



West Wiltshire  
Economic Partnership  
**Action Plan 2005 - 2006**

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## ***1. Introduction***

In the last 20 years, there has been a shift in the way economic development is focused. The goal for sustainable economic development now is to raise average per capita incomes through higher-wage jobs, while working to reduce poverty and expand opportunity for economically disadvantaged residents, in a way that boosts the area's quality of life. The path to raising wages and quality of life will follow a route to a technologically advanced infrastructure, through boosting the skills of the workforce, with the support of fast and responsive local government at all levels. Consequently, there needs to be a shift in focus towards action aimed at delivering these requirements. Areas that meet the challenges of the New Economy - focusing on innovation, learning, and constant adaptation - will be the ones that succeed.

## ***2. The West Wiltshire Economic Partnership***

The West Wiltshire Economic Partnership (WWEP) brings together public and private sector organisations with an interest in promoting the economic well-being of the district. It was formally launched in September 1998 and operates legally and financially through West Wiltshire Enterprise Ltd. with David Stratton as Chairman of the Board as well as Chair of WWEP. The partnership is managed through a service level agreement with the Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC), and a part time partnership manager, Len Turner, is employed through WACC. WWEP meets at least on a quarterly basis and contributes to initiatives on district, sub-regional (Wiltshire) and regional (South West) levels. It has little financial and human resources of its own and much of the activity is delivered through the various partner organisations. The District Council makes a financial contribution to the partnership and has committed to a close working relationship with WWEP through its economic development unit, where two full time staff work closely with the WWEP manager. The WWEP Action Plan 2005-06 reflects the key priorities identified by the District Council's economic development service.

### ***3. West Wiltshire economy***

The West Wiltshire Economic Profile for 2003 can be viewed through the District Council website - [www.westwiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.westwiltshire.gov.uk) - and the main issues challenging the local economy are highlighted in this document as:

→ Slow economic growth - West Wiltshire experienced the slowest employment growth (by workplace) in the county and has the highest level of long term unemployment across the four Wiltshire districts.

→ Decline in manufacturing industry - the biggest decline in employment has been in manufacturing, with a decrease of 24%.

→ An ageing population - West Wiltshire had the second highest population growth rate (1999-2001) in Wiltshire at 9% more people but for the first time, there are more adults over 60 than children under 16.

→ Low skills base - West Wiltshire has the highest proportion of adults with poor literacy and numeracy in the county. 7% of 16 year olds entered employment without structured learning and there is a lower proportion of working age people qualified to NVQ level 4 than Wiltshire as a whole.

→ Changes in the agricultural sector - the rural economy has witnessed significant structural change involving a decline in the agricultural contribution to wealth and income.

### ***4. Strategy context***

The economic strategy of the region, produced by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), and the sub-region, produced by the Wiltshire & Swindon Economic Partnership (WSEP), address issues around innovation & enterprise and skills & learning. The main focus is on objectives for providing the right environment for improving business productivity and economic inclusion, developing a skilled workforce and improving communications.

## 5. *Key themes*

The regional issues around the need for innovation, supporting enterprise and addressing the skills agenda are to some extent reflected in a number of issues emerging from local businesses in West Wiltshire. A number of local businesses have cited the following as main areas of concern:

→ Skills

→ Infrastructure (roads)

→ Availability of workspace

It is against this backdrop of strategic challenge that WWEP's vision and action plan has been developed.

## 6. *The vision*

Working in partnership to maintain and enhance a prosperous, dynamic, sustainable economy for the benefit of all those who live, learn and work in West Wiltshire.

## 7. Objectives and key outcomes

### Objective 1

Promote a skilled workforce by developing a skilled, motivated and adaptable workforce to meet the needs of local employers by:

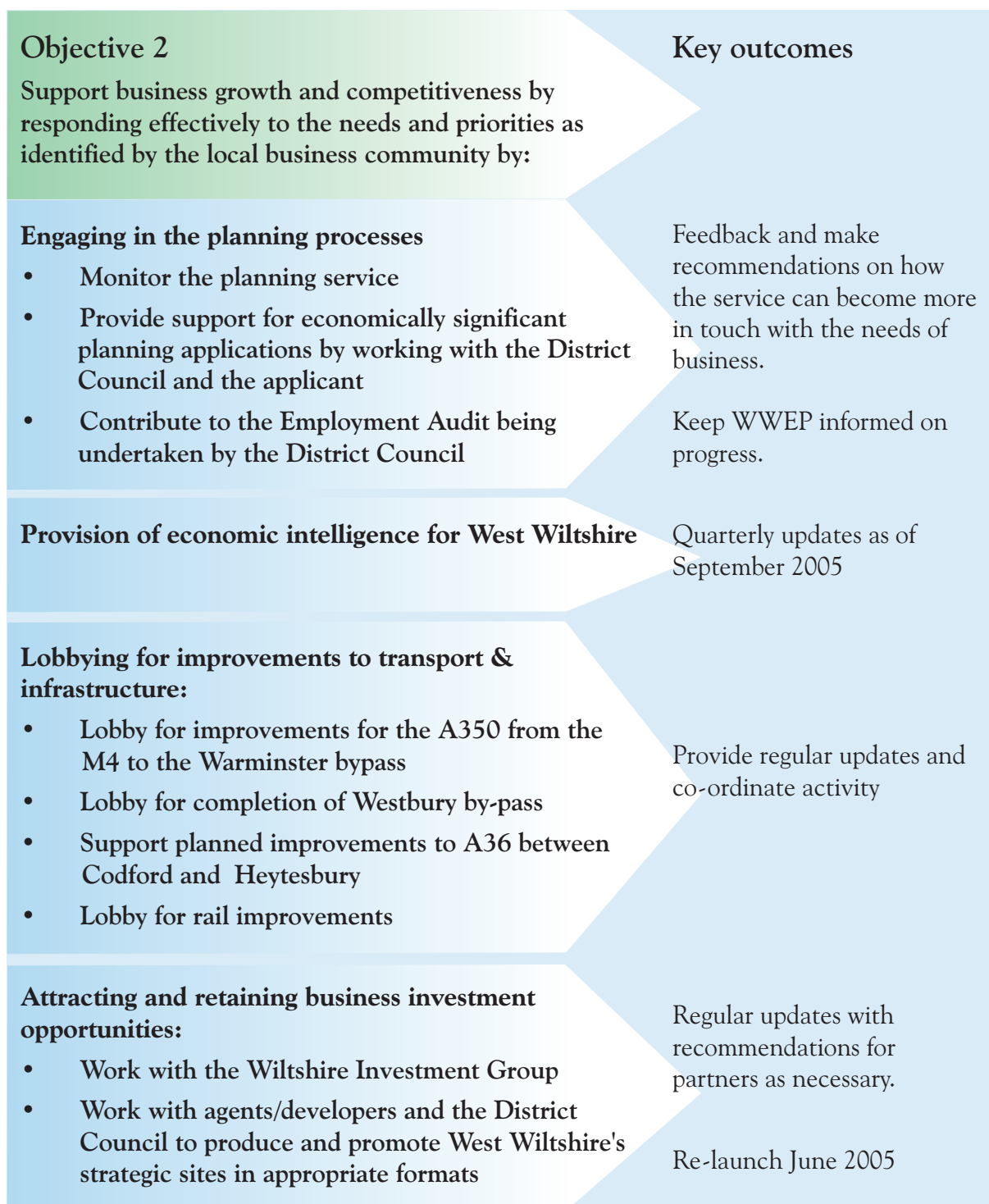
- Developing links between the business community, schools and colleges
- Working with local secondary schools to inform students of employers' needs, improve school leaver skills, provide career information and promote modern apprenticeships
- Investigating the potential for engaging businesses in local job fairs
- Ensuring that the West Wiltshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) actively delivers specific skills projects

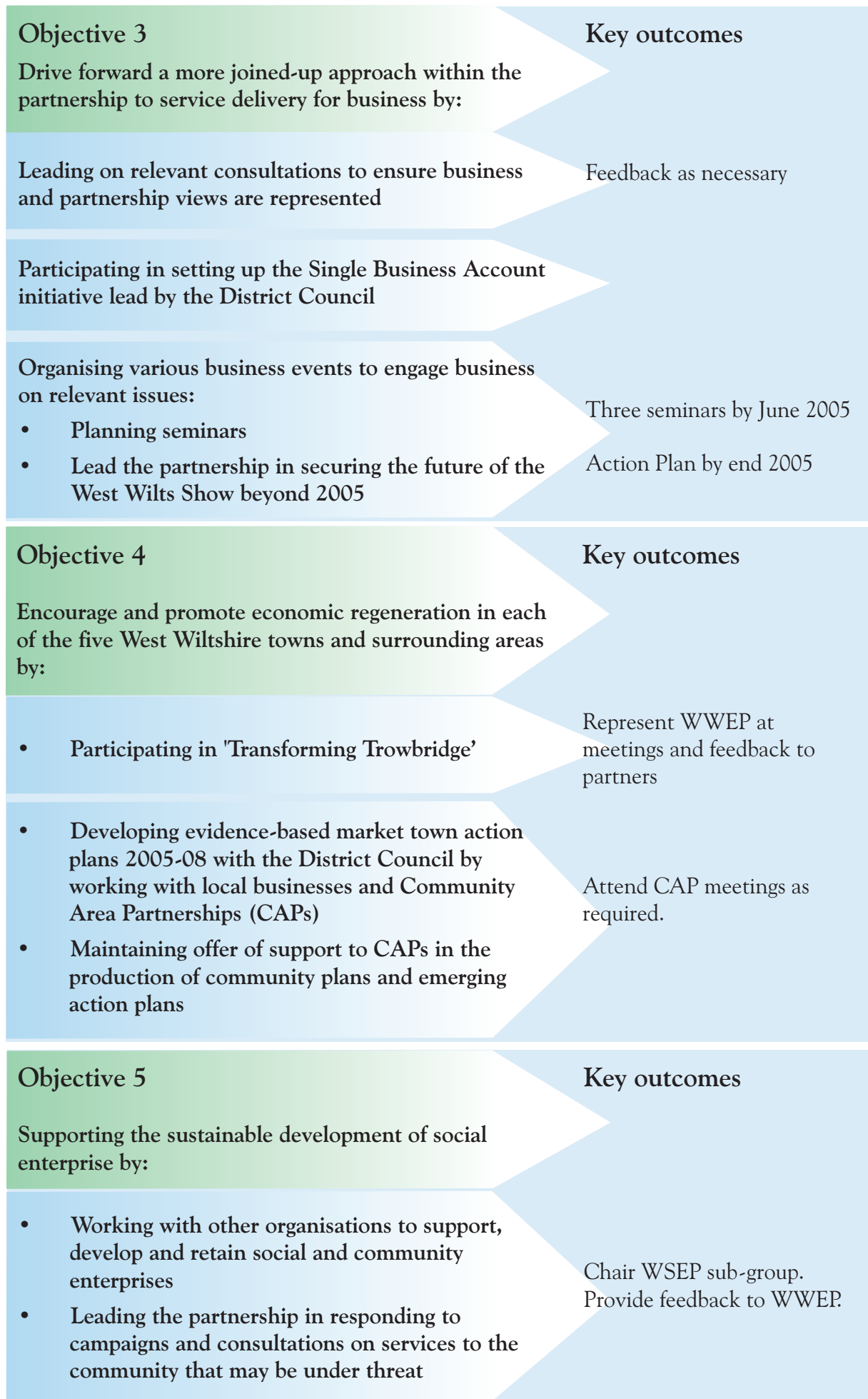
### Key outcomes

Feedback on key issues to all WWEP meetings with recommendations for issues that the partnership can address.

Form a skills sub-group to identify key projects that can be delivered through the LSP.







## Objective 6

## Key outcomes

Promote West Wiltshire Economic Partnership activity by:

### Working with WSEP and SWRDA to ensure that:

- The needs of West Wiltshire are understood at sub-regional and regional levels
- WWEP action plan reflects the strategic objectives and priorities of both WSEP and SWRDA

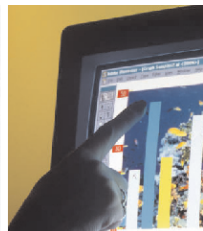
Represent WWEP at meetings, report back on key issues.

- Update and promote the WWEP website
- Promote WWEP through Chamber Pot - Increase and improve input from partners

Re-launch August 2005  
Liase with partners' communications/PR where applicable.

- Undertake 12 company visits between May and December 2005.

Feedback significant issues including recommendations for WWEP partners.



## 8. *Monitoring and evaluation*

- Discuss progress of WWEP Action Plan at WWEP meetings
- Review Action Plan on a quarterly basis
- WWEP Manager to produce a quarterly report for the District Council
- Annual WWEP presentation to the District Council Cabinet and Scrutiny committee
- Quarterly meetings with the District Council within two weeks of the end of the quarter
- Update and produce a WWEP Action Plan annually

The following set of indicators are contextual measures that can be used to identify the baseline assessment of an area and are intended to support an understanding of the local economy. Additionally they can contribute towards assessing the combined performance of individual agencies such as WWEP. By monitoring these indicators on an annual basis, it will be possible to identify any changes that may occur and which the partnership may need to address through its objectives in the WWEP Annual Action Plan.

- Employment levels - on par with the county rate and below the regional and UK rate - 1.1%
- Average gross yearly earnings - slightly higher than the county and regional averages, but lower than that of Great Britain - £22,443
- Workforce skills - population of working age lacking basic skills - 22% (highest in the county)
- Business growth - VAT registrations are useful indicators of the economy's health and level of entrepreneurship, as entry of new firms in the economy stimulates productivity - 2,275 new registrations between 1995 and 2001.

**Source:** West Wiltshire Economic Assessment 2003, available on WWDC website, the figures refer to the previous year's activity. Other data is available from this report including population statistics, house prices, business profile etc. The above are only a snapshot to give a quick picture of the local economy.



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