

As you'd expect, supporting local residents, businesses and the local economy to get back on its feet after Covid is one of our highest priorities right now.

We've set up a Ways To Work advice centre in St Helens town centre to help people access job and training opportunities; we're continuing to support businesses with new ways of working and offering various grant schemes to help their recovery; and now we've set up a new Place Board to work in partnership with the local public, private and third sector to help drive growth and regeneration, and to make sure this benefits local people first and foremost.

We've previously had an Economy Board which had the aim of driving the economic rejuvenation of the borough. Readers may recall that Eamonn McManus Chaired this board, and I want to thank him and all those who took part for their fantastic hard work, support and progress. Among other things this included setting up a successful business awards, helping to secure support for Glass Futures, and setting up the Ambassador programme which has gone from strength to strength with over 150 members who together have helped to promote apprenticeships, raise aspiration for school children, and support care leavers. In particular their support for schools and vulnerable children during the pandemic was amazing and I thank them all.

However, the time is right to take a broader look at our aims and, as a Labour council, we want to make sure we deliver inclusive growth. In short, this means making sure that we do everything possible to see that growth in our borough – including the major regeneration projects underway and those coming forward in the next couple of years – benefit all the people of the borough, our communities and our local economy as much as possible.

In addition, the climate change challenge and net zero emissions target also necessitates the promotion of a green recovery, and the council cannot do this alone.

For these reasons, we've replaced the Economy Board with a Place Board, mirroring the work of our People's Board, to bring together local public, private and third sector partners and work together to not just regenerate the borough, but to change and improve lives too. It's a big task, but one we are ready to take on.

Find out more: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/news/2021/september/21/place-board-targets-growth-for-all/>

Best wishes to all Star readers.