

Luton 2040
A place to thrive

A CIVIC AGREEMENT FOR LUTON

FOREWORD

The University of Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Council are delighted to present our Civic Agreement for Luton. It sets out our shared ambition for Luton and our commitment to delivering the Luton 2040 Vision: A Place to Thrive.

Both our institutions are integrally linked to the area of Luton and the people who live and work here. Our colleagues, students and residents are part of its vibrant community and support our vision that Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no one lives in poverty.

Our Civic Agreement demonstrates the formal commitment of both the University and Council to the Luton 2040 Vision and sets out how we will work together to support the future of our town and deliver our shared ambition.

Over the next five years, we will work collaboratively with our residents and organisations across the private, public, voluntary and community sectors to deliver opportunity and prosperity, support social mobility and sustainability, and drive innovation and economic growth. We will do this while nurturing our cultural strength, ensuring that everyone has a meaningful voice to shape the future of our town.

As signatories to our Agreement, we will bring strategic alignment to our priorities and strategies, and will focus on special projects to enhance place, public life and partnerships. Central to our agreement is a shared celebration of cultural diversity and of the power of research, education and enterprise to shift long-standing societal problems.

We are united in our commitment to drive positive and meaningful change and are proud to share with you our Civic Agreement for Luton.



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OUR COMMITMENT TO A CIVIC AGREEMENT

The University of Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Council are committed to working together to support the future of the town of Luton. This Civic Agreement is a binding document that will strategically direct our collaboration focussing on key priorities and special projects centred on place, public and partnerships.

This Civic Agreement is important for the University and the Council as it is an opportunity for two institutions central to the future prosperity of Luton to work together for the benefit of the town's people, businesses, partner organisations and environment.


The Civic Agreement is designed to support the delivery of the *Luton 2040 Vision: A place to thrive*, a shared town-wide vision that all the key anchor institutions, including the University and Council, worked together to produce and are committed to achieving.

The Vision is that Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty.


Our partnership work will align with the Luton 2040 vision's five priorities:




Building an inclusive economy that delivers investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.




Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their potential.



Becoming a child-friendly town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.



Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net-zero town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.



Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on fairness, local pride and a powerful voice for all our residents.

The University's strategy, *Transforming Bedfordshire*, confirms the University's role as an anchor institution with a longstanding presence in Luton, especially in the town centre. It has a strong commitment to transforming Luton through embracing a civic and economic role and taking pride in the

University's engagement with communities and business. The Civic Agreement will build on the University's existing strengths in local collaborative work, especially for health, arts, heritage and culture, skills, schools outreach, business enterprise and community engagement.

Luton Borough Council's *Corporate Plan* is built around the shared *Luton 2040 Vision* and recognises the central role of partnerships and full system working toward the successful transformation of the town. The Civic Agreement will benefit from the Council's recent close working with central government and regional partners over levelling up, inward investment, skills and employability, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the role of the airport in creating a prosperous and inclusive town. Collaboration with the University will also support the delivery of key local initiatives such as Luton Rising, Active Travel Luton, the Good Business Charter and the Heritage and Arts and Culture strategies.

Together, the two parties share an ethic for collaboration and a powerful commitment to innovation. This Civic Agreement is intended to bring strategic alignment to the roles of the University and the Council in support of local goals for the transformation of Luton. It seeks to set thematic areas of focus, measurable goals and working practices to ensure greater coordination, alignment and close working. Central to our agreement is a shared celebration of cultural diversity and of the power of research, education and enterprise to shift long-standing societal problems.

THE BENEFITS AND VALUE OF A CIVIC AGREEMENT IN LUTON

Prior to Covid-19, Luton's economy was performing strongly compared to national trends and progress was being made on addressing key social challenges. In 2017, 46% of children in Luton lived in poverty – a figure that reduced to 39% in 2019 – but due to the pandemic and cost of living crisis this has increased back to 45% in 2022. Recovery from the cost of living crisis will be critical in the next decade for Luton. Central to this are plans for the town centre's regeneration based on the Council's successful £20m bid for central government levelling up funding and the construction of a state-of-the-art stadium for Luton Town FC, with accompanying residential development.

There is a need to increase pride in place, which the Council believes will naturally increase the strength and attainment of the community.

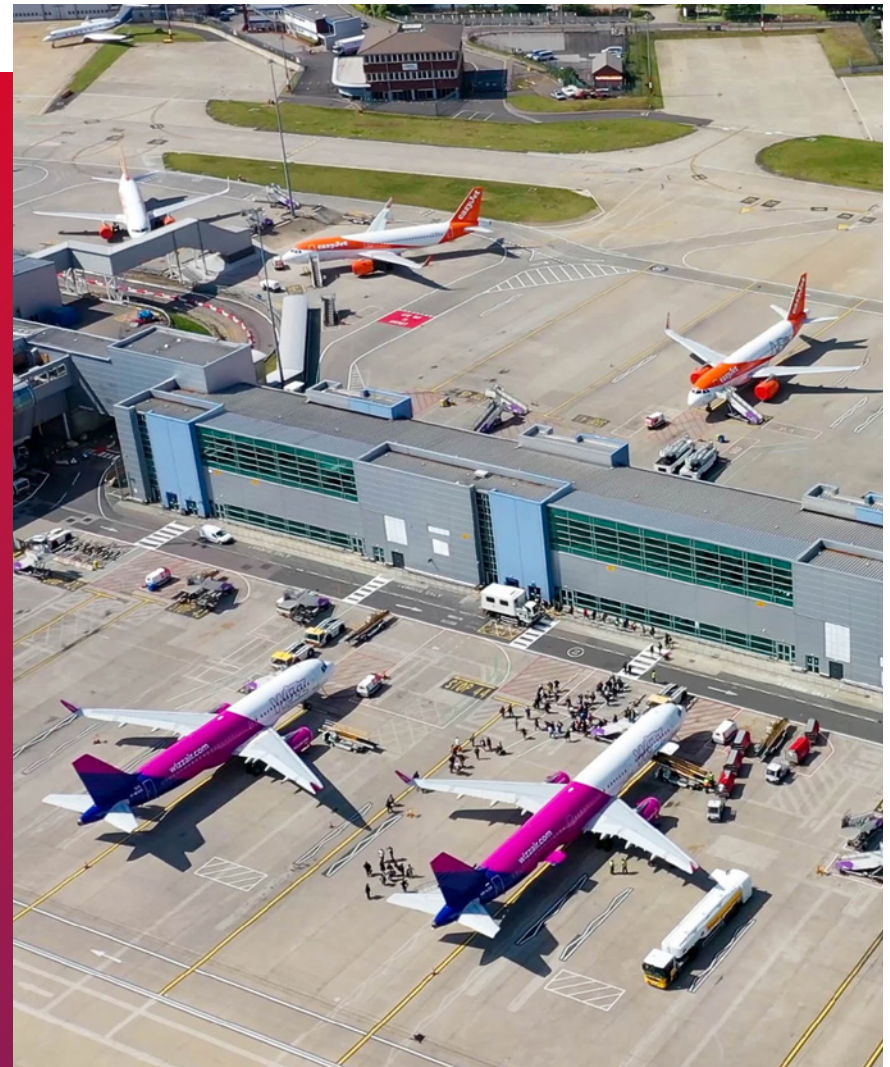
The University is part of this revitalisation, taking a position in the heart of the town centre, including the refurbishment of several key buildings within its estate and the development of new spaces for

staff and student-led activities. There is a need to increase pride in place, which the Council believes will naturally increase the strength and attainment of the community.

The Council launched an important new programme of work in 2022, creating an exciting new place narrative, branding and marketing for Luton to promote Luton's unique advantages and support economic growth by attracting new investment into the town.

This work is fundamental to the *Luton 2040 Vision* and making Luton a better destination for people to live, work, visit, study and invest so that everyone in our town can thrive. A focus will be on selling the opportunities within the town centre and the Luton Rising development activity, including Morton House, Bartlett Square and the Green Horizons Business Park, which will become a creative hub for developing sustainable industries, research and finance.

The Civic Agreement will contribute to a wider process of creating a greater sense of community and people being ambassadors for the town. It will also take into account the sensitivities around the cost of living crisis and demonstrate why supporting regeneration, jobs, skills and local businesses is more important than ever.



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION FOR THE COUNCIL

A challenge and opportunity for the Council is to address inequality while strengthening and celebrating diversity and inclusion. Key aspects of this are fairness of opportunity for all communities who live in Luton, connected to how to improve the image of the town. The Council is aiming to build on and nurture pre-existing community-led development that also involves the University, such as the Fairness Task Force, as well as launching new partnership initiatives led by the community, businesses, voluntary sector and key anchor institutions.

Town-wide partnerships that involve the University addressing these issues are already being established...

Developing the resilience of existing business sectors and embedding new, resilient sectors in manufacturing and aviation, is a focus for the Council's work towards the future of Luton that will benefit from a Civic Agreement. Essential to this is the creation of good quality jobs and employment

opportunities, alongside the development of a talent pipeline to get young people from Luton schools to university, and then from university into local jobs. Currently, 40% of high paid jobs in Luton are filled by people who do not live in the town. The acknowledged skills deficit within Luton is a key area of need. Given the University's strengths in education and widening higher education participation for local young people, closer working in this area will lay the foundations for a skills improvement and a talent pipeline for working in business and public service for Luton residents. Town-wide partnerships that involve the University addressing these issues are already being established to deliver the Employment and Skills Strategy for Luton, launched in 2022.

Sustainability and becoming a net-zero town is an priority for now, not just for the future and requires partnership working between the Council and University. There is a need to find collaborative ways to meet net-zero goals while also addressing the acute social and economic needs of many local residents. In 2022, the Council launched a net-zero road map that will guide this partnership working and the University received a first class award in the People and Planet University Green League in 2021 and already works closely with the Council on the implementation of the University's sustainability strategy.



BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION FOR THE UNIVERSITY

Diversity, inclusion and sustainability alongside international excellence in teaching and research are central to the University's strategy *Transforming Bedfordshire*. The University keenly recognises its role in working with partners in Luton to enhance opportunities, secure positive graduate outcomes, support social mobility and improve health outcomes through its leading health, social care and youth work. The University also collaborates with partners locally to ensure its own activities in estates, supply chains and industry engagement contribute to sharing prosperity across the town. Equally important, it has invested long term in award winning community engagement work with local partners to benefit the town's communities through the everyday power and value of arts, heritage and culture.

Of the University's UK domiciled students, 4,000 are local to the Luton area but it has also been very successful at recruiting international students. The University fully recognises that the relationship between the town and university is central to strengthening

certain aspects of university life; namely the student experience, volunteering, graduate outcomes, the availability of affordable housing, diverse amenities and greener public transport. There is also mutual gain in closer working with the Council in these areas to support town centre regeneration.

The University has longstanding excellence in health and social care research and practice and inclusive engagement with local communities in Luton but recognises that addressing

the complex health and social care challenges of Luton, including developing the workforce, requires collaboration between the University, Council and local health and social care services and providers. This excellence has been confirmed with a £3m grant from NHS England for the University and local partners to establish the Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes Integrated Care System Research & Innovation Hub to tackle health and social care inequalities.

...addressing the complex health and social care challenges of Luton... requires collaboration between the University, Council and local health and social care services and providers.



THE VALUE OF THE CIVIC AGREEMENT FOR LUTON

The University and the Council are committed to working with a full range of local partners across the town and region, as what we can achieve together is greater than what we can do working apart. There are significant gains to be made on the key social, educational, economic and environmental ambitions for Luton held by both Council and University, if greater strategic working can be achieved. The process of preparing this Civic Agreement and our shared analysis, identified certain needs and opportunities, which – if addressed by joint working between the Council and the University – will benefit the town.

The Civic Agreement will address the **needs in Luton** to:

- Develop shared capacity for innovation, particularly around green economy, industry and community transition to net-zero.
- Understand and plan for how certain business sectors must adapt to the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions and how business resilience can be enhanced overall.
- Develop greater coordination and sharing of capacity around talent pipelines and reskilling the local population post-Covid and ahead of industrial change.

The Civic Agreement will aim to deliver on the following **key opportunities** that build on Council and University shared analysis, expertise and strengths:



Address skills shortages across the private and public sectors, to resource the ambition of the Civic Agreement and the Luton 2040 mission through shaping and attracting a diverse, dynamic talent pipeline equipped to deliver and innovate in partnership.



Lead by example and encourage other anchor institutions in the Luton area to adapt and respond to the green agenda, to practise ethical procurement, and to focus on social value to realise Luton's transition to net-zero.



Develop stronger structures for knowledge exchange and knowledge utilisation in health and social research, so that the cutting edge research in health by the University is not underused and can better inform and shape Council services and local NHS training and practice.



Undertake locally relevant research to support the evidence-based development of crucial social, health, wellbeing and cultural interventions.



Contribute to a different story for Luton, to amplify the messages of the shared town-wide *Luton 2040 Vision* and the ambitious goals and extensive impact of the University through working inclusively with local communities in Luton.

This Civic Agreement sets out the mission and priorities that will address these needs and ensure these opportunities can be unlocked by the University and Council's collaboration.



OUR CIVIC AGREEMENT FOR LUTON

OUR MISSION AND OBJECTIVE

Our shared mission for this Civic Agreement for the town is the vision of *Luton 2040 Vision: A Place to Thrive*, that:

Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty

The core objective of this Civic Agreement, which contributes to fulfilling the vision of Luton 2040, is:

Collaboration and innovation for a fair and thriving future for Luton

Whatever the agenda, our mission recognises that partnership and progressiveness are core to how the impact of our activities can be greater and felt in real ways by local communities.

It reflects the innovative ways of working and processes of system change that we will use to ensure the capacity and strengths of the University and the Council contribute powerfully in local partnerships for solving the challenges for Luton.

OUR VALUES

The values guiding our Civic Agreement draw on the values set out in the shared *Luton 2040 Vision*, the Council's *Corporate Plan* and the University's *Transforming Bedfordshire Strategy*. The values that unite the University and the Council towards achieving the mission of the Civic Agreement are:

We will hold and promote our values throughout our partnership and in our work with other anchor institutions, local organisations and the public in Luton.



OUR PRIORITIES

There are five priorities for action that we commit to in our Civic Agreement. They align with the priorities of our shared *Luton 2040 Vision: A Place to Thrive*.

PRIORITY 1



Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.

We will do this by developing partnerships for excellence in public health research and public health outcomes in Luton:

- **Creating a systematic process of transferring and applying relevant research** that impacts on public health service delivery and intervention by developing evaluation expertise to understand what works, and research commissioning structures that are aligned to enhance the local knowledge base.
- **Taking a system-change approach** together to address health and wellbeing inequalities in Luton, including acting collaboratively on the 'Health Equity Town' recommendations by Sir Michael Marmot.
- **Working collaboratively on evidence-led, informative and impactful campaigns** to improve key areas of health and wellbeing currently challenging Luton, namely healthy eating, active travel, physical activity, mental wellbeing, smoking, alcohol and sexual health.



PRIORITY 2



Building an inclusive economy that delivers investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.

To do this, we will innovate and catalyse ambition to realise a more inclusive and sustainable economy:

- **Capitalising on the University's expertise and the Council's ambition to act towards job and employment resilience** for Luton's workforce: the University will work with the Council, to create a pipeline of talented graduates to fill airport-related roles, green industries, new technologies and artificial intelligence, using Luton Rising as a case study.
- **Promoting social justice and diversity in the workforce** through learning from and cascading models that are working, including using the University's Community Targeted Outreach Programme (CTOP) – a culturally competent approach to recruitment, so that all sectors take an inclusive and sustainable approach to local recruitment.
- **Embedding resilience and longevity in Luton's workforce** by creating enabling conditions, incentives and skill provision for diverse, Luton resident workers to build long term careers in Luton, particularly in key sectors such as aviation, manufacturing, green growth, digital, healthcare, public services and the creative industries. This includes how Luton's Employment and Skills Strategy can be extended, how Luton businesses can interact and engage students more easily, and how the apprenticeship levy transfer scheme can be applied and supported by the University.
- **Building on Luton's reputation for creating sustainable start-ups** through delivering consistent support with finance, advice, personnel and product/service design, connecting Council-University resources and providing support to new entrepreneurs, especially in sustainable transport, green growth, data and AI.



PRIORITY 3



Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net-zero town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.

To achieve this, we will influence and enable partners and the community to achieve net-zero emissions by:

- **Collaborating on the net-zero roadmap for Luton** that sets goals and pathways across social, economic, environmental and place-based aims. This includes furthering the University's role linked to Luton Rising, concerning the future development of the airport.
- **Directing and supporting Research & Development collaborations** that lead to funding for innovative companies in our town to work with our academic experts in Smart Cities and Renewable Energy Management Systems on projects directly contributing to the NetZero agenda.
- **Supporting the evidence-based design of schemes and incentives** for communities, businesses and the public sector to adopt climate positive practices, drawing on the University's Platinum Eco Campus status and expertise. This will help provide practical tools to support other local institutions to be more sustainable.



PRIORITY 4



Supporting a strong and empowered community built on fairness, local pride and a powerful voice for all of our residents.

To do this, we promote a strong and empowered community based on fairness, accessibility and inclusion by:

- **Working creatively and collaboratively to unlock new experiences of 'pride in place'** by drawing on recent collaborative work in building a thriving arts, heritage and culture portfolio for Luton, the Council and University. We will undertake place-making, partnership, outreach and enabling activities to promote positive perceptions of the town centre.
- **Building on the pioneering work of Luton's Fairness Taskforce** to identify and overcome structural barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion, with the University's research responding to and supporting the priorities of the Taskforce to understand 'what works' and engage with the citizen's panel to give all parts of our community a powerful voice.
- **Catalysing community power** through partnerships with community groups, we will strengthen and enable the governance and impact of third sector groups to support all communities who have a stake within the area to act towards positive social, economic and environmental goals.



PRIORITY 5



Becoming a child-friendly town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.

Building on the University of Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Council's individual excellence in schools outreach and engagement, to achieve this we will:

- **Develop our Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) partnership** working to contribute to becoming a Disability-Friendly Town with the council developing new SEND school provision within two years, and the University increasing its SEND provision, with a new BA Special Educational Needs and Disability degree launched in 2022.
- **Understand the youth and student lifecycle within and outside the University** and work collaboratively with a range of local partners to plan for how town and university can support student retention and graduate employment in Luton. The University's expertise will support young people to access a university pathway, and support identifying skills that are needed to meet future employment markets and business sectors.
- **Develop and integrate a consolidated system of work experience and mentorships** for young people, whether graduates or not, in Luton, including pathways into work in the higher education sector, and into public services at local level.
- **Establish and launch a lifelong learning agenda for Luton by working with other local education partners** to understand and meet what local people of all ages want from learning and to consider flexible, multi-year and non-traditional offers spanning aspiration, skills, degree courses and employability support.



OUR CIVIC AGREEMENT – WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

Our Civic Agreement is based on our priorities, strategies, shared analysis and will focus on special projects to enhance place, public life and partnerships whilst maximising the impact of our joint work.

...special projects to enhance place, public life and partnerships...

PLACE

- **Working collaboratively on place-making in Luton by contributing to**
 - **a collaborative enterprise and innovation area planned by Luton Rising linked to airport development** to engage new employers and industries, and particularly focus on the provision and role of enterprise and start-up support
 - **the delivery of the town centre masterplan** to create an exciting space to activate and reinvigorate Luton's town centre, especially around the University campus
 - **reinforcement of the University and town's innovative approach to supporting arts, culture and heritage skills development** that will include education and cultural venues to reinforce the role of arts, culture and heritage to improve outcomes, such as wellbeing and mitigating social isolation.
- **Improving the local impact and implementation of the University's strengths in research**, identifying a consistent working structure and system by which to implement the findings of research with Council support. The University will undertake an audit to examine where its research can impact on parts of the town-wide *Luton 2040 Vision*; and proactively share its extensive repository of knowledge. The Council and University will collaboratively align around future research commissioning processes where there is local demand for research not met by existing activity.
- **Supporting each other towards sustainability** the University and Council will work to learn from each other in partnership to seek to achieve net-zero at pace, and to accelerate their own estate de-carbonisation.



PUBLIC LIFE

- **Modelling shared civic leadership** and growing the next generation of civic leaders through collaborative voluntary placements and a capability offer for aspiring civic leaders and mentors within and outside of the University.
 - **Planning for curriculum change with place-sensitivity in mind** encompassing lifelong, modular learning, a new skills improvement strategy and building employment opportunities into the University curriculum.
 - **Creating ongoing structures for community engagement** around this Civic Agreement and both the University's and the Council's strategies. The Talk Listen Change (TLC) methodology (a culturally competent approach to co-production) can form the basis of this process and ensuring best practice in how all parts of the Luton system can use TLC as the norm, and not the exception, when working with local communities.
- ...growing the next generation of civic leaders through collaborative voluntary placements...

- **Developing a shared communications strategy for visibility and reputation** building with the public, focused on transparently telling the story of the Civic Agreement's impact and in turn, shifting residents' perspective on their town and the contribution of the two institutions.



PARTNERSHIPS

- **Launching a local research, innovation and engagement data hub** to track and assess local conditions and challenges that need alleviation or action, and to research and identify solutions. The hub will focus on sub-criteria of the *Luton 2040 Vision* to end poverty in Luton by 2040 and the goals of the Bedfordshire, Luton & Milton Keynes Integrated Care System Research & Innovation Hub based at the University to tackle health and social care inequalities.
- **Collaborate strategically on future funding** a working group will be established to consider how and when to respond collaboratively to funding calls. This will include 'levelling-up' funds that the Council will be able to access in the next few years and health research funds that the University of Bedfordshire could apply for, with the aim to partner as often as possible to maximise the impact of funding streams locally.

...the aim to partner
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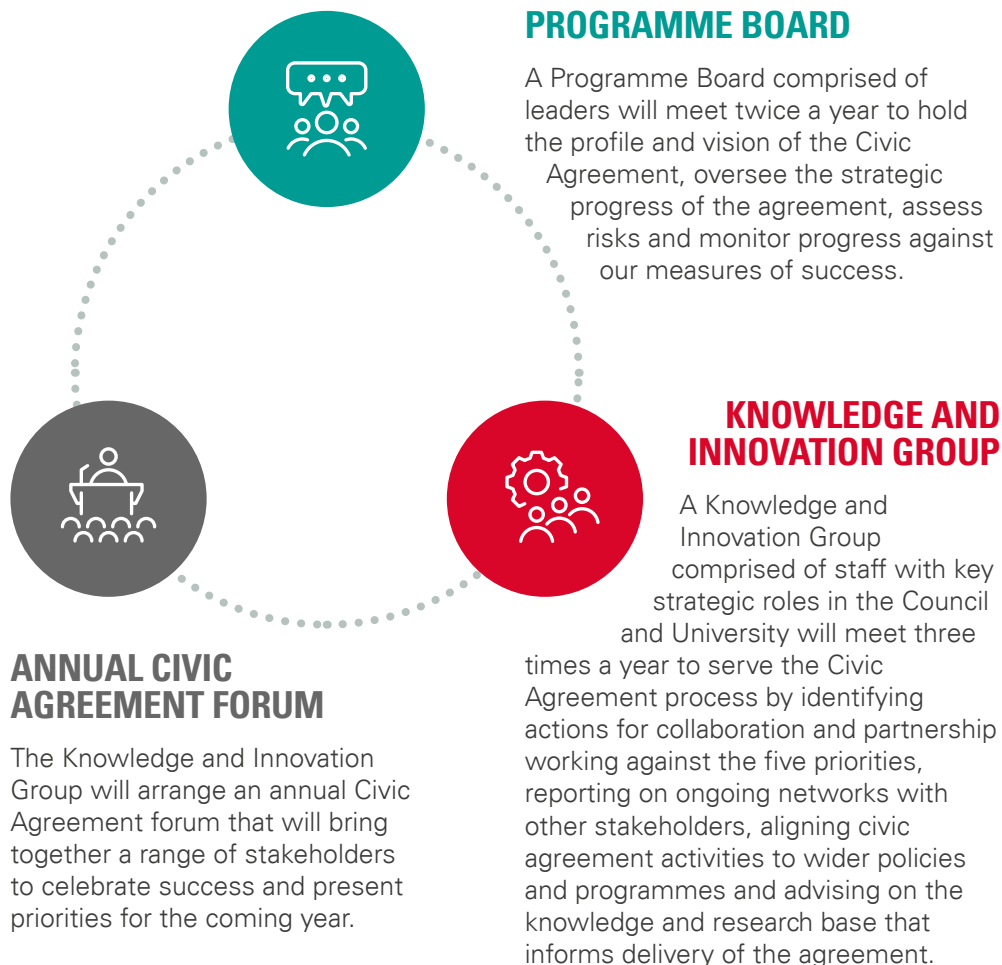


GOVERNANCE, WORKING STRUCTURES AND OPERATIONAL CYCLE OF MEETINGS

We will establish new governance and working structures to support the delivery of this Civic Agreement.

The governance structure proposed enables horizon scanning, knowledge sharing and innovation to guide the robust delivery, resilience and future development of the Civic Agreement.

...identifying actions for collaboration and partnership...



OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Measures of success will ensure the contribution of the Civic Agreement to the *Luton 2040 Vision* and to the strategy of the University of Bedfordshire. The University's expertise will support the development of a Theory of Change and Logic Chain model to help shape the governance structures and activities of a Civic Agreement which will be aligned with, and where possible not additional, to existing measures and metrics of success adopted by the Council and University. The Civic University Agreement has seven outcome measures against which we will use to measure our success and capture the planned impact expected to flow from the Civic Agreement.

The first five measures are **Priority Outcome Measures** related to our five Civic Agreement priorities aligned with the *Luton 2040 vision*.

Two further **Strategic Outcome Measures** will assess our collective endeavour and reflect the overall mission of the Civic Agreement – *Collaboration and innovation for a fair and thriving future for Luton*.

The outcome measures are intended to assess clearly the contribution of the Agreement's work to change in Luton, which also requires the collaborative work of many actors and communities. The University and the Council are just two of many institutions and organisations playing a role in delivering the *Luton 2040 Vision*. Thus, where we are not the sole or majority actors able to effect change, the outcome measures are framed as a contribution to change in Luton rather than as an attribution linked to our actions.

Collaboration and innovation for a fair and thriving future for Luton.



PRIORITY OUTCOME MEASURES

OUTCOME 1



We will help people to live healthier lives for longer through promoting effective, healthy policy campaigns based on research and evidence that will fulfil our commitment to becoming a Marmot town and disability friendly town.

OUTCOME 2



We will use our collective capacity in anticipating, attracting and embedding new industries and enterprises in Luton leading to a diverse economy and local supply chain within which local employers and our workforce can build fair, future-proof careers.

OUTCOME 3



We will mobilise our expertise in research, development and inclusive community engagement to drive socially impactful innovation towards achieving the town's roadmap to net-zero by 2040 "a green and sustainable Luton".

OUTCOME 4



We will champion strategies for community engagement to build a thriving community sector in which the diverse communities and organisations in Luton can all have a voice and a stake.

OUTCOME 5



We will support inclusive opportunities and pathways for every child in Luton, using the strengths of the University, to support work to remove barriers to education, employment and participation in Luton.

STRATEGIC OUTCOME MEASURES

OUTCOME A

We will demonstrate and deliver on the vision for creating a fair and thriving future for Luton through collaborative and close working that embraces the value of innovation in partnership.



OUTCOME B

We will hold ourselves to account that greater civic pride and progress towards the *Luton 2040 Vision* arising from this agreement will be visible, felt and shared by communities in Luton.



2024



University of
Bedfordshire

Luton 2040
A place to thrive

For further information please visit
www.beds.ac.uk/civic-agreement