

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 SUPPORTING THE BOROUGH'S LOCAL CENTRES

To set out an approach to engagement with local Chambers and trading associations to identify opportunities to support business activity and vitality in the Borough's local centres.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that an independent 'Town Team' for Tonbridge was established last year to prepare a bid for funding from the Government's 'Portas' initiative. In the event, that bid was not successful but the Town Team, supported by the Borough Council, decided to carry on with its work and this has recently culminated in the very successful Taste of Tonbridge event. This and the future plans of the Town Team are reported elsewhere on this agenda.
- 1.1.2 At the same time as the Portas bid was being prepared, the Borough Council received notification that it had been allocated funding of £100,000 from the Government's Innovation Fund to help address the issue of vacant retail premises and their effect of the vitality of shopping centres. The grant was not ring-fenced and thus could be used to address such issues in both main and local centres within each district to whom it was awarded. A small contribution from that Fund will be used to support the Taste of Tonbridge event but the bulk of the funding remains available for local investment.

1.2 Local Centres

- 1.2.1 As the Tonbridge Town Team develop new additional initiatives, there will no doubt be a further call on the fund by them to assist with their implementation. The Borough's key local centres, however, could and should also be supported where there is scope to improve trading and enhance their overall retail and business appeal.
- 1.2.2 It is therefore suggested that the Borough Council takes a lead in consulting with those local organisations who represent the retail and business interests in our

local centres. The process could also seek to identify opportunities for a range of small scale investments, led by local trade based organisations, which might benefit those centres.

- 1.2.3 As a starting point, it is suggested that the Council engages with those organisations to whom we provide annual grant support for Christmas lighting schemes as these represent the more significant local centres in terms of the numbers of retail units they contain. These organisations are:

Borough Green Chamber of Commerce

Snodland Chamber of Commerce

Martin Square Traders Association

West Malling Chamber of Commerce/Town Malling Day Ltd

Wrotham Traders.

- 1.2.4 In addition, the following Parish Councils are the named contacts for their local centres: Hadlow; Aylesford and East Peckham. Kings Hill has never applied for a Christmas lighting grant but, in this instance, the Parish Council could also be consulted.
- 1.2.5 As a second phase, the consultation could be extended to cover smaller, suburban retail centres.
- 1.2.6 The purpose of the consultation will be to hear the views of local traders on the issue of retail and business vitality and whether there would be scope to enhance this in any way with support from the Innovation Fund monies. Such meetings could appropriately be led by the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration with support from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Board.
- 1.2.7 Once complete, the results of the conversations with traders will be reported back to this Board along with any proposals for investment. The results of these consultations could also usefully feed into the consultation and engagement strategy being prepared for the Borough Local Plan.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 None

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 None

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report.

1.6 Recommendation

1.6.1 That the suggested process of engagement with local traders, as set out in this report, **BE ENDORSED**.

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	N/A
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	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.