

## Consultation on Draft Local Economy Strategy

Closing Date: 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Douglas City Council Response

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#### Question 1

Do you agree with the Local Economy's **7 Guiding Principles**? (As detailed below)

- Yes
- No
- Partially

#### Question 2

How important do you consider each of the **7 Guiding Principles**?

	Not important at all	Not very important	Quite important	Very important
1. Foster and build great communities.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Support the existence of a strong and diverse economy.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Lead to job creation.			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4. Encourage a retail, leisure, and hospitality offering that has broad appeal; is varied and attractive to a wide range of demographic constituents (including children, young people, and families).				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Stimulate investment and incentivise development; to improve the quality and vibrancy of the Island's retail, hospitality, and leisure proposition.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Be consistent with the Island's net zero commitment.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Reflect a local first approach to tackling challenges and taking advantage of opportunities.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Do you have any additional comments regarding these Guiding Principles?

(3) above – Lead to Job Creation – has been marked as Quite Important as filling vacancies within the industry is currently a major issue for organisations. Removing barriers and disincentives to workers coming to the island is more important, that is, the demographic changes called for within the Island Plan.

### Question 3

Which two Strategic Goals, included in the Local Economy Strategy under **Pillar 1 – Infrastructure & Place Management**, should be prioritised? (maximum of 2)

- 1.1 Transform Underutilised & Vacant Spaces
- 1.2 Invigorate High Streets & Catalyse Vibrancy
- 1.3 Encourage Town Centre Regeneration
- 1.4 Improve Town Centre Accessibility
- 1.5 Implement Strategic Planning Policy
- 1.6 Encourage Sustainable Practices
- 1.7 Improve Collaboration to Maximise Business Potential
- 1.8 Enable Place Promotion & Branding

### Question 4

Which two Strategic Goals included in the Local Economy Strategy, under **Pillar 2 – Enterprise & Consumer Experience**, should be prioritised? (maximum of 2)

- 2.1 Encourage Increased Consumer Choice
- 2.2 Reduce Barriers to Business
- 2.3 Foster Entrepreneurship
- 2.4 Support Adaptation to Meet Consumer Demand
- 2.5 Utilise Data-led Decision Making
- 2.6 Enable Businesses to Improve Quality of Service
- 2.7 Stimulate the Provision of Entertainment and Leisure Facilities

### Question 5

Which two Strategic Goals included in the Local Economy Strategy, under **Pillar 3 – Local Empowerment & Partnerships**, should be prioritised? (maximum of 2)

- 3.1 Develop Effective Town Partnerships
- 3.2 Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes
- 3.3 Empower Stakeholder Partnerships through Designated Resource

- 3.4 Create Open & Clear Communication Channels
- 3.5 Drive Community Engagement

### Question 6

Do you have any additional comments regarding the **Strategic Goals** detailed under the three pillars above?

Q5, 3.2 – Empower Local Authorities by Creating New Funding Routes – although these would be welcome, these need to be significant to make a difference and sufficiently flexible to permit creative solutions to locally specific problems. Bureaucracy within the Domestic Event Fund and events generally has been cited as a concern by many businesses. Empowerment of Local Authorities needs to include trusting those authorities to make the right decisions for their communities. Funding routes may include rate-support schemes.

### Question 7

Which of the **outcomes** below do you consider to be of most significance? (maximum of 2)

- Increased footfall in urban areas and high streets
- Reduced commercial property vacancy rates
- Improved Local Economy Survey scores relating to the vibrancy of the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors
- The avoidance of sector employment decline (retail, hospitality, and leisure)
- An improvement in the attributes of the Island's towns and urban areas – supported by survey results
- Positive impact on the Isle of Man's decarbonisation targets as detailed in the Climate Change Plan 2022-2027
- Fulfilment of the Island's demographic targets as detailed in the Isle of Man Economic Strategy and Island Plan

### Question 8

Please select the factors that you see as crucial to delivering the outcomes of the Local Economy Strategy (maximum of six):

- Financial Support for Local Authorities & Trader Groups
- Financial Support for Local Businesses
- Enabling the work of Local Authorities & Trader Groups
- Dedicated Coordinators to Manage Local Delivery
  - *These should be local authority posts supported financially where appropriate by Government. This should not result in government employing co-ordinators for Douglas City Council and where appropriate larger Local Authorities*
- Clear Communication Channels Between Government and Private Sector

- Simplification of Government Processes (e.g., Planning Rules, Licenses)
- Investment in Infrastructure and Public Services
- Training and Skill Development Programs for the Local Workforce
- Incentives for Innovation and Technological Advancement / Adoption
- Support for Sustainable and Green Initiatives in Town & City Centres
- Enhanced Access to Markets and Business Networks
- Promotion of Local Products and Services
- Strengthening of Local Supply Chains
- Other – creating a space in the City Centre to promote local products and services. Douglas as the island’s capital city is essential to be vibrant, setting the precedence, if the Island’s capital is vibrant it sets the way for the rest of the Island.

### Question 9

Do you believe the implementation of the Local Economy Strategy will have a positive impact on the Isle of Man's retail, leisure, and hospitality sectors?

- Yes
- No

Please explain your reason for choosing yes or no:

Anything that improves regeneration and investment in our town centres and encourages the retail and hospitality industry in the Island will have a positive impact on the economy and enjoyment of the Island, for both residents and visitors.

It is difficult to visualise how town boards and one-off funding for initiatives will lead to a sustained positive impact. Some of the infrastructure issues mentioned in the document could be addressed through the Douglas Masterplan with elements which have been embraced by local businesses and entrepreneurs but has not been backed fully by central Government. The document is repetitive and positive in its aspiration but there are no tangible actions or SMART objectives to which the DfE can be held accountable. Budgets for the Domestic Event Fund or other elements of the Strategy have yet to be agreed by Treasury.

### Additional Information

Fulfilment of the Island’s demographic targets will demonstrate that people want to come and live and work on the island. There is a concern around the number of young people leaving the island.

There are a number of empty buildings and land in the City centre which are government owned and lacking investment i.e. Chester Street Car park and M&Co which should be available for development or for commercial premises rent.