

# **Luton 2040**

## **No-one in Poverty**

### **Luton Council Response to the Final Report of the Inclusive Growth Commission**

In December 2018, Luton Council established an Inclusive Growth Commission to investigate how best to ensure that everyone in Luton can contribute to and benefit from growth in the town. Professor Sir Les Ebdon CBE DL chaired the commission, which included eight other commissioners representing business, education, health and the voluntary sector in Luton.

The Inclusive Growth Commission delivered its final report to the council in July 2019, with the report published in full in October 2019. This report includes 12 high level ambitions for developing an inclusive economy in Luton. These ambitions are based around the themes of developing a productive place, collaborative communities and happy, healthy and successful people.

The recommendations contained within the report are grounded in evidence, following seven months of extensive engagement with residents and stakeholders in the town and consideration of a wealth of data relating to six key lines of enquiry.

Luton Council are extremely grateful to all of the commissioners for the hard work and expertise that they have given to this report. We recognise the enormous value of the evidence and insights contained within the report and believe that the 12 ambitions provide a clear direction for everyone in the town to work towards a more inclusive economy, from which we can all benefit. Our collective thanks go to Professor Sir Les Ebdon CBE DL and all of the commissioners for this excellent report.

The report of the Inclusive Growth Commission has shown that despite major investment in Luton over recent years, too many people are not benefiting from this growth. Far too many working families in our town are living in poverty, including 46% of our children. Poverty has a clear impact upon many aspects of people's lives from education outcomes to life expectancy. By the age of five, children from the most deprived households in our town are on average 15 months behind in their vocabulary skills, compared to children from the wealthiest families.

In response to this report, we are proud to launch our ambitious vision for Luton 2040: a town where no one lives in poverty. Our plan will address the key challenges set out in the Inclusive Growth Commission report, from low wages and skills shortages to the environment and poor health outcomes.

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Luton 2040 will be delivered through two strategic partnership boards, an Inclusive Economy Board and a Health and Wellbeing Board. Each of these boards will be underpinned by their own clear strategies and will bring together key partners from across the town to ensure real commitment and action. As recommended by the commission, we will also establish a roundtable approach to monitoring fairness and the success of Luton 2040 over time.

The Inclusive Economy Board will focus on delivering a fairer economy, from which everyone can benefit. This will include measures to ensure that we have a thriving town centre and a smart city, as well as ensuring increased local spend and a greater number of people earning the real living wage. The Health and Wellbeing board will focus on reducing health inequalities, tackling challenges of obesity, mental health and social isolation and protecting the most vulnerable in our communities.

We will set out a detailed response to the Commission's recommendations and how we are delivering on each in spring 2020. Already though we are seeing significant progress on fulfilling the 12 ambitions.

As an organisation we have already established a new procurement strategy, designed to increase council spend within the local area from 25% to 70% by 2024. This strategy will help to build the local economy and we are currently working to embed other aspects of social value such as local jobs and apprenticeships into this policy. We have also commissioned a skills audit to help plan for Luton's future workforce and ensure that Luton remains an attractive place for high value industries to invest.

We are continuing to support the growth of high value industries including London Luton Airport. The £225 million Luton DART project is currently under construction and our airport company, London Luton Airport Limited, has recently launched its consultation on Future LuToN, the plan to increase capacity at the airport to 32 million passengers per year. This investment will deliver an estimated additional £1.3 billion for the local economy each year as well as 16,000 new jobs.

We are also making good progress on the Commission's recommendations to make Luton an attractive destination. We have already begun work to develop a new Town Centre Masterplan and we are bringing forward plans to develop the cultural quarter. We have also set ambitious environmental targets such as becoming a carbon neutral economy by 2050 and we are continuing to encourage active travel as part of our new Population Wellbeing Strategy.

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Clearly, there is much work to do if we are to fulfil our vision of a town with no one in poverty by 2040. Achieving this ambition will require the commitment of everybody in our town and we will engage with businesses, anchor institutions, third sector organisations and residents to make this a reality.

Work is already underway with local businesses and anchor institutions to co-design a local wealth building approach that ensures more of our collective spend remains within Luton and the surrounding area. We are also beginning work to establish a living wage action group to enable all employers to pay a real living wage to working people in our town and we are redoubling our efforts to bring together businesses and education providers to strengthen skills and make Luton a more attractive location for high value industries. This work will shape the new Inclusive Economy Strategy for the town.

As well as businesses and anchor institutions, we believe that residents and our outstanding voluntary and community sector will be vital to delivering Luton 2040. In the New Year, we will be stepping up our engagement with residents, as well as the charities and community organisations that play such a vital role in our town. We will work collaboratively to develop a new deal that works for all our communities to address key challenges around poverty and wellbeing.

The 12 ambitions outlined in the Inclusive Growth report have set out a series of clear challenges for everyone in our town. Luton 2040 is a bold and ambitious vision to meet these challenges by eradicating poverty and improving the lives of all our residents. Everybody in Luton has a part to play in delivering this exciting vision and we will be working closely with everyone in our town to make this a reality.



**Cllr Hazel Simmons MBE**  
**Leader of Luton Council**