



Economic Growth & Resilience Plan Consultation

Report by Consultation & Engagement Team

March 2024

1. Background and methodology

Between 15th January and the 17th March 2024, Bolton Council ran a public consultation seeking to engage residents and stakeholders, including businesses, in sharing their reflections on a draft Economic and Resilience Plan/Strategy for Bolton. The strategy, which centres around three economic prosperity themes: People; Business and Investment, sets out nine priorities to attract investment and business growth, deliver borough wide regeneration projects, and address barriers to employment and skills that many residents face.

During the consultation period a comprehensive communication plan was implemented to raise awareness of the draft strategy across the borough, with a strong emphasis on engaging strategic partners and businesses. The consultation process sought to gain views on the strategy, indicating what the Council and its partners should be doing to promote economic growth that's sustainable in supporting people and businesses to overcome the challenges they face.

To support engagement, feedback was obtained from businesses at the 'Bolton means Business' event on Tuesday 5th March. At the event specific feedback was obtained on the 'Business' theme of the strategy. Further to this, an email was distributed to all key stakeholders, including Elected Members and community groups. Supporting documentation was made accessible on the Council's consultation webpages and social media was heavily utilised throughout the period to share key messages about the consultation. This engagement was also replicated by the 'Business Bolton' team.

Participants were surveyed using a questionnaire tool made up of open and closed questions, over a period of 8 weeks, providing respondents the opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts on the proposal. The questionnaire was made available both digitally and offline, with the questionnaire being accessible on the council's consultation web page, as well as in hard copy format, on request.

*A copy of the questionnaire is included at the end of this document, located in Appendix A.

Analysis notes

- Results are presented in the questionnaire format with 'Don't know' type responses removed unless stated.
- Comments have been categorised where feasible. Unless otherwise stated, categories with 3 or more responses are shown. Categories may overlap and a comment from one respondent included in multiple categories. A sample of comments [verbatim] are included in the report. Comments may be abbreviated so that only the relevant extract is included. One comment may be coded into multiple categories, and each category may only cover a certain aspect of the comment, for example a respondent may have made both positive and negative comments about the same aspect.
- Base: unless otherwise stated the base is the number of respondents to a particular question.
- Data has been cleansed where appropriate, e.g., comments moved into existing responses.

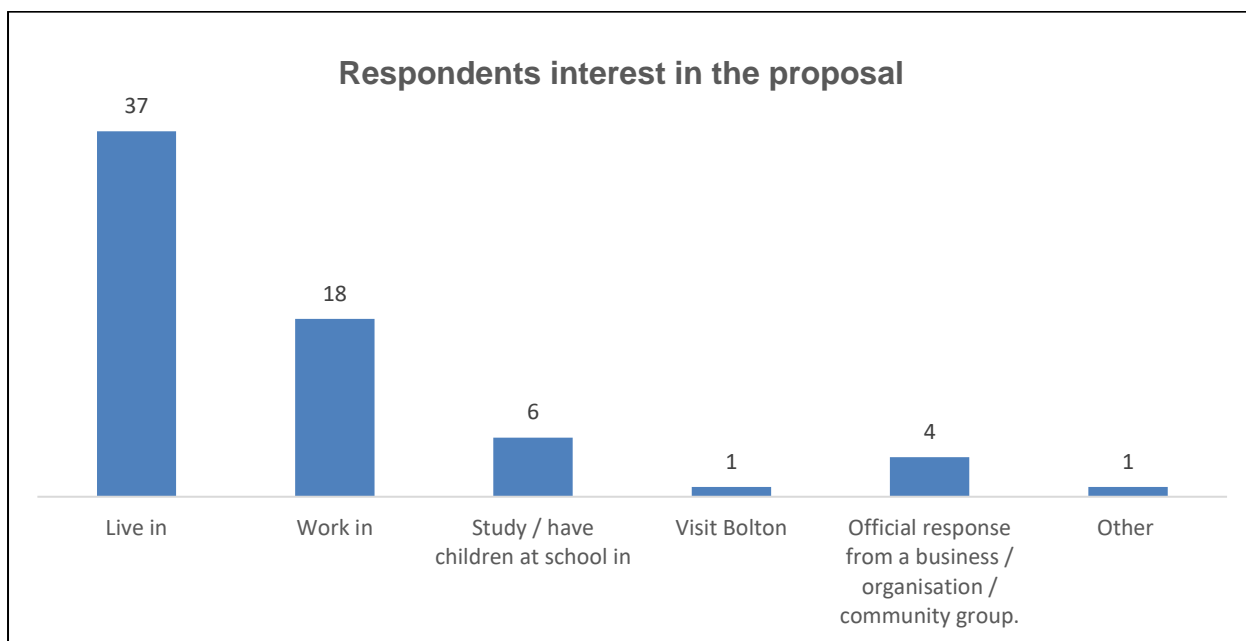
2. Consultation responses

A number of open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to give respondents the opportunity to comment on the proposal, suggest alternative approaches to the thematic within the strategy and outline strengths and challenges within the document.

Throughout the consultation period the following responses were received:

- 45 responses were received via the public consultation.
- 37 representatives were received from the business community and fed back via the 'Bolton means Business' event.
- 1 formal response was received from the Federation of Small Businesses (refer to Appendix B)

From those that engaged in the public consultation, 37 are resident in the borough; 18 work in the borough; and 6 study or have children at school in Bolton. Those that answered 'other' had previously invested in business / regeneration programmes in Bolton. Official responses were also received from 4 businesses and community sector organisations.



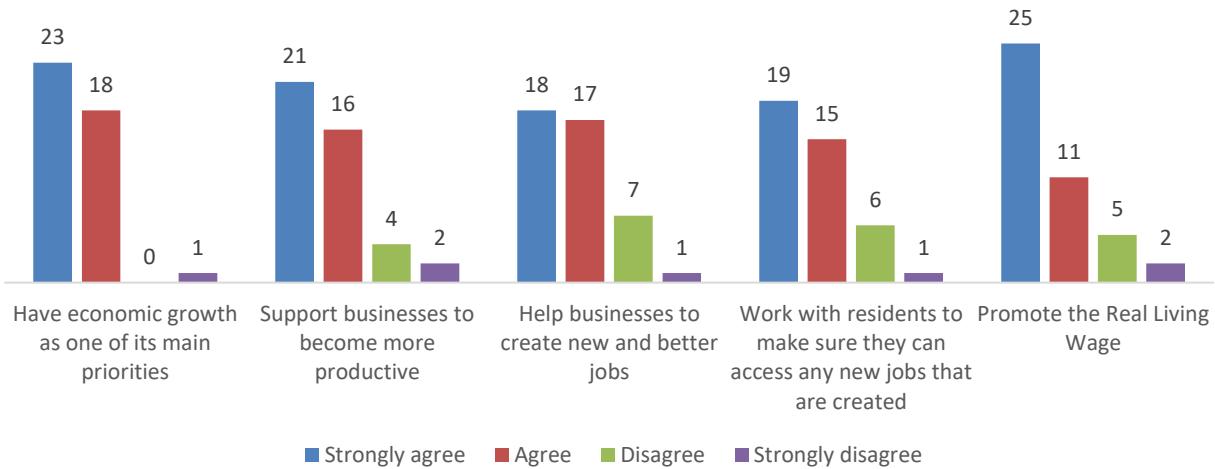
Base: 44

General principles

3a. Principle statements

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect on the General Principles outlined within the strategy. Of the 5 principle statements defined, 42 stakeholders provided their reflections. Greatest agreement was highest amongst the principles 'have economic growth as one of its main priorities' (41 agreed); 'support businesses to become more productive' (37 agreed); and 'promote the Real Living Wage' (36 agreed).

Please say how far you agree or disagree with the following statements about these principles and the general role of Bolton Council in supporting economic growth.



Base: 42

3b. Reasons for disagreement

12 stakeholders went on to outline why they disagreed with some of the principles within the plan. The majority of respondents stated that the principles should be left to the business community to decide and implement, and that it is not the role of the local authority (9 responses). Equally, it was felt that *'Bolton Council should concentrate on other things'*, and *'shouldn't get involved in the wage levels'* of the economic sector.

Where other comments were outlined, these reflected the clean and green agenda:

"CLEAN and SECURE streets/environment is the job of the council, these are necessary but not profitable in the short term for businesses. These could be made profitable with long term thinking like recycling, transport and education. It's in these types of 'businesses' councils should run and make profitable indirectly through local taxation and quality of life."

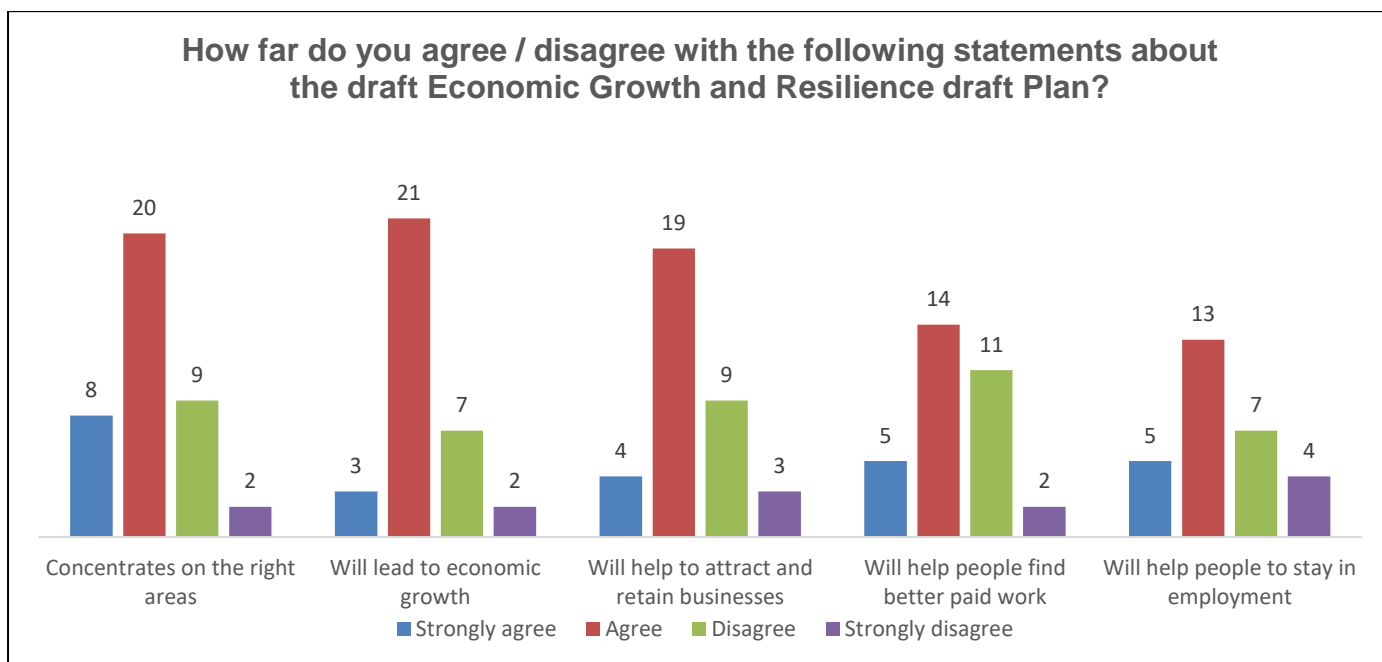
If you disagree, why is that?



Base: 12

3c. Impact and sustainability of general statements

Residents and stakeholders were asked to reflect on the whether the strategy will be impactful and sustainable. Looking across 5 areas, 39 residents provided their reflections, with all areas seeing overall agreement. Stakeholders felt most strongly that the strategy ‘focuses on the right areas’ (28 agreed); ‘will lead to economic growth’ (24 agreed); and ‘will help to attract and retain businesses’ (23 agreed). It should be noted that 12 stakeholders also disagreed with this final statement.



Base: 39

Of those that disagreed with the statements, 16 individuals went to comment further. These comments have been categorised into the following themes.

a. General disagreement with the strategy

Whilst 1 comment provided general agreement to the proposal, “encouraging businesses to come to Bolton will increase economic value”, 7 comments reflected the general disagreement with the principles laid out within the strategy.

- “The ten year plan is all well and good, but we need to get through the next couple of years first!”
- “I’m not sure I’m completely convinced by the plan. It feels like it’s warm words and I’m not sure how and where it’s backed by business.”
- “Your plan has no substance or detail.”
- “No guarantee that companies will employ local people or pay the correct wage after they have got the council paying for everything”.
- “The council is not the nanny”.

b. Confidence to deliver

6 comments were received that referenced a lack of confidence in the Council’s ability to deliver an effective strategy and action plan.

- *“Bolton Council can’t run their own Council in a proper manner therefore are in the wrong place to give advice to Bolton businesses”.*
- *“If the council employed some people with retail experience then they would know better how to save the town from dying.”*
- *“The draft plan says the master plan however, there is no detail about this master plan and I have no faith in Bolton council delivering this as Bolton town centre has been destroyed”.*

c. Place based agenda

4 comments arose concerning the place based agenda and regeneration.

- *“Bolton has poor land values. There is nowhere for businesses to expand in Bolton”.*
- *“Plan is majority Bolton town centre which will not attract enough business. The towns need to be more supported using the assets they have to attract business to them.”*
- *“Please define “areas” Is it areas of the town or areas of industry?”*

d. Employment opportunities

3 comments focus on the development and retention of employment opportunities, particularly in growth industries.

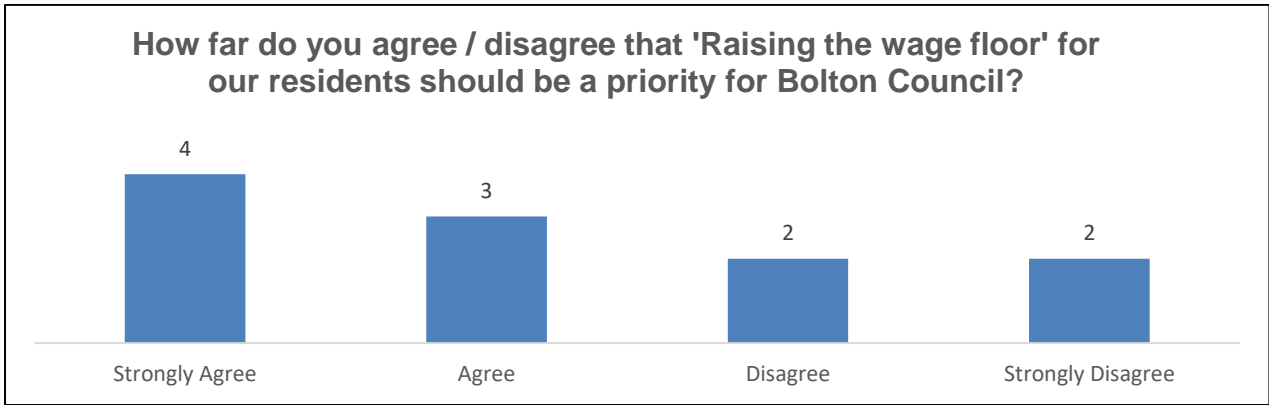
- *“The towns need to be more supported using the assets they have to attract business to them. Local people getting local jobs”.*
- *“Insufficient emphasis on green jobs - surely a major component if the town is serious about net zero. No mention of Greenworks - what has happened to this initiative?”*
- *“People are capable of finding better paid work if they want to.”*

Other comments focus on challenges around increasing visitor numbers to Bolton’s attractions, with residents opting to shop in neighbouring towns and retail parks, *“It’s clear that a lot of local Bolton people , especially those with a disposable income have gotten out of the habit of shopping local”*; *“you need to help the retailers by getting them more customers & encouraging more shoppers into town”*; and *“sort parking”*.

Key themes and priorities

4a. People: Priority One (Raising the wage floor)

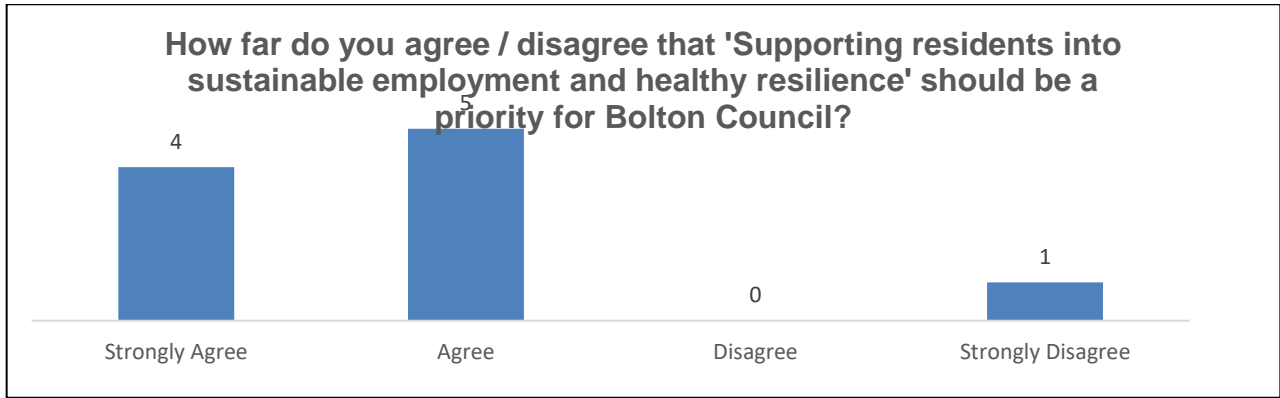
Residents and stakeholders were asked to consider whether ‘raising the wage floor’ for residents should be a priority for Bolton Council and its partners. Of the 11 responses received, 7 individuals agree with the priority.



Base: 11

4b. People: Priority Two (Supporting residents into sustainable employment and healthy resilience)

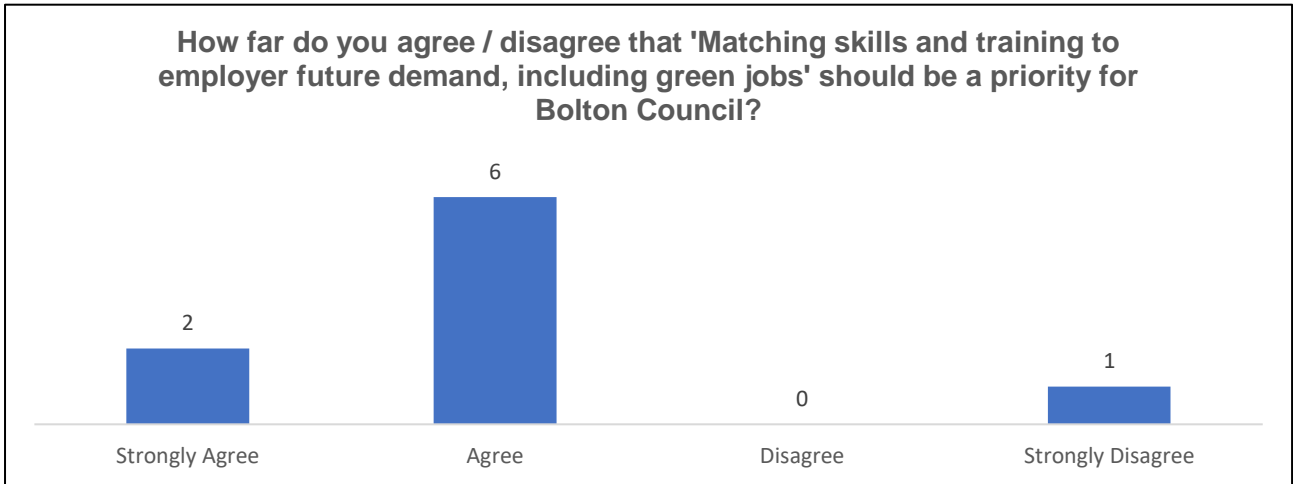
10 stakeholders reflected upon Bolton Council supporting residents in progressing into sustainable employment. 9 individuals agree this should be a priority for the Council within the strategy.



Base: 10

4c. People: Priority Three (Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green jobs)

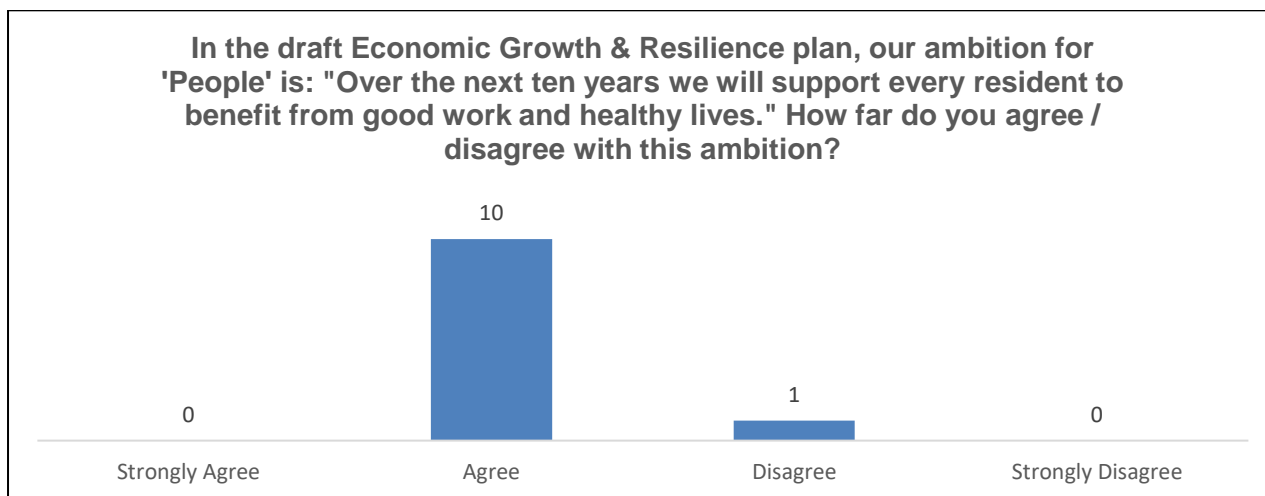
Stakeholders were asked to reflect on the relationship between industry demand, and skills and training. Of the 9 individuals responding to the question, 8 believe this should be a priority within the strategy.



Base: 9

4d. People: The Ambition

Stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the whole ambition for the 'People' theme and whether they agree with the principle that 'over a 10 year period, Bolton Council and its partnership will support every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives'. Of the 11 responses received, 10 agreed with the ambition.



Base: 11

4e. People: The overall priorities

Overall, 6 out of 7 respondents agree with the general 'People' priorities. When asked whether the strategy should be doing anything further to enable and encourage residents into better paid employment, 6 comments were received.

- *"I think promoting the Real Living Wage is the right approach. Bolton Council should become a Real Living Wage employer in order to do so."*
- *"If you're genuine about this, then as a council you should make a public commitment to never contract with or work with any organisation that's not a living wage employer, otherwise you're being disingenuous."*
- *"Struggling businesses may find it difficult to pay more and still make enough profit to survive. I think there should be some leniency/discretion in how the policy is applied".*
- *"Talk to them and see what their plans and ambitions are. Ask why they are in lower paid employment".*
- *"Trying to set up a business is not easy, why not help provide environments for people to try and make small businesses without the legal hassles, red tape and heavy financial RISKS; they do this in Hong Kong. They have buildings with small kiosks like an indoor market, they are clean, high tech and secure; people can meet, learn and buy. There are places like this in Manchester but not for 'ordinary' people."*
- *"The immediate first priority should be to help stop small shops closing down in the town centre.... Before it becomes a ghost town.... Encourage locals back into town by offering them some incentives".*

Two final remarks were received that reflect upon the 'People' thematic:

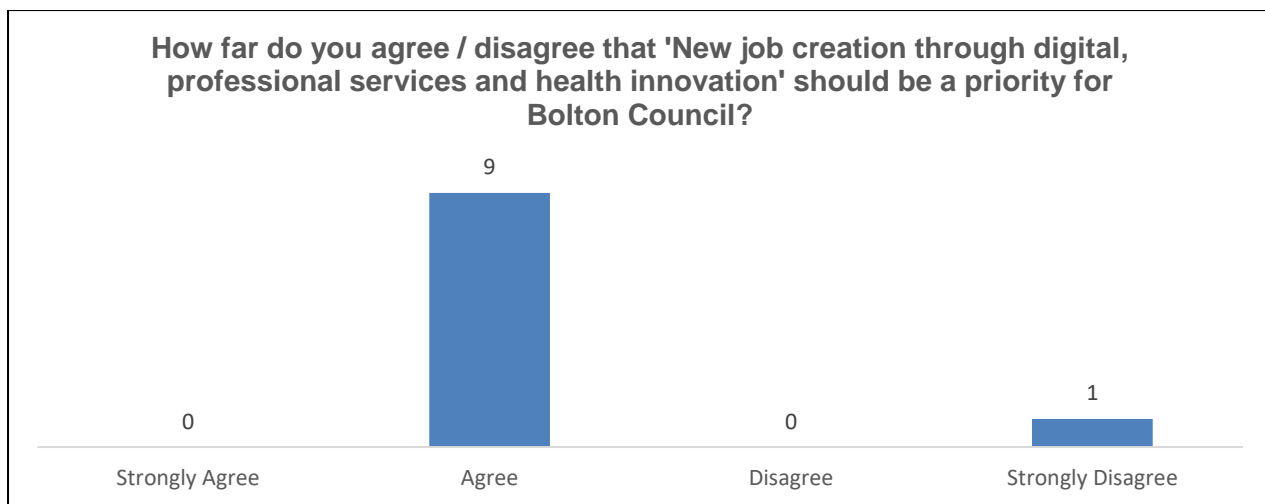
“If you pressure the local small shops to increase their wages right now then they will cut hours, lay off staff & or close down. First you need to help them become profitable, especially local small traders who’ll re spend in Bolton, not multi nationals or those businesses that are not from Bolton”.

“The plan will not work unless a better culture can be created. This can be done in small hubs that establish a good culture and are supported; allow them to grow naturally. There are examples around the area in collectives and cooperatives”.

Business

5a. Business: Priority One (New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation)

Residents and stakeholders were asked to consider whether ‘new job creation, through digital, professional services and health innovation’ should be a priority for Bolton Council and its partners. Of the 10 responses received 9 individuals agreed with the priority.

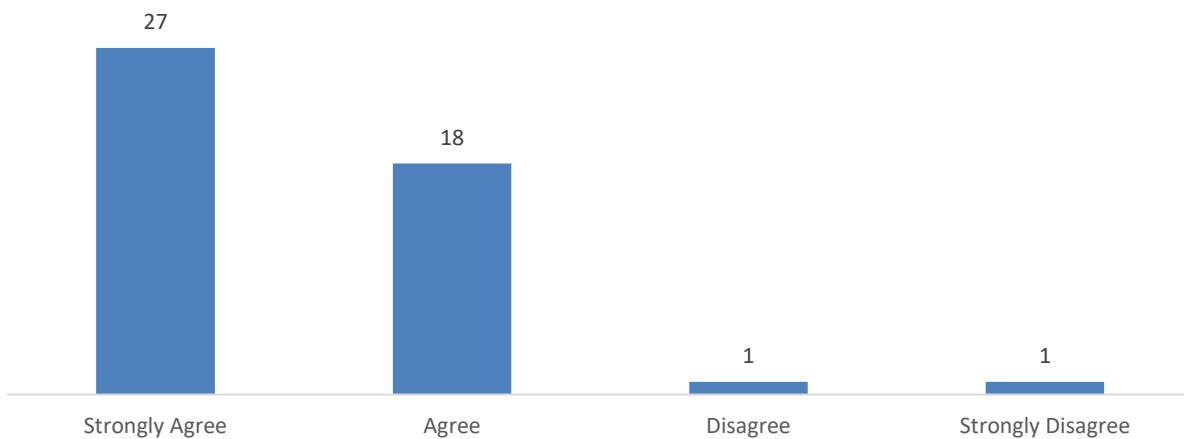


Base: 10

5b. Business: Priority Two ('Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester – Lancashire manufacturing corridor')

47 stakeholders reflected upon the Manchester to Lancashire manufacturing corridor and whether maximising on this asset should be a priority for the borough. Individuals at the ‘Bolton means Business’ event also reflected upon this priority. A total of 47 responses were received, which outline overwhelmingly (45 respondents) that this should be a priority within the strategy.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester - Lancashire manufacturing corridor' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

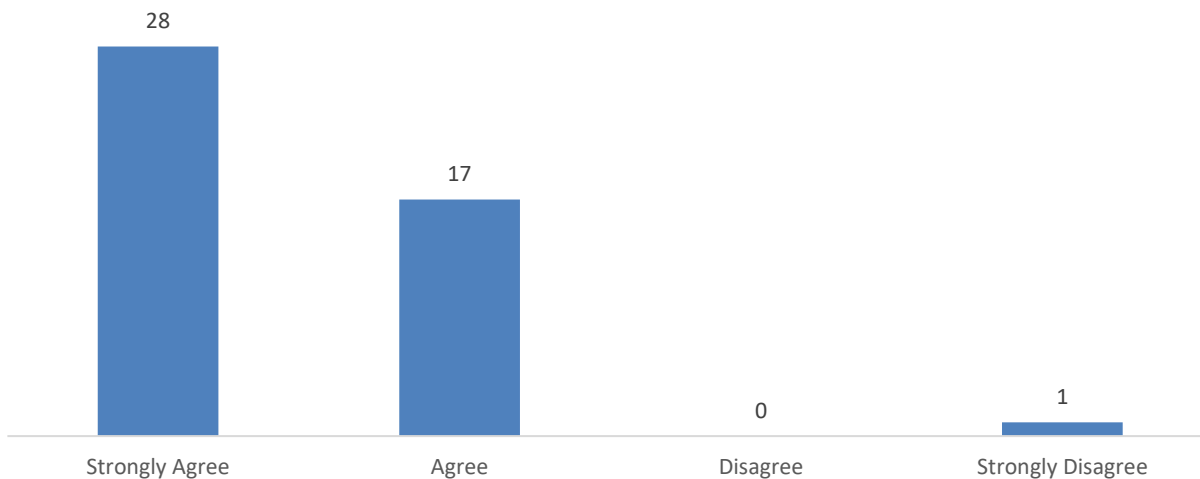


Base: 47

5c. Business: Priority Three (Supporting scale-ups and business growth)

Stakeholders were asked to reflect on whether emphasis should be on business scale-ups and growth. Again, delegates at the 'Bolton means Business' event were also encouraged to provide their reflections. Of the 46 individuals responding to the question, 45 believe this should be a priority within the strategy.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Supporting scale-ups and business growth' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

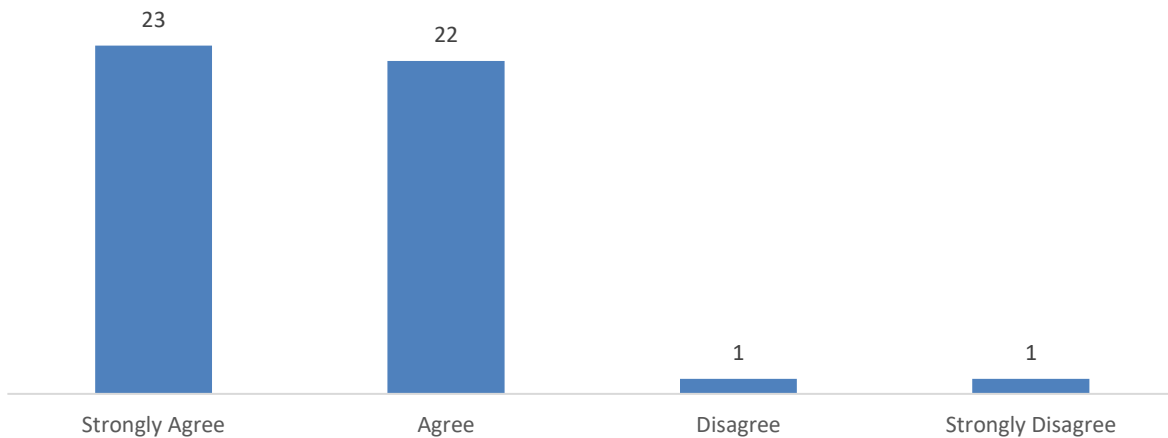


Base: 46

5d. Business: The ambition

Stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the whole ambition for the 'Business' theme and whether they agree with the principle that 'over a 10 year period, Bolton Council and its partnership should maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester'. Of the 47 responses received, 45 agree with the ambition.

"Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester" How far do you agree / disagree with this ambition?

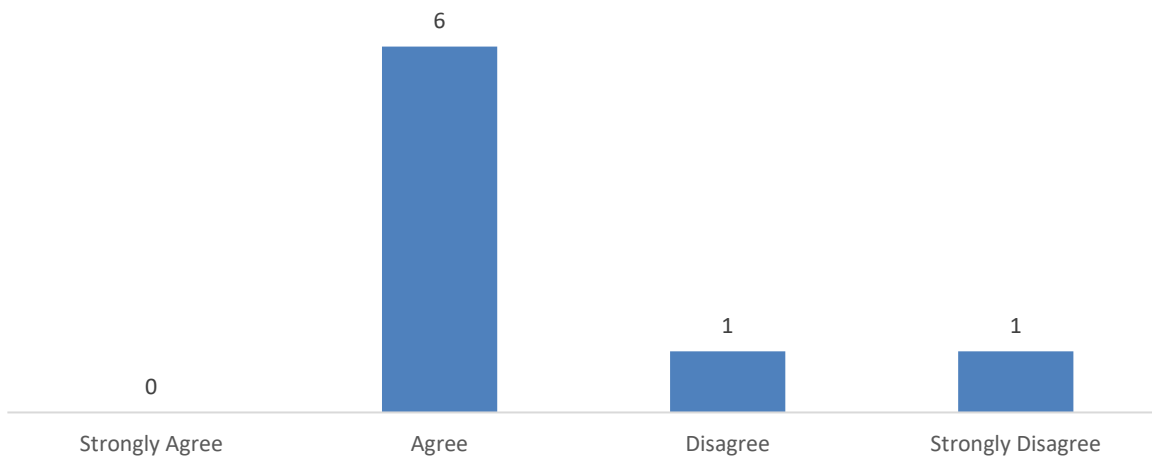


Base: 47

5e. Business: The overall priorities

Overall, 6 out of 8 respondents agree with the general 'Business' priorities. When asked whether the strategy should be doing anything further to enable and encourage businesses to start up and develop in the Bolton borough, 7 comments were received.

How far do you agree / disagree that the three priorities in the Business section will help Bolton Council achieve this ambition?



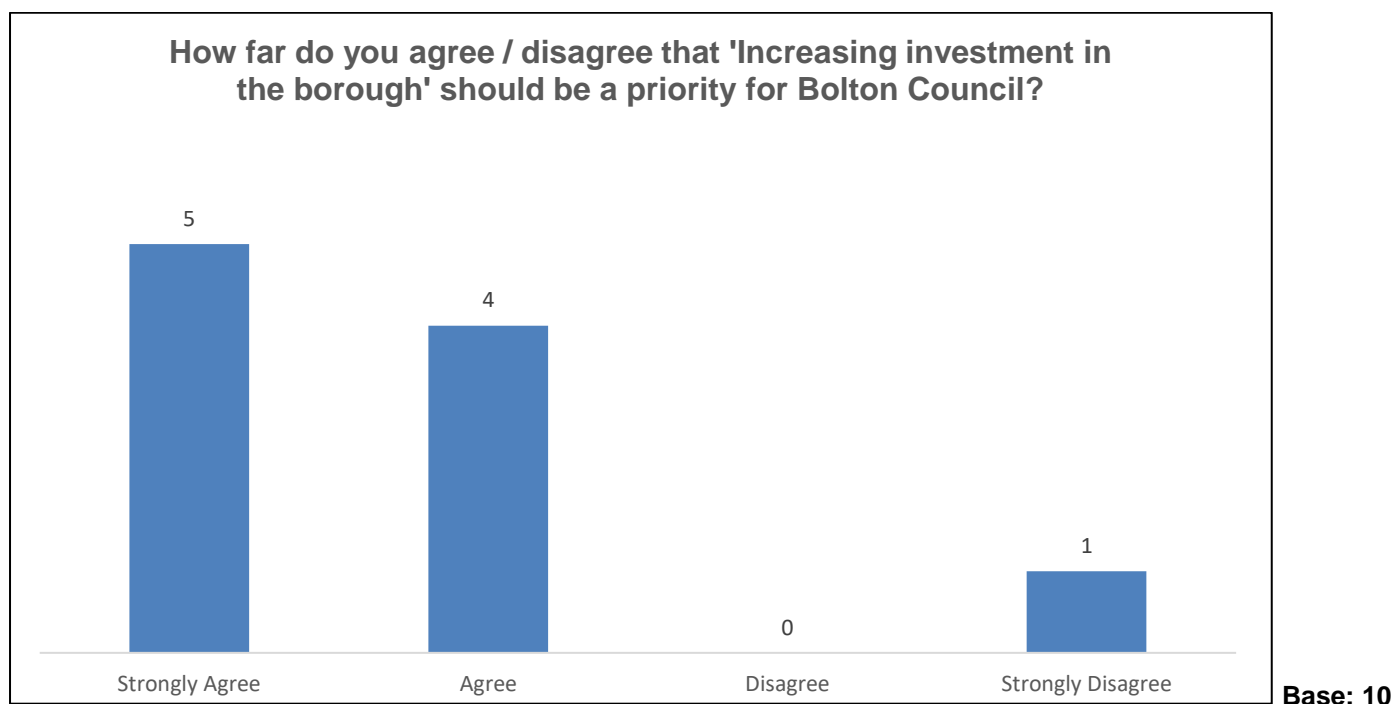
Base: 8

- “It's okay to have a plan but it is on shaky foundations. Focus on the basics, like: parking, security, cleaning the town up and bringing the various communities together under banner projects they can organise, find purpose and help to make work with council support.”
- “Make sure the closed premises in the town centre are reopened - this would give the impression that Bolton is thriving, rather than that the economy is declining.”
- “Not sure but I feel this strategy contains everything and the danger is that by saying you'll do everything nothing actually gets properly done.”
- “I really like the independent business section of Chorley Town Centre, it feels like a bold idea to steal”.
- “Reduce rates/ council tax to reflect the vastly reduced retail property values & the greatly reduced foot fall in the town centre”.
- “There are no business grants available for SME's”.

Investment

6a. Investment: Priority One (Increasing investment in the borough)

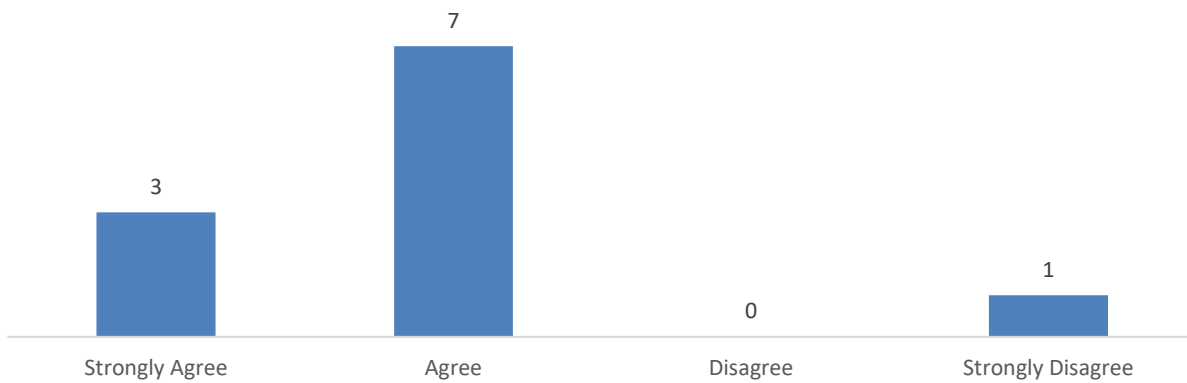
Respondents were asked to consider whether 'increasing investment in the borough should be a priority for Bolton Council and its partners. Of the 10 responses received 9 individuals agreed with the priority.



6b. Investment: Priority Two (Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub)

11 stakeholders reflected upon whether 'bold diversification of the town centre, as a major urban hub', should be an investment priority for the borough. 10 respondents agree.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

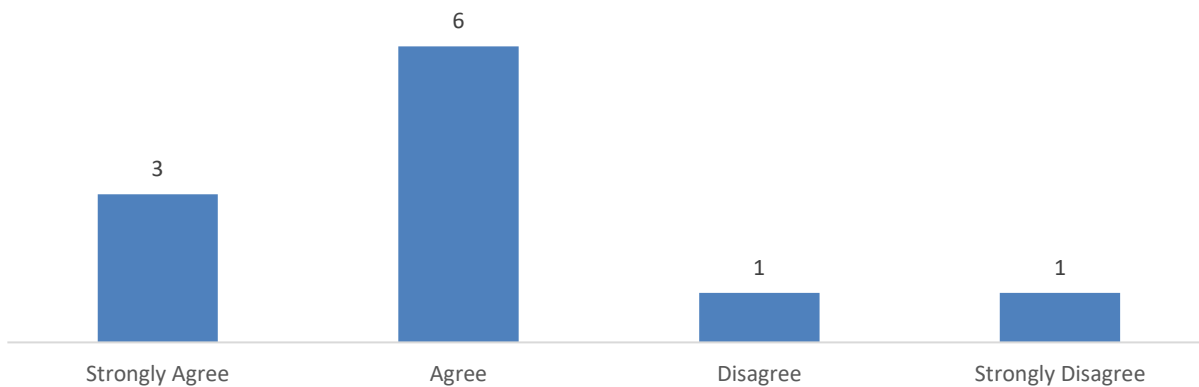


Base: 11

6c. Investment: Priority Three ('Thriving and resilient communities')

Stakeholders were asked to reflect on whether emphasis should be on 'creating thriving and resilient communities'. Of the 11 individuals responding to the question, 9 believe this should be a priority within the strategy.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Thriving and resilient communities' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

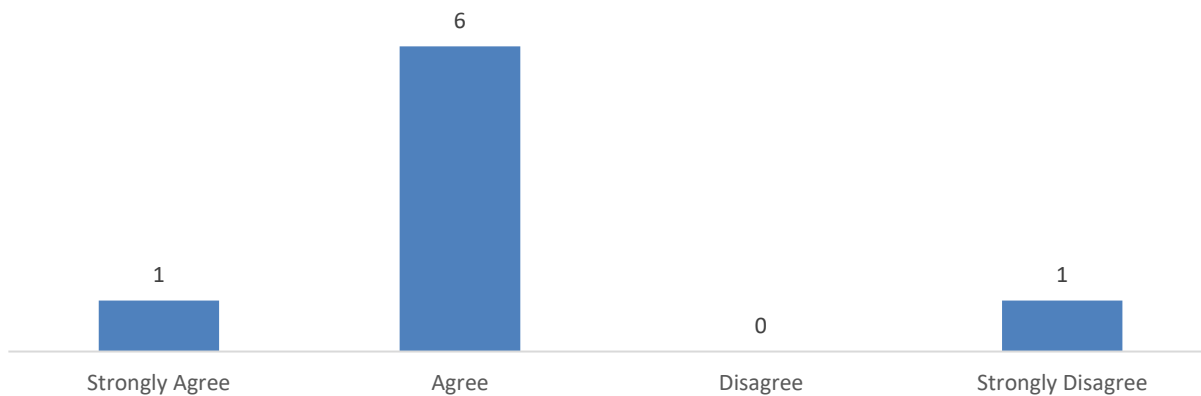


Base: 11

6d. Investment: The ambition

Stakeholders were asked to reflect upon the whole ambition for the 'Invest' theme and whether they agree with the principle that 'over a 10 year period, Bolton Council and its partnership will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work'. Of the 8 responses received, 7 agree with the ambition.

"In ten years we will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work." How far do you agree / disagree with this ambition?

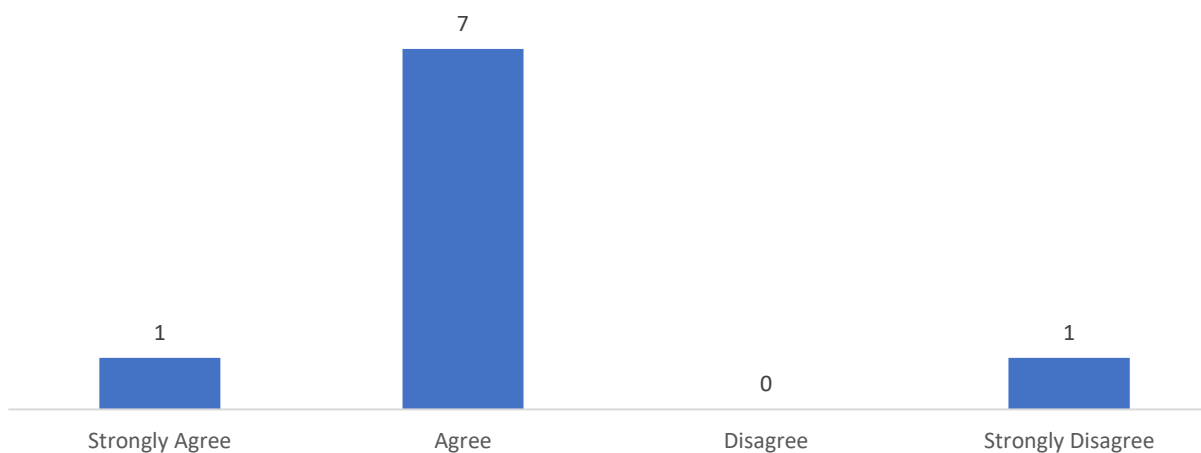


Base: 8

6e. Investment: The overall priorities

Overall, 8 out of 9 respondents agree with the general 'Investment' priorities. When asked whether the strategy should be doing anything further to encourage investment in the borough, 8 comments were received.

How far do you agree / disagree that the three priorities in the Investment section will help Bolton Council achieve this ambition?



Base: 9

- *“Over the past 10 years the Council have deliberated and cogitated over the decline of the Town Centre what makes you think that by saying these magic words of another 10 years you will do anything different? Promise much and then deliver little be careful”.*
- *“Business rate reduction and grant schemes i.e energy savings not available to SME's in bolton.”*
- *“Develop a clean up plan to make the place look better, especially derelict plots.”*
- *“I think that the visitor and cultural economy should be critical to reviving our town centre and stimulating wider economic growth. The night time economy needs urgent and radical change. Working with communities and supporting community-led enterprises, cultural programmes, and small businesses is a must.”*
- *“I want to see the baseline data and measures to track progress, otherwise it's just words. Bolton Council should let go of the big events and have an events specialist lead on that programme as a 'spin out' enterprise/marketing hub.”*
- *“Make sure that the investments you do make aren't wasted - for example, Farnworth centre has been declining in recent years, but building some fancy flats will not necessarily improve it. People may just think "I'm not paying that much to live in a place where half the shops are shut." Maybe move slowly and start by upgrading or extending existing streets and see whether that makes a difference.”*
- *“You do not help our retailers by letting out stalls to outside traders coming in & taking the local spend away from them. Eg during food festivals the local cafes take virtually nothing..... How do you expect them to pay their expenses and survive?”*
- *“It's definitely a good idea to build more flats in the town centre. You need to be careful to encourage more people to live, work & spend in Bolton especially with small local shops & not spend out of Bolton”.*

General reflections

7a. General comments

7 general comments were received which span a number of themes, including support for Town Centre businesses and growth aspirations; improving the transport infrastructure; and investing in the labour and skills market.

- *“More apprenticeships. More accessible business hubs for all residents in bolton to experiment in setting up a business with minimal risk and support (not a free for all). Allow residents to innovate, make it a competition to come up with ideas to help Bolton”.*
- *“There is great potential in other hubs such as Westhoughton and Horwich. They should be marketed as NTE areas as they're a nicer experience than Bolton's NTE. More work needs to be done to invest in culture marketing, including the theatre”.*
- *“Try to preserve the theatres, the libraries and the pubs - all things which draw people into their communities.”*

- “Build a roof over Newport st. Save the town... free parking for at least a couple of years to bring shoppers back”.
- “Grants to local business”.
- “Bolton market.”
- “The transport network needs to greatly improve, movement out of the borough restricts employees, with roads and trains overly in demand and not enough infrastructure”.

7b. Further ideas

24 individuals choose to provide further recommendations for consideration within the draft strategy. These have been categorised into the following themes:

a. Place and Regeneration

8 comments reflect upon place based assets, investment and regeneration, including ‘cleaner / greener’ growth. Bolton Town Centre was particularly highlighted as a geographical area that needed significant investment and regeneration.

- *“It seems that Bolton council are being near sighted and looking at the town centre as their priority. Although other towns are mentioned, it doesn’t consider the towns people getting the new build via social housing which is desperately needed. Although some large companies are using out of town sites, all towns need large companies moving into them otherwise the towns will look like Bolton town centre. No shops, no footfall. Out of town centres are okay but all the towns need investment and attractions and events.”*
- *“Like any Major town and City our town has potential but has a lot of run down places with poor infrastructure. Most businesses thrive in areas that can promise security, accessibility and return on investment”*
- *“Like seeds; small business hubs with the right support, environment and culture will grow. Think small and Think quality!”*
- *“The town centre is no longer attractive”.*
- *“The council needs to work harder to tackle litter and fly tipping in the town to make it look tidy and make it a place that people want to invest in. Empty and derelict buildings must be brought back in to use. The town centre needs a huge amount of work to make it a place where people want to work and shop. The pavements should be jet washed.*
- *“The town needs to feel good about itself. If it can do that, then this will attract businesses into the town. If the town looks shabby, unkempt and tired, then why would you bring your business here.”*

- *“To me there's insufficient emphasis in this plan on green growth. Let's build a reputation as a green town, one which puts green growth at the top of the agenda - green jobs in terms of retrofitting old properties to improve energy ratings (a win-win-win situation - creates jobs, reduces fuel poverty, helps meet the town's net zero promise). Let's demand the highest possible green spec in all our new builds, and let's influence the whole of GMCA to do the same. Resurrect Greenworks - not a mention of this, which was a flagship initiative in the Climate Strategy.”*
- *“Where are your regeneration plans? Focuses too much on business. It is short sighted to think the council should not play a hand in development. The development at Moor Lane is hardly enticing to attract people to live in the town centre”.*

b. Employment and People

6 comments focus on the importance of supporting the town's residents and creating opportunities to prosper. Comments reflect the need to invest in skills, training and employment, whilst capitalising on the town's assets, including its diversity.

- “Invest in people and all the other things will fall in place”.
- “Businesses are vital to providing jobs to the people with Bolton, giving them some financial security and pride in their own town.”
- “Living standards and opportunity for people is essential, the living wage needs to be at the very least £15 an hour. SME needs supporting and subsidising to achieve this and to encourage growth. Health will improve when people can afford to buy healthier choices and not forced to eat cheap processed food because of poverty.”
- “More ambition is needed with the benefits around Bolton's diversity, particularly global languages spoken and being a creative & University town compared to our neighbours.”
- “The council does nothing for most people to improve their lives”.
- “Provide more rigorous training for young adult.”

c. Roles and responsibilities

7 comments focus on roles and responsibilities within the plan. This includes the role of the Council and its wider partners and elected members.

- *“Bolton Council is a catalyst and multiplier and not the owner of economic growth. I want to see an economic board of advisors [triple bottom line specialists] that advise the council [with different sized business and economic generators, including housing and the VCSE] as a progressive board for economic development.”*
- *“Do what business ask of you, don’t fudge around with social nudging. You’re a council, not a government.”*
- *“The council needs to concentrate on its day job”.*
- *“The council should help create the environment for growth but should not be involved in wages and business development. That is for the government.”*
- *“Need to have someone specifically looking after the interests of small shops. Many need help & guidance in how to improve their business. You need to visit them during their quiet hours to assess & listen & then find ways to help them increase their sales & maybe overcome problems they maybe having”.*
- *“People do not feel safe in the town centre. The police and or a private security company need to clamp down on the beggars, drunks and reprobates who deter visitors”.*
- *“There is a very high risk of politics interfering with the businesses and we risk having councillors benefitting from collaborations with businesses. Independent panels free from councillors and council employees should be put in place to oversee the councils role in each business that gets support. Any councillor with direct or indirect involvement with any business should have to declare their interests and be removed from any decisions regarding that business if the independent panel sees fit.”*

d. Resourcing

5 comments specifically focus on resourcing suggestions. These include offering free carparking as a way of boosting visitor numbers to the town and reducing business rates. A comment was also received that recommended that procurement contracts be reviewed and awarded to local businesses.

- *“Car parking needs”.*
- *“Town centre car parking is expensive and inconvenient. Free parking needs to return to boost town centre retail.”*
- *“Support new and diversified ideas, making annual arrangements for popular artist to visit our town and venues”.*
- *“Reduce business rates to help bring businesses to the area, increasing footfall, wider benefits to local economy and increase demand for skills and workers”.*
- *“We need to adopt the Preston model of ensuring that we not only create wealth within the town but keep it in the town. The council should lead the way in ensuring that the money it spends on contracts goes to local firms or at the very least firms employing local people, as well as ensuring that the procurement process has a built-in environmental impact assessment”.*

e. Economic Plan

3 comments reflect upon the overarching objectives of the strategic plan.

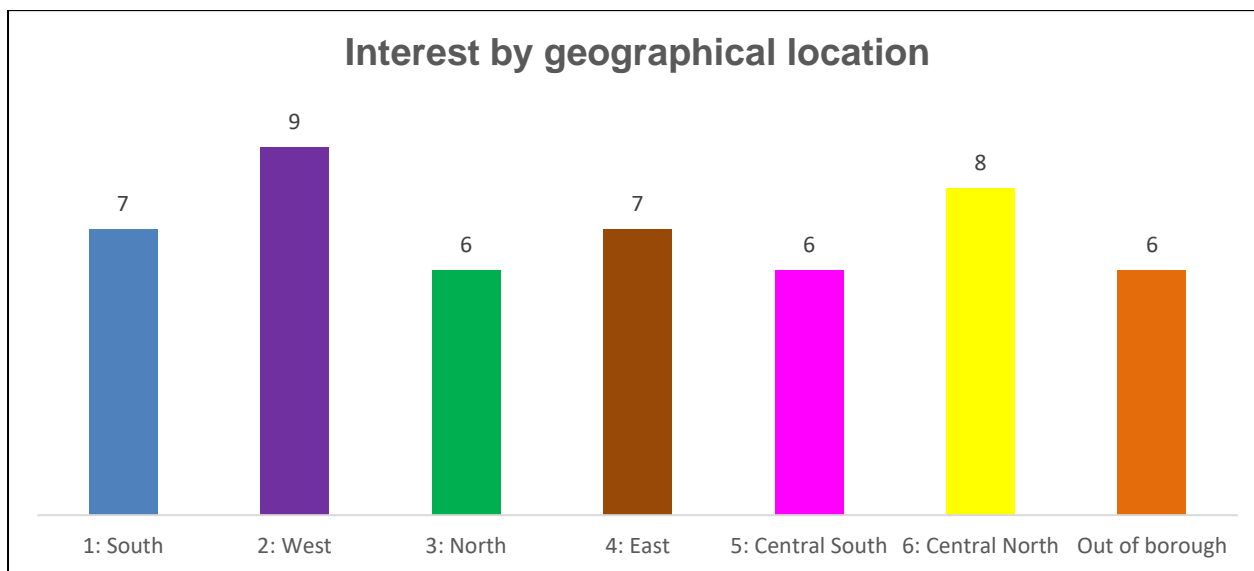
- *“It’s not clear from the master plan, how it’s going to bring the community together and bringing the businesses back to Bolton town centre which have disappeared and been destroyed over the years.”*
- *“Its time for real change, levelling up on a grand scale, starting with homes, basic needs, warms, food, health services , dentist. Empowerment for deprived community, go good feeding wealth with wealth. Poverty needs addressing, inequality, housing stock made fit for purpose”.*
- *“New buildings and diverse ideas do not help.”*

Other comments particularly focus on the transport infrastructure, *“public transport is very poor. Buses are unreliable and trains constantly delayed, shortformed or cancelled at short notice. The traffic is awful”* and *“we don’t have a tram line to Manchester like other neighbouring towns.”*

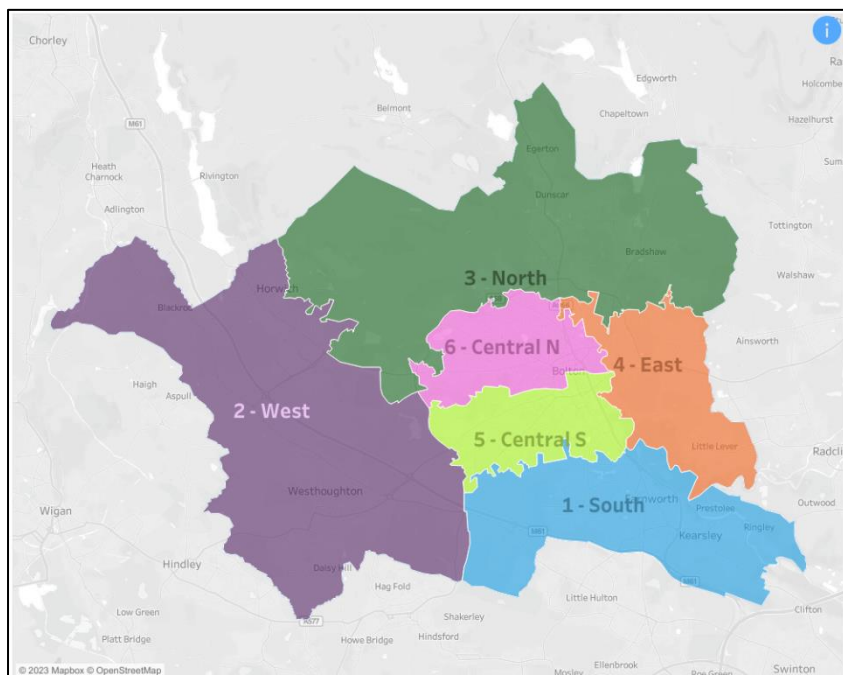
8. Demographics

8a. Geographical

The table below outlines the demographics of respondents by geographical neighbourhood. A total of 49 respondents provided their full postcode. There was equal geographically engagement across the borough, with residents located in neighbourhoods in the West (9) and Central North (8) being highest to respond.



Base: 49



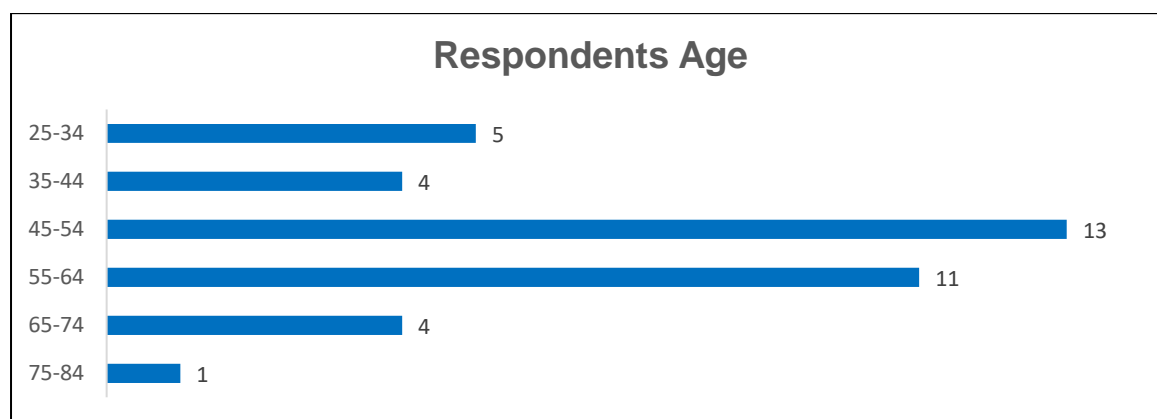
*Neighbourhoods are a local geography for integrated health and social care; all have a population of around 50,000 residents.

8b. Sex

49 responses were received providing the respondent’s sex. 16 respondents’ identity as being female, 24 as male and 1 respondent identifies as ‘other’.

8c Age

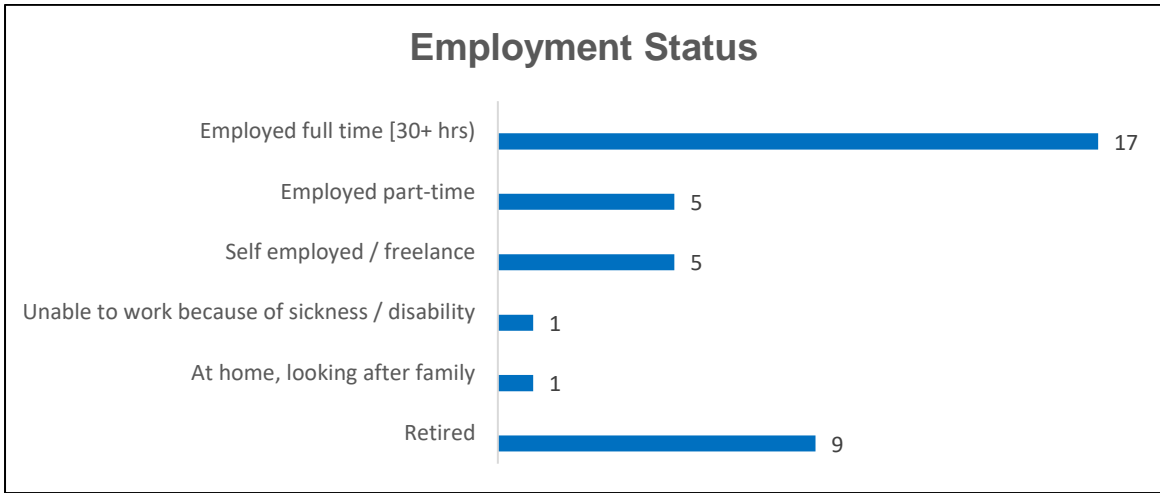
38 respondents provided their age. No responses were received from individuals under the age of 25 years. 5 respondents are under the age of 34 years. 28 respondents are aged between 35 – 64 years. 5 responses were received from individuals above the age of 65 years.



Base: 38

8d. Employment Status

27 responses were received from individuals in some form of employment. 1 response was received from an individual who is unable to work due to sickness or a disability. 1 respondent stays at home to look after family and 9 individuals are retirees. The person who stated ‘other’ is a foster carer.



Base: 39

8e. Ethnicity

32 respondents provided their ethnicity when undertaking the consultation. 27 report as being white – British. 5 report as being from other ethnically diverse communities.



Base: 32

8f. Financial stability

Respondents were asked to indicate their financial stability. 15 individuals stated they can afford basic necessities and have spare money to spend on extras or save. 13 can afford basic necessities but have very little spare money. 6 individuals have no money worries and 6 sometimes struggle to afford basic necessities.

Financial stability



Base: 40

10. Summary

Between 15th January and the 17th March 2024, Bolton Council ran a public consultation, seeking to engage residents and stakeholders, including businesses in sharing their reflections on a draft Economic and Resilience Plan for Bolton. During that period 83 stakeholders engaged in the consultation, including formal feedback from the Federation of Small Businesses.


Overall, stakeholders agree with the general strategy principles outlined within the draft plan, specifically having economic growth as one of its main priorities; implementing support for businesses to become more productive; and promoting the real living wage. Where disagreement was outlined, this tended to be around leaving the agenda to be set by businesses and the free trade market.

In principle, stakeholders generally agree to the impact and sustainability outlined within the general statements.

People: With reference to the 'People' thematic, stakeholders tended to agree with the three priorities outlined; 'raising the wage floor'; 'supporting residents into sustainable employment and creating health resilience'; and 'matching skills and training to future employment demand'. In addition, there was overall agreement to the ambitions and overall priorities outlined.

Business: With reference to the 'Business' thematic, stakeholders tended to agree with the three priorities outlined; 'new job creation'; 'maximising the manufacturing corridor'; and 'supporting business growth'. In addition, there was overall agreement to the ambitions and overall priorities outlined.

Investment: With reference to the 'Investment' thematic, stakeholders tended to agree with the three priorities outlined; 'increasing borough investment'; 'diversification of the town centre'; and 'creating thriving



and resilient communities'. In addition, there was overall agreement to the ambitions and overall priorities outlined.

General comments received highlight aspirations for Town Centre businesses and future growth; improving the transport network; and labour market skills investment. Some stakeholders suggested further considerations for the strategy, specifically on themes of place and regeneration; employment and people; roles and responsibilities of the Council and its partners; resourcing; and general reservations around the economic plan.

End.

Economic Growth & Resilience Plan - consultation

Consultation closes on 10th March 2024

Bolton Council has worked with business and other key stakeholders to produce a draft Economic Growth & Resilience Plan. This sets out our commitment to help businesses grow, regenerate our town centres and create new jobs and opportunities for residents.

We are now inviting all residents, businesses and other interested people and groups to give their views on what we should be doing as a council to promote economic growth that's sustainable and help businesses to overcome the challenges they face.

Please read the draft plan and background documents for more information on the approach we are proposing to take. www.bolton.gov.uk/directory/13/consultations/category/195 Your views will be considered alongside other information to help Bolton Council decide whether or not to go ahead with the proposals in the draft plan

Your response - keeping your data safe

Most questions are optional so that you can miss out any you prefer not to answer.

The results of this consultation may be made public, however if you're responding as an individual you won't be identified in any report as your responses will be anonymised and grouped with those from other people. If you're responding in an official capacity your response may be published but no personal details will be included.

Any personal data you provide will be held securely, in line with our retention schedule and privacy policy www.bolton.gov.uk/data-protection-freedom-information/privacy-notices
We use Snap Surveys professional software to collect and process your data. Their privacy policy can be found here www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/privacy-policy-uk/. Snap Surveys Ltd. follow the UK General Data Protection Regulation.

Background

In Bolton:

Three out of ten people of working age are not in paid work.

Many residents in paid work earn low wages compared to similar towns.

One in seven workers earn less than the Real Living Wage, which will be £12 per hour from April 2024.

Barriers to better paid employment include:

Poor health.

Limited access to a supply of high paying jobs within the borough.

Limited transport to access jobs across the borough and further afield.

Difficulty accessing training for skills needed for more highly paid jobs, such as in digital or technical areas.

General principles

Helping people to earn higher wages may increase spending locally which will help shops, tradespeople and other businesses across our borough.

The draft Economic Growth and Resilience Plan aims to:

Promote the Real Living Wage which is based on the cost of living.

Work with local businesses so that they can become more productive, encourage job creation and develop career progression.

The draft Economic Growth and Resilience Plan sets out a number of main principles. Please say how far you agree or disagree with the following statements about these principles and the general role of Bolton Council in supporting economic growth.

Bolton Council should...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
have economic growth as one of its main priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
support businesses to become more productive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
help businesses to create new and better jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
work with residents to make sure they can access any new jobs that are created	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
promote the Real Living Wage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you disagree, why is that?

- This should be left to businesses / the free market
- Bolton Council should concentrate on other things
- Business can't afford to pay the Real Living Wage
- Council shouldn't get involved in wage levels / Its up to businesses what wages they pay
- Residents don't need council support to find work
- Other reasons - please state below

If 'other reasons' please explain

How far do you agree / disagree with the following statements about the draft Economic Growth and Resilience draft Plan?

The draft plan...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion
concentrates on the right areas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

will lead to economic growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
will help to attract and retain businesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
will help people find better paid work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
will help people to stay in employment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you disagree, please explain why

Type of response

So that we can direct you to the right set of questions, please let us know if you answering as a business or a trade association

Yes No

Key themes and priorities

The draft plan sets out how we aim to deliver a ten year ambition to create better jobs in a more economically productive borough.

The plan is divided into three themes: People, Business and Investment each of which has three priorities.

Each theme has a separate section in this questionnaire.

People

Our ambition in the 'People' section of the draft plan is:
"Over the next ten years we will support every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives."

We will do this by concentrating on three priority areas:

People: priority one

Raising the wage floor.

People: priority two

Supporting residents into sustainable employment and healthy resilience.

People: priority three

Matching skills and training to future demand, including green jobs.

People priority one: Raising the wage floor

Raising wages can help improve people's standard of living and health. Higher wages can also boost the local economy as people have more to spend. This can benefit local businesses such as shops, cafes and bars and local tradespeople.

People priority one: 'Raising the wage floor' will aim to:

Support the growth and development of businesses in existing and new fields.

Create opportunities for employers to offer highly skilled jobs with higher salaries.

Encourage businesses to offer the Real Living Wage, which will be £12 an hour from April 2024.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Raising the wage floor' for our residents should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

People priority two: Supporting residents into sustainable employment and healthy resilience

People priority two: Supporting residents into sustainable employment and healthy resilience' will aim to:

Help people to develop employment skills so they can get good, well-paid jobs and remain in work once employed.

Look at ways to overcome any barriers to employment, such as illness or caring responsibilities.

Develop new public transport routes that better connect communities to major employment opportunities across the borough.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Supporting residents into sustainable employment and healthy resilience' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Our residents may not have the right skills to meet the growing demand for new types of work in the digital, technical, and energy efficiency sectors.

People priority three: 'Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green jobs' will aim to:

Work with local manufacturing, engineering, construction and logistics firms to identify gaps in the local labour market and look at how they can be filled.

Help local employers develop links with schools, colleges and the university so that our residents can learn new skills and gain qualifications to help them find better paid work.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green jobs' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

People - the ambition

In the draft Economic Growth & Resilience plan, our ambition for 'People' is:

"Over the next ten years we will support every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives."

How far do you agree / disagree with this ambition?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

How far do you agree / disagree that the three priorities in the People section will help Bolton Council achieve this aim?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

No opinion

What else [if anything] should we be doing to enable and encourage our residents into better-paid employment?

Please use this space for any other comments or suggestions around the ambition and priorities in the People section of the draft Economic Growth and Resilience plan

Business

Our ambition in the 'Business' section of the draft plan is:

"Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester."

The three proposals in the 'Business' section of the draft plan concentrate on these areas:

Business: priority one

New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation.

Business: priority two

Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester - Lancashire manufacturing corridor.

Business: priority three

Supporting scale-ups and business growth.

Business priority one: New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation

Career opportunities continue to increase in the professional sectors, with more and more opportunities for employment in digital businesses involved in ICT [Information & Communications Technology].

Health innovation opportunities are also growing in our borough. This will be supported by a major project to develop a health innovation campus in Farnworth, which will include the University of Bolton's Institute of Medical Sciences.

Opportunities for remote and hybrid working creates opportunities for people to work from home and in growing co-working spaces, meaning they're no longer tied to living close to their employer's premises.

Business priority one: 'New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation aims to:

Create new jobs by encouraging companies to relocate to our borough.

Develop a new Business and Innovation Hub in Bolton town centre which will support local enterprise in digital, creative tech and professional businesses.

Develop health innovation proposals with Innovation Greater Manchester to attract more science-based industries.

Provide specialist business support to accelerate enterprise and high-growth employment sectors.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Business priority two: Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester - Lancashire manufacturing corridor

Business priority two: 'Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester - Lancashire manufacturing corridor' aims to:

We will set up a networks of manufacturing and engineering firms to help this sector - a major part of our borough's economy - to grow further.

Take advantage of our local connection to companies in Lancashire and to research & develop organisations across Greater Manchester.

Develop local supply chains to make the most of the national drive for the UK to become more self-sufficient.

Attract new investment, with a focus on health and healthtech, grahene and other advanced materials.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester - Lancashire manufacturing corridor' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Business priority three: Supporting scale-ups and business growth

Whilst we want to attract large and growing businesses, we also want to encourage small start-ups. Having this variety will help provide work for our residents, increase productivity, and build a local economy that can weather national economic downturns.

Business priority three: 'Supporting scale-ups and business growth' aims to:

Develop a business growth programme with the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub to support Small to Medium sized enterprises and high growth sectors.

Work with partners, such as Bolton Community and Voluntary Services [CVS]), the Bolton Family Business Network and Proper Good to increase investment in social value [the positive effect businesses create for our economy, communities and society] and social enterprise. We also wish to improve opportunities for the local supply chain to link local producers, suppliers and distributors of goods and services.

Develop business incubation spaces across Bolton, including the Wellsprings.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Supporting scale-ups and business growth' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Business - the ambition

In the draft Economic Growth & Resilience plan, our ambition for 'Business' is:
"Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester"

How far do you agree / disagree with this ambition?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

How far do you agree / disagree that the three priorities in the Business section will help Bolton Council achieve this ambition?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

What else [if anything] should we be doing to enable and encourage businesses to start up and develop in our borough?

Investment

Our ambition in the 'Investment' section of the draft plan is:
"In ten years we will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work."

The three proposals in the 'Investment' section of the draft plan concentrate on these areas:

Investment: priority one

Increasing investment in the borough.

Investment: priority two

Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub.

Investment: priority three

Thriving and resilient communities.

Investment priority one: Increasing investment in the borough

It's important that all parts of the borough benefit from investment. By drawing up a pro-active business plan we can promote the places we want to develop economically.

Investment priority one: Increasing investment in the borough' aims to:

Work with partners to identify and develop business opportunities in the east and north of the borough where investment could have the most impact.

Continue to deliver the masterplan ambitions for Bolton town centre, Farnworth, Little Lever, Horwich and Westhoughton.

Create an investment prospectus to attract a range of businesses to the borough, including start-ups, independents, small / medium size business entrepreneurs and national brands.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Increasing investment in the borough' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Investment priority two: Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub

Footfall in Bolton town centre has been falling over recent years, and customer surveys highlight the lack of variety in the leisure, cultural and refreshment offer, particularly in the early evening.

Investment priority two: 'Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub' aims to:

Develop an annual events programme to build on the success of events such as the Bolton Food & Drink Festival, Iron Man and the Bolton Film Festival.

Bring together heritage and cultural institutions with businesses and funders so that we can deliver a Cultural Strategy with an improved cultural and leisure offer which makes the most of the town's attractive historical buildings and helps to attract more visitors.

Support a community-led night time economy which celebrates and gives space for a wide variety of cultural events, together with a food / drink offer from Bolton's diverse communities.

Build family homes and apartments to help develop a vibrant town and town centre community.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Investment - priority three: Thriving and resilient communities

We want all our residents to benefit from economic growth. Future investment must address neighbourhood deprivation, the need for mixed housing stock and green spaces, and an ageing population.

Our partnerships already work closely together, and we will continue to develop these links to identify long-term needs and ensure that a variety of good quality housing is available in our borough.

Investment priority three: 'Thriving and resilient communities' aims to:

Work with partners, such as local developers and Bolton at Home, to improve social housing and build new accommodation in attractive surroundings.

Support older residents to continue to live independently.

Improve existing housing stock.

Promote new builds which produce less carbon dioxide and are more energy-efficient to help deliver our climate change strategy.

How far do you agree / disagree that 'Thriving and resilient communities' should be a priority for Bolton Council?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

Investment - the ambition

In the draft Economic Growth & Resilience plan, our ambition for 'Investment' is:
"In ten years we will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work."

How far do you agree / disagree with this ambition?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

How far do you agree / disagree that the three priorities in the Investment section will help Bolton Council achieve this ambition?

- Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No opinion

What else [if anything] should we be doing to encourage investment in our borough?



In general

Apart from the priority areas identified in the draft Plan, are there any other areas of economic growth that Bolton Council should include as priorities?

Please use this space for any further ideas or comments about Bolton Council's role in economic growth.

Your interest

Which of the following describes you / your family's interest in this consultation?

- Live in Bolton borough
- Work in Bolton borough
- Study / have children at school in Bolton borough
- Visitor to Bolton
- Official response from Parish / Bolton borough Councillor / Elected Member
- Official response from a business / organisation / community group. You must have their permission to submit an official response on their behalf
- None of the above - please explain below

Please say what your interest is

Please say which ward, business organisation or community group you represent

Please say what your role is - in what official capacity do you represent the business, organisation or community group?

About you

Your answers in this section help us to make sure we are getting views from different types of people. They won't be used to contact or identify you.

Please give your full postcode

Are you...?

- Female Male Identify in another way

Which most closely describes you?

- Employed full time [30 hours or more a week]
- Employed part-time [up to 30 hours a week]
- Self employed / freelance
- Unemployed, available for work
- Unable to work because of sickness / disability
- Full time student
- At home, looking after family
- Retired
- Other {Q30.a}

If 'other' please explain

Which age group are you in?

- Under18
- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 - 84
- 85 or over

What is your ethnic group?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> White British | <input type="radio"/> Asian or Asian British |
| <input type="radio"/> White other | <input type="radio"/> Black, Black British, Caribbean or African |
| <input type="radio"/> Mixed or Multiple ethnic group | <input type="radio"/> Other ethnic group |

Which of the following best describes your financial situation?

This question helps us to see how people are being affected by the cost of living

- I often can't afford basic necessities [food, heating etc]
- I sometimes struggle to afford basic necessities
- I can afford basic necessities but have very little spare money
- I can afford basic necessities and have some spare money to spend on extras or save
- I'm comfortably off and have no money worries
- Don't know, as I don't have responsibility for managing finances

Further contact

How may we contact you once a decision has been made, or if there are any significant changes?

We'll email you where possible. Your details will be held securely and only used to contact you about this matter. You can change your mind at any time by replying to any communication we send you, or by emailing businessbolton@bolton.gov.uk

	Yes	No
Email	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Text	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Email address

Name

Postal address

Telephone number

Thanks! Please click 'submit' to send your response through to us

Appendix B

Response from the Federation of Small Businesses

Having read through this, it would make sense for me to submit our Small Business Metro Mayor Manifesto, which is holistic in nature and content around what small businesses need and want support with. It's actually a policy document aimed at not just the next metro mayor, but for decision makers within councils/council SMTs, because much of the substance in the document requires partnership working to achieve between councils and the GMCA. Importantly, it does cover a lot of the policy issues that your own consultation is seeking views on.

I know this is not ideal, but it is the best I can do in the short time frame. However, the content absolutely stands and it would be remiss of Bolton to not consider the proposals in it as part of their consultation requirements.

I would draw your attention particularly to the sections on *public sector procurement, town centres and high streets, transport and infrastructure, digital infrastructure, and going green sensibly.*

Best

Development Manager, Greater Manchester
Federation of Small Businesses