

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD

28 March 2013

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 WEST KENT BUSINESS SUPPORT INITIATIVES

To provide an update on the development of additional, jointly-commissioned business support services for West Kent to be implemented in 2013/14.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A report was made to the previous meeting of this Board setting out proposals for a pilot programme of business support initiatives across West Kent. The initial proposal was for this to be undertaken in January – March 2013 as a precursor to a full programme being developed for the new financial year. The pilot programme was to be funded by Kent County Council but, in the event, the County Council indicated that a pilot programme could not be supported. Instead, the West Kent Partnership were invited to proceed direct to a full bid for funding for a business support programme for 2013/14.

1.1.2 As set out in the previous report to this Board, given the ongoing challenging economic situation for our local businesses, our collective ambition for 2013/14 is to pool the limited economic development resources available to the three West Kent districts and the West Kent Partnership to promote a single and clear business support 'offer' for West Kent businesses. This will require a review of what we currently provide individually and the development of a limited commissioning process to secure the business support services that are most effective and needed locally from the best provider or providers. Additional funding from the County Council could provide a significant enhancement to the services that the three West Kent districts could provide themselves.

1.2 West Kent Pilot Programme

1.2.1 A bid to the County Council's Regeneration Fund for 2013/14 has now been prepared. The bid is for funding totalling £52,000 which would be partly matched funded by the three West Kent Districts and the West Kent Partnership. The bid

would enable the following additional/enhanced business support initiatives to be implemented:

- providing additional impartial and confidential 1:1 business advice to start up, and micro businesses
- 1:1 mentoring to bring forward businesses to qualify for High Growth Kent support
- Meet the Expert workshops signposting to professional services available to improve management and performance of a business and move it into growth.
- Topic specific workshops across all sectors focusing on particular areas, identified according to demand but likely to include, finance, sales and marketing, export markets
- 1:1 and workshop support for home based businesses
- 1:1 and workshop support for rural, especially land based businesses
- Pilot programme of tailored support to encourage entrepreneurship in deprived communities

1.2.2 The bid has received a first stage approval from the County Council and is now proceeding to a final assessment. If that is successful, then funding would be available for West Kent Partners to commission the above initiatives from April 2013.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 None

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 The Borough Council's own financial contribution would be met from existing economic development budgets.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 N/A

1.6 Recommendation

1.6.1 That the West Kent business support programme **BE ENDORSED** and further reports on the commissioning of providers and the take up of these initiatives **BE MADE** to future meetings of this Board.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Business support initiatives of the kind described in this report are open to all sections of the community.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	Specific support to social enterprises is to be considered.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.