

Appendix 1 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Application Summary

*These are extracts from the applications to provide additional information to Committee.

Communities and Place

1. Belmont Community Cinema Ltd– Belmont Cinema Community Engagement and Refurbishment. - £40,000 Requested

We plan to refurbish and reopen the Belmont Cinema in Aberdeen for the benefit of the local community. It is a beloved cultural venue in the city, which closed unexpectedly in October 2022, when its parent company went into administration. A well supported campaign to reopen it resulted in the formation of a not-for-profit company which was recently chosen by Aberdeen City as its preferred operator to refresh and reopen the building before the end of 2024. The Belmont will show a curated programme of independent, arthouse and world cinema which are not available elsewhere in the city and it will have a film education unit too (with a focus on young persons). Creative Scotland have given their support to the reopening as Aberdeen is currently the only city in Scotland without an arts cinema.

We'll engage with the public, community groups, arts and culture organisations etc to promote and build support for the cinema and ensure that our programme offering will meet their needs. It will be community resource which will celebrate the very best that the cinematic medium can offer and will embrace diversity as a vibrant and welcoming space for all. We'll run a communications and marketing campaign to build interest and anticipation in the reopened cinema. We'll also run a targeted fundraising campaign to raise funds for refurbishment of the building.

We'll recruit two full-time staff on initial 12-month contracts, a Comms/Marketing/Fundraising Lead and a Project/Operations Manager to drive our plan and co-ordinate activities. Both will report to the board of volunteer trustees and be supported by them. We will recruit a Finance/IT/Admin Officer in the New Year.

The Fundraising Lead will organise and attend events to promote the cinema, will write funding applications, network with potential individual/corporate donors and community groups and will liaise with our marketing consultants. The Project Manager will work with our architect, surveyor, lawyer and Aberdeen City Council to bring the cinema building back to life on budget, on time and to specification.

2. Crow House Projects – Crow House Projects – Film Accelerator - £40,000 Requested

Crow House Projects founded its flagship programme, Film Accelerator, in 2023 as a key component of the wider Crow House Projects educational and economic objectives laid out in our constitution. Crow House seeks to establish two filmmaking cohorts annually of thirty applicants. Each Cohort is structured to provide a series of workshops exploring varied avenues of film making. Following these sessions, members work together under the guidance of award-winning directors Nicci Thompson and Jamie McDonald (The Anatomist: 2018 and Children of Chronos: 2021) to produce festival-quality short films. These projects will be entered into competition, providing those involved with recognized credit to help them strengthen their work experience. These objectives align with three of the Shared Prosperity Fund objectives: Community & Place, Support Local Business, and People & Skills.

The programme seeks to act as a complementary facet to the film departments at Robert Gordon University, North East Scotland College, and the University of Aberdeen. It does so by providing young filmmakers with practical, educational experience not found in the theory-based academic curriculum. Crow House provides participants with a local opportunity, otherwise unavailable within Aberdeen or without considerable cost, which opens doors to a global network of filmmaking professionals that will bolster their personal and professional development. History has shown there is a demand for such a program – previous programs have seen a hundred applicants apply for the limited available seats.

This community of filmmakers will remake Aberdeen into a strong regional player in the British filmmaking scene, diversifying her economic portfolio and drawing outside investment that will benefit small business and the locations on which they stand. This will naturally lead to a promotion of key tourist areas as potential areas to film.

Furthermore, by training and investing in local talent, Crow House will help to promote local culture and strengthen the communities of the Northeast. Local artists and filmmakers who experience the Accelerator Program will be empowered to tell their own stories, bringing the culture of Scotland's northeast to a truly global market. Also, by helping to forge the infrastructure of a local film making scene, Crow House hopes to entice producers from outside the region to film in Aberdeen and surrounding communities by providing them with a local pool of talent upon which they can rely. In doing so, the natural beauty of the landscape and culture will be projected around the world.

It is this vision, aided by a partnership with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, that we hope will revolutionize the fortunes of Aberdeen's creative community. We will build a foundational network and talent pool, vital to establishing a new film industry in the Granite City. Demonstrating that art and filmmaking can be vital components of the Council's wider goal of creating a sustainable economy and a vibrant city centre. To summarize, Crow House aims to foster an opportunity for Aberdeen to promote its shared cultural and industrial heritage, creating a dynamic ecosystem that will serve the city for decades to come

3. Aberdeen City Council (on behalf of Danestone CC) - Danestone upgrade feasibility funding - £5,000 Requested

A feasibility to explore a proposed internal layout redesign and upgrades at Danestone Community Centre which will increase centre capacity and Identify the changes that will support community transfer in the future. Due to the number of new developments in Bridge of Don, there has been a high increase in demand for current and new services delivered from the centre. The centre is currently nearing capacity and already seeing an impact on their current provision from the new developments. Therefore, the centre is looking at creating more flexible enhanced space offering more services; developing and running a community café to support socially isolated residents; additional meeting space for strategic stakeholders e.g., community councils, elected member surgeries and other groups. The centre is a charity and work strategically and align their projects with the CPP LOIP.

Feasibility study to explore:

- Installing doors that open automatically or that open remotely when someone pushes button, to improve access for people with mobility/impaired vision

- Creating more flexible space by removing walls, creating larger space for café and or activity
- Better storage space
- upgrade toilets/showers with disabled access that allow people that use the centre with wheelchair or mobility challenges, or have problems with incontinence, or both to be accommodated.
- open space area for flexible use for cafe/activities
- ramp access to small hall, as this area has a step up into hall which reduced accessibility for some. Providing a ramp with a minimum gradient at the stepped entrance of that area will facilitate people in wheelchairs or with other mobility difficulties.
- A new sustainable heating system
- reconnecting solar panels already installed

These changes would help the centre support Danestone and surrounding area to meet continued grown demand for services identified in a survey of key stakeholders. The survey highlighted the need for extra space as highlighted above and there is an overall support for the upgrade.

The centre engaged in a pilot Social Capital report which gave a fair example of the impact the centre has within in the area. The pilot Social Capital report for the Community Centre Association showed that for every £1 invested by the Council a total return of £5.14 was generated.

The feasibility study will explore how the design will incorporate flexible space, low carbon options, easy accessibility to all areas.

4. Aberdeen City Council - Accessibility Improvements for Spectra 2024 - £25,000 Requested

Aberdeen City Council are seeking to develop a broad suite of improvements to accessibility for Spectra, Scotland's Festival of Light.

Accessibility was the main area of improvement identified following the 2023 edition of Spectra and officers are keen to develop a robust model that can be utilised for Spectra 2024 and inform best practice for other events within the Event 365 calendar. A number of key improvements have already been identified, and officers are engaging with accessibility stakeholders including WeToo!, Aberdeen and the ACC Equalities team to identify and design further measures.

ACC are seeking support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to bring in additional professional expertise and advice around accessibility best practice, purchase infrastructure improvements to be used across city events, contract third sector accessibility support for Spectra, and to make additional key improvements to the visitor experience for those with additional support needs or accessibility requirements. Key improvements may include creation of BSL video tours to aide interpretation and sharing of safety information, use of assistive listening technology for deaf or hearing impaired visitors, creation of an optional pre-registration process and help-point for those with additional needs where staff and resources will be provided to ensure a safe and high quality visitor experience, and additional signage to highlight accessible routes and facilities.

Officers will work with City Events to identify any required infrastructure improvements which could be utilised for Spectra 2024 and possibly across additional events to address accessibility. The solutions will be informed by engagement with accessibility stakeholders to ensure they are appropriate and effective as well as providing best value for the Council against rental options.

Improvements to accessibility will be robustly assessed and officers will work with accessibility stakeholders to evaluate effectiveness and any further changes that can be made for future editions of Spectra or other events within the city's calendar.

5. Sport Aberdeen – Northfield Outdoor Sports Centre Refresh - £216,000 Requested

This project is considered “Phase 2” of the Masterplan to modernise facilities around the GetActive@Northfield site on Kepplehills Crescent. Phase 1 was completed in 2022 which saw the successful multi-million pound re-development of the swimming pool and gym facilities.

Phase 2 focuses on the adjoining outdoor sports centre site (historically offering putting, tennis and bowls facilities), with the aim of modernising the outdoor facilities to unlock the potential of a large outdoor venue to meet the needs of the local community and increase participation and usage levels.

As part of this phase Sport Aberdeen have already secured £83k from the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) Parks Tennis Fund to resurface the outdoor tennis courts (including preparatory work for floodlighting), with work due to be completed in October 23.

These improvements are designed to kick-start further developments. Given the scale of the site, the overall vision is to create an urban park, which would appeal to wide range of user groups focusing initially on:

- Installation of floodlighting for tennis courts
- Creating core paths, disability access and lighting across the site to better link existing facilities (and encourage walking & cycling opportunities) on site.
- Installation of outdoor fitness & play equipment
- Creating space for allotments, orchards or other sustainable growing programmes
- Building new changing facility (incl. General Purpose [GP] room) which could be accessed by site users (as well as users of the neighbouring 3G pitch)

Achieving this vision would have a transformational effect, repurposing currently poorly utilised green space into a focus for community activity that promotes healthy lifestyles regardless of age.

Key to the development of the site would be building of a modern changing facility (including GP room) to provide modern amenities on site which will be utilised by a range of users including football, tennis, bowls and other community groups.

Sport Aberdeen are also committed to working with the local community to reactivate the Northfield Community Sports Hub (dormant since Covid). The Community Sports Hub approach focuses on supporting and empowering local people to improve sport & physical activity in communities across Scotland. It starts with understanding the needs within a community and then collaborating to facilitate and deliver activities and interventions.

Consultation has been ongoing during 2023 to ensure local residents and community groups are engaged for feedback on the future of the site, to ensure that any proposed new facilities on site address local need.

Sport Aberdeen feel that the suggested improvements for the venue fit very well with the main objectives of the Communities and Place priorities of the UKSPF. We want to work in partnership with the local community to create a vibrant, multi-use green space which the community are proud

of, which develops a positive reputation for being a space where the community can meet to exercise, play and learn new skills.

Securing funding to initially address the connectivity of the site should then open up further opportunities to activate additional phases of improvement work as part of the overall site masterplan.

6. Aberdeen Chinese Women’s Association – Elderly Fun Day - £17,400 Requested

Aberdeen Chinese Women’s Association (ACWA) would like UKSPF Communities and Place funding because we have found it difficult to carry out our Aberdeen activities with limited funding.

- ACWA are mostly retired people, and our Association has tried to continue promoting our project, so we need financial support.
- Our events encourage members to take part in activities with the Aberdeen community.
- We organise a health talk, aerobics dance, singing contest, Chinese opera singing, puzzle, art classes, easy brain exercises for adults/seniors, board games and card games. These are great to encouraging social interaction and there are lots of old favourites, that are meaningful to their mind, spirit and body.
- We will also promote the spirit of care and mutual help and foster social harmony to ensure that the elderly enjoy their golden years.

| Expenditure |
|--|
| Christmas Gathering |
| Chinese New Year Gathering |
| Women’s Day March 8 (Annual General Meeting) |
| Mid-Autumn Mooncake Festival Gathering |

Local Business Support

1. Aberdeen City Council – City Centre Regeneration - £64,500 requested

The project proposed for UKSPF support is the creation of a City Centre Project Officer post. The purpose of this post is to support the Senior Project Officer to successfully draw together the lead partners involved in city centre economic activities and deliver the Union Street Empty Shops Action plan approved by Council in December 2022. The creation of an Officer post via the UKSPF fund would meet fund objectives, while supporting more widely:

- New, continued and strengthened engagement with city stakeholders and lead partners in order to deliver on the short, medium and long-term interventions of the Union Street Empty Shops Action Plan
- Collaboration with Aberdeen Inspired and Our Union Street, in line with Service Level Agreements

- Promotion, management and disbursement of the Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme
- Alignment and cohesion of the Action Plan and Grant Scheme with wider ACC city centre activity by the Masterplanning Team, Corporate Landlord, Local Development Officers and others
- Enhanced offering of Business Charter support

One of the key responsibilities of a post holder recruited through the project would be to support in managing and disbursing awards under the Union Street Empty Shops Grant Scheme. The grant scheme offers new tenants/businesses on Union Street a grant towards eligible project costs for the reconfiguration of vacant ground floor units for reoccupation. The grant scheme targets new or expanding local and national SMEs, offering capital support for new ventures which may not be able to launch otherwise.

Another key responsibility of a post holder recruited through the project would be facilitating collaboration across city centre stakeholders. As well as ACC service areas, these would include Aberdeen Inspired, Our Union Street, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Business Gateway, further and higher education establishments and city centre residents. Dovetailing policy and activities will bring together public and private partners with shared goals. Enabling resource and knowledge sharing will stimulate innovative solutions to the city's challenges, resulting in increased opportunities for businesses and a revitalised, energised city centre for the local community.

While there is dedicated officer resource across ACC service areas to progress many of the above activities, the allocation of capital for a grant scheme and the establishment of Our Union Street have led to workstreams growing significantly in scope and momentum since the beginning of the year. Dovetailing policy and activity across internal ACC services and external organisations will be vital to ensure resource is not duplicated and impact is maximised. Where pilot projects are successful there may be potential in the near future to increase geographical scope of these types of activity across the city.

The project will be managed by the Service Manager, with support of the Senior Project Officer, from within the City Growth cluster at Aberdeen City Council.

Aberdeen City Council's resources on project management will be consulted and applied where relevant. Close contact with the External Funding Team will be maintained to discuss any issues or challenges arising and to ensure adherence to guidance issued.

2. Aberdeen City Council – Digital Business Support programme - £125,350 requested

Supporting businesses to develop digital skills and assets is important for our businesses to stay ahead, continue to innovate and grow, and productively use the digital infrastructure investment funded through the City Region Deal. This Project builds upon work undertaken by the Business Gateway Digital Boost Programme. The Programme supported businesses for seven years but unfortunately funding is no longer available, and the scope has been reduced to an online offering only. This Project application therefore proposes more focused, bespoke interventions for individual businesses to include:

- 1-to-1 tailored adviser support of 1, 2 or 3 days;
- 1-to-1 surgeries of 1-2 hours per business;
- 1-to-few coaching sessions.

Continuing from the previous Digital Boost Programme, the key objectives of the Project are to strengthen the knowledge and skills of SMEs in Scotland about all aspects of digital technology, thus enabling them to enter new markets, trade internationally, increase business efficiency and therefore, through growth, potentially increase staff employed.

It is intended that if successful in securing funding, the Project will be led by an external provider following an open tender process in line with Council procurement regulations. The intended Project would be delivered across both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire with Aberdeenshire Council leading on this procurement.

The interventions will be free at the point of delivery for SMEs and it is intended that the support and consultancy provided will enable SME owners and employees to raise their skills and knowledge levels to enable them to adopt and optimise use of digital technology. The intention is not to execute tasks for clients. Client referrals will come from Business Gateway, partner organisations such as Enterprising Aberdeenshire and business-facing Council services.

While the external lead will deliver the support interventions and devise the support themes, it is likely these will include:

- Website Support
- Data Analytics
- Customisation of software or app development
- Social Media Development or Implementation
- Mobile or internet technologies
- Cloud Computing
- Digital Strategy
- Cyber Resilience

Consideration has been given to working with external partners to deliver a similar support offering, but the underlying principles of this service being objective (“honest broker”) advice, and free at the point of delivery, cannot be guaranteed.

Public sector partners, such as Scottish Enterprise or Opportunity North East, do offer digital support but this is aimed at the high growth segment of the business base rather than the volume segment – this segment is the role of local authorities via the Business Gateway brand.

Without UKSPF funding the Project would not be able to go ahead in Aberdeen City. There is no service provision like this currently available to businesses and without this we risk not meeting national strategy objectives on digital support for business. Lack of digital skills may have a knock-on effect on the ability of our local SMEs to continue to do business competitively and to grow, risking an impact on local jobs and employment opportunities.

Expenditures:

| Expenditure | Amount |
|---|---------------|
| 1-to-1 tailored Adviser Support <i>1, 2 or 3 days of support. Average 2 days per business/100 businesses</i> | £101,800 |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1-to-1 Surgeries <i>Average 2 hours per business/100 businesses</i> | £14,550 |
| 1-to-few Coaching Session <i>Average 3 hours per session/36 sessions with 4+ attendees per session</i> | £9,000 |
| Total Expenditure (£) | £125,350 |

Due to the previous Digital Boost Programme, we know that demand for digital support services is high and not being met by any other service for city businesses. During the 5 month period of operation by the Digital Boost Programme in 2022/23 there were:

- 50 x 1-to-1 projects
- 73 x 1-to-1 surgeries
- 24 x coaching sessions with 171 registrations

These figures have informed our planning for a 15-month service offering as part of this Project.

Utilising Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council's shared Procurement Service, an open tender process will be launched to identify a suitable consultant to deliver the Project activity. It may be the case that through PCS a framework of expert advisers is appointed to draw from in order to deliver the bespoke themed support intended for businesses. Aberdeenshire Council will lead on the procurement exercise. There are no anticipated challenges with attracting tender bids. Aberdeenshire Council has issued an RFI related to this planned tender and attracted 21 notices from businesses.

The intended process for referral is that interested businesses (engaged through Business Gateway or any other third party) will complete an application detailing its needs in terms of digital support, and the preferred format for this. The application will be reviewed by the Business Gateway Service Manager. Both Councils will have visibility of this process with the Business Gateway service due to be brought in-house from 2024 onwards. Business Gateway's involvement ensures impact and value from the project, utilising their existing CRM system to check applicants aren't accessing or receiving duplicate training and support.

If the application is approved then the contracted consultant, or a consultant from the contracted framework, will be appointed and engaged to deliver the support. As part of tender evaluation and award, the contractor's capacity and capability to deliver quality and relevant support as per the project will have been assessed and set out. The consultant will be required to provide a report on the support session offered for both the client, and for the Council for sign-off and payment. Again, Aberdeenshire Council will lead on this engagement between client and consultant and managing the payment process.

This process replicates the delivery method adopted by the successful Digital Boost Programme in which Business Gateway played a facilitating role, and thus prior experience has been gained to support delivery of this Project.

By adopting an application process which requires the Business Gateway manager to review and approve businesses for referral to the appointed consultant(s) we will retain an overview of demand, the support interventions being implemented and the frequency and format of these.

On the application form businesses will indicate if they are City or Shire based, so that spend across the two areas can be tracked and invoiced accordingly.

Following delivery, the consultant will need to complete reporting in order to receive payment which will again ensure direct Project costs are being tracked and recorded. The Aberdeenshire Council project lead will submit copies of this reporting and related invoices to Aberdeen City External Funding Team for proposed quarterly disbursement of the funding.

The Project will be managed by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Business Gateway. The three entities already work together on similar business support activities and with the Business Gateway service provision moving to in-house delivery from 2024 a wider 'Terms of Reference' for this collaborative partnership working is being worked on.

Procurement is already a shared process between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, and this tender will be led by Aberdeenshire Council due to them already having some Project funding in place.

The Project will be governed through existing Business Gateway governance. This operates as a shared service between the two Councils, and monthly meetings are held with the relevant Service Managers (Jim Johnstone and Gary Hughes) as well as quarterly meetings with Chief Officers (Paul Macari and Julie Wood).

People and Skills

1. Aberdeen City Council – HMP Grampian Construction Courses - £15,000 requested

Funding will be used to fund construction training and CSCS card accreditation to people nearing the end of their sentence in HMP Grampian who are to be released to Aberdeen and who have expressed an interest in entering, or re-entering, the construction sector which is suffering significant recruitment challenges (S31 Employment support for economically inactive people).

The vast majority of prisoners in HMP Grampian will be released to Aberdeen.

The Scottish Prison Service has a variety of training facilities within the prison and through collaborative working we have identified a range of opportunities to upskill people who are nearing the end of their sentences and who are keen to make positive progress in their lives, to train and move into roles in sectors which are experiencing skills and recruitment gaps in Aberdeen and the broader region.

Work is already underway with a training kitchen which has been kitted out in the jail and which, through work with an industry partner is already yielding positive results with prisoners voicing eagerness to participate and to "stay off report" so they can take part and complete the course.

There is significant interest within the prison population, and some degree of experience amongst inmates, in roles in the construction sector. In order to enter a construction site, individuals need at least a CSCS card.

This proposal seeks to secure funding to enable on-site CSCS training and assessment to equip individuals with an accredited qualification to enable them to move rapidly into sustainable and quality employment on their release from prison.

Industry partners are being sought for this and discussions are already underway with Aberdeen City Council contractors through community benefits clauses.

Anyone participating in this programme will receive employability keyworker support to help them secure and sustain employment on release, thus reducing the risk of falling back into unhealthy, risky or illegal activities.

2. Aberdeen City Council – Admin Apprenticeship - £38,023.34 requested

We will provide an administration modern apprenticeship to an individual who meets the criteria for No One Left Behind support, thereby upskilling an individual and in doing so support delivery of a range of employability activities and particularly UKSPF (S31 Employment Support).

The changes to employability provision and additional funding, which will see more commissioning of activities and a greater case load, bring with them an additional administrative support need. The apprenticeship will enable us to upskill an individual through accredited training, while also supporting the broader employability services delivery activity.

Aberdeen City Council offers guaranteed interview schemes for care experienced young people, school leavers who have attended city schools, people with disabilities, and refugees to anyone who meets the person specification for the role.

This post would be restricted to Aberdeen residents, in line with the funding, and inclusive recruitment practises will be in filling this post. Individuals currently receiving ABZWorks support who are interested in an admin career will be encouraged and supported by their employability keyworker to apply for the job.

3. Aberdeen City Council – English for Speakers of Other Languages - £70,000 requested

Funding will be used to commission full-time English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to support individuals to progress into employment or other positive destination.

At current time, only part-time courses are available, providing a few hours of English language training each week to individuals. As a result, it is taking a long time for people to make the necessary process with English language skills to not only engage with local life at basic level – including medical appointments, liaising with official bodies including their children's schools, the DWP, and local authority, but also significantly limiting their employment prospects. This also stymies their ability to integrate into their communities and Aberdeen society.

Aberdeen has a high population of displaced Ukrainian people – some very highly qualified professionals including doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, engineers, and nuclear physicists. The city also has a significant and growing number of Afghan refugees, Syrian refugees, and currently has three hotels full of asylum seekers, with more than one hundred shortly due to obtain the right to work. Language is a significant barrier to employment for the vast majority of them, and this is evidenced in research carried out by the Employability and Skills team.

In addition, the city also has a high population of migrants from other parts of the world who also struggle to secure employment as a result of the language barrier, and a high proportion of these people are experiencing poverty.

Aberdeen has a number of skills gaps in key sectors and needs qualified, experienced people to fill those roles, as well as to fill entry level roles across the all sectors in the city.

By commissioning full-time ESOL courses we will be able to support people to more rapidly progress in life and employment, and to contribute to the local economy.

4. Aberdeen City Council – Pilot Projects for People with Long-Term Health Issues or Disabilities
- £70,626 requested

Statistics show that a high number of people are economically inactive as a direct result of long-term health issues or disability. Added to this are high numbers of people suffering with ill health or who have a disability who are struggling to enter employment or sustain employment.

We will develop and test a series of pilot projects designed to support people with disabilities and/or long-term health issues, including long Covid to progress along the employability pipeline and secure and/or sustain their employment. This will support economically inactive people into employment (S31 Employment support for economically inactive people).

This will fit not only with Fair Work activities and ongoing efforts to make Aberdeen a more inclusive city through a range of employer engagement activities, it will also help individuals to realise their own work readiness and abilities, and to progress towards and into good quality employment.

We will offer, through our commissioning framework and internal services, the opportunity to develop small scale projects for people with a variety of health challenges and disabilities, including long-Covid, to enable a test and learn approach, creating co-designed activities with the needs of the individuals at the heart. Through this approach we will learn more about needs of individuals, challenges which need to be addressed, and opportunities for scaling up activities.

The aim of this project is to take an inclusive approach to supporting people into quality employment and support them out of poverty, improving their overall wellbeing outcomes and lives.

We will work with a variety of partners throughout this project to ensure a broad range of support and expertise is available as the test and learn pilots are developed.

These pilots will also help to build the capacity of local training providers, enabling them to broaden their knowledge, skills, and expertise in providing services to people with health issues and/or disabilities, and to be in a stronger position to win contracts which may be offered through No One Left Behind funding in due course.

5. Aberdeen City Council – Skill Audit - £60,000 requested

We will carry out a skills audit to determine the skills needs and skills base of individuals living in the city's priority areas. This will not only give a clearer view of the needs which require to be addressed, but also inform commissioning of employability services and feed into the work of the Local Employability Partnership and Employability Training Providers Forum to target the right support where it is needed. This will also inform delivery of the skills element of the Regional Economic Strategy and associated Skills Action Plan.

It is several years since the last audit was carried out and the local economy has changed significantly since then, with the advent of Covid, increased remote working, downturn in the oil and gas sector, move towards renewables, a cost of living crisis, increased poverty and higher levels of mental and physical health challenges faced by people.

Additionally, high numbers of displaced people, refugees, and asylum seekers have moved into the city. It is necessary to capture the new skills base and training needs to enable us to accurately determine needs and develop the necessary services across the city to ensure the economic growth and development of Aberdeen, and ensuring we have the necessary skilled workforce while moving people out of poverty and into quality employment.

The audit will serve a dual purpose, in that it will take information about employability services directly to people's doors, thus helping to build knowledge of and access to a broad range of employability support and removing or reducing one of the immediate barriers that individuals face.

We are currently mapping employability services provision across the city, from official providers down to grass root level. This skills audit will tie into that work and form a LEP action to identify geographic areas in most need of support, barriers to employment by area, and develop strategies to tackle and address these and part of the ongoing work of the LEP.