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TONBRIDGE & MALLING
BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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19 June 2019

CABINET - TUESDAY, 25TH JUNE, 2019

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Tuesday, 25th June, 2019 meeting of the Cabinet, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

4. **Matters Referred from Advisory Boards (Pages 3 - 6)**

The notes of meetings of Advisory Boards are attached, any recommendations identified by an arrow being for determination by the Cabinet. Notices relating to any decisions already taken by Cabinet Members under the arrangements for delegated decision making have previously been circulated.

Economic Regeneration Advisory Board of 17 June 2019

12. **Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023 (Pages 7 - 34)**

Item ERG 19/12 referred from Economic Regeneration Advisory Board of 17 June 2019

Replacement for agenda item 8

J E BEILBY
Chief Executive

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Monday, 17th June, 2019

Present: Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr N Foyle, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr A P J Keeley, Cllr D W King, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr K B Tanner and Cllr C J Williams

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, R P Betts, A E Clark, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D Lettington, Mrs A S Oakley and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs T Dean, J R S Lark and L J O'Toole

ERG 19/9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

ERG 19/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 20 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 19/11 TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL ECONOMIC REGENERATION ACTIVITY 2015-19

The Economic Regeneration Manager presented an overview of activities undertaken by the Borough Council over the last four years to support the local economy.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

ERG 19/12 BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY 2019-2023

The report of the Chief Executive set out details of proposed changes to the draft Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023 in light of feedback received during the consultation exercise undertaken during October and November 2018. Particular reference was made to access to broadband provision in remote areas, the need to lobby for lower business rates to encourage High Street shops, the development of socio-economic initiatives in 'deprived areas' to support those seeking employment and the success of the West Kent Careers and Enterprise Network in promoting 'work readiness' in schools and colleges. It was

noted that these issues had been included in the revised strategy set out at Annex 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved. ◀

***Referred to Cabinet**

ERG 19/13 BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT SCHEME INITIATIVES - UPDATE

Decision Notice D190046MEM

The report of the Chief Executive set out details of progress on economic regeneration initiatives within the Borough funded by income received from the Business Rates Retention Pilot. Particular reference was made to the Town and District Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme launched at the end of March 2019 and the potential for this to be extended to local centres and parades across the Borough.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) initial scoping work on a local centres shopfront improvement scheme be undertaken and a report on the scheme, along with a list of other potential initiatives, be submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

ERG 19/14 VISIT KENT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2019

Decision Notice D190047MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided a summary of the current Service Level Agreement between the Borough Council and Visit Kent and set out details of the proposed agreement for 2019/20.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposal to continue the Service Level Agreement with Visit Kent in 2019/20 at the level set out at paragraph 1.4.1 of the report (a maximum of £3,680) be agreed; and
- (2) the activities set out at paragraph 1.4.2 of the report be included in the Service Level Agreement.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**ERG 19/15 ECONOMIC OVERVIEW OF TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH**

The report of the Chief Executive provided an overview of the economic position of the Borough which included details of recent trends, up-to-date statistics on current performance of the local economy and comparison with neighbouring districts within West Kent.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**ERG 19/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

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Item ERG 19/12 referred from Economic Regeneration Advisory Board minutes of 17 June 2019

ERG 19/12 BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY 2019-2023

The report of the Chief Executive set out details of proposed changes to the draft Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023 in light of feedback received during the consultation exercise undertaken during October and November 2018. Particular reference was made to access to broadband provision in remote areas, the need to lobby for lower business rates to encourage High Street shops, the development of socio-economic initiatives in 'deprived areas' to support those seeking employment and the success of the West Kent Careers and Enterprise Network in promoting 'work readiness' in schools and colleges. It was noted that these issues had been included in the revised strategy set out at Annex 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

***Referred to Cabinet**

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TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

17 June 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY 2019-2023

This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in October - November 2018, and recommends adoption of the strategy as amended.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A report was made to the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 05 September 2018 setting out a draft strategy to guide our work on supporting the local economy for the period 2019-2023.

1.1.2 This strategy will follow on from the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 2015-2019, for which the final action plan update was delivered at the last Advisory Board meeting in February 2019.

1.1.3 The draft strategy has now been the subject of consultation and the purpose of this report is to present a final draft for approval, amended to take account of the comments received and to reflect views of local businesses on future economic priorities for the local area.

1.2 Results of Consultation

1.2.1 The following measures were undertaken in order to obtain consultation responses from local stakeholders:

- Dedicated webpage inviting people to comment through a short questionnaire.
- Series of Twitter and Facebook messages encouraging feedback.
- Short article in the TMBC Business e-Bulletin which went out to over 600 business and stakeholder contacts.
- Direct email to over 600 business contacts.

1.2.2 A total of 17 formal responses were received from local businesses and business representative organisations (via the questionnaire and email). In addition,

comments were also received from partner organisations, such as the West Kent Partnership and adjoining Borough and District Councils, as well as from officers within Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. This feedback has been extremely helpful in shaping the strategy, and is summarised below:

- Overall respondents were positive about the content, length and presentation of the strategy, which were all rated as ‘good’ on average.
- Need for a clear vision within the document to demonstrate the overall direction that the Borough Council is looking to head towards.
- When asked if any issue had been overlooked or underrepresented in the strategy or the action plan, 5 main items were put forward:
 - i) Greater emphasis on **broadband** access, given the growth in online retail and the expectation of businesses to be able to access superfast broadband provision even in remoter locations.
 - ii) **Retail:**
 - a) Need for a *reduction in business rates* for High Street shops.
 - b) Need to set up a *Retailers Forum* for Tonbridge Town Centre that looks at some of the strategic issues it faces.
 - c) Greater support for *rural service centres*
 - iii) Need to ensure an emphasis on **skills**, as the availability of skilled people continues to be a challenge.
 - iv) Need to strengthen the link between the socio-economic initiatives in the action plan with the ‘pockets of **deprivation**’ within the borough.
 - v) There are many other reasons for business failure than a lack of **business support** that need to be highlighted – these include suitable premises and economic conditions.

1.2.3 These points have all been accommodated within the draft Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy as set out in Appendix 1.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 The actions set out in the strategy can be delivered using existing Economic Regeneration budgets.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Not applicable.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.8.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, **BE APPROVED**.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration and the Chief Executive confirm that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Manager

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy

2019 - 2023



Foreword - Economic Regeneration in Tonbridge and Malling: The Need for a Strategy

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is hugely positive about supporting our local economy. We want to help foster an environment in which local businesses can flourish, as we recognise the massive contribution they make to the economic well-being of the borough.

When the Borough Council adopted Economic Regeneration as a new key priority in 2012/13, we set to work with our partners across the County and West Kent to implement our strategy, which included a large range of initiatives aimed at supporting business start-up and growth. In recent years, we have achieved a number of successes, including:

- Securing Local Growth Funding towards improved flood defences at Leigh and Hildenborough.
- Delivering Public Realm improvements in Tonbridge – including the High Street, River Walk and Town Lock.
- Delivering improvements to Snodland and Tonbridge Stations.
- Establishing the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network and associated events, such as Skillsfest and Skills 30:30.
- Opening and securing full occupation of The Castle Lodge co-working space for small businesses.
- Introducing new Jobs and Training Fairs in partnership with Jobcentre Plus.
- Improving engagement with local businesses through our networking events and monthly e-bulletin.

However, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. There are a number of challenges that we still face, for example, the need to improve skills attainment and help increase our 3-year business survival rate.

This strategy for 2019-2023 sets out the economic initiatives the Council will undertake with its partners to help **create a resilient, dynamic and inclusive economy that fosters sustainable growth in the borough** over the next 4 years. We will keep the strategy under close review and report on progress on the actions we set out on an annual basis.



Nicolas Heslop, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration

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1. Our Local Economy

In order to make sure we provide the right kind of support to local businesses and add genuine value, it is essential that we understand the key aspects of the local economy. In doing so, it is recognised that Tonbridge and Malling does not represent a self-contained functional economic area– indeed, there is a high level of inter-relatedness between the various parts of West Kent, as well as strong link between the towns and villages in the north of the Borough with Medway and Maidstone.

Analysis of the Borough’s current economic profile highlights the following:

- **Strong strategic transport network:** Served by the M2, M20 and M26, as well as nearby ports – Gatwick, Eurotunnel (Folkestone), Sheerness and Dover – the area has a strong strategic communications network. Tonbridge has the busiest railway station in Kent, with well over 4.4 million journeys in 2017. In the north of the district, direct services to St Pancras International on High Speed Javelin trains from Maidstone West began calling at Snodland during the morning and evening peak Monday to Friday in December 2014. Direct trains into London Victoria and to Ashford International also serve Barming, East Malling, West Malling and Borough Green & Wrotham railway stations.
- **Key Sectors:** The retail, business administration and support sectors support the highest levels of employment in the borough, with financial and insurance and wholesale industries prevalent in the local economy relative to the wider South East. While there has been limited overall growth in employment over recent years, financial and insurance and professional, scientific and technical sectors have seen relatively significant levels of employment growth, with strong proportionate growth in wholesale industries.

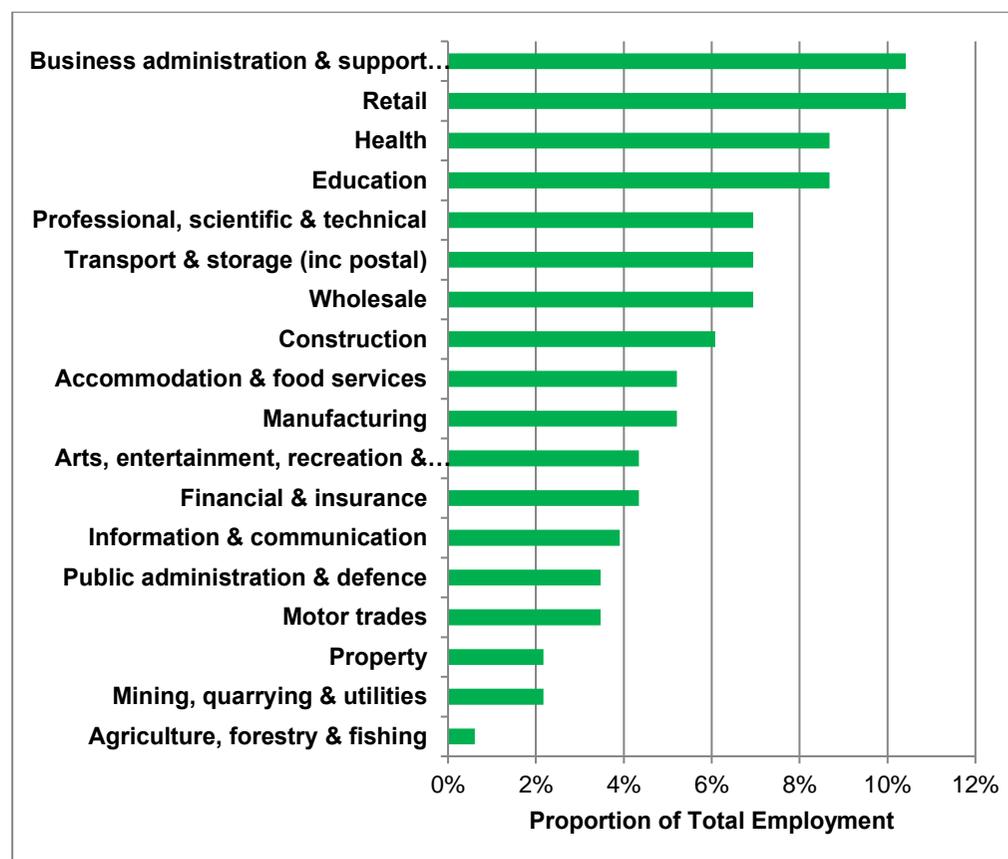


Figure 1: Key Sectors in Tonbridge and Malling (BRES, 2015)

- **Recent economic growth:** Local growth in employment between 2009 and 2015 has been relatively flat, with an increase of 3.6% over the course of this period. Further analysis shows that this falls notably below the level of growth seen over the same period in the South East LEP (6%) and West Kent (12%) areas.

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Employment	56,000	57,000	58,000	54,000	57,000	56,000	58,000
Change		+1,000	+1,000	-4,000	+3,000	-1,000	+2,000
Total change 2009 – 2015							+2,000
% change 2009 – 2015							3.6%

Table 1: Total Employment Change 2009-2015 (BRES)

Since 2010, the number of businesses in the borough has increased by 18%. While this surpassed the level of growth recorded across West Kent (15%), the number of enterprises in the South East LEP grew at a slightly faster rate (19%).

In Tonbridge and Malling, growth was primarily driven by a strong increase in the number of micro businesses, with more limited growth in the number of small and medium enterprises as shown in the following chart. The number of large enterprises employing more than 250 people grew by one quarter, albeit from a comparatively small base.

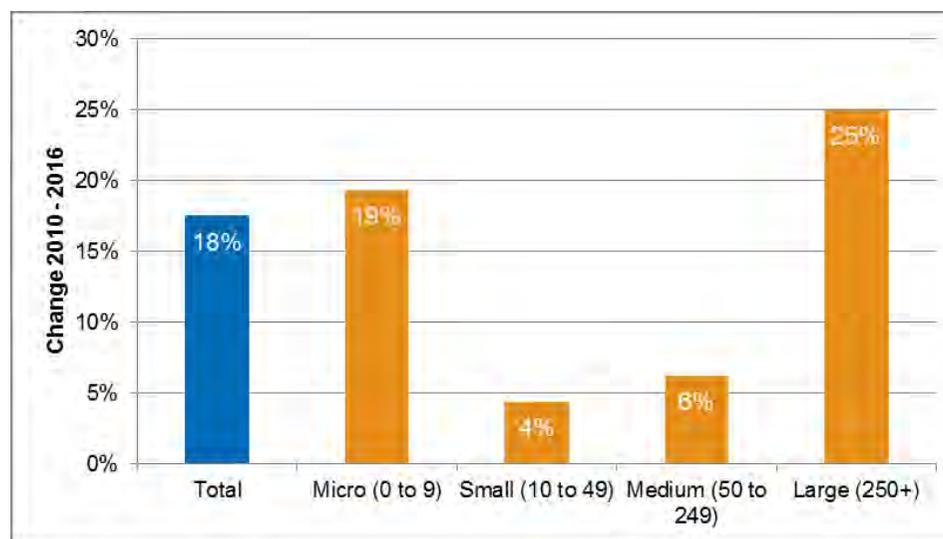


Figure 2: Business Growth 2010-2015 (UK Business Counts)

However, this growth does hide a high degree of churn within the local economy, with high levels of business set-ups and medium to high levels of business closures. The three-year survival rate for businesses in the borough tends to fluctuate around 60-65% of business start-ups lasting for at least this length of time, this compares with around 58-63% in Kent and around 60% nationally.

- **The role of micro business:** The majority of businesses in Tonbridge and Malling employ fewer than 10 people (89%), broadly reflecting wider trends in West Kent and the South East. This illustrates that micro businesses represent a strong backbone to the Borough's economy and giving it an emphasis on entrepreneurialism and vibrancy.

	Enterprises	%	West Kent %	South East LEP %
Micro (0 to 9 employees)	5,105	89%	90%	90%
Small (10 to 49)	530	9%	8%	8%
Medium (50 to 249)	90	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Large (250+)	25	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Total	5,745	100%	100%	100%

Table 2: Business Demography (UK Business Counts 2018)

- **High annual earning rates:** Relatively high earnings are estimated for residents of Tonbridge and Malling in full-time employment, surpassing figures for Kent as a whole and the South East LEP area. There is, however, variance between the earnings of those living and working in the borough (as there is for comparator areas), suggesting that a significant proportion of residents commute elsewhere (particularly Central London) for higher paid employment opportunities. This is borne out in the most recent statistics (Census 2011), which showed that, at the time, nearly two-thirds of residents commuted out of the borough for work (mostly to Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Westminster and Tunbridge Wells).

Table 3: Residence-based and Workplace-based Annual Earnings (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2018)

	Residence-based	Workplace-based
Tonbridge and Malling	£33,784	£28,480
Sevenoaks	£30,186	£28,236
Tunbridge Wells	£34,694	£27,882
Kent	£31,101	£28,392
South East LEP	£31,200	£28,392

- Pockets of Deprivation:** The Borough is not characterised by high levels of deprivation, ranking within the 20% least deprived authorities in England. However, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015, there are small pockets of Tonbridge and Malling that do have challenges (these show up in a darker shade of red on Figure 3). Most notably, these include parts of Ditton, Snodland, East Malling, and North Tonbridge – our ‘priority communities’.

These areas of the Borough are characterised by comparatively higher rates of worklessness and lower rates of higher level skills attainment.

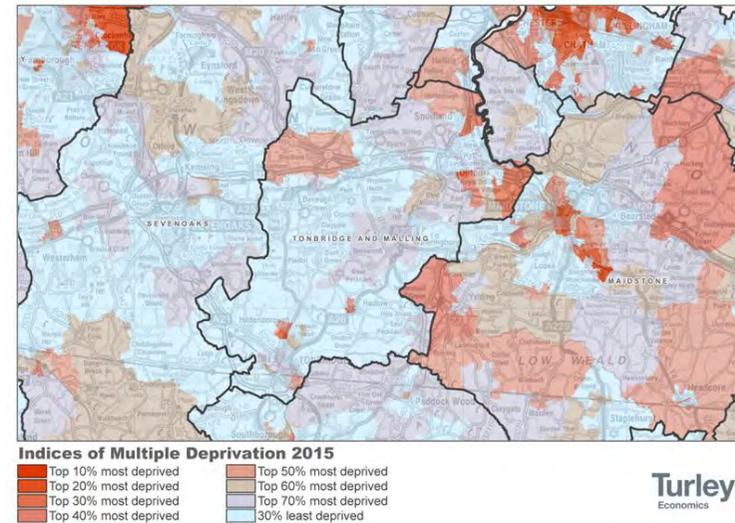


Figure 3: Map of Deprivation in Tonbridge and Malling (IMD, 2015)

- Skills Attainment:** In 2017, the percentage of the local population (aged 16-64 years) with NVQ1 and above was higher than the average for the South East and nationally – at 93.1% attainment compared with 89.5% across the South East and 85.4% for Great Britain as a whole. The percentage of the population with no qualifications has also reduced in the borough from around 20% in 2011 to less than 7% in 2017. Despite this, when it comes to higher skills attainment, the borough falls behind, with only 35.2% achieving NVQ4 and above in 2017 compared to 41.4% in the South East region and 38.6% across Great Britain.



- **Economic Vibrancy:** The Economic Vibrancy Index was devised by Grant Thornton in 2018 to provide an overview of economic performance, looking beyond Gross Domestic Product and encapsulating some of the broader indicators of economic success. Taking all the various indicators into consideration, Tonbridge and Malling Borough is the best performing area of Kent, and across the whole of England was ranked as follows:
 - Vibrant Economy Index – 45 out of 324 local authority areas
 - Prosperity – 46th
 - Dynamism and Opportunity – 50th
 - Inclusion and Equality – 61st
 - Health, Well-Being and Happiness – 40th
 - Resilience and Sustainability – 76th
 - Community, Trust and Belonging – 156th

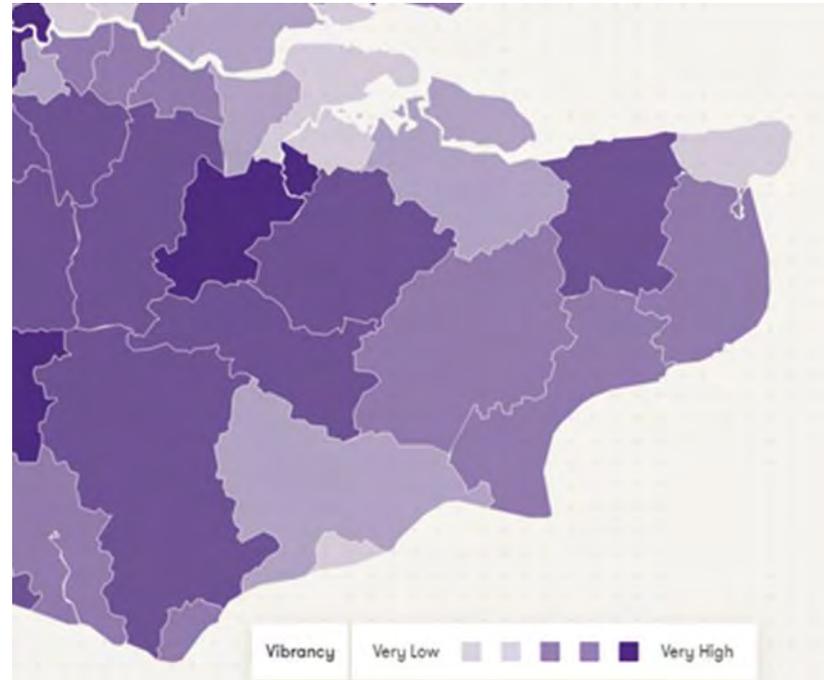


Figure 4: Map showing Vibrant Economy Index Scoring (Grant Thornton, 2018)

2. Working with Our Partners

The Borough Council recognises the key role it has to play in supporting sustainable growth in the local economy, both in terms of setting a strategic framework for investment as well as through the various initiatives it undertakes in order to create added-value. However, our positive impact can only really be maximised by working with partners that also play an equally important role in creating positive change. As such, we are committed to working with a wide range of partners to achieve the actions set out in this strategy. The following are key strategic partnerships that the Borough Council engages with on a regular basis:

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP): is one of 39 business-led public/private partnerships set up by government to make investments and deliver activities, as set out in its Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2018, to drive growth and create local jobs. SELEP covers Kent, Essex, East Sussex, Medway, Thurrock and Southend and is the biggest Local Enterprise Partnership outside of London. Recent investments into Tonbridge and Malling which have benefited from funding via the SELEP have included Tonbridge town centre improvements (Tonbridge High Street and River Walk) and Tonbridge Station. Funding has also been awarded to Rochester Airport and Leigh Flood Storage Area (including Hildenborough).

Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP): was set up in 2013 as one of the four federated partnerships which comprises the SELEP. KMEP is focussed on driving forward economic growth and prosperity in Kent and Medway and is governed by a Board and chaired by the private sector, with membership drawn from business, local government, further and higher education establishments. KMEP is responsible for delivering the objectives set out in Kent and Medway's Growth Plan.

West Kent Partnership (WKP): is the strategic economic partnership covering the local authority areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. The WKP vision for West Kent is to sustain a dynamic and well-connected local economy, to ensure that West Kent remains a key location for business success and growth, and to facilitate access to quality jobs and skills development. The three boroughs work closely together to make the most of the resources available to them in order to deliver more for our local businesses. The partnership has been successful in obtaining funding for a number of initiatives, such as West Kent LEADER and the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network.

In addition, there are a number of key partners that the Borough Council works with directly to deliver initiatives or to support work in a specific area of the local economy. A list of these partners is provided in Appendix 1.

3. Policy Context

It is important to recognise that this Economic Regeneration Strategy will be delivered within the context of a much wider policy framework. The table below provides a brief overview of the key national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies that look to address a range of issues affecting the economy:

	Policy Document	Organisation	Key Messages
National	Industrial Strategy White Paper	HM Government	<p>5 foundations of productivity are set out to achieve a transformed economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas: the world's most innovative economy • People: good jobs and greater earning power for all • Infrastructure: a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure • Business environment: the best place to start and grow a business. • Places: prosperous communities across the UK
Regional	Economic Strategy Statement	SELEP	<p>Following on from the Strategic Economic Plan (2014-2018), the SELEP has adopted an Economic Strategy Statement which aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work smarter to increase productivity in the SELEP area, with the aim of bridging the gap in GVA per filled job between the South East and the rest of the UK; • Deliver faster by accelerating housing and infrastructure delivery to meet planned growth; • Work better together by collaborating across the Greater South East, with Government and with business.

	South East Skills Strategy	SELEP	Provides a regional focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications for all ages. • Simplifying the skills landscape for employers and individuals. • Enabling all in society to access training and employment • Raising the profile of our key sectors • Fostering the spirit of pride, innovation and enthusiasm to bring about growth.
Sub-Regional	Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth	KMEP	Sets out 4 key areas of intervention to help Kent realise its potential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major investment in transport infrastructure • Bring forward strategic (Highways Agency) schemes where they impede growth • Public sector-backed Development Fund – providing investment • New solutions to open up housing delivery • Measures to tackle concentrations of deprivation and housing market failure in coastal Kent
	Kent & Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework	KCC	Sets out the level of investment in infrastructure (such as transport, education, health and social care, utilities) required in the county for the period up to 2031 in order to accommodate planned housing growth, and the current gap in funding in order to deliver this (in the region of £4 billion)
	Kent Adult Skills Strategy	KCC	Sets out the aim to reduce unemployment and improve adult skills levels in the county by 2023.

	West Kent Priorities for Growth	WKP	<p>Aims to create <i>“a dynamic and well connected economy, a key location for business growth where businesses are supported to innovate and thrive and our local population has access to quality jobs and skills development”</i></p> <p>Priority projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Medway Flood Storage Area • NIAB East Malling Research Biotech Hub • Innovation Park Medway (Rochester Airfield) • Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration
Local	Corporate Plan	TMBC	Identifies Economic Regeneration as a key priority of the Borough Council.
	Emerging Local Plan and Evidence Base	TMBC	Identifies a range of strategic sites and employment allocations to meet the needs of the borough up to 2031. The Local Plan is supported by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which sets out critical, essential and desirable infrastructure investments needed to enable growth and development.

Key Issues

Despite having a relatively successful and resilient local economy, there are a number of challenges that the Borough faces, and which need to be addressed if the area is to continue to enjoy a high degree of prosperity. These include:

- The rate of **commercial development** coming forward is currently insufficient to meet the growing demand, and yet at the same time, existing commercial premises are being lost to residential conversions, especially in Tonbridge.
- In order to accommodate future housing and commercial developments, it is key that **essential infrastructure** is delivered in order to create a more resilient transport network and ensure a high quality of life for both residents and businesses. Without this investment, our existing infrastructure will eventually become insufficient to meet local needs.
- In a changing world, where automation is replacing some lower skilled work and generating new opportunities, it is important that our emerging cohort of students and existing workforce do not get left behind. **Higher Skills attainment** in the borough is better than the average for Kent as a whole, but still lags behind that for the rest of the South East, and as such action is urgently needed to provide effective careers guidance and deliver opportunities for upskilling and interaction between employers and residents.
- Although the Borough benefits from an extremely entrepreneurial spirit – with business creation being high – the survival rates for these businesses is not as high as it could be. Indeed, only around 60-65% of businesses in the borough last 3 years or more. Whilst this high business churn is likely created by a wide variety of different factors, it does indicate that there could be a need for more targeted **information sharing, business support and advice, recruitment support and better access to suitable business premises.**



- Our **town centres** are evolving in response to how people now shop. With an increased number of transactions online, our High Streets are no longer ‘retail centres’, but are evolving into places where people go to get an ‘experience’, be it going to a park, having a coffee, visiting the gym or enjoying a meal out. Whilst a lot of this change is happening organically, it is important that we continue to support our businesses through these changes by making our town centres attractive places to visit.
- Whilst the borough has some great **tourism** assets, such as Ightham Mote, Tonbridge Castle, the Hop Farm and Buckmore Park, Tonbridge and Malling does not have a particularly high tourism profile, especially in comparison with other parts of Kent.
- There are some fantastic businesses in our rural areas, however there are a number of constraints to our **rural economy**, these include areas of poor broadband provision and the cost of housing and transport. In addition, in a number of our villages and service centres, the traditional village shop is facing increased competition from internet shopping and is having to evolve and innovate. As well as providing an economic function, these stores are also often at the social heart of the community.

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Vision and Objectives

The Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy sets out the Council's vision which aims to:

“Maximise the unique strengths of the local area to help create a resilient, dynamic and inclusive economy that fosters sustainable growth in the borough”

The Borough Council has identified the following objectives to help underpin the vision and support the local economy over the next 4 years:

- To **plan for future economic growth** so that it supports the needs of the local economy, enabling it to remain competitive and create quality local jobs: the TMBC Local Plan evidence base highlights the need for an additional 46ha of employment space which will need to be met through the allocation of new sites and the intensification of existing sites. These sites include Innovation Park Medway (formerly Rochester Airfield), the former Aylesford Newsprint site and East Malling Research Station.
- To obtain **funding for key infrastructure**, be it from developer contributions or Government, to support planned growth and address existing capacity issues. It is critical that these relationships continue to bear fruit, if not become even more fruitful, in order to ensure there is the necessary investment in our infrastructure.
- To embrace the **skills and work readiness** agenda and work directly with schools, local businesses and business representative organisations to develop careers advice that is business-relevant, develop initiatives that provide regular contact between students and employers, and run events that open up new employment opportunities for local residents.
- To contribute towards an environment that **supports local business**, providing them with cost-effective information that gives straightforward access to business advice, funding opportunities, council-run networking events and, where possible, to also help with finding business premises that meets their needs.
- To undertake a range of initiatives in our **town centres** that help with their vitality and viability, and help to make them resilient during a time of change.
- To promote the **visitor economy** and, in partnership with Visit Kent, to support campaigns that help to raise the profile of the area as a visitor destination.
- To support the **rural economy** through the delivery of funding and support programmes, and lobbying on rural broadband issues.

Action Plan – Priority Actions

Objective	Action	Timescale	TMBC Partners	Success Measure
Planning for Economic Growth	Support the development of a new Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan, including the identification of new employment sites and the protection of existing sites.	2019	Adjoining Local Authorities Town and Parish Councils Local Businesses and Land Owners	Allocation of sufficient sites for employment uses. Adoption of the Local Plan.
	Implementation of the North Kent Enterprise Zone (Innovation Park Medway)	2022	Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Medway Council South East LEP	No. of new businesses relocating to Innovation Park Medway.
	Bring new economic life into the former Aylesford Newsprint site.	2023	Site owner Locate in Kent	No. of new businesses relocating to the former Aylesford Newsprint site.
	Support the development of a new research campus and associated inward investment at East Malling.	2023	NIAB EMR and the East Malling Trust	Creation of masterplan for the campus. No. of new sector-specific businesses on site.
	Foster additional inward investment to the Borough via the promotion of vacant sites and existing premises.	Ongoing	Locate In Kent	% increase in the number of jobs retained and secured through inward investment projects handled by Locate in Kent.
Funding for Key Infrastructure	Implementation of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and Hildenborough improvements.	2020-2023	Environment Agency Kent County Council Local Businesses Local Residents	Delivery of scheme.
	Design and implementation of viable flood relief scheme in East Peckham	Ongoing	Environment Agency Kent County Council Local Businesses Local Residents	Outline Business Case for investment completed and funding secured.
	Delivery of SMART Motorway between Junctions 3 and 5 of the M20	2020	Highways England	Delivery of Scheme
	Implementation of critical transport infrastructure as identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.	2023	West Kent Partnership SELEP	Funding in place and delivery of 'short-term' (over next 5 years) investments

Skills and Work Readiness	Support the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network (WKEAN)	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Careers & Enterprise Company Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC Local Employers Local Secondary Schools	No of schools engaged in the initiative and supported by an Enterprise Adviser
	Deliver 2 employability and skills events per year in local schools that are located within our pockets of deprivation.	Annual Event	Federation of Small Business EBP Kent WKEAN Local Employers & Schools	No of employers attending No of students participating
	Deliver the West Kent Skillsfest event	Annual Event	West Kent Partnership Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC Local Employers Local Secondary Schools	No of employers attending No of schools participating
	Deliver 2 West Kent Jobs and Training Fairs per year - Spring: alternate between Tonbridge and Sevenoaks - Autumn: Tunbridge Wells	Annual Events	West Kent Partnership Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC Jobcentre Plus Local Employers Training Providers	No. of employers attending No. of Job Seekers attending No. of people entering employment or training
	Deliver 1 local Jobs and Training Fair per year that is located within one of our priority communities.	Annual Event	Jobcentre Plus RBLI Local Employers Training Providers	No. of employers attending No. of Job Seekers attending No. of people entering employment or training
	Deliver 1 'Help me Out' event per year per year that is located within one of our priority communities	Annual Event	Jobcentre Plus Local Community Partnerships	No. of support agencies attending No of people attending
Supporting Business	Deliver 4 business engagement events in the borough per year	Ongoing	Local Businesses and Business Representative Organisations.	No. of events per year No of businesses attending.
	Produce a monthly business e-bulletin	Monthly		No of e-bulletins produced No of businesses reading the e-bulletin.
	Maintain the TMBC Business webpages	Ongoing		No of visits per year.
	Maintain regular messaging through TMBC Social Media	Ongoing		No of followers No of shares and retweets.
	Promote and support the West Kent Business Support Programme (start-up and scale-up support), the Kent & Medway Growth Hub and other support activities.	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Kent County Council	No of businesses using the service.

			Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce National Centre for Microbusiness Kent Business School Local Districts/Boroughs	
	Promote and Support the Better Business for All initiative	Ongoing	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Kent Fire & Rescue Service Local Districts/Boroughs	No of businesses using the www.bbfa.biz website.
	Seek new opportunities to provide flexible co-working space for start-up businesses in the borough.	Ongoing	Private Investors	No. of new co-working venues in the borough
	Promote and signpost to key business funding opportunities	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Kent County Council South East LEP	No. of borough businesses awarded funding.
Our Towns and Local Centres	Work with the Tonbridge Town Team and local retailers to support the delivery of town centre events and other initiatives aimed at increasing footfall and spend in the town centre.	Ongoing	Tonbridge Town Team Local Retailers	No of events and initiatives delivered per annum. % vacancy rates on Tonbridge High Street
	Bring forward developments and townscape improvements to strengthen the viability and vitality of Tonbridge Town Centre, such as shopfront improvement schemes and town centre redevelopment opportunities	2023	Private Investors	Planning permission in place for new schemes by the end of the strategy period.
Visitor Economy	Work with Visit Kent to promote and market Tonbridge and Maidstone's tourism assets through an annual Agreement.	Ongoing	Visit Kent	No. of visitors to the borough Visitor spend in the borough (£)
Rural Economy	Promote the take up of LEADER grants by rural borough businesses	2019-2022	West Kent Partnership LEADER Local Action Group	No of grants awarded to borough businesses.
	Work with partners to implement superfast broadband services across the borough and to address local problems with mobile phone coverage.	Ongoing	Kent County Council Service Providers.	% of the borough with high speed broadband coverage. % of the borough with weak or no signal
	Deliver further phase of the Village Stores Initiative.	2019-2020	Action with Communities in Rural Kent.	No. of village stores engaging with the initiative.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council - Open for Business

The borough council has a key role to play, individually and in partnership with others, to provide positive support and advice to the local business community. In addition to this, the council also must, at the same time, undertake a number of regulatory functions which are relevant to, and will impact upon, local businesses.

The council is committed to undertaking such regulation with regard to local business in a measured, consistent and constructive way and to seek to reduce the burden of regulation where possible. Where necessary regulation impacts adversely on a local business, we will take the time to communicate clearly why this is necessary and explore what measures might be open to business to overcome any barriers or problems they face. In this respect, we will use the 'Better Business for All' model across all council services in the form of a 'one stop shop' where contact between businesses and the council is joined up regardless of whether that contact relates to regulation or offering support.



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We are committed to recognising the challenges which businesses face, particularly smaller businesses, and will do as much as we can to assist them when some form of regulation is required.

In order for businesses to get the maximum benefit from the activities set out in this strategy, there are a number of simple things they can do, such as:

- Signing up to the monthly business e-bulletin, which has information on new funding streams, advice and support and other business news.
- Engaging with the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network and supporting the workforce of the future.
- Coming along to our informal business networking events – a great opportunity to meet other local businesses.
- Following the borough council on twitter - @TMBC_Kent
- Considering sponsoring town centre events

For further information on any of these, please contact the Economic Regeneration Team via economic.regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk

Monitoring and Reviewing the Economy

Economic Indicator	Previous Performance			Current Trend	Targets					
	2015	2016	2017		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
VAT Registrations (Start-Ups)	775	770	730		750	760	770	780	790	800
VAT De-registrations	575	560	670		640	620	600	570	560	550
3 Year Business Survival Rates (%)	60.6	62.2	65.0		65	66	66	67	67	68
Median Gross Weekly Workplace Earnings (£)	517.10	550.80	547.70		550	560	570	580	590	600
Model-based Unemployment Rate (%)	4.1	3.7	3.3		3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6
18-24 year olds claiming out of work benefits (%)	1.6	1.7	1.7		1.6	1.55	1.5	1.45	1.4	1.4
National Vocational Qualification Level 3+ (%)	57.1	55	59.7		60	61	62	63	64	65
Happiness Score (out of 10)	7.4	7.7	7.9		7.9	7.95	8.0	8.05	8.1	8.15

Appendix 1 – List of Key Partners

Action with Communities in Rural Kent	Locate in Kent
Better Business For All – Regulatory Services	Mid Kent College
Business Doctors	National Centre for Micro-Business
Clarion Housing	Network Rail
Department for International Trade (DIT)	NIAB East Malling Research
Deskrenters (Castle Lodge)	North Kent Enterprise Zone Steering Group – including Medway Council
East Malling Trust	Produced in Kent
Education Business Partnership Kent	Royal British Legion Industries
Environment Agency	Tonbridge and Malling Businesses
Federation of Small Businesses	Tonbridge and Malling Local Strategic Partnership
Golding Homes	Tonbridge and Malling Schools
Hadlow Group	Tonbridge Forum
Highways England	Tonbridge Town Team
Homes England	Town & Parish Councils
JobCentre Plus	Visit Kent
Kent Apprenticeships	West Kent Adult Skills Forum
Kent County Council	West Kent Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Kent Farmers Market Association	West Kent College (Hadlow Group)
Kent International Business	West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	West Kent Partnership – including Sevenoaks DC & Tunbridge Wells BC
Kent Supported Employment	