

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

20 May 2014

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 Tuesday, 3rd June, 2014 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

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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.

Matters for consideration in Private

11. Exclusion of Press and Public

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.

PART 2 - PRIVATE

12. Urgent Items

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 C P Smith (Chairman)
Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R W Dalton
Cllr M O Davis
Cllr S M King
Cllr R D Lancaster
Cllr Mrs S Luck
Cllr M Parry-Waller

Cllr T J Robins
Cllr A G Sayer
Cllr Miss J L Sergison
Cllr Mrs E A Simpson
Cllr R Taylor

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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 26th February, 2014

Present: Cllr C P Smith (Chairman), Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman), Cllr M O Davis, Cllr S M King, Cllr Mrs S Luck, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr Mrs E A Simpson and Cllr R Taylor

J A L Balcombe, O C Baldock, M A C Balfour, P F Bolt, D J Cure, N J Heslop, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster

ERG 14/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Luck advised that in connection with the item on Local Retail Centres - Engagement she had a business in West Malling and was a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

ERG 14/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 12 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

ERG 14/3 SELEP STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN, KENT AND MEDWAY UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL AND WEST KENT PRIORITIES FOR GROWTH

The report provided an update on the development of growth plans for the South East, for Kent and Medway and for West Kent. It also set out proposals for the development of a local commissioning plan to draw future funding into Kent and Medway from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to support local economic priorities.

Members were reminded that funding from both Government and European sources for local infrastructure projects and to support economic initiatives was now being channelled via Local Enterprise Partnerships across the country.

In addition, proposals regarding a Kent and Medway Commissioning plan were outlined and specific priorities for Tonbridge and Malling, along with indicative funding, were set out in the report. Further work on the commissioning process would continue over the rest of the year and it remained crucial that West Kent set out a strong case for local

investment over this period to ensure the area received its fair share of support relative to other needs across Kent and Medway. It was noted that there was no guarantee that funding would be allocated to Tonbridge and Malling individually as it was anticipated that distribution would be on a county wide basis.

Members were encouraged by the priorities put forward and were grateful to Kent County Council for their response. However, whilst uncertainty remained regarding funding allocation it was important to maintain appropriate pressure and continue to lobby for important projects to be included. It was also commented that recent events had highlighted the importance of flood protection measures, which should be funded by Government and not Local Enterprise Partnerships.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the comments submitted by the West Kent Partnership on the draft Kent and Medway Growth Plan and the Strategic Economic Plan be endorsed;
- (2) the draft priority list of local economic projects, as set out in paragraph 1.6.3 of the report, be endorsed; and
- (3) the Chairman of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership be informed of the Borough Council's strong support for Government funding to support growth being devolved to the Kent and Medway Partnership.

ERG 14/4 LOCAL RETAIL CENTRES - ENGAGEMENT

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the engagement with traders from the Borough's local retail centres and sought agreement for a revised process for approving applications for grant support.

Members were pleased to note that all meetings held to date had resulted in positive and productive discussions. The main issues arising from these meetings were summarised in the report.

In addition, the offer of grant funding had been welcomed by local traders. However, an extension to the original deadline had been requested due to the tight timescales involved for some groups. To enable grant decisions to be made quickly it was proposed that Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance, Innovation and Property to determine grant applications and for those decisions to be reported to a further meeting of the Advisory Board for information.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the outcome of discussions with local traders held to date be noted; and
- (2) authority be delegated to the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance, Innovation and Property to make decisions regarding applications for grant support from local traders groups.

ERG 14/5 DRAFT ECONOMIC REGENERATION ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2014/15

The report presented for consideration a draft annual action plan for 2014/15. Officers noted the request to include reference to developing better regulatory delivery to promote better business for all under corporate initiatives if it was considered appropriate.

Particular reference was made to a Tonbridge and Malling Peer Challenge review arranged from 28-30 April, which would focus on economic regeneration, together with a number of wider corporate issues. Adoption of a short and concise action plan would assist with the peer review and enable the Borough Council to more clearly articulate what specific actions needed to be undertaken to fulfil its obligations to deliver against one of its key priorities.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Economic Regeneration Annual Action Plan 2014/15 be endorsed.

ERG 14/6 A LOCAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESSES, SOUTH EAST LEP (LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP) AND REGULATORY SERVICES

The report considered how local authority regulators in the South East might work with the Local Enterprise Partnership to help regulatory services work more effectively with business, with the aim of supporting economic regeneration, and set out proposals to develop a Better Business for All Partnership model in the South East LEP area.

Members were advised that the Better Business for All Partnership model was intended to promote co-operation between local regulators and businesses to deliver specific support and improvements to assist businesses comply with the law quickly, easily and economically. It was important that through co-ordinated corporate working across the Borough Council the culture of regulatory services adding value to business in a positive way would continue to be developed.

The Borough Council's proposal to the LEP was set out in the report and included a single point of contact that could be developed with their support and the support of local business organisations. An application for grant funding to aid in the delivery of this would be need to be considered.

Members were supportive of the initiative but queried whether charging for advice in some instances would be appropriate. After careful consideration it was felt that charging could impede a business's ability to succeed given the already difficult and costly legal framework they were required to operate in. On balance, this initiative was to help business grow and it met the Borough Council's aspiration on economic strategy.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Council's involvement in this initiative and the approach to be taken, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

ERG 14/7 ESCALATE BUSINESS LOAN FUND - UPDATE

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the Escalate loan fund scheme and the level of interest generated to date. A copy of the guidance for the scheme was attached as Annex 1 to the report.

It was reported that the recent launch of the programme at K College had been well attended. Members expressed an interest in seeing similar events in the Malling area of the borough and, although there were no current plans, it would be suggested to Kent County Council.

Members were advised that there appeared to be considerable early interest already generated and it was anticipated that the fund might be taken up very quickly once the approval process started. There was strong evidence of local demand which demonstrated a future need for additional loan funding for West Kent businesses in excess of the £5.5M currently allocated.

ERG 14/8 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP - MINUTES

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 24 February 2014, which had focused on the SELEP and the various strategies for growth.

The level of public sector attendees at these meetings was noted and Members were advised of a potential reconfiguration of the Partnership to address a lack of business representation.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

ERG 14/9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

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

3 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES - PRESENTATION

Alison Parmar of the Kent branch of the Federation of Small Businesses will be attending the Board meeting to give a presentation on the role of the FSB and the current issues being addressed by the organisation.

1.1 Federation of Small Businesses

- 1.1.1 The Federation of Small Businesses has a Kent-wide membership of over 6,500 members. The organisation's key roles are to lobby on issues of concern to smaller businesses and provide opportunities for its members to meet and receive support and advice.
- 1.1.2 The Federation produces a quarterly newsletter, The Voice, and a copy of the latest edition is attached as Annex 1.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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THE Kent Voice



May/June 2014

Your regional magazine from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

Small business awards are cherry on the cake

CONGRATULATIONS to **Cake Craft World, Sevenoaks**, who have been recognised as **Regional finalists in the FSB WorldPay UK Business Awards against tough competition.**

Almost 1,000 small businesses entered this year's awards which see companies from across Britain competing to be named best small business.

This year's increase in entrants is a sign that small businesses, the backbone of our economy, are enjoying a feel-good factor about the emerging recovery and are keen to celebrate it.

Lin Chow, the company's Managing Director, said: "To be recognised as finalists means the world to us. After 30 years of putting our heart and souls into creating fabulous ideas for others it is fantastic to receive recognition for all our hard work.

"We really enjoyed the experience of entering as it made us realise how far we have come from a tiny cake shop to an international online cake craft supply company."

Cake Craft began as a small retail shop now they sell to customers across the



▶ Carol Baines, Finance Director, Lin Chow, Managing Director and Paul Hallam, Technical Director of Cake Craft World

UK and Europe. Lin added: "We never stand still. We finish one project then get straight onto the next, continually creating to inspire our customers.

"Coupled with the research that is carried out to source new suppliers from local to Liverpool to Mauritius means that every day is different.

"With a diverse team of people from creative to warehouse staff there is never a dull moment. Lin's advice

to others starting out and growing a business would be to focus on the customer.

She added: "Always remember the customer, managing their expectations and providing an impeccable service. Of course, bring your passion into your business."

Karren Brady from TV's *The Apprentice* will name the best small business in the UK at the awards ceremony in May.

The budget from The Bull

MEMBERS watched the Budget this March from the cosy setting of The Bull Hotel, Wrotham.

Landlady and member Lygia Fontanella was pleased that 1p would be knocked off the price of a pint, saying, "It's good that the Government is not penalising people for having a bit of fun. They could be doing more to support us but for now at least the

price of beer is not going up."

Vic Peake, Regional Secretary and Director of VJP Accountants said: "It's good to discuss how number 10's decisions affect us. There's some good news, in that the annual investment allowance is doubled to £500,000. Other highlights are the £140million for flood defences and postponed fuel duty."



▶ Lygia Fontanella

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5 VOICE EDITORIAL: This publication is produced by and published for the Federation of Small Businesses, Sir Frank Whittle Way, Blackpool Business Park Blackpool, Lancs, FY4 2FE.
 6 © Copyright 1996 Federation of Small Businesses all rights reserved. Editor: James Connor. Tel: 01253 361179 Email: james.connor@fsb.org.uk.
 7 Whilst every care has been taken in the compilation of this publication errors or omissions are not the responsibility of the Federation of Small Businesses and opinions expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Federation.
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CONTACT
 WELCOME to this latest edition of YOUR Regional Voice bringing you up-to-date news from the FSB.
 Business Update this issue includes stories on employment and the environment plus tax.

Ring Alison Parmar on 07917 628 904 or email alison.parmar@fsb.org.uk



View from the Chair

ALL the indications seem to be pointing towards a turnaround in the economy and improvements for small business.

I hope that is the case for FSB Kent members. However, as we have seen with the news about Manston Airport, spanners suddenly appear.

So, if you feel there are issues holding you back, we would like to hear from you.

That takes me on to what we are trying to achieve in your Region.

We want to revamp the way we handle Branch and Regional issues and the way we interact with you.

I've been working with four other Regions in the South East (representing this inter-regional group on the national policy committee) and, between us, we represent a significant proportion of the national membership together with the political foundation that forms the base for our lobbying.

At a time when national policy is being reviewed, it seems right to carry out an audit of our policy.

We need to plan budgets and support to work the system from Branch level through to national level.

As part of this change, we need to establish small focus groups that can act as sounding boards and generate content for response to government (in particular KCC) and where appropriate, for media.

We're therefore looking for sector representation around the following; life sciences, creative and media, low carbon, land-based, construction, tourism and leisure.

Please consider joining this. To find out more contact Sue Waldock 01622 688134 or Alison Parmar on 07917 628 904.

Roger House
Regional Chairman

Political heavyweights at FSB events

MEMBERS from all over the UK were in Manchester for the FSB's annual conference. Guest speakers included the Chancellor, Ed Miliband, Leader of the Labour Party, as well as Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, young

entrepreneur Jacob Hill and BBC host, Naga Munchetty.

The FSB's Head of Public Affairs, Craig Beaumont, said. "At the FSB, we fiercely protect our cross-party, non-partisan independence.

"This isn't always easy, but we do

it at every level. We've welcomed David Cameron, George Osborne and Chuka Umunna to our first Policy Conference, Vince Cable spoke at our Chairman's Dinner and we can now add The Chancellor and Ed Miliband

speaking at National Conference. To have the Prime Minister, Chancellor, Business Secretary, Shadow Business Secretary and Leader of the Opposition is something.

"This is a stellar line-up others can only dream about."



▶ Medway Council's Meet the Buyer event

Council switch is boost to SMEs

DID you know that for every £1 spent in the local community, 63p stays in the local economy?

So, when one local authority has an annual spend of £230m there is an awful lot of money that is available to local companies.

In fact, Medway Council drive 10 per cent of the local economy. It is a good example of why the FSB is so passionate about encouraging good business practice between local authorities and businesses.

We were pleased to attend a Meet the Buyer event with Medway Council and other businesses at the St Georges Centre, Chatham.

Councillor Alan Jarrett, Deputy Leader of the Council and Finance

Portfolio Holder, said: "We are pretty proud of our

progress. Medway does have a big budget to spend on residents' services, but we are doing what we can to make sure that the money stays in and supports our community.

"We're doing what we can to make it easier to do business with us and are setting new standards that help not only local businesses but the job market, too.

"For instance, we've now agreed that any company doing business with us over £1million must take on an apprentice."

Neville Gaunt, North Kent FSB Chairman and Director of Mindfit, said: "It is great to see Medway Council changing the environment for SME procurement and I hope local businesses grab the opportunity it gives them. I was particularly impressed that Medway has set itself a target of 50 per cent of contracts being

with local SMEs. This is double the Prime Minister's target for Government Departments."

As evidence of their success, the Category Management team at Medway Council responsible for procurement recently won the Highly Commended Award in the Excellence in Public Procurement Awards.

Councillor Jarrett said: "We won the award for our £12m Homecare contract where we were able to save £1.9m while still maintaining a high quality service.

"It has been tough getting new systems in place but we are sure we're doing the right thing, making it easy to do business with us."

To find out about contracts with Medway Council visit the Kent business portal www.kentbusinessportal.org.uk

Are you in a not spot?

THE South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) is collaborating with the mobile app provider, Opensignal, to build a picture of mobile 'not spots' and to estimate the impact this has on local businesses.

Zoe Gordon, the business and communications manager for SE LEP revealed details of a recent survey.

She said: "It looked at the impact that poor mobile phone reception has on businesses in the area.

"The survey estimated that mobile 'not spots' cost the average small business £10,000 a year in lost contracts and increased running costs, with 84 per cent saying their business had suffered and continues to suffer from disruption because of poor mobile reception.

"We wanted to get stronger evidence that poor signal is bad for



business. By working with Opensignal's mobile phone app we can understand the extent of 'not spots' and downtime when businesses can't access mobile networks. OpenSignal helps you get the best connection, find nearby wi-fi networks and keep track of your usage. It also helps

you to search for a signal." Because of the success of the survey, Zoe is keen to delve deeper.

She said: "We're going to run another survey with the FSB. The data will be used with mobile phone companies, the Department for Communities Media and Sport and the Department for Transport. We're committed to improving reception in Kent and on key transport routes, especially on trains."

Find out more at www.southeastlep.com and download the Opensignal app through the Apple App store, Google Play for Android or visit <http://opensignal.com>

Please contact Zoe Gordon on 07880 179 998 or zoe.gordon@essex.gov.uk for more information.

Seller beware

WHEN Denise Barnes chose to sell her eight-branch estate agency, which had 50 staff, she was sure that having a business agent, rather like an estate agent, was enough to make the sale run smoothly.

"How wrong I was," Denise told FSB members at a West Kent Branch event. "I was taken hook, line and sinker. It was a terrible time in my career because I had built my estate agency up from scratch, it was my baby.

"The sale, which should have gone well, turned into a nightmare. My staff and valued clients should have been looked after.

"Instead, all that I had worked so hard for was disintegrating in front of me. I wrote *Seller Beware* to warn others who may sell their business what to look for."

Seller Beware: How Not To Sell Your Business by Denise Barnes.

EXCLUSIVE OFFER for FSB members: input BUSINESS for a discounted price of £8.99 (usually £12.99) www.bitebackpublishing.com/promotions



Zero per cent loans

DID you know Kent County Council has £60m in zero per cent interest loans and it is looking for companies like yours to lend it to?

Councillor Mark Dance said: "Many of the companies we loan to are micro or small businesses with great ambitions and a desire to grow and succeed.

"As the local authority it is our job to make sure that we are lending the money responsibly to companies that are sustainable, and will create jobs. I like to say that we are a positive funder. We're here to encourage small businesses to grow and succeed."

Claire Burroughs of www.fsb.org.uk

Claimaday.com is one of the FSB members benefitting from the Tiger fund. In March the company secured more than £200,000 to help grow their business.

Money talks

You may be eligible for a 0 per cent interest loan, from £5,000 upwards.

Tiger fund: £20m for North Kent

Escalate: £5.5m for West Kent

Expansion East Kent: £35m for East Kent companies

Marsh Million: £1m for small businesses in the Romney Marsh area

The contact is www.kent.gov.uk/business

Advertise your business in Regional Voice magazine

FSB Members receive a 25% discount!

THE Federation of Small Businesses produces local news magazines for all 33 of our Regions.

These publications provide a local link to thousands of our grassroots members and activists.

Now, for the first time, we are able to offer advertising space in these highly localised, specific magazines.

This is an opportunity to promote your product or service to fellow members in your Region.

Advertising space is offered on a first come first served basis, and only two pages of advertising are available per Regional magazine.

**Full page £750 + vat
Half page £400 + vat
Quarter page £250 + vat
Eighth page £150 + vat**

All members of the Federation of Small Businesses will qualify for a 25 per cent discount on the full advertised price.

This is a fantastic opportunity to hit a target audience at very competitive

prices your business without breaking the bank.



For more information, or to order, please call Mainline Media on 01536 747 333 or email adsales@mainlinemedia.co.uk

Key diary dates for this year

FOR all FSB Kent events and networking sessions please check out www.fsb.org/kent.

You can also look on the Google calendar.

Many branches hold regular meetings often with guest speakers.

Key dates:

22 May: EU Elections.

June: Marsh Million Business Week, Romney Marsh area

July: Independent Retailer month

Apprentice spotlight

THE FSB teamed-up with the National Apprenticeship Service to talk about apprenticeships in Kent. Small businesses enjoyed a curry from The Chai Stop and commented on the process of recruiting an apprentice, and heard from an apprentice face to face.

For more information about grants and funding available visit www.kent.gov.uk/apprentices or call 0800 18 224.

FSB: "The fourth emergency service"

HAVE you heard the expression: "If you want something done, ask a busy person?" This could be true of many of the volunteers in the FSB.

As members they run their own business, or in some cases, a range of businesses. Many have families to look after, a gym to visit or a dog to walk.

Add to that, volunteering in their spare time and you may wonder how they do it. We asked a couple of our Regional Committee about their experience.

Daniel Sanguiseppe (*pictured below left*) owns and manages Castelwood Hotels, three hotels in Kent and East Sussex. Daniel said: "Originally we joined the FSB via my father, but as

I got more involved in



overseeing sales and marketing, I ended up taking on roles in the local community.

"One of these was with the FSB. I joined the South Kent Branch in 2006 to represent tourism and to have a seat at various tables which the FSB sat on. It means I can find out first-hand what is going on and have a chance to influence decisions.

"I enjoy putting my ideas into events and seeing how it works behind the scenes. I'm now Secretary of the South Kent Branch. I'd recommend volunteering to others who can give up a bit of time now and again and who may be able to help organise networking events."

Sarah Poole (*pictured right*) has been involved with the Regional volunteers since 2012. It's clear that she is passionate about supporting small businesses. She said: "I volunteer as I believe that all small, young businesses should be able to talk to people who face the same questions as themselves.

"I like to help put people together either through collaboration or just being able to recommend people to each other. Working in the events industry, it is great

to get to know who else is out there as it is always important to work with people who you know, like and trust.

"I'm currently secretary for the North Kent Branch. I organise speakers and conferences, regularly meet new businesses and encourage them to join the FSB, the fourth emergency service as I call it."

To volunteer in your area, contact a branch representative.



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FederationOfSmallBusinesses

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2015 - 2020

To set out proposals for the development of a new LEADER programme to support the rural and land-based economy.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The first West Kent LEADER programme ran from 2007 to 2013. A total of £1.25M of grant funding was drawn down from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to support local projects under the following two axis:

- To make agriculture and forestry more competitive and sustainable (Axis 1)
- To improve the rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy (Axis 3).

1.1.2 The programme resulted in 62 local projects being supported with 35 new jobs created and a further 110 existing jobs safeguarded. The total investment into the West Kent economy was in excess of £3.4M.

1.1.3 A Local Action Group (LAG) was established, with the support of the West Kent Partnership, to prepare a delivery strategy for the programme and to assess individual bids for grant support. Sevenoaks District Council was the accountable body for the programme and administration costs were shared between the local authorities involved. The programme was led by Caroline Lingham, employed by the accountable body, whose post was funded by the local authority contributions. The programme was a major success for West Kent; all available funding was fully committed to local projects by February 2012 and £100K of additional funding was awarded to the programme from underspends in other programmes. The West Kent LEADER programme was recognised by DEFRA as one of the best performing programmes nationally.

1.2 New LEADER programme for 2014 - 2020

1.2.1 A new RDPE programme for 2014-2020 has now been agreed between the EU and DEFRA. The LEADER element of the programme is to be retained and local areas have been invited to submit proposals for new LEADER programmes to be led by Local Action Groups as previously. A Local Development Strategy is again required setting out the scope of, and funding requirements for, each programme. The aim will be to establish these programmes by 1st Jan 2015. Local development strategies must also now be approved by the area's Local Enterprise Partnership, although the exact process for this remains unclear.

1.2.2 New programmes must each address the following priorities:

- Support for increasing farm productivity
- Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification
- Support for rural tourism
- Provision of rural services
- Support for cultural and heritage activities
- Support for increasing forestry productivity.

1.2.3 70% of funding must be directed to projects which directly support the local economy whilst the remaining 30% of funding needs to contribute at least partially to this objective. This is to address some criticism of the previous programmes which saw considerable funding support given to community projects, events etc. The original West Kent Leader project, whilst supporting some of this type of project, mainly focused its funding on supporting land-based activities and rural businesses.

1.3 A New LEADER Programme for West Kent

1.3.1 During 2014, work to develop a new LEADER programme for the West Kent area is now underway, led by the existing team at Sevenoaks District Council. Transitional funding from DEFRA has been awarded to undertake this work.

1.3.2 Given the overall success of the original LEADER programme and the considerable economic benefits it has generated to the local rural economy, I recommend that the Borough Council formally supports proposals for a further LEADER programme covering all rural areas in the Borough.

1.4 Area of Coverage of the New Programme

1.4.1 DEFRA has indicated that it wishes additional areas of the country, not previously covered by LEADER programmes, to now be included either via extensions to existing LEADER areas or by the development of new LEADER programmes.

- 1.4.2 Within Kent, there were previously two LEADER programmes in operation: West Kent and Kent Downs and Marshes. A bid for a programme for East Kent did not gain approval. Discussions across Kent are now underway to establish how additional areas of the County may now be covered by LEADER programmes. A revised bid for the East Kent area is now likely to be developed. There are, however, some parts of the west of the County which have not been covered previously including the rural area to the south of Maidstone and rural areas south of the M2 in Dartford and Gravesham boroughs.
- 1.4.3 A major issue with any proposed extension, however, is that the EU has limited the population to be covered by each LEADER area to a maximum of 150,000 population. Initial assessments suggest that the original West Kent leader area (which did include some small rural parts of Medway and Gravesham areas) now has a population (following updates via the 2011 Census) of a total population very near to that maximum.
- 1.4.4 DEFRA has acknowledged that, particularly in more densely populated areas like the South East, this population limit will cause difficulties for many existing LEADER areas, They are therefore seeking a 'derogation' from the EU to enable the limit to be increased to 200,000 population. This would be the only way in which the West Kent LEADER programme could be extended to cover additional areas although a minor extension, for example, to include the rural area to the north of Swanley in Dartford borough could be included and accommodated within the 150,00 population limit. Further work on these options is now being undertaken.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 Sevenoaks District Council will continue to acts as the accountable body for the new programme and will therefore be responsible for the related legal aspects.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 There is a need for the participating local authorities to provide support funding to assist with the administration costs of the new programme. Such contributions are routed via the financial support the West Kent authorities already provide to the West Kent Partnership, currently £10K per year. To support the LEADER programme in addition to the WKP, an additional £5K contribution would be required.
- 1.6.2 In terms of value for money, the considerable overall economic value likely to be generated by the new LEADER programme would justify a contribution from the Council of £5K per annum. The LEADER programme will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Council's key priority to promote economic regeneration in communities across the Borough with a focus on those in rural areas.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 n/a

1.8 Equalities Impact Assessment

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

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 That the development of a new West Kent LEADER programme for 2015/20 **BE SUPPORTED.**

1.9.2 That appropriate budgetary provision **BE MADE** to enable the Borough Council to contribute to the administration costs of the new programme as set out above.

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	There will be a focus on supporting rural communities but applications for grant support will not discriminate between different groups in the community.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	As above
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.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 June 2014

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 BUSINESS LOAN FUND – UPDATE

To provide an update on the Escalate loan fund scheme and the current level of take up.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Members will be aware that the Escalate Loan Fund was formally launched in December 2013 and the scheme is now open to applications. The fund provides 0% interest loans to local businesses with growth potential. The scheme covers the districts of Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone in Kent, and Wealden, Rother and Hastings in East Sussex.

1.2 Scheme Approval

1.2.1 Originally, the application to Government for an Escalate Loan Fund covering West Kent/East Sussex was submitted as a stand-alone scheme that was intended to sit alongside the TIGER programme for North Kent and the Expansion East Kent scheme covering the east of the County. However, following further negotiations with Government at the application stage, it has now been agreed that the Escalate scheme will be funded as part of the TIGER scheme for north Kent with a combined fund totalling £20M. Each scheme will retain its own separate identity, application criteria and local approval board. In addition, the original total fund available to Escalate will remain as £5.5M.

1.2.2 The benefit of adopting a combined funding pot, however, means that there is greater flexibility over the loan funding available. Higher levels of demand for support from West Kent businesses can now be accommodated if there are underspends in north Kent. In addition, there will be a full, national review of funding for RGF schemes undertaken in September and there is scope via this process for additional loan funding to be secured if local demand can be demonstrated; this will be met from underspends in schemes elsewhere in the country. On this basis, if the Escalate programme performs above expectations

(as is likely), there is a very good chance that the current allocation of £5.5M will be augmented.

1.3 Progress to date

- 1.3.1 Following the launch in December 2013, considerable publicity about the scheme has been generated to ensure local businesses are fully aware of the loan opportunities now available. For example, a flier about the Escalate scheme was included with the Council's business rates bills and this has generated a significant number of enquiries. Information about the scheme has also been made available on the Council's website. Where appropriate, businesses expressing an initial interest in the loan scheme have been signposted to agencies including High Growth Kent and the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to enable them to obtain further, free advice and support to progress a formal application.
- 1.3.2 Since the launch, there has been very strong interest from local businesses with a number of full applications now submitted and a considerable 'pipeline' of additional applications being generated.
- 1.3.3 The Escalate Approval Board has now met three times (meetings are hosted by the Borough Council). The Board, chaired by Cllr Mark Dance of Kent County Council, is made up of both public and private sector representatives and Tonbridge and Malling is represented on the Board by Mr Steven Hale, Managing Director of Crofton Design, based in Hadlow. Applicants are invited to attend the Board meeting and make a presentation setting out further details of their loan application. Normally, the Board will then discuss the application in private and make a decision at the end of each meeting. On occasion, a decision is deferred pending the receipt of further information.
- 1.3.4 The first three meetings of the Board have resulted in approvals being granted in respect of 7 applications, 3 of which were from businesses located in Tonbridge and Malling and one from a further business shortly to relocate to the Borough. As the application process is confidential, the names of those businesses cannot be made public. The total value of those successful applications was approximately £675,000 with an estimated 31 new jobs being generated.

1.4 The Project Pipeline

- 1.4.1 In addition to the above approvals, there are now a further 47 local businesses who are progressing to the full application stage. 7 of these are located in the Borough. Whilst all of these have yet to be formally approved, they have the potential to draw down a total of just over £2M in loan funding and generating 167 new jobs. A further Approval Board meeting will be held in late May and I will therefore update the Advisory Board on any changes to the above.
- 1.4.2 11 further businesses are at the active 'Expression of Interest' stage. Should these progress to successful full applications, a further £1.47M of loan funding will

be required generating 107 new jobs. A number of pre-applications are currently on hold pending the receipt of further information. These could collectively generate loan funding bids totalling £1.2M.

1.4.3 In total, therefore, there is already funding commitments and potential spend for the Escalate programme totalling well in excess of £7M. This confirms initial expectations that the demand for business loan funding from the West Kent/East Sussex area was likely to be high, given the number of successful, growing businesses in the locality. Both the volume of bids being generated and the speed at which these have come forward point to on-going demand for such financial support.

1.4.4 These early results suggest that a strong case could be made to increase funding to the Escalate programme when the Autumn review is undertaken. A further report on outcome of this review will be made to a future meeting of the Advisory Board.

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 Assessed as part of the approval process.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 As above

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 n/a

1.8 Equalities Impact Assessment

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

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 That the strong initial demand for business Loan funding via the Escalate programme **BE NOTED**;

1.9.2 That work **BE UNDERTAKEN** with local partners to make a case for additional loan funding to be made available to the Escalate programme at the Autumn review.

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	The approval process does not seek to discriminate against any particular groups etc.
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.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 June 2014

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 ECONOMIC REGENERATION INITIATIVES - UPDATE

To set out an update of local business support programmes including grant support for local traders groups.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report provides a further update on various economic regeneration initiatives being delivered locally in the Borough and across West Kent.
- 1.1.2 In addition to the ESCALATE programme, dealt with as a separate agenda item, a range of business support initiatives are now being delivered. An update on each of these is set out below.

1.2 One to One Business Advice

- 1.2.1 This programme is being delivered by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and offers free advice sessions to entrepreneurs wishing to set up in business and to small and medium-sized enterprises needing support or looking to expand. The programme is delivered by experienced business advisers.
- 1.2.2 When first launched in late 2013, take up of the service was initially steady but then demand fell to low levels in early 2014. A number of booked appointments were not being taken up. In response to this, a change of approach was agreed with the provider to focus delivery of the support at the business premises themselves rather than at remote locations. In addition, a co-ordinated marketing campaign linked to the Escalate programme was also launched to reach a wider business audience. As a result, take up of the service has been increased and the target of 20 1-2-1 sessions per month is now being met.

1.3 Business Seminars

- 1.3.1 A similar pattern of demand for business seminars has also arisen with a strong take up in late 2013 followed by a decline in take up in the new year. Poor

weather and the impact of local flooding may have contributed to this situation. However, a new programme of seminars has now been drawn up with two being sessions being delivered in April and a further 3 for May covering issues of food safety, use of social media and marketing.

1.4 Be Your Own Boss

1.4.1 This programme seeks to provide support for those not in work who are considering self-employment as an option. It is being delivered by the Centre for Micro Business (CMB) in close partnership with Job Centre Plus. So far, the programme has been very successful and has exceeded initial expectations. To date, 24 engagement events have been held and the CMB have worked with 34 individuals. 8 of these are currently receiving on-going support to develop a business proposal.

1.5 Supporting Home Based Businesses

1.5.1 A total of 42 home-based businesses have been engaged by this programme to date, also run by the CMB. 1-2-1 advice meetings take place at West Kent College. A programme of additional engagement events is now underway using West Kent libraries. Four engagement events have been held at ASDA in Swanley and this is to be rolled out to the ASDA at Kings Hill.

1.5.2 The success of this programme does depend on local publicity and promotion. Further engagement with local Parish and Town Councils in the Borough is therefore needed to help promote the support which is available and maintain high levels of take-up.

1.6 Support for Local Traders Groups

1.6.1 Members will be aware that a grant scheme was launched recently to support local traders groups improve the retail appeal of larger local retail centres in the Borough. To date, the following proposals have been approved in principle by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance , Property and Innovation:

Aylesford: signage to the village centre, information boards, planters and additional Christmas lighting (total £7,000)

Martin Square/Larkfield: additional signage and new website (total: £3,146)

Hadlow: hanging baskets, notice board, village information leaflets, additional Christmas lighting (total: £4817)

1.6.2 Borough Green traders (TN15 Local Businesses) has very recently submitted a proposal covering a local business directory and publicity board. Five further bids are still being developed. Detailed proposals for East Peckham and Snodland

centres have been submitted and are being further refined. Other centres are still considering their detailed bids.

1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 None

1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 No issues to note.

1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 n/a

1.10 Equalities Impact Assessment

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

1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 That the update on business support initiatives **BE NOTED**;

1.11.2 That Parish and Town Councils **BE INVITED** to help further promote the supporting home-based business initiative.

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?	n/a	

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
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.

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP - MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the West Kent Partnership meeting held on 25th April 2014.

1.1 Minutes of the Meeting

1.1.1 The minutes of the WKP meeting held on the 25th April 2014 are attached as Annex 1 to this report.

1.1.2 Peter Jones, Chairman of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, attended the meeting of the West Kent Partnership to outline the emerging role of the LEP and the development of the Growth Plan to secure funding from Government. He acknowledged that areas of economic growth such as West Kent deserved to be supported and that the LEP must 'invest in success' to achieve its overall economic objectives in addition to supporting areas in economic need. He also acknowledged the work of the WKP to set out its business and infrastructure priorities and the influence that this has had on both the Kent and Medway and LEP-wide growth strategies.

1.1.3 Ross Gill of Kent County Council outlined progress with the Kent and Medway Growth Strategy and drew attention to a request from Government for each area to prioritise its various proposed schemes. This exercise has been now undertaken for Kent and Medway, and a high priority has been awarded to a number of key schemes in West Kent and in Tonbridge and Malling in particular. These include:

Peters Village – forward funding of community infrastructure

Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration – transport

M20 Junction 4 Over Bridge scheme

East Malling Research – forward funding to create new business hub.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 n/a

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 n/a

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 n/a

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

West Kent Partnership Meeting

Minutes

Friday 25 April, 2014, St Julians, Sevenoaks

Present

Peter Fleming, SDC (Chair)

Roddy Hogarth, SDC

David Candlin, TWBC

Jane March, TWBC

Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms

Mark Raymond, TMBC

Paul Lulham, KCC

Wendy Wood, WKP

Lesley Bowles, SDC

Brian Luker, TMBC

David Godfrey, KCC/SELEP

Jo James, KICC

Julie Beilby, TMBC

Nicholas Heslop, TMBC

Wayne Peet, BIS

Apologies

Lesley Game, K College

Jan Van der Velde, Kit for Kids

John Marshall, SFA

Paul Bentley, Maidstone & TW Trust

Jonathan MacDonald, TWBC

Ch Supt Corbishley, Kent Police

John Balcombe, TMBC

Pav Ramewal, SDC

Roger House, FSB

Jacqui Ward, KCC

Guests

Peter Jones, SELEP

Ross Gill, KCC

Caroline Lingham, WK Leader

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

All covered in Agenda

2. The importance of West Kent to the economy of the LEP area – Peter Jones

The Chairman welcomed Peter Jones who made the following points:

- **West Kent and East Sussex** - As a previous Leader of East Sussex County Council Peter Jones was well aware of the strong affinity between East of East Sussex and West Kent linked as they are by the A21 and the importance of dualling the road at Pembury.

- **Invest in Success** - West Kent demonstrates a strong case for investing in success. One of the most successful parts of the South east economy with outstanding businesses and an entrepreneurial population. Investing in success generates wealth which provides taxes to help the less well off. Message to West Kent is to fight hard to win investment and the LEP supports investing in successful communities.
- **SELEP Director** - David Godfrey, a West Kent resident, has been appointed as full time Director at SELEP. Strong skill set, political and Whitehall connections and experience. David is in a good position to get message to Ministers and civil servants alike that investing in success in the SELEP will generate revenue to benefit the whole Nation.
- **Local Growth Fund** - SELEP represents 8% of the national economy and area and predicated on the invest in success argument is bidding for a 10% share of the £2 billion pa government local growth funding - £200M a year - two thirds of which would be allocated to transport/infrastructure projects

The remaining one third would be for a range of capital investment projects in the physical and intellectual capital of our area

- **Educational Governance** - The South East has underperformed on educational and skills achievement. Investment is needed to raise the quality of the educational and skills offer in the SELEP. Local business needs to be at the heart of education and represented as Governors on School and College boards. There is a crisis of governance in our schools and the current model needs change to incorporate significant business involvement so that the right skills are developed to meet business needs.
- **SEFUND** – a real estate investment fund in the SEP submission. It is designed to leverage funding from banks and investment institutions at a ratio of 1:7 or 8. It will be used to help the SELEP's 9 universities build business parks on their campuses. Through a partnership the universities will then develop a mechanism to promote innovation and spin out to businesses with all involved in the process incentivised to get innovative products to market. The Fund will be designed so that a good proportion of projects can be refinanced at an early stage making the Fund recyclable.

Peter Fleming and other Partners endorsed the Invest in Success approach which has long been argued from within West Kent and pleased that the West Kent voice is being heard on a level with other areas within the LEP.

Partners made a number of comments

- **Rail Investment** – There is a real need to invest in rail infrastructure in West Kent and ensure the continuance of a world class fast train line into

London. Peter Jones is working to secure a high speed line from Hastings to St Pancras via Ashford which could be a project for SEFUND and reduce demand on the Hastings line via Tunbridge Wells. Concern was expressed however, that WK commuters are paying more per mile to commute than elsewhere in country, effectively subsidising improvements from which they will not benefit, such as HS1 and facing severe disruption through London Bridge for next 5 years.

- **A21** - A request was made that the SELEP intervene with Government to obtain the long-awaited outcome of the A21 Inquiry. Post meeting – Announcement has been made that the dualling at Pembury will be going ahead post 2015. PJ
- **Town Centres** - Sainsbury's pulling out of the Tonbridge town centre development has been a big blow locally. This reflects changes in the retail sector worldwide. Major supermarket retailers are being challenged by Aldi and Lidl and share prices are falling. Peter Jones predicts a long period of price war and profit squeeze ahead. Internet retailing is claiming a larger share of the market with nearly 20% of all Christmas purchases last year made on line. Peter Jones counselled that local authorities need to look at what constitutes a town centre and be prepared to invest in different things such as Open University satellites in town centres.
- **SEFUND** - Concern was expressed that previous investment via SEEDA into Canterbury University City had largely failed to provide support for innovation and that support clustered around universities was now outmoded. Investment needs to be on a county wide basis. The innovative environment model has moved on and now needs to be aligned with Kent Reimagined rather than repeat unsuccessful past investment strategy. In response Peter Jones pointed to University of Brighton who have spread the work of the university along the south coast taking education and skills opportunities outwards to other communities. Distance learning is also a route as are business centres with support for new businesses.
- **Broadband** - Poor connectivity is still an issue in rural areas where investment by the County Council in Kent has lagged behind that in East Sussex impacting on the overall budget because Government matched Council investment. The superfast speeds delivered across the piece in Australia were held up as an example of what can be achieved. Peter Jones endorsed the vital importance of broadband infrastructure and indicated that if there was a choice between investment in roads and fibre then fibre should win. There is no competition in delivery as procurement process resulted in delivery through BT alone and rollout is steady and bureaucratic through Broadband UK. Where communities have come together and procured fibre themselves speeds are excellent and delivery swift. The point was made that 51% of our residents are in rural areas and there are an increasing number of home-based businesses which require the broadband infrastructure.

- **Landbased Economy** - East Malling Research Centre has a major part to play in giving the farming population the tools to weather the imminent price wars. The primary producers will be very hard hit. Peter Jones responded that the SELEP SEP provides for support for the land-based sector.
- **Educational Governance** - K College was given as an example of an educational establishment that had suffered with poor governance and a failure to engage with the business sector on governance. Peter Jones explained that Essex is developing a model with the Chamber of Commerce and Essex Business Board on further education which is having an impact in ensuring business involvement in FE colleges and better alignment of courses with commercial and business needs in area. Jo James has a meeting with Essex Chamber and offered to circulate some notes on the model via Wendy.

JJ

Engineering skills - As older skilled people retire there is a missing generation beneath them where the education system failed to train enough engineers. Funding is required for that generation to retrain in the required skills as well as to bring young people into the sector.

Post 14 Education Choices - The recent competition in education provision has had a positive impact on choices for 14 year olds. However, there are issues around schools not necessarily making those choices clear to their students. For example, not allowing University Technical Colleges <http://www.utcolleges.org/> access to mainstream pupils. It was agreed that if you give the right opportunities to young people all can achieve, with the example of Rye Studio School given has an example where working with more challenged young people they had excelled in a conducive environment.

3. **KCC Vision for West Kent – Mark Dance** – carried forward to future meeting
4. **Local Prioritisation/Delivery Plan for Kent and Medway – Ross Gill**

Ross explained that the SEP was developed as a document with a dual purpose – a vision for the South East area but also, at Government’s request, as a funding bid for the local growth pot from which SELEP is bidding for £2Bn over the 6 year period. There is a spatial allocation of £67M for West Kent and in addition county wide investments from which West Kent will benefit such as building on the Escalate Fund. This investment ask was developed from WKPs *West Kent Priorities for Growth* document.

The SEP was submitted at end of March and now Government is asking for priorities to be ranked with a focus on what can be started in 15/16. A ranking exercise has been completed and Transport accounts for 75% of the investment. The remainder are site-based projects that form part of the pipeline

for the new SEFUND. A list of projects deliverable in 15/16 will be submitted to Government and a further list will be generated ranking priorities for the whole programming period. The ranking exercise has caused some issues but West Kent has come out of the process well placed reflecting *West Kent Priorities for Growth* argument that the area is geared towards delivery.

There was some discussion around projects included in the ranking process and concern that the growth hub project has been taken out. Ross explained that it had always been understood that projects should be predominantly capital projects but that recent guidance from Government had clarified that only capital projects can be included. Hence all revenue projects such as the growth hub and some skills revenue projects have had to be taken out. SEFUND has remained in priorities as it has been designed as a capital project along the lines of the RGF3 finance projects being delivered in Kent.

David Godfrey advised that Government have now made further requests for project detail and prioritisation which poses the risk of Government cherry picking projects to support. Funding on a per project basis would be a very unsatisfactory result and difficult for the SEP to manage. SELEP need to demonstrate what can be delivered and then negotiate on freedom and flexibilities over delivery. Lobbying will be very important and two of the four panel members are WK MPs so West Kent voice vital.

all

Positive news is that Government have accepted the Federated model for the large SELEP area.

5. **Transport Update – Paul Lulham**

Concern was expressed about the lack of a decision on the A21 and a period of purdah about to start. Post meeting – A21 has been approved.

Kent and Medway bids within the SEP are over £500M and £360M of this is for transport. For West Kent these include North Farm Relief Road Strategy, M20 Junction 4, park and ride in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge Town Centre regeneration and sustainable transport interventions across West Kent.

Projects which strategically impact on West Kent include the Lower Thames Crossing on which there is still no decision, free flow tolling at the Dartford Crossing trialling in the autumn, and Gatwick consulting on a second runway ahead of the Davies Commission reporting in the autumn on Aviation Expansion.

Consultation has been completed on the Kent Freedom Pass and KCC Cabinet are expected to give approval to a compromise scheme from September which would see the price rise from £100 to £200 payable in 2 instalments for most users and the 16 plus scheme to go down to £400 from £500. Eligibility times will be reduced to 6am-7pm Monday to Friday during the academic year. This is still a very good scheme for students and outside of London Kent is the only authority offering such a scheme.

Peter Fleming thanked Paul for Chairing the Transport subgroup for nearly 3 years so ably and his contribution to Partnership meetings. Partners wished Paul well in his new career in the private sector.

6. **Funding**

West Kent Leader – Caroline Lingham - Powerpoint attached.

Escalate

Escalate was developed out of the WKP conference in January 13. There is now a pipeline of £7.7M generated since launch in December 13. All funds must be drawn down by 31 March 2015. Escalate will need to demonstrate projects delivering and drawing down and should be in a good position to approach Government for unspent funds from elsewhere. Escalate process is clear, restricted to 0% loans for a maximum of 50% project value, with no equity stake for the Fund and repayment terms designed to deliver recyclable funds.

7. **Co-ordinator's Report** – circulated with Agenda

Partners were asked to note that the West Kent Investment Strategy Action Plan circulated with the Agenda has now been completed and priorities will now be addressed *through West Kent Priorities for Growth* and Kent Delivery Plan.

The ongoing provision of business support after KCC funding is spent in September is a priority and ways to continue with the support developed during the pilot year until any LEP funding is available are being explored.

Partners were reminded of the West Kent B2B event at The River Centre, Tonbridge on 30 April, hosted by Kent Invicta Chamber and sponsored in part by the West Kent Partnership.

WW

8. **AOB** - None

9. **Dates of Next Meetings** – all Fridays 10am-noon

- 25 July, 2014
- 24 October, 2014
- 23 January, 2015
- 24 April, 2015
- 24 July, 2015
- 23 October, 2015

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 June 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY FLOODING

To provide an update of the financial support offered to local businesses to aid recovery from recent flooding.

1.1 Support Available

1.1.1 Following serious flooding problems between December 2013 and February 2014, the Government launched a series of support schemes to help local businesses with any financial losses incurred and to assist with their recovery plans. The following schemes were administered by the Borough Council:

- Rate Relief for Businesses that suffered directly from the floods: 100% relief for 3 months;
- Grant support from the Business Support Scheme for businesses both directly and indirectly flooded;
- Grant support from the Repair and Renew Scheme to enable businesses to invest in their properties to make them more resilient to future flooding episodes.

1.1.2 This report provides a brief summary on how each of the above schemes have been delivered in the Borough.

1.2 Rate Relief Support

1.2.1 To date, a total of 86 business who have suffered from flooding have been awarded rate relief at a cost in excess of £300,000. These costs will be fully reimbursed by Government using a grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

1.2.2 A further 38 business premises have been identified but do not qualify for support under this scheme. 25 businesses have no rates liability after all other reliefs

have first been applied, 11 have been identified as empty properties and a further 2 are not rated for business rates purposes.

- 1.2.3 Only businesses which have been directly affected (ie actually flooded) can apply for such relief. Businesses who may have been indirectly affected by flooding in the vicinity of their premises are not eligible.

1.3 Business Support Scheme

- 1.3.1 The Borough Council has received two tranches of funding from Government totalling £250,000 to pass on to business directly affected by flooding and also to assist those located close by to flooded areas who might have been indirectly affected. With guidance from Government, local councils involved had to draw up their own grant scheme to enable the funds to be distributed.
- 1.3.2 We have chosen to adopt a 'light touch' approach to our own scheme recognising that financial assistance was needed urgently by those affected and that a complex scheme would not be cost effective. It was agreed that a flat-rate grant would be offered to all eligible applicants who were responsible for the maintenance of their business premises (a lower flat-rate has been grant offered to businesses without such responsibilities but who may still have incurred losses in respect of equipment etc). Such an approach avoids the need to assess in great detail each and every application received although full data checks have been undertaken against business rates data to prevent fraud. Businesses known to have flooded (using EA data) were contacted and additional information was sought to supplement the original EA list. Personal visits were made to a number of businesses in Tonbridge High Street, a benefit for those for whom English was not their first language.
- 1.3.3 To date, our approach has proved very successful. A total of £160,000 of grant has been distributed to approximately 65 local businesses. A number of further applications are also pending. The support provided has been well received by local businesses.
- 1.3.4 We are now seeking applications for grant assistance for businesses indirectly affected by the flooding. Publicity has been undertaken and full details of the grants available and an on-line application form have been posted in our website.

1.4 Repair and Renew Scheme

- 1.4.1 This scheme provides grants of up to £5,000 to fund works to business premises to enable them to be more resilient to future floods. The costs of all grants made by the Council will be re-imbursed in full by the Government.
- 1.4.2 A number of initial enquires about the grant have been received from businesses in Tonbridge High Street, Barden Road, Avebury Avenue and East Peckham. Advice about the options open to business is being provided by the Council's Building Control team. Visits to business premises are under way and to date two

applications for grant have been received. Unlike the business support scheme, this grant programme is likely to have a longer 'gestation' period given that many local businesses will first need advice about possible flood control options before an application for grant can be made.

1.5 Legal Implications

1.5.1 As set out above

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.6.1 Funding for each of the three schemes is covered by the Government.

1.7 Risk Assessment

1.7.1 n/a

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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