

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 20th February, 2019

Present: Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr T Bishop, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr F G Tombolis, Cllr B W Walker and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, M A Coffin, N J Heslop, D Lettington, P J Montague and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Betts, J L Botten, R D Lancaster, L J O'Toole and C P Smith

ERG 19/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ERG 19/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 6 November 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 19/3 PRESENTATION: TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICAL EFFICIENCIES (TALE) INITIATIVE

On behalf of the Haven Gateway Partnership who were unable to attend the meeting, the Economic Regeneration Officer provided an overview of the Transport and Logistical Efficiencies (TALE) initiative, which offered free support and funding contributions for logistics businesses.

Small and medium sized businesses in the transport and logistics sector, as well as businesses with a transport and logistic function within their business, were offered advice on improving cyber security, complying with general data protection regulations (GDPR); reducing costs and growing sales, launching new products and implementing innovation aimed at improving business efficiencies. Funding was available until 2021.

A free Cyber Security Workshop was to be held on Wednesday 27 March 2019 in Tunbridge Wells.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**ERG 19/4 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

Decision Notice D190018MEM

The report of the Chief Executive set out information on the Future High Streets Fund and sought approval for submission of an Expression of Interest for Tonbridge, which had to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 22 March 2019.

Members were advised that the main objective of the Fund was to renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improved experience, encouraged growth and ensured future sustainability. Based on the scope and eligibility criteria it was suggested that an Expression of Interest be submitted for Tonbridge as it was classified in the draft Local Plan as the only town centre within the borough. This also offered an opportunity for further regeneration of the town centre.

It was noted that this was likely to be a very competitive funding stream and that as Tonbridge faced significant challenges it represented the strongest chance of success. Members asked that air quality measures and improvements to the overall appearance of the town centre be considered as part of the Expression of Interest submission.

Reference was made to the Borough Council's recently announced grants for shop front improvements which offered alternative funding opportunities for other retail centres in the borough. Small retailers in Tonbridge, West Malling, Borough Green, Snodland, Hadlow, Larkfield, Kings Hill, East Peckham, Aylesford and Wrotham would be advised of the scheme in the next couple of weeks.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Director of Central Services, in consultation with the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, to finalise an Expression of Interest and submit to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 22 March 2019.

ERG 19/5 FAIRTRADE TONBRIDGE ACTION PLAN

Decision Notice D190019MEM

The report sought endorsement of an Annual Action Plan 2019 following the success of Tonbridge in securing Fairtrade Town Status in October

2018. In addition, the Fairtrade resolution approved by the Borough Council in February 2018 had been reviewed and it was proposed that this was updated to reflect that Fairtrade status had been achieved, a Steering Group was in operation and Fairtrade products had been used at some Borough Council events.

The Chairman of the Tonbridge Fairtrade Steering Group (Councillor Tombolis) indicated that significant progress had been made and a number of objectives had already been achieved. It was also important to note that there were multiple benefits to the town for tourism and improved engagement and co-operation between various organisations based in Tonbridge.

Members welcomed the progress made so far, recognised that the initiative had to be consumer driven and commented on the feasibility of relevant Chamber of Commerce organisations introducing Fairtrade into their towns.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Annual Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed; and
- (2) the resolution, set out in full in paragraph 1.3.1 of the report and summarised above, be approved.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

ERG 19/6 UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2018/19

A detailed overview of the progress made in delivering the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan 2015-2019 during 2018/19 was provided in the report of the Chief Executive. It was noted that as the new Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-23 would be presented to the next meeting of the Advisory Board the report focused on the progress made during 2018/19.

Overall good progress had been made across a wide range of initiatives, as illustrated in Appendix 1 to the report. It was reported that some actions were progressing slower than originally envisaged. These included applications for the Kent and Medway Business Fund and the West Kent LEADER funding.

However, there had been a number of achievements over the period and these included the opening of the Castle Lodge Co-working space in Tonbridge, expansion of business engagement events, successful expansion of the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network and the delivery of a programme of employability events such as Jobs and Training Fairs.

In addition Appendix 2 to the report showed how the local economy had fared during the period 2011-2017 in comparison to other West Kent authorities, Kent and Great Britain. It was reported that overall Tonbridge and Malling had performed well, despite an increase of VAT de-registrations between 2014-17 and Employment Support Allowance claimant numbers remaining static.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration advised that the Borough Council were hoping to lease further office space in Gibson Building to support local businesses. Options were currently being explored with Deskrenters.

Members were pleased to note that the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network was building upon its success and was considered an example of best practice.

ERG 19/7 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP

The report highlighted matters arising from the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 11 January 2019. Particular reference was made to a discussion on shared issues across West Kent which focused on the greater need for employment space, urban and rural development, broadband connectivity and fostering successful High Streets.

Reference was made to plans for a Rural Focus event later in the year and clarification would be sought on the venue.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

ERG 19/8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm