

SAS DANIELS AND MARKETING STOCKPORT

Stockport: the next chapter



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RECRUITMENT **NEW BUSINESSES**

EDUCATION **HOSPITALITY**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT **LEISURE** **CULTURE**

EQUALITY **FINANCE** **CREATIVE & DIGITAL**

YOUNG PEOPLE **MANUFACTURING** **PROPERTY**

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES **CHARITY** **ENERGY**

TRANSPORT **ECONOMIC GROWTH**

About the report



About the report; context and purpose

Stockport's economic growth

We know the headlines; £2 billion town centre regeneration, 8,000 new homes, £1m sq.m of new employment space, £5 billion added value to the economy.

So much work has been done by both public and private sectors; but what comes next?

How can Stockport businesses work together to sustain this growth and help it to continue?

Gathering the information **with** **Marketing Stockport**

We managed to get 50 professionals from a range of sectors, seniority and types of business, all in one room. All working and/or living in the Stockport area and all with their own individual experiences.

Attendees were grouped into six tables, each with a leader from SAS Daniels to encourage discussion and capture the views. Each table had questions to work through.



Questions

EQUALITY	What can we do to ensure equality of opportunity across the borough, especially in the economic sense?
CULTURE	How can we build on Stockport's strong cultural heritage to encourage engagement from both visitors and residents?
LEISURE	Is the existing leisure and hospitality offering growing at the right pace to support residents, visitors and those working in Stockport?
BUSINESS	Stockport has a strong entrepreneurial spirit and a wealth of independent businesses. What can be done to encourage more new business into the area?
BUSINESS	As a business in Stockport, what needs to be done internally or externally to move you to the next level?
SKILLS	How do we encourage young people to stay in or come back to the Stockport area to learn, work and live?
SKILLS	How can businesses and educational establishments work together to ensure our current and future workforce is equipped with the right skills to continue growing?
PLACE	Stockport's 'secret sauce'; what are the key ingredients that make our area unique? What are its main assets and challenges?
PLACE	What would success look like for Stockport? Where would we want to be in 5 years or 10 years? How can we measure it?

About the report; context and purpose

Our overall aim was to encourage discussion, debate and end up with a qualitative study of the real opportunities and issues facing Stockport today, as seen by those with a real stake in the area.

Acknowledging and appreciating what's been done but focusing on what's next; how we can collectively make our town better for its residents, workers and visitors.

Attendees were encouraged to give examples from their own experience.

Good practices, ideas and soundbites are all pulled out in the report.

It doesn't claim to provide all the answers, but is intended to spark further conversation.

Key theme:
businesses



Local businesses: SMEs and entrepreneurs

Independent businesses were celebrated as a huge success and their contribution to Stockport's unique identity was recognised.

SMEs are the next larger businesses, but how do we build on the success of our current independent businesses and collectively help them get there? The group came up with the following:

- Support to fail – we need risk-takers to grow
 - Mentoring access to finances and growth programmes
 - Flexible licences, reduced rates for start ups
 - Tax reliefs
 - Valuations, separate units would mean business rate relief would be available

Local businesses: SMEs and entrepreneurs

Several businesses indicated availability and cost of premises were a limiting factor in their growth. Limited warehousing space and offices with parking was reported, with those available at a relatively high cost compared to surrounding areas.

The group felt there may be a need for alternative workspaces, affordable workspaces for smaller businesses to scale up and more opportunities for the creative sector who need large spaces at good prices.

Enhancements to transport and infrastructure, such as parking loyalty solutions and subsidised bus travel might encourage people to travel into both Stockport centre and the neighbouring boroughs for work.

People felt greater awareness is needed of the business support services already available.

Ideas, quotes and good practice

- “ Could the council fund a campaign to promote Stockport as a business destination?
- “ Could something be set up to match local charities with volunteers to help with the skills gap?
- “ Can bigger businesses sponsor smaller businesses or mentor them?
- “ How about a pot of funding for formal learning for SME leaders and entrepreneurs? This would promote leadership development and help people run their business more effectively.
- “ Could there be an online ‘menu’ of all the support that exists for a Stockport business?
- “ Better communication of ‘success stories’ could help inspire more people to consider starting their own business and demonstrate that entrepreneurship is an achievable option.

“Connectivity across the borough will help local businesses thrive and will give new founders more opportunities and options for where to set up.”

Key theme:
young people



Young people: potential challenges

The group highlighted that young people may face different challenges from previous generations. The speed of modern communication, constant connectivity, and exposure to world events through social media can contribute to increased pressure and anxiety.

With the upcoming social media ban for under 16s, young people are likely to need more to do.

It is increasingly difficult for young people to secure employment due to high levels of competition and employers frequently seeking candidates with prior experience.

There were several anecdotes about the relative lack of summer jobs for young people and potential concerns this could lead to a reduction in client-facing skills.

Young people: education and employment

All agreed recruitment is expensive; thoughts were that investing in the younger generation early and aligning that investment with local economic opportunities would create a pipeline of skilled workers.

Desirable jobs and career pathways could be created through supporting business growth, apprenticeships and partnerships with employers, alongside offering modern work experience.

However, many businesses face financial and operational pressures and may not have the time, resources or capacity to invest in training new entrants.

T-Levels were highlighted as a positive route into employment and apprenticeships.

Young people: education and employment

It was felt that a lack of communication between businesses, schools and colleges may contribute to limited awareness of career paths and job roles, and the development of soft skills such as workplace etiquette, communication, relationship-building and resilience.

Certain sectors, such as engineering maintenance and inspection, continue to experience significant skills shortages and attract insufficient numbers of new entrants.

There was discussion around whether some employers lack awareness of how apprenticeships operate and the potential benefits they can bring to a business.

For young professionals, Future Stockport was mentioned as a great way to build their network, make connections and invest in their own development.

Young people: entrepreneurship

Not all young people want to work for someone else; the group thought entrepreneurship should also be encouraged in schools and colleges and supported through initiatives like dedicated start-up spaces, mentoring and access to finance.

Participants discussed whether more practical support is needed for aspiring entrepreneurs during the early stages of starting a business, including access to mentoring, networking opportunities and funding advice.

There was recognition that many successful business owners have valuable experience and knowledge that could be shared with the next generation of entrepreneurs through formal mentoring schemes.

The importance of creating a culture that encourages innovation, risk-taking and enterprise was highlighted as a way of supporting long-term economic growth in the borough.

Young people: culture and leisure

Creating inclusive and attractive places was high up the agenda. Stockroom was praised as an inclusive space, but could there be more like it? There were several ideas for community facilities and activities:

GREEN SPACES BIKE RAMP FOOTBALL
PADEL RUGBY CRAFTS
MARTIAL ARTS CINEMA ART BATTLE GYM
SPORTS VIEWINGS HOLIDAY CAMPS YOUTH CLUBS

With the upcoming social media ban for under 16s, young people are likely to need more to do.

Life Leisure report that their teen gym membership is the fastest growing category; a space for young people to focus on their health and wellbeing.

Ideas, quotes and good practice

- “ A local database for apprentice recruitment.
- “ Giving young people a voice in local decision-making would give them ownership. Could this encourage them to stay in the area?
- “ Businesses need to invest in young people before they are capable of work.
- “ Chester Storyhouse offers teens free tea and coffee as part of their membership, to encourage studying/socialising in their spaces. Could venues in Stockport do the same?

- “ Our business visited a local college, running a real-time practical exercise which added value for the students and counted towards their qualifications.

From that, we identified a standout performer and plan to make an offer of employment.

This person would be unlikely to apply in traditional ways, as had certain economic disadvantages, so this is an alternative way of identifying talent and ensuring opportunities are open to all and the future workforce is as diverse as possible.

“We should develop a vibrant town centre with leisure, culture, hospitality and evening economy activities that appeal to younger demographics.

“Young people stay where they can build a career, afford a good standard of living and enjoy a fulfilling social and cultural life. Towns that offer all three will attract talent.

“It’s become a really nice place to grow up.

Key theme:
equality



Equality: economic opportunities

Stockport has a diverse population in terms of economic and social prospects, with boroughs ranking in both the most and least deprived areas of the country. The group considered job opportunities, affordable housing education, transport and childcare to be key drivers in aiming to reduce inequality.

To keep job opportunities open to all:

- Accessible transport that links less affluent areas to places like Stockport and Manchester was thought to be crucial.
- Concerns were raised about the rising population in the city centre area and the impact this could have on those travelling into Stockport for work. There is a need to ensure accessible public transport is sufficient to cater for this growing demand.
- Cycle to work schemes and safe cycle paths were also seen as essential.

Equality: economic opportunities

The group felt that different types of job opportunities would mean people with a wider range of skill sets are able to come to the area.

They also thought that educating children on different paths to success and what the modern job market looks like would open doors and provide opportunities to eventually reduce the economic gap.

The question of affordable childcare also came up in enabling families to find paid work outside the home.

The link between the housing market and available job opportunities was also brought up.

The group cited the current plans for 8000 new homes and highlighted the importance of affordability and providing different types of home for young professionals, families and shared living accommodation.

Ideas, quotes and good practice

“Are we educating the next generation to support the job market we want to build?”

“Are there sufficient job opportunities in the area to sustain the housing plans? Are the house prices and rental fees set at the right rate for the people in these jobs?”

Key theme:
leisure and
hospitality



Leisure and hospitality

The room agreed that this is one of Stockport's great strengths. Anecdotal evidence suggests more and more people are staying in the town instead of travelling into Manchester for the night-time economy.

Some good examples were cited: hospitality venues embracing the World Cup and putting on promotions to try and improve midweek footfall.

And Weir Mill has been successful in looking to fill its leisure units first, to attract the type of young professionals it's appealing to with the apartments.

Leisure and hospitality

Opportunities identified:

- Existing trendy, 'Instagram-able' independent businesses – attract new, similar initiatives
- A lot of vacant units, scope for new businesses
- Local people seem keen to support independent businesses
- Coordinated marketing and community led campaigns: Foodie Friday, Stockport 10k, World Cup event, art battle

Leisure and hospitality

Challenges identified:

- Patchy and inconsistent footfall, quiet on weekdays
- Loss of big names on the high street, eg. M&S
- Food and drink is expensive, is that off-putting?
- Rent – can a business afford to be there? Costs have to be passed on to consumers

Ideas, quotes and good practice

“ It’s a great place to be and visit.

“ Our good parks and green spaces are being sold off to developers for new build houses; can’t they use brown space?

“ What exercises or measures can we put in place to encourage Stockport’s soul?

“ Didsbury and Chorlton have regenerated old buildings really well; it feels upmarket.

“Culture is a massive part of the feelgood factor of Stockport’s regeneration and renaissance.

“Stockport is still a number of years away from being desirable.

What would
good look like?



Additional thoughts: what would success look like for Stockport?

The room felt that the following would constitute progress for Stockport:

- Narrowing the economic gap
- Investment figures increasing
- Involvement of Stockport residents in shaping the town
- Retaining the younger generation
- Reduced homelessness
- Thriving independent organisations

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Thank you for your time.

Understanding your needs. Protecting your interests.

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