our profile, ensure our products and services are more accessible and improve our customers' experience. Targeted social media campaigns, the launch of a redesigned website, implementation of a new CRM system and commercial property portal, alongside a growing library of customer case studies and testimonials have helped us strengthen our brand and reach more customers.

Fundamentally, we recognise our employees are our greatest asset and I would like to thank them for their energy, dedication and determination. The 'Invest in our Workforce' programme has been a company-wide approach to ensure our employees can make the most of their skills and experience, and

have the opportunity to enhance their skills where the business needs them most. As part of this programme, we have also sought to introduce some fantastic learning and development opportunities to enter the world of work, including 2 school work experience placements, an apprentice, 2 undergraduate placements, 2 internships and a post-graduate placement, bringing fresh thinking and shared learning.

Building on the success of our first two years, we look ahead with ambitious plans for the company in line with our mission and strategic priorities. To achieve this we will continue our three-part approach to growth:

- » Maintain high customer satisfaction and develop opportunities with existing and new customers, demonstrating the value of our services
- » Invest in our workforce to ensure we have the necessary skills and expertise to deliver our business activities and to foster a culture of continuous improvement
- » Enhance core business systems and practices to reduce inefficiencies, improve automation and to provide more flexibility to engage with our customers.

Innovation & Growth Team

During 2017-18 the Innovation & Growth Team delivered a successful programme of sector and infrastructure projects to stimulate economic growth and enhance energy security for Cheshire East's businesses and residents. The team has led sector development activities to invigorate the growth of our priority sectors; addressing today's business challenges and planning for the economy of the future. Highlights for the year included:

- » Delivery of the award winning Connecting Cheshire broadband programme on behalf of Cheshire East Council, reaching a milestone of 100,000 premises connected with fibre broadband. The next phase of the Digital 2020 project, is being developed with an aspiration to reach even more homes and businesses; specifically those in rural areas typically the most in need of a speed upgrade.

- » Research and policy development to ensure our towns, villages and rural communities continue to prosper and maximise the benefits of HS2; including responding to local and national strategies and working with a wide range of stakeholders and technology specialists to develop a "Smart Region" framework to exploit the adoption of new technologies.

- » Supporting some of our largest employers, including Alderley Park and Astra Zeneca on energy, security and accessibility; helping Jodrell Bank to integrate the Square Kilometre Array; and enabling the delivery of a Masterplan which aims to create a modern campus at the Bentley Motors site in Crewe.

- » Fairerpower, our trail-blazing domestic gas and electricity to offer residents a 'fairer deal' celebrated its third anniversary and has been expended to offer services across Lancashire, in partnership with Preston City Council, as well as continuing to grow in Cheshire.

- » Building one of the largest local authority energy programmes, securing grant funding for energy projects from the European

Investment Bank and central government, with Cheshire East being the first rural region in the UK to be awarded ELENA energy funding.

- » Stimulation of the digital and creative sector led by the industry through 'Weave', our sector board to address many of their challenges to growth including skills shortages and accessing finance. This also included delivering a programme of six 'Town Talks' bringing together businesses, residents and policy makers to discuss topical issues impacting the sector.

As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities facing the local economy it is clear the need for investment in digital and energy infrastructure will continue, as will the need for economic policy support for our priority sectors. We look forward to contributing to this exciting agenda to stimulate economic growth.



Innovation & Growth Case Studies



Digital+ Programme – Actikem

"Attending the Digital+ Programme was very beneficial in terms of its content and delivery. The 1-day intensive Seminar was expertly led and packed full of useful tips to help businesses unravel a lot of the digital 'jargon' and seize the opportunities that these new platforms and channels can provide." Audrey Mooney, Sales & Marketing Manager.

Actikem Ltd based in Warrington, Cheshire is an ISO 9001 certified business that provides bespoke chemical manufacturing and repacking services to the UK and European chemical supply chain with a strong focus on delivering an unrivalled service.



Connecting Cheshire – Supreme Visors

"Before we were able to switch to fibre it was as if our broadband was coming down a piece of wet string – now its ten times faster and helping us to grow the business by 15% already." Paul Ferguson, Managing Director.

Based in Halton near Runcorn, Supreme Visors are a design and manufacturing business specializing in world-class safety headwear, helmets and visors. They sell complete paint spraying hoods alongside a wide range of bespoke items such as mine clearance helmets for the UN, the internal reinforced liners for police helmets and sailor's hats for the Royal Navy. Their industrial estate was recently upgraded to fibre via the Connecting Cheshire project.



Weave Town Talks

The Creative and Digital sector within Cheshire East has been identified as an area of strength within the local economy and which could represent a significant opportunity for further growth. Over 2,000 companies form the sector, worth around £500m a year to Cheshire East.

To support this key sector, we established a private sector-led taskforce – 'Weave' whose members are drawn from the creative and digital industry in Cheshire East. To help increase knowledge and experience transfer, in conjunction with SHIFT (a programme celebrating all things digital within Cheshire East), funding was secured for Weave to host a series of six 'Town Talks'. Overall, 559 people attended the Town Talk events.

Business Engagement & Investment Team

2017-18 was another year of impressive results for the Business Engagement & Inward Investment Team, supporting the creation of new high quality jobs. We played a key role in responding to the government's challenge for businesses to increase GVA, improve productivity, invest in new technologies and explore new markets; resulting in £82m uplift in GVA demonstrating real business confidence in the borough and success in attracting new investment, which accounted for almost half the new jobs created.

We have had considerable success in working with our major businesses, however, the majority of resource has been invested supporting our small to medium sized businesses - the life blood of the economy. Our Access2Finance service has been a big hit with over 100 businesses attending the launch event, equally, we have helped businesses with the challenges of selling into the public sector and identifying new premises. The rural economy is flourishing with businesses attracting more investment, with our support, than the rest of the county.

The strength of the market has created a real demand for high quality commercial property, and it is fantastic to see the progress of key developments at Apollo & Orion Park in Crewe, Novus in Knutsford and Magnitude in Middlewich, and we continue to help attract much needed further investment in commercial property and ensure a steady supply of grow-on space.

Highlights included:

Inward Investment Programme:

- » Attracted business to the borough creating 486 new jobs and £2.25m of capital investment
- » Delivered a programme of 8 lead generation events, including international delegations at MIPIM, Business of Science and Mobile World Congress
- » Developed marketing material to showcase our strategic employment sites and key sector strengths in life sciences and the tech sector
- » Responded to 60+ new investment enquiries, strengthening relationships with partners such as BEIS, DIT and Cheshire & Warrington LEP to increase the flow of investment enquiries.

Connecting Cheshire:

- » Secured funding for the ERDF Digital+ project, which will provide SMEs with support to exploit digital technology
- » Delivered the first 3 Digital+ seminars to 28 SMEs and appointed a partner to deliver a further 32.

High Growth SME Programme:

- » Conducted 150 in-depth business engagements to develop growth plans, helping to create over 140 new jobs, with circa £9m of capital investment and over £6.2m of revenue spend

- » Held 13 events and seminars with over 250 businesses attending to help understand and overcome the challenges of Brexit, boost innovation, develop new markets and sell into the NHS
- » Delivered a Rural Enterprise programme, securing EU capital grant funding of £428k for 8 businesses
- » Supported businesses to become 'investment ready' and source commercial finance
- » Assisted 9 applications for Business Rate Discount within the Enterprise Zone.

Top 100 Programme:

- » Developed action plans to support investment projects including: AstraZeneca, Baywater, Morning Foods, Radius, and Siemens; leading to over £13m of capital investment and the creation of over 450 jobs
- » Coordinated strategic meetings between Executive Director and Council Leader with the borough's largest employers
- » Worked with Barclays to improve site accessibility and facilities for their rapidly growing workforce
- » Supported Bentley Motors and Royal London develop long-term site masterplans and subsequent planning applications.

Business & Investment Case Studies



Flour Water Salt

"We decided to turn a dilapidated building on Market Place into a new home for Flour Water Salt. We revitalised the building and opened in February 2018, we're now open for breakfast, coffee and lunch serving our own produce. The Skills & Growth Company provided help and practical support to ensure I had the knowledge and tools to make sure the business was investment ready, which meant I could turn our plans into reality." Paul Robinshaw, Founder.

Flour Water Salt is a bakery and café in Macclesfield born out of a love and passion for hand made bread. From corporate career to artisan baker, the business was launched in 2009 by Paul and Eva Robinshaw from their home. We have supported the business with impartial advice through our Access2Finance service, and by helping navigate through the council's planning process.



Waters Corporation

"The team at Skills & Growth have worked closely with us every step of the way – from the initial development of our Wilmslow site through to supporting our growth plans for the next decade – their help has been invaluable in achieving so much in such a short time." Brian Smith, VP MS Instrument Technology.

Waters Corporation is a global leader in manufacturing mass spectrometers. They operate in more than 100 countries with 11 manufacturing facilities and approximately 6,500 employees globally. Their purpose built facility opened in September 2014 and is a world-class centre for innovation and the largest site globally committed to the development of mass spectrometry systems. Waters previously operated across four sites throughout South Manchester.



Forest Gin

"As a tiny distillery, it is amazing for us to see Forest Gin available around the world. From being a hobby in our kitchen, to become the only gin in the world to be awarded two separate double-gold medals at the San Francisco World Spirit Awards and now being available throughout Japan, it's been an incredible journey." Karl Bond, Director.

We have supported the business with their growth and encouraged Karl and Lindsay to look into export opportunities and referred them to the Department for International Trade's Exporting is GREAT programme. As a result, they are now selling Forest Gin into France, Germany, Switzerland and recently secured a further export deal to over 100 outlets across Japan following the Prime Minister's trade mission to Tokyo.

Skills & Employment Team

2017-18 proved to be another year with significant highlights for our Skills & Employment Team. The year has seen us develop new industry-led partnerships, mobilise delivery and continue to support our schools to develop stronger links with local businesses. Key achievements included:

- » Securing funding to 2020 from the national Careers and Enterprise Company for the Enterprise Adviser Network across secondary schools and colleges in Cheshire East; the only authority in the sub-region benefiting from this nationally recognised and championed programme
- » To increase the quantity and quality of employer interactions with young people, 22 of our 26 secondary schools and colleges have joined our Enterprise Adviser Network, with 29 senior business people working with schools as Enterprise Advisers and ambassadors
- » Securing £50,000 Kickstart funding to support those schools in the network to enhance careers activity and align to the Gatsby benchmarks

» 800 young people in Cheshire East completed our online 'YourSay'

survey, to obtain their views on the careers education, advice and guidance they receive and a number of schools embedded this into their curriculum

- » Commissioned 'The Pledge' to develop and deliver employability programmes for those most vulnerable young people in the borough
- » Created a library of video case studies promoting the exciting and diverse range of apprenticeships across Cheshire – filming young people in their workplace talking about their apprenticeship and their employers explaining the benefits of hiring young talent
- » Supported the Higher Education Taskforce for Cheshire East and produced a 'HE Vision' for the borough, setting out the higher education provision required for economic growth.

During the year we also gave significant focus to supporting employers with all aspects of workforce development, including talent pipeline development, attracting young people and apprenticeships. Achievements included:

- » Roll out of a Toolkit to ensure businesses maximise the Apprenticeship Levy and have supported over 40 businesses
- » Recruited our own Business Administration Apprentice and used the Levy to fund upskilling of one of our future managers through a Leadership & Management Apprenticeship

» Developed the first Cheshire East Apprenticeship Directory, this will promote local businesses and apprenticeship opportunities to young people and their parents.

The year has also seen us further develop partnerships with industry, including:

- » Mobilising our activity as a Tier 2 supplier for Manchester International Airport's Transformation Project promoting the variety of jobs, which will become available over the next ten years
- » Developed new partnerships with Vodafone and Virgin Media, to design collaborative digital projects to address skills needs and promote the sector to young people
- » Secured funding from the ESF FUSE project, led by Cheshire College South & West, to develop curriculum aligned to local employers needs
- » Continued our work with sector skills boards for creative and digital and rail; and established a new Transport & Infrastructure Skills Board, working with HS2 Ltd, to bring together local employers with colleges, universities and private training providers
- » Worked in partnership with Cheshire & Warrington and Stoke & Staffordshire LEPs to develop the Constellation Skills Strategy.

Skills & Employment Case Studies



Hirsch Tailoring

"The team at Skills & Growth helped me realise my aspiration of establishing a training centre to ensure bespoke tailoring skills are not lost, and to help mentor a new generation of aspiring tailors." Brita Hirsch, Owner.

Brita Hirsch is a master tailor and textile engineer with 30 years of experience, who worked in Germany's equivalent of Savile Row, including even making a stage tail-coat for the late opera star Luciano Pavarotti. Brita is passionate about retaining bespoke tailoring skills for future generations and has now established the UK's first dedicated training centre to offer a Level 5 Diploma in Bespoke Tailoring, as a stand-alone qualification. The Tailoring Academy provides a complete curriculum in a converted mill in Macclesfield.



RedEye International

"The Skills & Growth Company have been a valuable source of information and advice which provides us with even greater confidence that Cheshire East is the best place to invest and grow a digital technology business." Scott Young, HR Director.

RedEye is a Marketing Technology company specialising in Marketing Automation, CRO (conversion rate optimisation) and Predictive Analysis. Headquartered within the beautiful settings of Crewe Hall Farm, RedEye has grown significantly over the last 5 years to now employ around 170 employees across three offices in London, Crewe and Milton Keynes, with a satellite office in Germany. RedEye hired their first Apprentice in October 2015, and now employ 12. They were recently voted as having one of the Top 5 Tech Apprenticeships Schemes in the North.



Women in Rail – Terri Seel

"Being part of a team that is delivering strategic infrastructure improvements is really inspiring. The perception that you will face lots of prejudice in a male dominated world is completely wrong. My male colleagues appreciate and value diversity and I have enjoyed a very positive, respectful and friendly culture at work. So don't be put off by negative perceptions, this industry is exceptionally rewarding, varied and challenging." Terri Seel

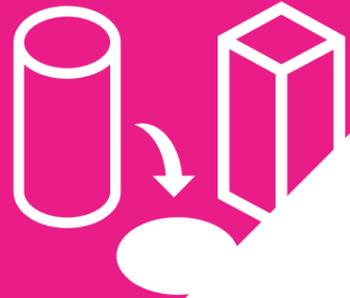
Terri is an award-winning engineer, winning both the Best Young Woman Engineer and the European Women In Construction and Engineering awards. Terri is currently working on the A6 Manchester Airport Relief Road and is responsible for the installation of 10 bridges along the route, in her previous role she was responsible for a new rail bridge as part of the Crewe Green Link Road.

2017/18 Key Outcomes

Skills & Employment

85%

of secondary schools and colleges participating in Work Readiness Programme



31

Employers supported with skills matching enquiries

6

Careers events held for high-growth sectors

29

Enterprise Ambassadors recruited to support secondary schools

Inward Investment

486

Inward investment new jobs created

112 Engagements with inward investment influencers

91 Inward investment enquiries

8 Inward investment events held



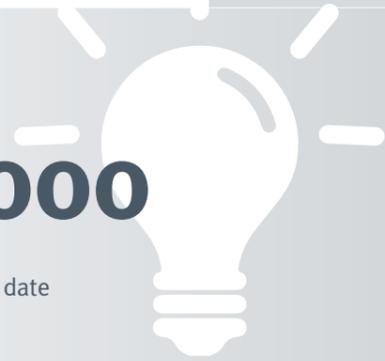
Innovation & Growth

9,000

Fairerpower customers to date

100,000

Connecting Cheshire premises reached to date



Business Support

£428k

EU Capital funding sourced for rural businesses

594

New high value jobs in priority sectors with high growth and Top 100 businesses

201,500ft²

Additional floor space taken up

242

Businesses and major investors supported

£28m

Capital investment by high growth and Top 100 businesses

£33m

Revenue spend by high growth and Top 100 businesses

£82m

Gross Value Added to economy based on jobs created via high growth and Top 100 businesses plus inward investment

162

Referrals to specialised support, including manufacturing, international trade and innovation





The
Skills & Growth
Company



Cheshire East
Council



The Skills & Growth Company
Sandbach Enterprise Centre, Wesley Avenue
Sandbach, CW11 1DG

Email: info@skillsandgrowth.co.uk

Tel: 0300 123 5001

www.skillsandgrowth.co.uk