



St Helens  
Chamber

2022 - 2024

# STRATEGIC PLAN

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An inspiring social  
enterprise creating  
opportunity and success  
in our community.



# WELCOME TO THE 2022 - 2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan sets out how St Helens Chamber intends to work over the next three years towards the achievement of our Mission and our strategic objectives.

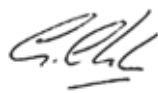
We are a large and dynamic Social Enterprise, with a long history of helping the business community create prosperity and opportunity in and around St Helens. The Chamber is a unique organisation, a private sector not-for-profit, that works with local businesses, partners and the community to contribute to inclusive growth and regeneration.

St Helens is a Borough with significant potential, building upon our business base, our geography, and our residents. Too often analysis focuses on the undeniable areas of disadvantage and deprivation. The challenges are perhaps greater than they have ever been, with the continuing effects of the pandemic, the rapidly changing work and technological environment, and a complex policy landscape. Time and commitment to address Net Zero requirements and opportunities will be a major imperative for St Helens businesses, people, and infrastructure.

The purpose of St Helens Chamber is to identify and help drive activities which contribute to social, economic and environmental development, making our place better through living our core values of Giving A Voice, Leading Edge, Driven by Quality, and Supportive. Our role gives a voice to local business, as the creators of prosperity and opportunity, and supports our Members, local businesses, and residents. Our services inspire people to start and grow businesses, successfully start and progress their careers, and give back to their community to inspire others. By delivering the strategic objectives outlined in this plan, we are able to create substantial Social Value, and we can enable others, including major investors in the Borough, to do so too.

We are proud that St Helens Chamber is an award-winning high-quality organisation, well-respected as a delivery partner, and led by a private sector Board, all supported by the highest level of business Membership in the UK relative to our business base. Our Strategic Plan describes our priorities over the next three years to deliver to the highest levels of quality and to ensure our sustainability as an organisation, enabling us to continue to deliver our Mission:

**We are an inspiring social enterprise creating opportunity and success in our community.**



**Gary Charlton**

Chair, St Helens Chamber



**Tracy Mawson**

Chief Executive

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>St Helens Chamber at a glance</b>	4
<b>Cultures and Values</b>	5
<b>Social Value</b>	7
<b>Net Zero</b>	8
<b>Strategic Objectives &amp; Key Programmes</b>	9
Key Programme 1: <b>Membership</b>	12
Key Programme 2: <b>Policy Impact</b>	14
Key Programme 3: <b>Events &amp; Seminars</b>	16
Key Programme 4: <b>Business Support, International Trade &amp; Information</b>	18
Key Programme 5: <b>Business Start-Up</b>	20
Key Programme 6: <b>Education</b>	22
Key Programme 7: <b>Career Development</b>	24
Key Programme 8: <b>Adult Training</b>	26
Key Programme 9: <b>Guidance Services</b>	28
Key Programme 10: <b>Apprenticeships</b>	30
Key Programme 11: <b>Organisational Strength</b>	32



# St Helens Chamber AT A GLANCE



# CULTURE AND VALUES

At our heart, the culture of the Chamber is to be a Membership organisation. We will prioritise listening and understanding the views of our Members, and use this intelligence to influence and design policies, investments, and services that work to strengthen St Helens.

## St Helens Chamber Values

Over 2022-2024 we will live all four of our Values through our activities, and support our Mission. The goals in this plan provide many examples, with key priorities set out here:

GIVING A VOICE	Creating opportunities for businesses to network, share views, and meet decision makers.
	Harnessing Membership intelligence and ensuring business needs are given a voice in strategy and decisions.
	Speaking up for our clients and ensuring that services are designed to meet their requirements.
LEADING EDGE	Investing in highly able people and high quality systems, both vital to our continuing organisational strength.
	Developing leading edge services for businesses in Social Value and Net Zero.
DRIVEN BY QUALITY	Ensuring our people are well trained and able to do their best every day, using the right systems and achieving our Quality standards.
	Managing our finances and developing our organisational strength through a robust business model.
SUPPORTIVE	Supporting, developing and energising our colleagues, including through our People Strategy.
	Supporting our public and voluntary sector partners through playing a full part in St Helens' strategic development and attracting further investment into our community.
	Inspiring our Members to give back to their community through quality programmes in schools and workplaces.



# SOCIAL VALUE

Enhancing the economic, environmental, and social prosperity of our communities through effective and meaningful investment sits at the heart of the Chamber's vision and mission.

We will support public sector organisations, developers, and contractors, to make a measurable impact on the local community, make positive changes to society and meet social value and inclusive growth targets on every project.

By creating impactful social value strategies to complement planning applications, we will embed social value in every phase of the project lifecycle which actively addresses the needs of local communities and delivers meaningful outcomes.

With a shared social conscience, we work with our partners to raise aspirations of our young people, improve skills through training, increase employment rates and create more jobs, all while hitting commercial targets and complying with the latest legislation.

## DURING 2022-2023

We will develop a Social Value policy and strengthen our Social Enterprise corporate positioning, improving how we track and report on the Social Value impact of our activities.

We will publish a St Helens Chamber Social Value impact statement and develop the Inclusive Growth / Social Value programme for Major Investors.





# NET ZERO

We are ambitious for St Helens Chamber to make a strong contribution to the Net Zero imperative for our business and our community.

During the first six months of 2022-23 our 'Clean, Green and Advanced Manufacturing Skills' programme will research the needs of local businesses, and help them to:

- Understand their carbon footprint, adapting buildings and current manufacturing processes to reduce carbon.
- Access external advice and expertise to understand the solutions, thinking creatively about new opportunities.
- Innovate new products and services, investing in the research and development required.
- Invest in training and job creation, building the skills required in their current workforce and enabling us to plan and implement new courses and qualifications.
- Enter new supply chains and ensure they have the policies and accreditations necessary to work within low carbon procurement regimes.

We will develop our own Low Carbon Strategy and implementation plan, and we will use the learning from the Clean and Green programme to develop further well targeted programmes that continue to assist local businesses and make a real difference to St Helens' carbon footprint.

Our Training teams will develop Apprenticeships and vocational courses that enable local people to gain the jobs created by businesses' carbon reduction activity.

Our Education team already delivers strong aspiration programmes in schools; we will continue to inspire children about the opportunities in St Helens to create a Net Zero world.

Our Key Programmes help to achieve the Net Zero agenda and relevant parts of our planned activity are marked with this icon.





# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & KEY PROGRAMMES

Our Strategic Objectives are achieved via Key Programmes, which are the way that we will deliver our strategy over the next 3 years and achieve our Mission to be an inspiring social enterprise creating opportunity and success in our community.

Each key programme works to outcomes and performance measures for the year ahead, which ensures we can track and assess our impact and fulfil our aims.

## Strategic Objective 1: **VOICE OF BUSINESS**

### **Key Programme 1: Membership Services**

We will provide excellent Membership services that all St Helens businesses can benefit from.

We will recruit 150 new Members and minimise resignations through centralised relationship management.

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### **Key Programme 2: Policy Impact**

We will add Members' voices to policy development and ensure that Members know we communicate their views.

We will give a voice to the private sector enabling their contribution to policy and investment decisions.

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### **Key Programme 3: Events and Seminar**

We will continue to strengthen our events, networking and business seminar training programmes to ensure that local businesses gain business and productivity benefits.

We will run a programme of events and seminars that attracts and upskills over 2000 participants.

## Strategic Objective 2: **BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE**

### **Key Programme 4: Business Support, International Trade and Business Information**

We will continue to deliver services enhancing the growth prospects of St Helens businesses, ensuring companies can obtain the support and resources they need to adapt and grow.

We will deliver Growth Hub and specialised business support services to over 400 businesses and support St Helens companies to access international markets and achieve Net Zero and Social Value goals.

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### **Key Programme 5: Business Start-Up**

We will support individuals to start a successful business and provide them with help to sustain their business and grow larger if they wish.

We will assist more than 40 individuals to develop their business plan, gain the skills needed for business start-up, and launch their enterprise.

## Strategic Objective 3: **YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Key Programme 6: Education**

We will raise aspirations amongst young people at school and college in St Helens, improving the links between schools and the world of work.

We will work with 30 Primary Schools and 14 Secondary Schools & Colleges in St Helens to help them introduce their students to the world of work.

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### **Key Programme 7: Career Development**

We will equip young people with the skills and attributes required by employers and support them to gain meaningful and sustainable employment or further training.

We will enable 360 young people to take up a Traineeship and ensure 95% of young people on our Traineeships and Study Programmes benefit from a meaningful work placement and progress into Apprenticeships, employment, or further training.

## Strategic Objective 4: **CAREER GUIDANCE**

### **Key Programme 8: Adult Education**

We will develop highly skilled, efficient and productive individuals by delivering a range of training courses to help equip people with the skills and attributes required by employers and support them to gain meaningful and sustainable employment.

We will deliver adult education training opportunities to 1200 individuals ensuring qualification success rates of at least 90%.

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### **Key Programme 9: Guidance Services**

We will provide individuals with high quality information, advice and guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their future career and employment prospects.

We will deliver Career Information, Advice and Guidance services to over 2000 individuals and support 50% of these into employment or accredited learning.

## Strategic Objective 5: **APPRENTICESHIPS**

### **Key Programme 10: Apprenticeships**

We will develop highly skilled, efficient and productive workforces by delivering a range of training courses to individuals and businesses each year.

We will have a minimum of 380 funded apprentices in learning by March 2023, maintain our achievement rates in line with the national average, and achieve an Ofsted 'Good' Grading.

# Strategic Objective 6: **ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH**

## **Key Programme 11: Organisational Strength**

To live our values of being Leading Edge, Driven by Quality, Giving a Voice, and Supportive, and to ensure our financial strength and sustainability.

**People:** Further strengthening aspects of our People Strategy and renewing our Investors in People Gold accreditation.

**Premises:** Assessing the best usage of our premises and achieving further investment into our facilities.

**Marketing:** Increasing the numbers of stakeholders who understand and appreciate the work we do.

**IT:** Migrating our server infrastructure, maintaining our Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, increasing IT skills in our colleagues and developing a new IT Systems Plan for the organisation.

**Finance:** Managing the finances of the Chamber to ensure viability and effective operations, mitigating risks and overseeing cashflow, while ensuring capacity and expertise in forward planning.

**Bidding:** Strengthening the capacity of the organisation to bid successfully.

**Quality:** Increasing the number of our processes that are within our ISO 9001 framework and achieving two further national accreditations or awards.

**Social Value:** Measuring our Social Value impact and ensuring that major investors have access to a programme to deliver Inclusive Growth and Social Value in St Helens.

**Net Zero:** Setting out our own Low Carbon strategy, and ensuring local businesses are able to seize opportunities both for their business and to improve St Helens' carbon footprint.





# MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

St Helens Chamber is an Accredited Chamber, part of British Chambers of Commerce. Our Membership penetration is the highest in the UK, meaning that we have more Members for our business base than any other Chamber in the country.

Our provision of excellent Membership Services builds our relationships, trust, and knowledge about our business community, and is a key focus of the entire organisation.

## Our Membership activities include:

- > The recruitment and retention of Chamber Members, providing excellent services, benefits, and cost savings to local businesses.
- > Enhancing and developing our Membership Services, working with affinity partners and with British Chambers of Commerce.
- > Ensuring our Strategic Partners are supported in their activities and raise their profile as important Social Value creators.
- > Administering the Town Centre Shop and Pub Watch radio system.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will centralise our relationship management resource to build our engagement, intelligence about our Members and add value across the Chamber.
- > We will ensure intelligence is effectively captured and accessible within our CRM system to enhance our membership offer and impact to businesses.
- > We will review and develop our Membership package and ensure the value of membership is communicated through a robust value statement.
- > We will understand the key motivations for why our members join and ensure that these are met through monitoring, relationship management and gathering feedback.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > Recruit 150 new Members.
- > Minimise resignations through improved relationship management and increasing insight into the value membership gives businesses.
- > Increase meaningful contact levels, with each Member receiving contact once per quarter.

## Future Prospects

Despite the continued difficult backdrop of 2021 for businesses and subsequently Membership, we hope and expect 2022-24 to return to moderate growth through centralised and improved relationship management and enhanced partnership working across St Helens.

St Helens property development programmes and investment provide a significant platform for business growth and prosperity, including plans for the redevelopment of the Town Centre for which we are acting on behalf of the Borough Council as Business Advocates. Our Members will want to contribute views and ideas, and we remain well positioned with those leading development projects to ensure we are ready to respond and act.

We will continue to ensure our Membership offer remains leading edge and driven by quality, potentially exploiting new platforms and services to further enhance the value of the Chamber across our business base.





# POLICY IMPACT

We will give a voice to the private sector enabling their contribution to policy and investment decisions.

St Helens is a great place to do business, and we are proud to be the voice of business in St Helens. We campaign on a wide range of issues to improve the St Helens business environment and help our Members succeed.

Our strong relationships with decision makers at local, regional, and national levels allows us to give our Members a voice and represent their interests to key policy influencers and decision makers.


We represent businesses of all sizes and sectors.

## Being the Voice of Business incorporates:

- > Gathering data and intelligence on key business issues.
- > Conducting the Quarterly Economic Survey.
- > Building and maintaining key strategic relationships that benefit business.
- > Hosting policy forums, roundtables and events.
- > Facilitating access to decision makers and policy influencers.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will host sectoral and issue forums including Manufacturing, Net Zero, Economic Development, Skills and Workforce Development. 
- > We will lobby on key issues of importance to our Strategic Partners and business base, including Freeport, Clean Air Zone and the design and implementation of funding programmes.
- > We will contribute to Borough-wide strategy development, alongside our public and voluntary sector partners, including the St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- > We will communicate business views to local stakeholders including St Helens Council, our MPs, and the City Region Mayor and his Combined Authority, and to the British Chambers of Commerce Policy Team.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will add Members' voices to policy development and ensure that Members know we communicate their views.

## Future Prospects

St Helens faces a complex set of national and international circumstances. The economy is recovering from the pandemic, but with inflationary pressures including significant energy price rises, and businesses need to adapt to our post-Brexit international context and the vital imperative to reduce carbon. The skills agenda is even more important now and technological change will be extremely significant for the future of work, bringing both opportunities and challenges. St Helens' economy needs both private sector investment and public sector funding support for its inclusive growth and regeneration.

Our strategy in these difficult times is to listen closely to businesses, policy-makers and experts, and form and communicate the views of our constituency. It has never been more important to be a Chamber that is strong on 'policy' – on understanding and communicating the ways in which investment and strategic decisions can be most adapted to allow the private sector to flourish, which creates prosperity and opportunity for all in our Borough.





## EVENTS & SEMINARS

We will continue to strengthen our events, networking and business seminar training programmes to ensure that local businesses gain business and productivity benefits.

Our programme of business events and seminars provide a range of opportunities for local businesses to celebrate success, raise their profile, make new contacts and learn new skills. Our Events & Seminars activity includes:

- > Organising our flagship St Helens Borough Business Awards in collaboration with St Helens Borough Council and hosting Business Fair events.
- > Creating sponsorship opportunities that provide businesses with an effective way to raise their profile.
- > Hosting regular networking events, enabling businesses to make new contacts and win new business.
- > Delivering opportunities for business leaders to hear from inspirational and insightful guest speakers.
- > Co-ordinating an extensive programme of seminars on key business topics to complement our range of formal qualifications, providing business leaders and their staff opportunities to gain new skills.



### During 2022-23:

- > The St Helens Borough Business Awards will highlight all that is great about St Helens businesses and Apprenticeships.
- > We will run the St Helens Business Fair, creating opportunities for businesses to make new contacts and generate new business leads.
- > Our Seminar programme will provide appropriate, well-priced training allowing businesses to gain productivity benefits and individuals to improve their skills.
- > We will work with local businesses through the Community Renewal Fund to improve the skills of their management teams and technical staff to contribute to Net Zero requirements and opportunities.





## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will run a programme of events attracting over 1500 attendees.
- > We will deliver a programme of seminars that upskills over 500 participants.
- > We will run a programme of Net Zero seminars to upskill over 100 participants in clean growth and low carbon principles.



## Future Prospects

The events industry has been one of the biggest casualties of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact is set to continue during 2022. We returned to our extensive event programme in late 2021 and whilst we will plan for the best we will be prepared for further impacts. We understand that the uncertainty that surrounds larger gatherings may continue to impact on attendee numbers and the willingness of businesses to invest in sponsorship.

We have adapted well to using technology for our seminar delivery and we will continue to harness appropriate emerging new platforms. Businesses have become used to the convenience of being able to attend training and conferences from their own homes and workplaces, so we will continue to include virtual attendance in our offer.





# BUSINESS SUPPORT, INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INFORMATION

We will continue to deliver services enhancing the growth prospects of St Helens businesses, ensuring businesses can obtain the support and resources they need to adapt and grow.

We deliver high quality business support to a wide range of businesses across St Helens and Liverpool City Region, and we are the Growth Hub for St Helens enabling all businesses to access a free diagnostic, expert business advice, and onward referral to specialist support.

This Strategic Plan period will see us deliver more Net Zero tailored Business Support, helping firms reduce their energy costs, achieve carbon reductions, and enter the low carbon sector and relevant supply chains.



Our skilled and experienced Business Advisers deliver a number of projects aimed at improving the performance of businesses, which will, in turn, enhance the prosperity of the borough, reduce unemployment and improve the standard of living of the population, making it a more attractive place to invest, work and live.

We directly provide first class support to business by providing excellent International Trade advice and export documentation, along with a wide range of business information services tailored to meet the needs of all businesses in the borough.

## During 2022-23:

- > We will deliver the Growth Hub, building our relationship with local businesses so that we can assess their needs and ensure that business owners and managers can obtain greater support, resources, and access to new markets.
- > We will provide tailored 1:1 guidance through a network of specialist consultants in the Business Growth Programme, helping businesses seize opportunities for growth and development.
- > We will provide investment readiness preparation services, and access to financial assistance through projects including Business Growth Grant funding.
- > We will deliver first class international trade advice, export documentation and business information to enable businesses to expand their operations whilst mitigating the growth risk.
- > We will deliver the Liverpool City Region Capital Grant Fund programme which catalyses and accelerates investment levels and productivity amongst SMEs.
- > We will develop a Social Value policy and strengthen our Social Enterprise corporate positioning, improving how we track and report on the Social Value impact of our activities.
- > We will work with local businesses through the Community Renewal Fund to improve the skills of their workforce to be better able to deliver clean green growth, strengthen our advanced manufacturing sector, and achieve Net Zero.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > Deliver Growth Hub contact, diagnostic and referral services to 400 businesses.
- > Complete 67 Business Growth Programme projects with St Helens businesses leading to the creation of 67 new jobs.
- > Award grants to 30 businesses under the Business Growth Grant Programme leading to the creation of 30 new jobs.
- > Run a strong International Trade and Export Documentation service, supporting St Helens companies access international markets.
- > Provide financial support through the Liverpool City Region Capital Grant Fund to 44 businesses across the region leading to the creation of 110 new, sustainable full-time jobs.
- > Provide major investors with a Social Value programme that ensures investment and development creates success and opportunity for local residents.
- > Support 15 businesses and 90 employees to upgrade existing or gain new technical skills to develop Net Zero plans for their businesses through the Community Renewal Fund.



## Future Prospects

The St Helens business community is resilient and high achieving, but no business can succeed completely on their own, and a much stronger business and skills support eco-system is vital if we are to maximise the potential of our business base; securing business growth, employment, increased productivity and investment levels.

Programmes around access to new markets and entering into supply chains (tendering, especially to the public sector) are essential. Our role is to assess and aggregate business need, lobby for well-designed programmes, and deliver this support enabling local businesses to access the best advice.

We will ensure that the St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy is well informed on the ways that a vibrant and successful business ecosystem can accelerate the local economy.

In this business environment all businesses, small and large, are increasing their investment into technology and digital systems to improve productivity. A further priority for all businesses is to develop a stronger approach to Clean Growth and Net-Zero Carbon. Our future role will be to ensure local businesses have access to leading edge thinking, and the best advice, support and financing, to enable their sustainability and growth medium-long term.



## BUSINESS START-UP

We will support individuals to start a successful business and provide them with help to sustain their business and grow larger if they wish.

We provide first class business planning advice to individuals who are looking to establish their own business from either a position of unemployment or those currently in employment. We can also support fledgling businesses that need additional help in their first few years of trading.

Our Business Start Up programme includes SFEDI-accredited workshops Understanding Enterprise, which give people the skills to launch, manage and develop their business.



### During 2022-23:

- > We will promote the benefits and help available for new start-ups, delivering free Be Your Own Boss sessions to provide encouragement and a sounding board for the first steps into self-employment.
- > We will provide 1:1 support to individuals to create a robust business plan and provide the client with the confidence and skillset to launch their business with the maximum chance of establishing a successful and enduring trading business.
- > We will continue to deliver accredited Enterprise training to participants, regularly reviewing the content of the various workshops to ensure that they fully meet the needs of the attendees.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will work with all individuals accepted onto the NEA Programme in developing their business plans to the point where they are ready to launch, to ensure that at least 40 enterprises commence trading.
- > We will work with 12 individuals in developing their business plans through the Enterprise Hub to the point where they are ready to launch, and support a further 21 fledgling small business to overcome initial trading issues. The aim of the Enterprise Hub is to create 25 new jobs during the year.
- > We will ensure that we deliver Understanding Enterprise Workshops to 120 individuals through the year to ensure that the new businesses are well planned, robust and have the best possible chance of survival. We will develop a higher level workshop programme for additional skills development.

## Future Prospects

St Helens has a lower business start-up rate than comparable areas, and lower business density. These two factors hold us back economically. Supporting entrepreneurialism is a powerful way to help an area grow, creating jobs, and lifting individuals out of benefit-dependency.

While this is of vital importance to St Helens, both funding streams for Business Start Up are currently due to finish in the timescale of our Strategic Plan (New Enterprise Allowance has now ended to new entrants).

Our strategic focus, therefore, is on lobbying for the support to be continued through new funding (potentially the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) and maintaining this vital service for the people and the economy of St Helens.





# EDUCATION

We will raise aspirations amongst young people at school and college in St Helens, improving the links between schools and the world of work.

Our Education programmes work with schools to support them in preparing students for their future careers, raising awareness of local career opportunities and how to access them. We tackle the lack of confidence and build the belief that there are suitable jobs in the local area for school leavers, secure jobs with training that are the first steps in rewarding careers. Our role is to support schools and young people, encouraging them to develop high aspirations and the skills and characteristics that employers need.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will run our Learning to Work programme for Year 6, helping primary school children understand the world of work and form their early career aspirations.
- > We will achieve a national accreditation or kitemark for this primary level programme.
- > We will deliver our Enterprise Coordinator role for the Enterprise Adviser Network, enabling all secondary schools and colleges in St Helens to have an Enterprise Adviser from the business community, voluntarily helping the school establish its Careers Advice strategy and achieve its Gatsby Benchmarks.
- > We will deliver the 'Inspiring Children' workstream of Community Renewal Funding to roll out a programme of activities which will inspire future generations and introduce them to opportunities available in clean, green and advanced manufacturing sectors.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will work with 30 Primary Schools to participate in our Learning to Work Year 6 programme.
- > We will support 14 Secondary Schools/Colleges in St Helens to have an Enterprise Adviser and achieve their Gatsby Benchmarks.
- > We will design and deliver a transitional programme for Year 6 students in 5 Primary Schools.
- > We will inspire, inform and engage 600 Primary School and 600 Secondary School pupils in a programme of activities to introduce clean, green and advanced manufacturing sectors as part of the Community Renewal Fund programme.

## Future Prospects

The future prospects for our Education team are strong and we will continue to capitalise on team development, introduction of new expertise and renewed sponsorship. Local businesses are very interested and willing to participate in careers events, and indeed for some businesses the fact that we can provide these opportunities to give back, and influence the next generation, is a major factor in their Membership of St Helens Chamber.

Similarly, schools are also keen to provide their students with the best careers advice and experiences, and they know that this has a real impact on motivation and progression of their young people. We know how to do this well and we are very well placed strategically to be the link between schools and employers.

Funding is a severe constraint, however our Primary programme is strongly supported by corporate sponsors, for which we are extremely grateful. The Enterprise Adviser Network is funded 50% by CEC Careers Hub and 50% by ourselves at St Helens Chamber. Through the creation of a Social Value policy and Major Investor programme, the education provision offered by the Chamber will be a fundamental component of raising aspirations and delivering social impact locally through our network.

In future we would like to deliver a programme enabling business people to mentor young people identified by their school as likely to become NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training); this has proven in the past to be very successful.





# CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We will equip young people with the skills and attributes required by employers and support them to gain meaningful and sustainable employment or further training.

Our strategy is to support young people and enable them to understand the skills and characteristics employers need, develop a belief in themselves, and gain qualifications that enhance their suitability for employment. We prepare young people for the world of work via Fast Track to Apprenticeships (Traineeships), Study Programmes, and pre-employment courses.

We enable our Members to give back to their local community by offering high quality work placements, ensuring that the business is fully supported to prepare and sustain work placements to a successful outcome.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will deliver Fast Track to Apprenticeships: A 12-week Traineeship course designed to help young people aged 16 -24 who need additional support to move into sustained employment or Apprenticeships. Our programme includes vocational training, employability skills, work experience, health and safety training and help with maths and English if needed. Our Fast Track to Apprenticeships course is delivered to young people in St Helens.
- > We will run full-time Study Programmes: Our Study Programmes in Digital Marketing and Accountancy are 7-month courses for 16-18 year olds, delivered Sept/Oct 2022 to April 2023. Students gain a Level 2 qualification and benefit from an extended industry work placement with a local employer, driving lessons, and stimulating experiences such as visiting the Houses of Parliament and our twinned town in Stuttgart, Germany. Upon completion students are ready for Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) with local businesses.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will ensure our young people progress into Apprenticeships, employment or further training at a rate of at least 80% by July 2022 and 85% by July 2023.
- > We will ensure 95% of our Traineeship students have a meaningful work placement with a local employer.
- > We will deliver over 322 Traineeships for those aged 16-18, and 45 Traineeships for those aged 19 and over.
- > We will increase our provision of suitable training to Construction Traineeship learners to enable them to gain Green and Low Carbon jobs.
- > We will strengthen our traineeship offer to those wanting Warehouse and Manufacturing opportunities by embedding the relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours into the curriculum.
- > We will improve the number of Hair traineeship learners progressing onto Apprenticeships within the sector.
- > We will help our learners progress by delivering a Level 2 Award in Business Administration with a qualification success rate of 95%.



## Future Prospects

Our future plans for Career Development include expanding our Traineeship offer by growing our contract by a minimum of 10% by August 2022. We want to investigate expansion of our service into neighbouring areas Knowsley and/or Halton.

We will strengthen numbers on Study Programmes by having a cohort of 10 on each programme by September 2022. It is vital that we are market-oriented, continually developing our offer to suit the local economy and making sure that is communicated strongly to young people. We will assess the prospects for introducing a Warehousing Traineeship offer by August 2022 and assess other possibilities including a T-Level in Digital Marketing by August 2023.

Construction Training is expanding rapidly and profitably. We may therefore outgrow our Construction Training Centre and we look to invest in this area of the business during 2022-23. We will enhance Construction Traineeship skills, knowledge and behaviours by updating curriculum based on future trends within the Construction industry including retrofitting and other Net Zero requirements, enabling our learners to gain roles in the local area.



# ADULT TRAINING

We will develop highly skilled, efficient, and productive individuals by delivering a range of training courses to help equip people with the skills and attributes required by employers and support them to gain meaningful and sustainable employment.

The reason we work in this area is to address the evidenced skills mismatch in St Helens between residents' level of qualifications and experience, and the roles that local businesses need to recruit into. Our courses offer qualifications which fill skills gaps identified by businesses and give participants the best opportunity to find a job.

Our approach is to offer short courses in sectors highly responsive to local labour market needs.

These include Digital & IT Skills, Customer Service, Health and Social Care, Childcare, Enterprise (the Business Start Up course), Construction, Warehousing, Hairdressing & Beauty, CV Writing and Interview Skills. For employers who are recruiting volumes of new staff, AEB funded courses can be packaged together to suit the job roles, and enable candidates to arrive for interview/work trials already trained specifically on the employer's needs.

Our Clickworks digital skills training centre is designed to address issues of digital exclusion, enabling residents to access and apply for jobs online and acquire the basic computer skills all employees now need.

St Helens Chamber is a substantial provider of training funded by the 'Adult Education Budget' - funding devolved by the ESFA to the Liverpool City Region Mayor & Combined Authority.

2022-23 sees the ending of the Kickstart programme which has been very successful in enabling 16-24 year olds to gain their first career roles.

## During 2022-23:

- > We will continue to provide relevant free training for low paid and unemployed adults across the Liverpool City Region, upskilling and retraining individuals to help them re-enter the job market, and supporting employers to develop their workforce.
- > We will reach into local communities, encourage engagement with the courses on offer, and develop confidence and a belief in aspirational career opportunities.
- > We will increase our focus on providing suitable training and qualifications to enable residents to gain Net Zero related jobs and further training.



## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > We will ensure qualification success rates of at least 85% by July 2022 and 90% by July 2023.
- > We will deliver adult education training opportunities to 1200 individuals.
- > We will increase our offering, developing at least 3 new courses to meet employer needs.

## Future Prospects

We have recently rebid for Adult Education Budget funding and should find out if we are successful in May 2022. Retention of this funding stream will ensure we can continue our delivery to adults in the local area.

Linking our Adult Skills offer to our emerging Social Value programme for major investors will be a strategic focus in the next 2-3 years.

AEB funding is not geographically restricted to St Helens and over the next 3 years we have an opportunity to expand our delivery in surrounding areas to assist businesses to grow by providing appropriately trained individuals.

AEB funding can now be used to deliver packaged combinations of courses (sector-based work academies): we will strengthen this offer further in 2022 using our employer intelligence to react swiftly to business growth and recruitment needs, providing more opportunities for local residents.





# GUIDANCE SERVICES

We will provide individuals with high quality information, advice and guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their future career and employment prospects.

The level of worklessness in St Helens has historically been higher than the national average although over recent years the gap has narrowed. Adults who have been away from the labour market for some time feel they lack the skills employers need in the current job market, and also need their confidence and levels of aspiration to be restored.

Our role in Guidance Services is to support people to understand the skills and attributes employers need and enable access to gaining appropriate skills and qualifications for local job roles. We are the National Careers Service for St Helens, and our expert team gives professional career guidance advice to over 1800 individuals a year.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will deliver information, advice and guidance services for adults, fulfilling our National Careers Service funding contract.
- > We will supplement NCS with other tailored programmes which allow us to give more support to other demographic groups, including ESF for 19+ adults and digitally-challenged 50+ individuals, and Veterans Foundation funding for ex-services personnel and their families.
- > We will deliver courses that help our clients prepare for finding a job, including CV courses, interview skills, and access to digital and vocational qualifications.
- > We will support employers and clients to access job opportunities linked to the Net Zero agenda.





### **2022-23 Performance Measures**

- > We will deliver Career Information, Advice and Guidance services to over 2000 individuals and support 50% of these into employment or accredited learning.

### **Future Prospects**

Guidance Services is an important area of our delivery for the residents and the economic health of St Helens. It is subject to significant competition and uncertainty this year as National Careers Service is being re-procured in mid-2022.

We remain alert to any prospects of additional support programmes for unemployed adults, as our track record and our expert team should position us well to bid for and secure these programmes for St Helens. Looking ahead, however, the loss of ESF funding will be significant in 2023, and anticipated replacements, such as the Shared Prosperity Fund, are not yet clear.





# APPRENTICESHIPS

We will deliver a range of inspiring and challenging Apprenticeships to meet the skills and workforce needs of our community.

St Helens Chamber offers business-oriented training through Apprenticeships. Working in partnership with the Apprentice and Employer the curriculum is designed to challenge, engage, and inspire Apprentices to progress and become successful and confident individuals.

We deliver a range of Apprenticeships, available to learners of all ages from level 2 to level 5 which supports the development and employment needs of our local business community. Apprenticeship training has no age limit and is available for existing employees as well as new recruits.



## During 2022-23:

- > We will put employers at the forefront of our curriculum planning, engaging local business to develop and create inspiring Apprenticeship programmes which support the needs of our future workforce.
- > We will strive to deliver Apprenticeships that make a positive impact to our local carbon footprint by developing the skills of our people and ensuring our curriculum develops knowledge, skills and behaviours of individuals to work in a sustainable environment.
- > We will review our processes and systems, so we maximise operational efficiency to deliver a high quality, productive and compliant Apprenticeship programme.
- > We will grow awareness of St Helens Chamber Apprenticeships in our local community, so local firms know what we do and how we can support the development of their workforce.
- > We will focus on quality, ensuring we are always learner-centric, so our Apprentices achieve positive outcomes to enable them to succeed in their chosen career.

## 2022-23 Performance Measures

- > To gain Ofsted grading of 'Good'.
- > To achieve successful compliance audits.
- > To have a minimum of 380 funded Apprentices in learning by March 2023.
- > To maintain our achievement rate in line with the national average, achieving a minimum of 60%.
- > To ensure that Apprentices beyond their funding date (out of funded learners) make up no more than 10% of our cohort.
- > To achieve 95% End Point Assessment first time pass rate, and outperform national average End Point Assessment grades in each sector of delivery.

## Future Prospects

Our primary strategic objective is to improve our Ofsted grade, our ambition being to achieve an overall Ofsted 'Good' rating at our next inspection. We will continue to focus on the quality of our programme so we reach the most positive outcome possible for each Apprentice.

The pandemic has changed the landscape of Apprenticeship delivery. We will focus on developing the skills of our team so we deliver creative programmes which inspire individuals to learn and develop their skills.

We will review the resources and tools we have to allow us to achieve this. We will develop relationships with our employers even further, not only throughout the Apprentice's learning journey but in the design and delivery of our programmes so we are able to offer programmes which will equip Apprentices with the skills needed to make a difference to businesses and across the community.



# ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

St Helens Chamber is a large and dynamic social value provider, a Social Enterprise with 115 staff and a turnover above £4M. We work at the intersection of the private and public sector – we are led by the private sector through our Board and Membership, and we obtain and use public sector funding to deliver activities designed to fulfil our mission to create success and opportunity in St Helens.

Our Strategic Plan 2022-23 focuses on continuing to develop a financial model and activity which ensures our organisation's stability and ability to invest.

During 2022-23 our organisational strength depends on excellent work by our teams ensuring that People, Premises, Marketing, IT, Finance, Bidding, Quality, Social Value and Net Zero are all delivered to an exceptionally high standard. A major focus will be to improve our IT systems and increase our use of technology.

Additional national Accreditations and Awards will give important external recognition of our Leading Edge and Driven by Quality values.

We will increase our ability to communicate the impact of our activity, showing how we create Social Value and enable others to do so.

## People

- > During 2022-23 we will continue our development of a People Strategy, focusing on workforce planning to ensure we can achieve our short- and long-term objectives.
- > We will retain our Investors in People Gold status and continue to support colleagues with their health and well-being.
- > We will strengthen our CPD and learning opportunities to ensure our colleagues have the knowledge, skills and experience to feel motivated to do their best, and to fulfil our organisational needs and ambitions.
- > We will improve processes of recruitment, selection and onboarding, ensuring we are efficient and adopt useful new systems.



### Premises

- > During 2022-23 we will review use of our premises to ensure we are reacting to changes in requirements brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and maximising the value of our space.
- > We will assess possibilities of developing a bookable 'hotdesk' working space.
- > We will continue to look for an opportunity to develop appropriate Green Skills Training space.
- > We will ensure premises and facilities are key parts of the development of the Chamber Low Carbon strategy.



### Marketing

- > We will create a Marketing and PR strategy for 2022-2023 encompassing strategic and operational areas of the business.
- > Creating and executing an aligned Marketing and PR operational plan, we will work collaboratively with internal teams and external agencies to maximise our impact.
- > We will strengthen the external perception of the Chamber as a Social Enterprise and improve our stakeholders recognition of our Social Value impact and how our services benefit both businesses and people.
- > We will continue to ensure that local business' voices are heard and the business community is kept informed through timely and relevant engagement.
- > We will continue raising awareness of all our services using our social media platforms and will continue to work on building our reach and engagement through relevant posts and building positive relationships with local influencers.
- > We will enhance internal communications through a range of online and offline mechanisms to strengthen colleague awareness.
- > We will use online tools to work more effectively with each other and with colleagues across the business.



### IT

- > During 2022-23 we will assess, plan and migrate much of our current server infrastructure to a hosted solution, to gain increased flexibility and scalability.
- > We will plan and implement a move to a hosted telephony system, away from ISDN lines.
- > We will retain our Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation and maintain our leading-edge IT security and business resilience protection.
- > Working across the business we will lead development of an IT Systems Plan, a multi-year programme to implement improved systems across the Chamber.
- > We will drive the Leading Edge and Driven by Quality values by improving colleague IT skills, leading on data protection and the IT elements of our ISO 9001 Standard, and ensuring an effective IT function for the organisation.

### Bidding

- > During 2022-23 we will continue to develop the skills of people in our organisation to write successful funding bids.
- > Our expectation remains that all of SMT should be able to lead a successful bid project, and that all of our Management Team plus our Marketing department will be able to contribute effectively.

### Quality

- > During 2022-23 we will expand the range of processes included in our ISO9001 Accreditation to improve our efficiency across the organisation, and achieve a strong result in our annual review visit.
- > We will achieve two further national Accreditations or Awards during this period.

## Finance

- > During 2022-2023 we will mitigate financial risks to the Chamber by ensuring effective controls are in place and being adhered to, ensuring all legal and funding body requirements are met, and ensuring submission of accurate claims backed up by the required evidence.
- > We will monitor the Chamber's cash flow forecasts and ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet expected requirements via the most appropriate source. We will maintain an excellent working relationship with the bank supplying accurate and timely information as requested.
- > We will co-ordinate the Chamber's budgets and forecasts in a timely manner to ensure that the overall picture is financially viable, and report against these monthly to the Management Team to enable effective management of Chamber activities.
- > We will continue to develop and improve efficiency of our financial systems and the knowledge and skills of the Finance Team. We will utilise electronic systems, processing and archiving wherever possible. An upgrade of the Sage Accounting system will be required prior to the current version becoming unsupported in 2023.
- > Following a tender process, we will move to a new external audit firm for our year-end audit and will work to ensure this goes smoothly. We will re-establish our regular in-house internal audits provision.
- > We will review and update the Chamber's Risk Register to ensure it provides assurance to our Board that risks are being effectively managed.
- > During 2022-23 we will work towards an effective and efficient link being established between our CRM system and the accounts system, as part of our IT Systems Plan.
- > As a longer-term ambition, the finance team will increase capacity to be able to provide additional financial modelling and forward thinking for the organisation.

## Net Zero

- > During 2022-23 we will develop a Low Carbon strategy for St Helens Chamber, and deliver the Net Zero / Low Carbon initiatives highlighted in other programmes in this Strategic Plan.





# St Helens Chamber

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