

This week we've launched the St Helens Borough Business Awards in collaboration with St Helens Chamber. The awards are a chance to celebrate and highlight our many fantastic businesses and workers and the competition is now open for entries until midnight on Tuesday 28th June, with the ceremony taking place later this year in September.

Businesses and employees across the borough can enter categories including Apprentice of the Year; Business Start Up of the Year; Education & Business Partnership; and Employer of the Year, with further categories showcasing environmental achievements, community work and more.

Our local business community has shown great resilience over the last few years and we want to do all we can to help them go from strength to strength.

We know that different sectors still face challenges. Last week myself and colleagues including Cllr Jeanie Bell, Cabinet member for Safer, Stronger Communities, met with local business owners and taxi operators to hear about the difficulties facing the hospitality industry and taxi trade. We will do all we can to help them.

In the next four years we'll be delivering our town centre regeneration plans and other large projects including the Parkside and Omega West developments, and we'll be introducing a new inclusive growth strategy to help local businesses and workers get to the front of the queue for the opportunities we create.

The council's Labour cabinet will be leading this work, with Cllr Kate Groucutt our portfolio holder for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills.

Through our Ways to Work scheme we've already helped more than 1300 residents into jobs, training or education, and these developments and the changes ourselves and partners are delivering will raise aspiration and create even more opportunities in the years ahead.

There are already signs of this – earlier this week pupils from St Cuthbert's High School in Sutton enjoyed a session organised by Glass Futures teaching them about career opportunities in engineering, and year 6 pupils at Ashurst Primary in Blackbrook took part in a session with the Chamber and local company E-Verve Energy to learn about their work and future careers.

The St Helens Borough Business Awards are open to businesses of all sizes and sectors and are free to enter, so get your entries in now! For more information about the awards visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/businessawards.

Best wishes to all Star readers.