

For publication

Strategic partnership agreement between University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	19 September 2023
Cabinet portfolio:	Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
Directorate:	Economic Growth
For publication	

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The report sets out the research and development work that has been carried out to underpin the proposal for the University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council to sign a strategic partnership agreement to strengthen the relationship between the two organisations.
- 1.2 The report recommends that the two organisations sign up to a strategic partnership agreement, with a commitment to working together to bring positive opportunities to the borough.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the work that has been carried out with the University of Derby, the Council and other key partners, set out in Appendix A, to establish a closer working relationship between the two organisations.
- 2.2 To approve the signing of a Strategic Partnership Agreement between the University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council, as set out in Appendix B, which sets out an overarching commitment, a number of joint strategic ambitions and outcomes to embed a culture of working together to deliver change.
- 2.3 To endorse the work underway by officers to develop and implement a delivery plan, in collaboration with the University, in order to realise the outcomes set out in the strategic partnership agreement.

3.0 Reason for recommendations

- 3.1 The University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council are two anchor institutions within the borough, with existing complementary ambitions to improve outcomes for communities in Chesterfield. The strategic partnership agreement seeks to strengthen the working relationships between the two organisations, and to maximise the resources and assets of each organisation to deliver enhanced benefits to the borough.

4.0 Report details

- 4.1 The University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council commissioned a piece of work to consider the opportunities and benefits that could be achieved from the two organisations working more closely together. As a result of this commission the two organisations have agreed to come together to sign a Strategic Partnership Agreement to embark on the development of a closer, more strategic and collaborative way of working to deliver enhanced outcomes for the borough.
- 4.2 Appendix A sets out the information, analysis and outputs from the work that was carried out for the two organisations. This work was underpinned by a series of discussions with colleagues from within each organisation, at strategic leadership and operational levels, and with other key partners across the borough.
- 4.3 The document captures the overarching commitment that would bring the two organisations together, it proposes a set of joint ambitions to provide focus for the new relationship and outlines a strategic plan with key actions to bring the organisations together to deliver change.
- 4.4 Underpinning the strategic plan are the outcomes from a range of conversations and data analysis that draws out a number of key areas of potential focus for business development, as well as a series of organisational areas aimed at maximising the use of the resources and assets of both organisations.
- 4.5 Following the commissioned work, the two organisations have worked together to develop a formal Strategic Partnership Agreement, setting out the commitment to strengthening the working relationship between the University and the Council. This agreement is set out within the standard format used by the university to structure its partnership work and is included as appendix B to this report. The agreement is deliberately high level; specific projects and actions will be set out in a separate delivery plan, development of which is now underway through joint working between officers in both organisations.
- 4.6 The partnership agreement sets out **joint strategic ambitions for Chesterfield:**

- To establish Chesterfield as a University town delivering higher level skills and education for our people and employers
- To work jointly, with business partners, education providers and the public sector to deliver world leading research that drives innovation, provide world class facilities to meet the needs of our community and establish a platform to help our entrepreneurs reach their potential
- To use our combined assets, within community partnerships across Chesterfield, to help to raise people's aspirations through delivering effective core skills, careers information, support, and advice

4.7 It then provides a series of high level outcomes to which both organisations are committed over the next three years, focusing on the themes of:

- Health and wellbeing, community, skills and resilience
- Innovation and research
- Experiential learning and curriculum design
- Brand profile and awareness
- Assets and investment

4.8 The outcomes in the agreement under these headings will be used to structure the delivery plan, that is in development. This will also take account of existing collaborations and commitments, such as the recently approved Skills Action Plan (2023-27), Derbyshire Rail Industry Innovation Vehicle (DRIIVe) and the Construction Skills Hub.

4.9 The process for review and monitoring of the delivery plan is set out in the agreement (in section 3). A regular series of collaboration meetings is already in place at Chief Executive-Vice Chancellor level and these will continue quarterly together with appropriate senior colleagues from both organisations, in order to provide oversight of progress against the agreement.

4.10 It is recommended to Cabinet that the Leader of the Council should sign this strategic partnership agreement and endorse the work of officers to develop a delivery plan to realise the commitments and outcomes set out in the agreement.

4.11 To deliver against this strategic partnership agreement the Council will need to focus appropriate levels of officer resources from the organisation to support the governance arrangements and the joint 'working' team. To date, the council has funded some dedicated resources to lead and coordinate colleagues in developing and facilitating delivery of the long-term plan. However, in time it is important that development and delivery of collaborative projects with the university becomes a business-as-usual activity for the council.

5.0 Alternative options

- 5.1 The two organisations could carry on with the current approach of working on projects and initiatives as they present themselves. This has proved to be successful in a number of areas. This is not considered the most effective approach in the long-term to maximise the benefits for the borough.

6.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money

- 6.1 It should be noted that whilst dedicated resources have been funded, using the Markham Vale Business Rates retention monies, in order to develop the agreement and a delivery plan, the projects and activities identified will rely on identifying specific resources from both organisations. This model has already been used successfully for existing collaborations, such as the development of DRIIVE. It will be important that the delivery plan is prioritised and realistic about available resources, whilst also using the strategic partnership to develop new opportunities for funding and resources for additional activities.

7.0 Implications for consideration – Legal

- 7.1 The strategic partnership agreement is not a legally binding document. If any projects or programmes are developed in the future that do require legal arrangements, then any implications would be considered as part of future reports.

8.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources

- 8.1 There are no specific HR implications from this report.

9.0 Implications for consideration – Council plan

- 9.1 Strengthening the working relationship with the University of Derby has the potential to make significant contributions to the outcomes that can be achieved for the communities of Chesterfield borough.
- 9.2 It is envisaged that projects and programmes will be developed that contribute to making Chesterfield a thriving borough by driving economic growth, supporting existing businesses to grow and new businesses to establish themselves; they will contribute to improving peoples quality of life through improving the skills offer to local people by working in communities; by maximising the use of resources and assets this will also drive value for money.

9.3 As noted above, the delivery plan for the strategic partnership agreement will be developed in alignment with the recently approved Skills Action Plan (2023-27).

10.0 Implications for consideration – Climate change

10.1 A formal assessment of climate change impact has not been carried out for the partnership agreement as it contains high level outcomes that would be very difficult to meaningfully assess through the normal process. As specific projects are developed through the delivery plan, formal assessments may be required. In some cases, such as activities aligned with the Skills Action Plan, an assessment has already taken place.

10.2 The agreement is not designed to limit or reduce the commitment of either organisation to tackling climate change. Indeed, it is likely that that developing green technologies and skills will be a core part of the delivery plan as it develops.

11.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

11.1 As with climate change, an assessment of impact on equality and diversity has not taken place for the overall partnership agreement for which approval is sought in this report. Rather, projects developed through the delivery plan may require assessments. In the case of those aligned with the Skills Action Plan, a preliminary assessment has already been undertaken.

11.2 The agreement is not intended to constrain or reduce existing commitments or duties of either organisation to promoting equality and diversity. It is envisaged that the focus on community resilience, wellbeing and skills will all have positive impacts on particular groups with protected characteristics.

12.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
Either party decide not to sign the strategic partnership agreement	L	L	Significant joint work has taken place between the University and the Council, proposals have been developed in agreement.	L	L
No progress is made to deliver the	M	M	Allocation of dedicated leadership	M	L

strategic plan; leading to non- delivery of benefits and reputational risk			and coordination resources to drive delivery		
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Decision information

Key decision number	<i>All key decisions must be in the Forward Plan at least 28 days in advance. There are constitutional consequences if an item is not in the Forward Plan when it should have been. Contact Democratic Services if in doubt.</i>
Wards affected	

Document information

Report author	
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Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
<i>This must be made available to the public for up to 4 years.</i>	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	University of Derby and Chesterfield Borough Council – Delivering a shared ambition
Appendix 2	Strategic Partnership Agreement