

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



EXECUTIVE SERVICES

Chief Executive

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NB - This agenda contains proposals, recommendations and options. These do not represent Council policy or decisions until they have received proper consideration through the full decision making process.

Contact: Committee Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

21 August 2015

To: MEMBERS OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD
(Copies to all Members of the Council)

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board to be held in the Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Wednesday, 9th September, 2015 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

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The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

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Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

MEMBERSHIP

Cllr S M King (Chairman)
Cllr S R J Jessel (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs S M Barker
Cllr M C Base
Cllr R P Betts
Cllr T Bishop
Cllr J L Botten
Cllr T I B Cannon
Cllr M O Davis

Cllr R D Lancaster
Cllr Mrs S L Luck
Cllr Miss J L Sergison
Cllr C P Smith
Cllr F G Tombolis
Cllr B W Walker
Cllr T C Walker

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Apologies for absence

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Declarations of interest

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 23rd June, 2015

Present: Cllr S M King (Chairman), Cllr S R J Jessel (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr C P Smith, Cllr F G Tombolis, Cllr B W Walker and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, P F Bolt, V M C Branson, D J Cure, N J Heslop, B J Luker, M R Rhodes, H S Rogers and Miss S O Shrubsole were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M C Base

ERG 15/9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ERG 15/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 25 February 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 15/11 INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

A presentation on the Borough Council's economic regeneration agenda, covering the wider economic context, West Kent partnership working and the delivery of local business support services, was provided by the Chief Corporate Policy Officer.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration welcomed the Economic Regeneration Officer to Tonbridge and Malling and indicated that this role demonstrated the Borough Council's commitment to economic regeneration and activity.

ERG 15/12 ECONOMIC OVERVIEW OF TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH

The report of the Chief Executive set out an economic overview of the borough in order to demonstrate recent trends and provided the most up-to-date statistics on the current performance of the local economy.

Annex 1 to the report provided a range of socio-economic statistics which gave an overall indication of the performance of the Borough. It was noted that the local economy continued to perform well overall within the county-wide and national context although there were still inherent weaknesses, such as pockets of deprivation.

Serious consideration was given to a range of issues, including the significance, credibility and reliability of statistics, the unemployment rate in the Borough compared to its West Kent neighbours and the disparity between males and females.

Members were pleased to note the positive position for 3 year business survival rates, which at 77.6% compared favourably to Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils.

However, concern was expressed that 20% of people aged 16 years and above had no formal qualifications at all. Reference was made to the Family Focus Programme which helped local families experiencing social deprivation improve their circumstances and education and skills represented an important aspect of this support.

It was suggested that Mid Kent and Hadlow Colleges be invited to a future meeting of the Advisory Board to outline their current educational and training programmes.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

ERG 15/13 BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY

The report of the Chief Executive set out proposed amendments to the draft Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy to reflect comments received as part of the consultation process.

A number of responses had highlighted the need to better promote the area for inward investment, deal with traffic congestion pinch points, including the A20, and the need to improve local mobile phone coverage. It was reported that these issues were included as new actions in the Strategy. In addition, a number of key economic indicators had been identified to help judge future progress and these had been included in the Strategy.

The revised Strategy was attached as Annex 1 to the report.

Members noted references to investment to prevent local flooding, the role of Locate in Kent in identifying employment opportunities and land; ongoing consultation regarding improvements to broadband and the potential opportunity for private investment to improve this in rural areas. It was noted that currently the target ambition of central Government was 95% broadband coverage by 2017.

Particular reference was made to business rate retention and the impact that Aylesford Newsprint going into administration had created for the Borough Council. It was also reported that correspondence had been sent to the Minister for Local Government regarding the loss of this significant business, which demonstrated a disproportionate impact on a local authority. In addition, this example would be incorporated into the Borough Council's response on a business rates review consultation.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy, as set out at Annex 1 to the report, be approved; subject to a minor amendment to the 'success measure' for securing high speed broadband services across the Borough to reflect the Government's ambition of 95% by 2017.

***Referred to Cabinet**

ERG 15/14 BUSINESS SUPPORT AND ADVICE

D150051MEM

Members were provided with an overview of the current business support and advice programme available to the local business community. Proposals to further develop the business support programme to meet local business needs were also set out.

As part of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub programme the County Council had allocated £10,000 to each district and borough in Kent and £20,000 to Medway. This funding aimed to deliver business support at a localised level. The Borough Council was looking to continue the delivery of business support through the West Kent Partnership. Business support proposals had to be submitted by 30 June 2015 and currently included the continuation of One to One sessions; development of business workshops across West Kent; sector specific support and web based support. Further details were set out in paragraph 1.3.2 of the report.

The Economic Regeneration Officer volunteered to undertake further analysis on the satisfaction levels of the business support programme, particularly those offered by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, as monitoring feedback from customers enabled a better focus and targeting of support.

Members discussed the promotion of business support services and suggested co-ordination with organisations such as 'Produced in Kent' and local banks.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposed approach to future business support activity, as detailed in the report, be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**ERG 15/15 BETTER BUSINESS FOR ALL**

The report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health provided an update on the progress being made with the Better Business for All initiative in Kent and Medway.

Since the initiative was reported to Members in February 2014 significant progress had been made in developing the programme, including setting up a long term Business Engagement group; the development of a website, which was anticipated to go live in July; and a training group focused on delivering a culture change programme for regulators.

Members recognised that reducing regulatory burdens on businesses was important and beneficial to the local economy.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**ERG 15/16 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

09 September 2015

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 PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH 2015-2018

This report provides an overview of the amended West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth Strategy and gives consideration to the priorities set out in the document.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Securing funding for local infrastructure and business support projects across West Kent, funding which is now held by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), depends on a strong local case being made along with clarity about which specific local projects should be regarded as a high priority. For this reason, the West Kent Partnership prepared an initial 'West Kent Priorities for Growth' document in 2014 which was used to support bids to Rounds 1 and 2 of the SELEP local growth fund.

1.1.2 Since then, there has been solid progress made in attracting investment into West Kent – most notably funding for the A21 dualling at Pembury, improvements to junction 4 of the M20 and improvements to Tonbridge High Street. The progress achieved provides a strong foundation for further developing and refining the case to attract further local investment from future funding rounds. A decision was therefore taken by the West Kent Partnership to carry out a refresh of the original strategy and to highlight a new set of priorities for investment across the West Kent area which are required to create the right environment for local businesses to thrive and create much needed local growth.

1.2 West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth

1.2.1 As a starting point, the revised document (Appendix 1) carries out a SWOT analysis of the West Kent economy. This analysis is set out under section 3.3 of the document.

1.2.2 With this SWOT analysis in mind, the strategy then sets out five key areas for economic growth. These are:

- Promoting Key Locations for Growth
- Improving Transport and Connectivity
- Essential Infrastructure Improvements
- Supporting Local Business and Skills Development
- Market Town Regeneration

1.2.3 In order to provide some greater clarity regarding West Kent's higher priority projects, the new strategy identifies a number of projects which have been classed as 'transformational' i.e. those which, if funded, would have the highest positive local impacts and therefore deserve to be given a higher priority overall.

1.2.4 Under *Key Locations for Growth* the document identifies a number of transformational schemes across West Kent. These are:

- East Malling Research – to improve incubation and crop trial facilities in order to enhance research capabilities.
- Fort Halstead – a major residential and commercial redevelopment opportunity in Sevenoaks District.
- North Farm – land allocation for employment purposes in Tunbridge Wells Borough.

1.2.5 The transformational *Key Infrastructure Requirements (transport and connectivity)* highlighted in West Kent are:

- A228 Colts Hill Strategic Link
- Addressing access constraints to the national road network in West Kent - Improvements to junctions on the M26/M25, M20 and M2/A2
- A21 corridor – dualling of section between Kippings Cross and Lamberhurst
- A26 and A264 corridors – capacity enhancements
- Improvements to public transport infrastructure and services

1.2.5 *Other transformational Essential Infrastructure Improvements* identified in West Kent are:

- Enhanced capacity to the Leigh Flood Storage Area and flooding works at East Peckham
- Broadband and mobile connectivity – including the delivery of superfast broadband services across the rural parishes in West Kent.

1.2.6 In *supporting local businesses and skills development*, the document proposes a number of key strands of which the following are deemed transformational:

- Ensuring West Kent businesses get the right support to help them thrive and expand

- Sector-led Skills Initiative - development of an action plan to overcome problems of fragmentation in the delivery of skills across the sector.

1.2.7 The 'future proofing' of our Market Towns is classed as a **transformational** priority. The document highlights that in order to successfully do so partnership working will be required to provide the right policy context for change as well as the resources to help implement positive change.

1.3 Proposed Local Enterprise Partnership for Kent and Medway

1.3.1 As noted above, future bids for funding to implement the above priorities must ultimately be determined by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership has, however, recently prepared a report called the Compelling Case for Change which sets out how a Kent and Medway Local Enterprise Partnership would be a more effective option.

1.3.2 The KMEP report sets out a strong case for change. It acknowledges both the current strengths and weaknesses of the Kent and Medway economy but concludes that a South East LEP is not best placed to both build on those strengths and direct investment to deal with its weaknesses. In summary, the report concludes that SELEP:

- does not reflect a functional economic area, and the links between its three component county-regions are relatively weak;
- has not established a clear and coherent overall strategy for growth;
- has become increasingly bureaucratic creating difficulties in both prioritising large numbers of project bids and securing necessary levels of funding to meet local needs.
- the adopted 'federated' model has merely created additional complexities and has not proved to be an effective vehicle to support local growth.

1.3.3 In contrast, the key benefits of more locally based Kent and Medway LEP can be summarised as follows:

- its area of cover would be more coherent in economic terms and therefore more relevant to local businesses enabling them to engage more in the process
- it will allow for local decisions to be made on determining Kent and Medway priorities and which projects should be awarded funding
- there will be a clearer focus on addressing local needs and issues, such as skills development and improvements to local infrastructure

- governance arrangements will be more robust and democratic and will be able to build on a range of existing robust partnerships and structures.

- 1.3.4 It is proposed that the structure of the new LEP will largely be based on the existing Kent and Medway Economic Partnership. This will mean that the West Kent Partnership will continue to be recognised as one of several sub-county partnerships which will feed into the new structure. It is also proposed that there will be three Boards which comprise the LEP: the Kent and Medway Leaders; a Business Advisory Board and a Skills Commission. Each district/borough Council Leader will have a single seat on the new Board which will be an improvement over the 'buddy' system in place for the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership.
- 1.3.5 We are currently awaiting a response from the Government on this proposal and a verbal update will be given at the meeting should any decision be forthcoming.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 Not applicable.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 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.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the transformational priorities as set out in the West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth document, **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:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

09 September 2015

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 ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

To provide an overview of progress made to date on the Local Neighbourhood Centres Programme and an indication of next steps.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Since May 2015, work has been undertaken by the Economic Regeneration Officer to take forward the neighbourhood centres programme, an initiative which seeks to provide grant support to local traders to enable them to agree and implement improvements to those centres. This work has helped to forge a strong working relationship with local traders and raise awareness of the support that the Borough Council is able to offer such small businesses. This programme has followed on from a very successful similar scheme implemented in 2014 for the Borough's larger district centres such as Borough Green, West Malling and Martins Square.

1.2 Progress to Date

1.2.1 To date, 2 local neighbourhood centres have drawn up improvement proposals and have had their proposals approved. They are in the process of implementing these improvements. These two centres are:

York Parade (Tonbridge) – following meetings with local traders in early June 2015, a number of key issues were highlighted that traders felt needed to be addressed. These were:

- Improved lighting around the precinct
- Re-painting of white lines and markings to help mark out parking spaces and re-introduce arrows and markings on road humps
- Tidying up of the green verge outside the precinct

Quotes were obtained from Kent County Council and TMBC Parking Services. Approval to proceed was granted by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance on 17 July 2015. Implementation is underway.

Little Market Row, (Leybourne) – following meetings with the local traders, the Little Market Row Management Company and Leybourne Parish Council in July 2015, the following areas for enhancement were identified:

- Anti-skateboarding measures for the parade steps
- A deep clean of the public space
- Installation of planters (maintained by traders)
- Repainting of railings
- Improvements to steps by the newsagents.

Having obtained quotes for all of these improvements, the total came to over £4,500. However, through contributions from the Management Company and in kind support from the traders, the grant requirement was reduced considerably. Approval to proceed was granted by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance on 24 July 2015. Implementation is underway.

1.2.2 In addition to the above, a number of other centres are at various stages of progression. The table below gives an overview of progress at the time of writing this report (July 2015):

Neighbourhood Centre	Issues Raised	Next Steps
Quarry Hill Road (Tonbridge)	Raised bed area next to the entrance roundabout looks tired, need to forge an identity – use of artwork/banners, tidying up of some public realm.	Meetings with traders and KCC Highways undertaken and need to review budget before progressing (see section 1.3)
Woodlands Parade (Ditton)	Concerns over upkeep of surrounding area (especially to the rear of the parade) and signage to the shops (to help build awareness amongst local people)	Support for the Community Clean Up day on 17 th August (set up by Cllr Walker). KCC Highways have appointed consultants to take forward improved signage.
Greenacres (Aylesford)	Improved signage to build awareness.	KCC Highways have appointed consultants to take forward improved signage.
Twisden Road (East Malling)	Lack of provision of disabled parking provision, poor state of repair of adjoining steps, need to repaint canopy and columns and need for a bench for elderly shoppers.	Disabled Parking Provision - in the programme for investigation and potential inclusion in a future part of the Local Parking Plan. Circle and Russett Housing have been made aware of the

		condition of steps and will report back to me shortly. TMBC Property approached about repainting work and bench.
Martin Hardie Way (Tonbridge)	Low level anti-social behaviour and parking provision/arrangements (also a concern from some traders about an expanded Co-operative and the impact on parking)	Further consultation with traders required and meeting with Parking Services to look into possible solutions to the parking issues. Need to ensure good links with the 'Shop Local' initiative.
Wateringbury	Initial meeting with Wateringbury Parish Council to take place in September 2015.	To be determined.

1.2.3 Due to time constraints, progress has not yet been made with Plaxtol and Hildenborough. Once work has been completed on some of the more advanced projects, then time will be freed up to take forward these two neighbourhood centres.

1.3 Possible Future Alterations

1.3.1 A large number of the local neighbourhood centres are, as the title suggests, relatively small scale in nature – comprising 3-5 businesses in most instances, although York Parade and Martin Hardie Way do have many more. However, Quarry Hill Road, which was originally included in the definition of a 'Local Neighbourhood Centre', does not easily fit within this category and could quite readily be considered a 'district centre' due to its scale. On this basis, it is proposed that Quarry Hill Parade now be included within the list of 'district centres' and improvements up to the value of £7,500 be made available to this centre rather than the £3,000 available to 'local neighbourhood centres'.

1.3.2 The additional £4,500 can be accommodated within existing budgets due to some underspends in the previous district centre grant scheme.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The programme is funded through existing budgets.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Not applicable.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 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.

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the progress in the programme be noted and the proposed increase in grant for the Quarry Hill area, as detailed in this report, **BE APPROVED.**

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:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

09 September 2015

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 LEADER PROGRAMME

To provide an update on the new programme and to set out proposals to assist with promotion of the available grant support.

1.1 The West Kent Leader Grant Programme

1.1.1 An initial report was made to this Board in September 2014 regarding the development of a new West Kent LEADER programme. In summary, the previous report outlined the following:

- LEADER is an EU grant programme which provides grants of up to £50,000 aimed at supporting capital investment and job creation in rural businesses, including farming and forestry enterprises.
- An initial West Kent programme ran from 2007 to 2013, drawing down £1.25M of grant funding which supported 62 projects with a total value of £3.4M.
- The programme is administered by staff employed by Sevenoaks District Council. This Council acts as the Accountable Body for the programme and each West Kent Authority contributes to the costs of administration (£5K each per annum).
- Individual grant applications are determined by a Local Action Group (LAG) for West Kent made up of representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors including rural businesses and landowners.
- The national LEADER programme is now administered by the Rural Payments Agency which provides guidance and support to the Local Action Groups.

1.1.2 Development of the new LEADER programme was originally intended to commence in early 2015. However, due to delays in the EU sign-off for the whole UK programme, it is now intended to launch the new West Kent programme in the

Autumn with the first grants being made available at the beginning of 2016. The West Kent LEADER programme has now been formally approved and the total allocation of funding has been set at €2,266,000 (approximately £1,603,000). The final stage in the process is the submission of a local delivery plan for the LEADER programme setting out how the programme will be run locally and setting priorities for local funding. The West Kent LEADER programme, based on the experience gained from the former programme, intend to set the following funding priorities:

Support for Increasing Farm Productivity	- 20% of funds
Support for Micro and Small Enterprises	- 40% of funds
Support for Rural Tourism	- 15% of funds
Support for Culture and Heritage	- 5% of funds
Provision of Rural Services	- 5% of funds
Support for Forestry Productivity	- 15% of funds

- 1.1.3 As with the former programme, there will be a two stage application process involving an initial draft application to test eligibility followed by a full application for those which are found to meet the scheme criteria. Grants of up to £50,000 are to be offered and the likely intervention rate is 40% grant/60% match funding (subject to the formal agreement of the West Kent LAG).

1.2 Encouraging Local Take Up

- 1.2.1 The key issue for the Council is to encourage as many applicants as possible from within the Borough to take up this grant opportunity. The recently adopted Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy sets a target of 25 local awards over the 5 year period. A significant amount of promotion across West Kent will be undertaken by the West Kent LEADER team based at Sevenoaks. We believe this could be further supplemented by the Borough Council via the following:

- produce a simple flier and seek the support of our rural Parish Councils and Borough Council ward members to distribute these to relevant local contacts
- direct e-mail alerts to selected rural-based businesses in the Borough
- messages about the scheme to be disseminated via the Council's social media channels and via press releases
- information and advice about the scheme to be made available on the Council's website

- promotion of the grant scheme via attendance at local business liaison meetings (including local Chambers, Federation of Small Businesses, Produced in Kent, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership etc)
- Information to be sent out with business rates bills to be issued in 2016.
- Making use of the Council's regulatory service contacts to promote grants to relevant businesses.

1.2.2 An annual update report on the progress being achieved with the programme will be made to this Board.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 Dealt with by the Accountable Body (SDC)

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 Significant levels of investment into the local rural economy can be achieved at a low cost to the Council (annual contribution of £5K agreed previously).

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 n/a

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 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 above proposed actions to promote take up of LEADER grants within the Borough **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:

Nil

contact: Mark Raymond
Chief Corporate Policy Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

09 September 2015

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 UPDATE ON BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

To provide a more detailed overview of the West Kent Business Support Programme following further discussion with Kent County Council and West Kent partners.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the previous Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 23 June 2015, Report ERG 15/14 provided an outline proposal for future business support activity across West Kent. These outline proposals were:

- Continuation of One-to-One sessions
- Development of business workshops across West Kent – with a focus on sales and marketing
- Sector Specific Support – covering home-based businesses, rural businesses and retail businesses
- Web-based Support – through the use of a web chat facility.
- Improvements to the database of business contacts.

1.1.2 This outline was submitted by the West Kent Partners to Kent County Council on 30 June and subsequently approved. Since this approval the West Kent Partners have been adding more detail to the programme, and working with partner organisations to make the activities even more comprehensive. Delivery will commence at the end of September 2015.

1.2 Progress to Date

1.2.1 Following further information from Kent County Council and additional working group meetings involving the Economic Regeneration teams across West Kent, the programme has been refined further. The following gives a more detailed programme of activity:

a) Generic Workshops:

These workshops will be delivered by Pro-actions on a regular basis, covering issues such as sales, marketing, and business planning. The next three sessions are scheduled for September in Sevenoaks (how to run a successful business), October in Tonbridge (sales event) and November in Aylesford (business planning). Further events will then be delivered in the New Year.

b) Specific Workshops:

Starting in September 2015, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales will deliver a series of workshops on financial planning across venues in West Kent.

The Kent Foundation have been approached to provide workshops for young entrepreneurs (people under 30 years of age who are setting up their own business) to help support them through the early stages in the development of their new enterprise.

Produced in Kent will deliver sessions specifically on promoting and exporting Kent produce – helping to encourage more small businesses in West Kent to expand their market.

A programme of support for rural businesses is to be developed through members of the West Kent Leader Executive Local Action Group.

Over the past 10 years, the number of rural pubs in West Kent has decreased considerably as illustrated by the loss of pubs such as The Red Lion (Borough Green, 2007), The Little Gem (Aylesford, 2009), The Three Postboys (Wrotham, 2009) and The Walnut Tree (Eccles, 2010) in Tonbridge and Malling. However, the rural pub is often the hub of the community and its loss can be devastating to a village. As such, a series of informal workshops run by The Pub Marketing Circle (headed up by a successful rural pub landlord) will be advertised to our rural pubs to help them gain extra tips to increase their turnover and profit margins.

To complement the improvements work that the local authorities are delivering in town and village centres in West Kent, workshops for retail businesses will be delivered by the Let's Do Business Group. This will focus on working with groups of independent retailers to enhance their offer in their communities.

c) Events:

In addition to the workshops, which are generally attended by around 10 people, the new programme also offers up the opportunity to include or incorporate larger events and initiatives. These include:

- Better Business for All Sessions – to help raise awareness of the initiative amongst the business community and to encourage information exchange and a positive relationship between regulators and local businesses.
- West Kent Export Conference – delivered by the Kent International Business in partnership with the West Kent Partners this event will provide local businesses with information and support on how to improve sales overseas. This event is scheduled to take place in November 2015
- West Kent Procurement Exchange Programme – co-ordinated by Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, this event will highlight procurement opportunities in the area and provide potential local suppliers with the chance to meet buyers. It is scheduled to take place in February 2016.
- West Kent Business 2 Business Event – building upon the B2B at the River Centre in March 2015, this event will provide an opportunity for businesses across West Kent to network with each other and to get up to speed on a range of business topics through a series of seminars. This event is scheduled to take place at the Hop Farm in March 2016.
- West Kent Business Excellence Awards – these will be launched in March 2016 with the awards ceremony taking place in October 2016. There are 9 different award categories, with sponsors still being sought for 4 of these.

d) One-to-One (Face to Face) Sessions:

The workshops and events will both act as referral points for one-to-one sessions where required. As part of the agreement with KCC, providers of the specific themed workshops will also offer a limited number of hours of free one-to-one support on their specialised area. In addition to this, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce will continue to deliver generic one-to-one advice to pre-starts, start-ups and small businesses across West Kent through their network of business advisors.

On top of this, a one-to-one offer tailored towards the needs of home-based businesses will continue to be provided by the National Centre for Micro-Business, who will also provide a more intense level of one-to-one support for people that are unemployed but looking to set up their own business.

e) One-to-One (Web Chat) Sessions:

For those start-ups or small businesses that do not have the opportunity or inclination to attend a workshop, event or obtain face-to-face support, the web chat facility offered through this programme will help businesses access support from their own business premises. The web chat facility will be delivered by 'My Incubator Ventures'- <https://miventures.co.uk/>.

1.3 Promotion and Awareness Raising

1.3.1 In order to raise awareness of the free support available to local businesses, a handful of actions are currently being developed. These are:

- a) Improved contact details for business- through updating existing databases and building up business contacts through increased promotion of business support activity.
- b) Campaign Organisation (through www.socialadvisors.co.uk) – will help to programme promotion and marketing activity at the beginning of the programme, ensuring social media, email, website updates and press releases are carried out in a timely fashion.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The externally funded business support activity builds upon an existing programme which has been well-received by local businesses.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Not applicable.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 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.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Agenda Item 8

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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Agenda Item 9

The Chairman to move that the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting during consideration of any items the publication of which would disclose exempt information.

**ANY REPORTS APPEARING AFTER THIS PAGE CONTAIN EXEMPT
INFORMATION**

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Agenda Item 10

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent due to special circumstances and of which notice has been given to the Chief Executive.

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