

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

17 July 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 ESCALATE – INNOVATION AND GROWTH FUND BID

To provide an update on the bid to secure a loan fund for small businesses in West Kent, Maidstone and East Sussex.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A report was submitted to the March meeting of the former Communities Advisory Board regarding the proposed submission of a bid to the Government's Innovation and Growth Fund for £5.5m of funding to act as a loan fund for high growth local small businesses unable to gain access to funding from usual sources. The bid, led by Kent County Council with support from the West Kent Partnership, has now been submitted and this report provides an update on further progress. A copy of the main bid document is attached as Annex 1 to this report.

1.2 Update to Bid

1.2.1 Following the closure of the bidding process, it became clear that this final round of the funding would be highly competitive. Over 300 applications were received by Government for funding support across the UK. The Escalate proposal is a strong one, with minimal overhead costs and the promise that the majority of funding secured would be channelled direct to the business community. However, the level of competition will mean that all bids will need to be heavily scrutinised.

1.2.2 A decision on the Escalate bid and others is likely to be made in mid July. A verbal update will be made to the meeting if there is any announcement prior to this. Part of the evaluation process involves an interview by BIS with the bidding authority. This has now taken place and it has been reported that the Escalate Bid was well received.

1.3 Accelerator +

1.3.1 As an interim measure, the County Council has agreed to develop a small, interim loan fund of £150,000 for West Kent and Maidstone as a potential precursor to the

more significant Escalate Programme. This 'Accelerator +' programme was launched at a business engagement event on 6th June hosted by Sevenoaks District Council and attended by the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration. Whilst relatively modest in scale, development of the interim programme has enabled guidance and criteria to be developed which could then be adapted for the Escalate programme should the funding bid be successful. It has also demonstrated the commitment of local partners. Loans of between £10K and £20K will be offered and is open to high growth businesses of 50 employees or less. The Fund will be open from 1st July and pre-application submissions required by 1st August. Those deemed to be suitable to progress to a full application will have until 16th September to make a submission. Details of the programme is being promoted on the Council's website and consideration will be given to further promotion of this opportunity prior to the 1st August.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 N/A

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That progress regarding the Escalate programme **BE NOTED;**

1.8.2 Further promotion of the opportunities presented by the Accelerator + programme **BE EXPLORED.**

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	Bids for loans from these schemes will be open to all businesses who meet the adopted criteria.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
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.