

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

12 February 2019

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, 20th February, 2019 commencing at 7.30 pm

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

A G E N D A

PART 1 - PUBLIC

- | | | |
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| 2. | Declarations of interest | 7 - 8 |
| 3. | Minutes | 9 - 10 |

To confirm as a correct record the Notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 6 November 2018

4. Presentation: Transport and Logistical Efficiencies (TALE) Initiative

Presentation from the Haven Gateway Partnership on the TALE initiative which provides free support and funding contributions for logistics businesses.

Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet

5. Future High Streets Fund - Expression of Interest 11 - 14

This report sets out information on the Future High Streets Fund and seeks approval for submission of an Expression of Interest for Tonbridge.

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This report seeks endorsement of the Annual Action Plan for 2019 following Tonbridge successfully securing Fairtrade Town status in October 2018.

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7. Update on the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan 2018/19 21 - 34

To provide a detailed overview of the progress made in delivering the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan 2015-2019 during 2018/19.

8. West Kent Partnership 35 - 42

This report sets out the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2019

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Matters for consideration in Private

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PART 2 - PRIVATE

11. Urgent Items 47 - 48

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 B J Luker (Chairman)
Cllr R P Betts (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T Bishop
Cllr J L Botten
Cllr T I B Cannon
Cllr R W Dalton
Cllr S M Hammond
Cllr R D Lancaster
Cllr Mrs S L Luck

Cllr L J O'Toole
Cllr Miss J L Sergison
Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole
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, 6th November, 2018

Present: Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr R P Betts (Vice-Chairman), Cllr T Bishop, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr L J O'Toole, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr F G Tombolis and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M A Coffin, N J Heslop and H S Rogers were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J L Botten, R W Dalton, R D Lancaster and C P Smith

ERG 18/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However, in the interests of transparency Councillor Betts advised that he had been a recipient of a LoCASE grant.

ERG 18/25 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 5 September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 18/26 LOWER CARBON ACROSS THE SOUTH EAST (LOCASE)

Members received a presentation from Rob Robinson of Kent County Council on the impact of Lower Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) grants in supporting Tonbridge and Malling businesses. Members asked a number of questions on the criteria for grant aid, whether support extended to businesses addressing other pollutants, the availability of funding post-Brexit and how the scheme would link with the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy. The Chairman then thanked Mr Robinson for his contribution to the meeting.

ERG 18/27 EAST MALLING RESEARCH BIO-TECH CAMPUS

Apologies were received from Mario Coccamo of NIAB EMR who was unable to attend to make the presentation on recent positive developments at the East Malling Research Station. The Economic Regeneration Officer therefore updated the Advisory Board on progress being made at NIAB EMR with assistance from the Borough Council, including submission of two bids to the Stronger Places Fund and the Local Growth 3B Fund. It was hoped that more detailed information would be available in due course.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**ERG 18/28 BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT INITIATIVES - OUTLINE PROGRAMME**

Decision Notice D180067MEM

Further to Decision No D180060CAB, the report of the Chief Executive set out a programme of delivery for the Business Rates Retention Pilot initiatives, including an early draft of the Commercial Frontages Grant Scheme.

Consideration was given to the proposed criteria for the scheme which focused on independent retailers in the town and district centres of Tonbridge town centre, Borough Green, Kings Hill, Martin Square/Larkfield, Snodland and West Malling. It was agreed that the four additional centres identified in the previous district centres programme (Aylesford, East Peckham, Hadlow and Wrotham) also be included. It was also suggested that the focus of the scheme on retail premises should be reflected in its title.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed outline Business Rates Retention programme, as set out at paragraph 1.1.2 of the report, be approved; and
- (2) the Town and District Centres Commercial (Retail) Frontages Grant Scheme, as set out in the report, be approved subject to inclusion of Aylesford, East Peckham, Hadlow and Wrotham.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**ERG 18/29 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP**

The report highlighted matters arising from the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 19 October 2018. Particular reference was made to the fact that there was now a representative of the Federation of Small Businesses on the West Kent Partnership. It was noted that the draft West Kent Priorities for Growth Strategy would be presented to the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**ERG 18/30 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

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

20 February 2019

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 FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

This report sets out information on the Future High Streets Fund and seeks approval for submission of an Expression of Interest for Tonbridge.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Although change on our high streets is not necessarily a new phenomenon, in recent decades the speed of change has increased dramatically. The huge growth in online shopping in particular has had a big effect on high streets across the country, with around 20% of all retail sales now taking place online. In many towns, this has left a number of vacant or under-used spaces, and a mismatch between supply of existing space and the demand for different types of space, which in turn has impacted upon footfall numbers and sales figures.

1.1.2 In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) released a Call for Proposals for Future High Streets Fund Expressions of Interest in December 2018. This £675m fund is a key part of 'Our Plan for the High Street', which aims to see the regeneration of town centres through 'innovative proposals around transport, housing delivery and public services'.

1.1.3 There will be two rounds of the Fund, both with a two-phase application process - Phase 1 is the submission of Expressions of Interest, with those who pass to Phase 2 receiving funding to work up project proposals and develop project plans and business cases.

1.1.4 In this first round, Expressions of Interest need to be submitted by 22 March 2019. Dates regarding a second round are to be announced in due course, but will not be open before 2020.

1.2 Scope and Eligibility

1.2.1 The main objective of the Fund is to 'renew and reshape town centres and high streets in a way that improves experience, drives growth and ensures future sustainability'. It is expected that any need for investment will fall under the following themes:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Acquisition and assembly of land including support for new housing, workspaces and public realm.
- Improvements to access, traffic flow and circulation in the area.
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology.

1.2.2 The Fund will contribute up to a maximum of £25 million to each successful place, however the expectation is that most bids will seek £5-10 million and that any project submission will be match-funded with a contribution from the applicant.

1.2.3 In terms of eligibility, it is stated that the focus of proposals should be on '*high streets or town centres as defined as areas that exhibit high levels of social and economic activity, that contain a variety of uses and functions and that act as important service centres for extensive catchment populations*', adding categorically that the following will **not** be accepted:

- Bids covering town centre areas that are not facing significant challenges.
- Bids covering parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance
- Bids covering central business districts of major city centres.
- Bids covering more than one high street or town centre area.
- Bids covering projects that only make a difference to the appearance, rather than the use, of the area.

1.3 Expression of Interest for Tonbridge

1.3.1 Based on the scope and eligibility criteria set out above, the best fit for an Expression of Interest submission is Tonbridge, as it is classified in the draft Local Plan as the only Town Centre within the borough, and as such can demonstrate the high levels of social and economic activity that is expected in a bid.

1.3.2 In submitting an Expression of Interest, there are three sections that need to be addressed:

1. **Defining the Place** – this is essentially an exercise in describing the geographical area that your Expression of Interest relates to, as well as information on the population living and working within the town centre area, and economic activity. Much of this information can be sourced through the Office for National Statistics, with more detailed local data collected by the Borough Council's Planning Policy Team.
2. **Setting out the Challenges** – these challenges can cover a wide range of issues, in recognition of the fact that each place is different. For Tonbridge, the key challenges would likely be – loss of office accommodation to residential use through the use of Permitted Development Rights, road congestion (especially during peak periods), maintaining footfall and addressing the disconnect between Quarry Hill and the High Street.

3. **Strategic Ambition** – although slightly dated, the Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan does provide a strategic framework for the area and sets out policies aimed at regenerating the town centre. This framework, along with the policies of the draft Local Plan and the aims of the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy provide a high level support for capital investment.

1.3.3 At this stage, there is no requirement to provide details of any specific scheme proposal. MHCLG are effectively looking at the Expressions of Interest and assessing the nature of the towns, the challenges they face and the strategic level ambition of the Council to rise to these challenges. On that basis if they feel there is a compelling case for investment, then successful applicants will be given revenue funding to work up a full business case, which will set out detail on investment projects.

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 content of the report **BE NOTED**; and

1.8.2 That subject to Member's support, delegated authority **BE GRANTED** to the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health and the Director of Central Services, in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Infrastructure to finalise an Expression of Interest and submit to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 22 March 2019.

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

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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

20 February 2019

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 TONBRIDGE FAIRTRADE TOWN – ACTION PLAN

With Tonbridge successfully securing Fairtrade Town status in October 2018, this report seeks endorsement of the Annual Action Plan for 2019.

1.1 Background:

1.1.1 In February 2018, the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board approved a resolution supporting a bid to secure Fairtrade Town status for Tonbridge, and the establishment of a Steering Group, including representation from the Borough Council, to help take the bid forward (Report ERG 18/5).

1.1.2 Over the course of 6 months, work was undertaken to meet the requirements for obtaining Fairtrade Town status and pull together the submission document – this included undertaking surveys of businesses, schools, community and faith groups to ascertain their level of engagement with Fairtrade; establishing the Tonbridge Fairtrade Steering Group with Cllr Tombolis as Chairman; and promoting Fairtrade locally to businesses and the community.

1.1.3 On 22 October 2018, it was announced that the bid had been successful, with the Fairtrade Foundation stating:

“Congratulations on achieving Fairtrade Town status for Tonbridge. Doing so is a fantastic achievement, and it is not often that a town’s initial application is already as strong and comprehensive as yours.... It has been a great pleasure to learn more about all you have achieved and the obvious impact your hard work has had....We would like to emphasise how important it is that your group maintains momentum and keeps up the good work after Fairtrade status has been announced....

We look forward to hearing how your Fairtrade campaign has developed in your renewal application....Our thanks once again for all your hard work and our congratulations on all you have achieved. It is thanks to groups such as yours that Fairtrade is going from strength to strength and helping more communities in developing countries to earn enough for today and to invest in a better tomorrow”

1.2 Fairtrade Tonbridge Action Plan:

- 1.2.1 As mentioned in the quote under paragraph 1.1.3, there is a requirement to make a renewal application, in the form of an Action Plan with progress against each of the actions highlighted, by the end of 2019.
- 1.2.2 The proposed Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 1, sets out a number of actions for the year ahead, ensuring that the Steering Group remain focussed on activities that will help secured Fairtrade Town status in the short term. Broadly, these actions include the following themes:
- Increasing involvement in the Fairtrade Tonbridge initiative
 - Raising awareness of the initiative
 - Strengthening membership of the Steering Group

1.3 Fairtrade Resolution:

- 1.3.1 In addition, one of the requirements set out by the Fairtrade Foundation is to undertake a review of the resolution the Borough Council approved in February 2018 after 12 months. Having reviewed the resolution, it is proposed that it is amended to reflect the fact that Fairtrade status has now been achieved, the Steering Group is up and running, and Fairtrade products (teas and coffees) have been used at some Borough Council events. These alterations and additions have been highlighted in bold:

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, as an important consumer and opinion leader, should support a strategy to facilitate the promotion and purchase of foods with the Fairtrade Mark as part of its commitment to sustainable development and to give marginalised producers a fair deal.

In supporting Fairtrade, the Council hopes that Tonbridge will be recognised by the residents and business community, suppliers, employees and other local authorities, as a town that actively supports and promotes Fairtrade and to increase the sale of products with the Fairtrade Mark.

*Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council resolves to contribute to the campaign to increase sales of products with the Fairtrade Mark by supporting the **Fairtrade Tonbridge Initiative**. To this end, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council resolves to:*

- *Offer Fairtrade Marked food and drink options internally **or at external events where appropriate***
- *Promote the Fairtrade Mark using Fairtrade Foundation materials in refreshment areas and promoting the Fairtrade Towns initiative in internal and communications and external newsletters*

- *Use influence to urge local retailers to provide Fairtrade options for residents*
- *Use influence to urge local business to offer Fairtrade options to their staff and promote the Fairtrade Mark internally*
- *Support media campaigns to publicise the Fairtrade Towns initiative*
- **Maintain** *council representation (member or officer) on the Fairtrade Steering Group and support ongoing work to promote Fairtrade*
- *Support the Fairtrade Steering Group to organise events and publicity during national Fairtrade Fortnight – the annual national campaign to promote sales of products with the Fairtrade Mark.*

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 These are no financial implications arising from the 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 Annual Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1 **BE ENDORSED**.

1.8.2 That the resolution as set out in Paragraph 1.3.1 **BE APPROVED**.

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

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Appendix 1

Fairtrade Tonbridge Annual Action Plan 2019:

Goal	Action	Delivered By	Timescale
1	Undertake review of TMBC resolution.	TMBC	February 2019
	Work with Tonbridge Castle on the provision of Fairtrade refreshments for meetings/conferences.	TMBC	Ongoing
	Liaise with TM Active regarding provision of Fairtrade produce.	TMBC	Ongoing
2	Undertake annual review of shops and cafes to ensure continued commitment to Fairtrade.	FTSG	September 2019
	Promote Fairtrade products to new and existing shops and cafes in Tonbridge.	FTSG	Ongoing
	Develop directory on the Tonbridge Town Team website.	TTT	March 2019
3	Contact local schools and community/faith groups to encourage participation in Fairtrade activities, especially Fairtrade Fortnight.	FTSG	February 2019
	Work with and support community groups on Fairtrade events and activities.	FTSG	Ongoing
4	Press release and Photocall following successful application	FTSG	November 2018
	Articles in Kent Life and Times of Tonbridge to promote Fairtrade Tonbridge.	FTSG	Jan - March 2019
	Deliver a number of promotional events during Fairtrade Fortnight – especially a talk at Tonbridge Castle and School Art Project	FTSG	February/March 2019
	Participation in the Food & Drink Festival	FTSG	May 2019
	Regular social media postings	FTSG	Ongoing
5	Maintain bi-monthly meetings	Administrative support from TMBC	Ongoing
	Increase Membership of the FTSG	FTSG	Ongoing

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

20 February 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

**1 UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY
ACTION PLAN FOR 2018/19**

To provide a detailed overview of the progress made in delivering the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan 2015-2019 during 2018/19.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 23 June 2015, Report ERG 15/13 presented the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. It was recommended that the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy 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.

1.1.2 Since this time, an annual update report on progress has been provided to the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board to demonstrate the activities undertaken to deliver the Action Plan during that year and to set out key priorities for approval for the following year. On this occasion, as the new Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023 will be presented at the next Advisory Board meeting in Spring 2019, this report solely focusses on the progress made during 2018/2019.

1.1.2 This report provides the Board with information on progress regarding the actions set out under Chapter 8 of the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy, covering the following topics:

- Business Advice and Support
- Loan Funding to Local Businesses
- Skills Development
- Work Readiness
- Infrastructure Projects
- Town and Retail Centres
- LEADER Programme
- Better Business for All
- Broadband
- Inward Investment
- Tourism
- Tonbridge & Malling Local Plan

1.1.3 More specifically, the following priorities for 2018/19 were agreed following the last update report (ERG 18/3) in February 2018

- To work with business representative organisations to effectively promote and build awareness of the free support, advice and funding available to local businesses. This includes the **Kent & Medway Growth Hub, South East Business Boost, Kent & Medway Business Fund, the West Kent LEADER Programme** and the **West Kent Business Support Programme**.
- To deliver **skills development and work readiness initiatives** that support our young people and local businesses
- To increase communication with the local business community through the development of the monthly **Tonbridge & Malling Business Bulletin**, the establishment of a regular **programme of business engagement events**, the regular updating of the **TMBC business pages** and social media activity.
- To support the Tonbridge Town Team and other local traders groups with initiatives and events that **support our town and retail centres**.
- To work with Kent County Council in addressing remaining **broadband** issues and mobile blackspots in the Borough.
- To provide support, information and guidance on the local economic impact of **key infrastructure projects**, including the Leigh Flood Storage Area.
- To work closely with NIAB EMR on supporting plans for the proposed **Bio-tech Hub at East Malling**.

1.2 Progress to Date

1.2.1 Progress on delivering the Action Plan is set out in Appendix 1. This illustrates that overall good progress has been made across a wide range of initiatives.

1.2.2 By using a RAG analysis of the actions set out in the Strategy, one can see that there are no projects that have a 'red' status. There are, however, some actions that are progressing more slowly than originally envisaged. These include:

- Despite supporting its promotion, the Kent & Medway Business Fund has not seen a significant take up by local businesses. This could in part be due to the greater availability of other funding sources.
- Despite 26 Tonbridge and Malling rural businesses applying for West Kent LEADER funding, the number that have secured funding so far is 15 (against a target of 25). Whilst there are some further projects in the pipeline, there are not sufficient to get to the target. Despite this, the actual level of funding that has been secured for T&M businesses has been high (around 53% of the total allocation so far) due to the size of the bids that have been approved.

1.2.3 There have, however, also been a number of achievements over this period, including:

- Opening of the Castle Lodge Co-working Space in Tonbridge
- Delivery of Pop-up Shop in partnership with Tonbridge Creates at Angel Walk between October and December 2018.
- Continuation of the monthly Tonbridge & Malling Business E-bulletin.

- Expansion of TMBC Business Engagement Events into other parts of the borough with events taking place in Tonbridge, Snodland and Kings Hill.
- Successful expansion of the West Kent Enterprise Advice Network.
- The delivery of a programme of employability events including Jobs and Training Fair (Aylesford), Skills 3030 (Wrotham), Employability Days (Malling School and Aylesford School), Careers Day (Hugh Christie), 'Help me Out' event (Tonbridge) and Skillsfest (Tonbridge Wells – through the West Kent Partnership)

1.2.4 Appendix 2 also shows how the local economy has fared during the period 2011-2017 in comparison to other West Kent authorities, Kent and Great Britain. The key points to note are:

- Overall Tonbridge and Malling has performed well with the economy improving in a number of aspects as the country as a whole made a recovery from the financial crisis in 2008.
- However, the number of VAT de-registrations has increased considerably between 2014 and 2017, a trend that is reflected in other parts of Kent and nationally. There are multiple reasons why this might be the case, such as business failure, the result of sole traders finding alternative employment, or a business down-sizing.
- Although main out of work benefits claimants have dropped significantly since 2011, Employment Support Allowance claimant numbers have remained relatively static.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 There are no financial and value for money considerations arising from this report.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Not Applicable.

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.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

Action	Success Measure	Achievements during 2018/19
<p>Deliver free business advice and support focusing on the needs of entrepreneurs, micro businesses and home based businesses.</p>	<p>The number of local businesses supported. Target: 75 per year.</p>	<p>During 2018/19 there has continued to be considerable business support activity in this area, with the target of 75 businesses being supported having been exceeded by February 2019.</p> <p>Over the course of the 2018/19 financial year to date, the following have been delivered in Tonbridge and Malling as a result of our support:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Support for Home-Based Businesses (through the National Centre for Micro-Business) supported 7 businesses located in Tonbridge & Malling in the period April – September 2018. 2) Kent & Medway Growth Hub supported and signposted 83 T&M businesses in the period April – September 2018 <p>Total Number of Local Businesses supported (as of September 2018) – 90+ businesses</p> <p>As such, the target of 75 local businesses supported has been exceeded every year during the course of this strategy period.</p>
<p>Secure additional 0% interest loan funding to support local businesses with growth potential.</p>	<p>New fund established. External funding successfully obtained by 10 local businesses successfully applying for funding per year.</p>	<p>The Kent and Medway Business Fund was formally launched on 12 January 2017 at Westenhanger Castle and there have since been a number of calls for new expressions of interest. TMBC have actively promoted this new fund via the Economic Regeneration E-Bulletin to over 600 local contacts.</p> <p>Since launching, there have been 4 offers of funding to Tonbridge and Malling businesses or businesses looking to re-locate into the borough. The total value of these loans is just under £1 million. To date only 2 Tonbridge and Malling businesses have subsequently taken up the offer of funding.</p>
<p>Help broker engagement between local employers and local training providers across the West Kent area.</p>	<p>Establishment of an active West Kent Business Skills Forum.</p>	<p>The West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network (WKEAN) was launched in July 2017 with the WKEAN Co-ordinator, Simon Harris, in post in September 2017. The network aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit secondary schools and Enterprise Advisers (from local business) • Match them together • Train and coach Enterprise Advisers • Help schools identify the best resources & activities • Network to recruit volunteers from world of work • Brief schools about changes to policy and other guidance affecting careers and skills provision <p>In the first year, targets have been exceeded with 22 schools and colleges signed up from across West Kent. In Tonbridge & Malling, these include: Aylesford School, Wrotham School, The Malling School, Hillview School for Girls, Hadlow College, Hadlow</p>

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

		<p>Rural Community School, West Kent College, Hugh Christie Technology College, Oakley School, Weald of Kent Grammar School, and Tonbridge Grammar School.</p> <p>These 22 schools have been matched with Enterprise Advisers from businesses across West Kent including: AXA PPP, 360 Employment Evolution, Covea Insurance, Hastings Direct, Business Doctors, Metro Bank, G&C Media, STC Energy Bureau Specialists, RDT (Remote Diagnostic Technologies) Ltd, Ten2Two Recruitment Agency, Cooper Burnett Solicitors and JEE (offshore Oil and Gas).</p> <p>TMBC has been able to support the network through partnership funding, business referrals, support on the WKEAN Steering Group as well as involvement in the running of events and activities in schools. During 2018/19, this has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 July 2018 – Careers Future Exchange at Hugh Christie School • 21 September 2018 - Skills3030 Event at Wrotham School • 02 October 2018 - Employability Day at Aylesford School
<p>Work with partners to promote greater work readiness via training, apprenticeships and support for self-employment.</p>	<p>15% reduction in the number of ESA clients over the strategy period.</p>	<p>At the start of the strategy period, the most up to date statistics (from February 2015) illustrated the following:</p> <p>Total Claimants – 6,440 (equating to 8.5% of residents aged 16-64 years). Of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Seekers – 850 • ESA and Incapacity Benefits – 2,780 • Lone Parents – 690 • Carers – 970 • Disabled – 870 • Bereaved – 160 • Others - 120 <p>Main out of work benefits claimants (Job Seekers, ESA and IB, Lone Parents and others) numbered 4,440.</p> <p>Main out of work benefits claimants numbered 4,050 representing a drop of around 9.6% since February 2015. However, ESA and Incapacity Benefits claimants have remained relatively static.</p> <p>Whilst additional work clearly needs to be done to reduce these figures further, TMBC has been pro-active in delivering and supporting initiatives in the borough again this year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs and Training Fairs are continuing on a regular basis in partnership with Jobcentre Plus: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) On 18 October 2018 at the RBLI Village in Aylesford there were 30 local businesses and training providers, as well as seminars delivered by the RBLI and Runway Training. In total, over 200 people attended. b) In addition, there was a West Kent Jobs and Training Fair in September 2018 at the Assembly Halls in Tunbridge Wells which had around 350 attendees (delivered through the West Kent Partnership).

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

		<p>c) On 21 March 2019 at the Angel Centre in Tonbridge there will be around 30 local businesses and training providers, as well as seminars for job seekers giving practical advice on funding employment. In total, we expect over 300 people to attend this event, the vast majority of them job seekers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs Clubs continue to be run in Snodland, East Malling and Trench through Clarion Housing Group. • The Council piloted a ‘Help me Out’ event in Trench in partnership with local agencies and community groups in May 2018. This was aimed at local residents who were not ready to go back into employment, but needed support in their journey towards work-readiness. In total, over 50 people attended this event.
<p>Identify a pipeline of potential projects to support key transport infrastructure and business support needs including improvements to the Leigh Flood Storage Area, other local flooding issues and traffic pinch points.</p>	<p>2 priority schemes funded over the strategy period including improvements to the Leigh Flood Storage Area.</p>	<p>At the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 23 September 2015, the updated ‘West Kent Priorities for Growth Strategy’ was presented. It was decided by the Board to establish the Leigh Flood Storage Area as its top transformational priority, with a clear second priority given to the investment required at the East Malling Research site.</p> <p>On 02 February 2017 an official announcement was made for individual LGF3 applications with £4.64m allocated towards the Leigh Flood Storage Area (including Hildenborough) and East Peckham works. A detailed LGF3 business case for the Leigh and Hildenborough scheme was submitted to the South East LEP Accountability Board in August 2018, and subsequently approved. Work is ongoing with the DEFRA business case, and funding agreements between the EA and funding partners (TMBC and KCC) have now been signed.</p> <p>The EA are now working towards the submission of a planning application during 2019, and undertook pre-application consultation in November 2018, with 178 people visiting the exhibition in Hildenborough and Tonbridge. A delivery board (under the auspices of the Medway Flood Partnership) has been set up to in order to move the scheme through its delivery milestones. The Environment Agency are also developing an outline business case for East Peckham.</p> <p>Since the formation of NIAB EMR, the East Malling Research Station has seen new investment and an increase in commercial income – including the creation of a new WET (Water Efficient Technologies) Centre, a new concept vineyard for researching grape varieties in Kent and the commercial success of the Malling Centenary. In 2018, Driscoll’s (one of the major employers on the site) were granted planning permission for a suite of new greenhouses.</p> <p>Despite these success, the research station still suffers from dated research infrastructure (greenhouses/energy centre/labs) that is rapidly becoming insufficient for the needs of the horticultural sector. As such, having had an Expression of Interest approved in August 2018, a full LGF3b business case was submitted to the South East LEP requesting a £1.8m grant for Phase 1 of a new Research Campus (Energy Centre and greenhouses) in October 2018. A decision on whether this application is successful will be made in March 2019.</p>
<p>Bring forward further retail and mixed use developments and townscape improvements to strengthen the retail</p>	<p>Planning permissions in place by end of the strategy period.</p>	<p>Retail and Mixed Use Developments</p> <p>There have been some retail and commercial developments during 2018/19 which have the potential to further strengthen the role of the town centre/edge of town centre, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a new retailers at Cannon Lane – the opening of Aldi and B&M in November 2018.

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

<p>appeal of Tonbridge town centre.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of new independents along the High Street including – NiiHaw Sushi Bar, Paws Cat Café, as well as the Tonbridge Creates Pop-Up Shop which TMBC part-funded and was open from October to December 2018. <p>There are also a number of other developments in the pipeline which will progress during 2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new state of the art medical centre at the site of the former Teen and Twenty Club. • The opening of a new bar in the former John Angel Jewellers. <p>Townscape Improvements</p> <p>During the course of this strategy, there has been considerable investment in the public realm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The £2.65m Tonbridge High Street regeneration scheme was completed in June 2016 and has helped to create a more pleasant visitor experience and allowing cafes and restaurants to spill out into the street. Kent Highways appointed Amey to undertake a review of the scheme in February/March 2018 and investigate any issues. The key outcome of this review was the decision to inset the bus stop outside Caffe Nero which is scheduled to be implemented in 2019. • An upgrade to the River Walk area was completed in March 2017, and the area has been completely repaved, with new seating and planting and opportunities for local eateries to stretch out on to the waterfront. • In October 2017, improvements to a key gateway into Tonbridge were finalised. The scheme on Quarry Hill Road was delivered by Quarry Hill Traders, local artist Guy Portelli, and Tonbridge business Mary Mary Creates Gardens with the support and funding from TMBC. The improvement works included removal of existing soft landscaping, installation of art work foundation supporting a column designed by local schools and a statue of Dame Kelly Holmes as well as wildflower meadow. <p>Having gone out to consultation in January-February 2018, detailed plans to improve the area around Tonbridge Station were drawn up by Kent Highways, and having secured Local Sustainable Transport Funding, were implemented during the Autumn of 2018/19. In addition to this, southeastern are also progressing a new cycle hub at Barden Road, with contracts having been awarded.</p>
<p>Engage effectively with town centre and local centre traders and extend support to neighbourhood centres.</p>	<p>Establish a town centre business forum</p> <p>Launch a grant scheme for neighbourhood centres.</p>	<p>Town Centre Forum</p> <p>The Tonbridge Town Team has acted as an established mechanism for delivering positive action in the town during 2018/2019, including the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events - the Dragon Boat Race has become a regular feature in September each year, attracting thousands of people in to the town, and the establishment of a Food & Drink Festival in May is also becoming embedded. • Membership of the Tonbridge Loyalty Card (TLC) – with around 60 businesses and in the region of 500 regular users.

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotional activity – the ‘What’s On’ booklet has become a regular publication (every three months), promoting the wide range of events that take place in the local area and the Town Team has also become recently a lot more active on social media to help promote the town. <p>District and Local Centres - Grant Schemes</p> <p>The District and Local Centres Grant Schemes have now been substantially completed with only a couple of initiatives ongoing to mop up small underspends. In total, support was given to the following district centres – Quarry Hill, Snodland, West Malling, Hadlow, Kings Hill, Borough Green and Wrotham, Aylesford, and East Peckham – as well as local centres at York Parade and Martin Hardie Way (Tonbridge), Wateringbury, Oxley Shaw, Twisden Road, Woodlands (Ditton), Greenacres (Aylesford) and Plaxtol. Funding covered a range of projects covering signage, building and environmental improvements, promotion and marketing, lighting, and road resurfacing.</p> <p>As part of the Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme, ERAB approved a pot of £100,000 towards a new Retail Frontages Grant Scheme in November 2018. This scheme covers a number of Town and District centres across the borough and offers grants of up to £5,000 (up to 80% of total cost) to external improvements. This scheme launched in early 2019.</p>
<p>Promote the take up of LEADER grants by rural Borough businesses.</p>	<p>25 grants awarded to Borough rural businesses.</p>	<p>The LEADER Programme is funded by DEFRA and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), with the West Kent LEADER being awarded £1.63m for the period 2015-2020 to deliver the strategy and support the rural economy of West Kent.</p> <p>Since opening in September 2016, TMBC have been helping to promote the scheme through the use of the TMBC website and social media, as well as working with West Kent partners to provide additional business support for prospective applicants. The Village Stores Initiative, set up with Action with Communities in Rural Kent, was also a useful mechanism through which rural businesses were able to get support and advice in submitting application forms to the West Kent LEADER Programme. In total, 3 village stores have interacted with the LEADER programme, with 2 having secured funding (in Plaxtol and Wateringbury) and a further village store (in East Peckham) in the process of submitting a detailed business case.</p> <p>To date there have been 26 Expressions of Interest submissions from T&M businesses to the West Kent LEADER Programme. Of these, 9 did not progress, 15 have been approved and the remaining 2 are still working their way through the process. The total value of grants awarded already to approved projects in Tonbridge & Malling is just under £700,000 (53% of the total value of grant funding approved to date), with those T&M projects working their way through the approval process amounting to an additional £99,400 in grant value should they be approved.</p> <p>As such, whilst fewer than 25 grants will be awarded to borough rural businesses come the end of the programme, the actual amount of grant allocated to our rural businesses is significantly higher than that allocated to Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells or Gravesham rural businesses.</p>

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

<p>Adopt a corporate 'open for business' approach across all council services.</p>	<p>100% positive feedback from businesses engaging with the council.</p>	<p>The Better Business For All (BBFA) initiative for Kent & Medway is a partnership aimed at improving relationships between regulatory bodies and businesses, making access to information easier and helping to create economic growth. TMBC continues to play a key role in this initiative, with the Economic Regeneration Officer at TMBC acting as the Kent Economic Development Officer Group (KEDOG) representative on the steering group.</p> <p>During 2018, the following activities have been undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of a refreshed BBFA website by the Kent & Medway BBFA – www.bbfa.biz • Running training sessions for regulators on effective communication with customers.
<p>Work with partners to secure high speed broadband services across the Borough to meet local business needs and to address local problems with mobile phone coverage.</p>	<p>95% coverage of the Borough by 2018/19.</p>	<p>At the end of 2018, the BDUK Phase 2 project completed. This has resulted in superfast (at least 24 megabits per second) broadband coverage of around 96%, against a target of 95%.</p> <p>Although this project has now been completed, because the take up of publicly funded superfast broadband has been higher than expected, the County Council have received a small pot of funding that can be used to deliver additional schemes, with a government emphasis now on Fibre to the Premise (FTTP). The detail regarding where these schemes will be delivered is still in development.</p> <p>During 2018, Government also launched a broadband voucher scheme aimed at encouraging small businesses and the local communities around them to install faster connections using gigabit-capable infrastructure. The vouchers are worth £2,500 per SME, with residents able to claim £500 each towards installation. This initiative has been promoted through the T&M Business Bulletin.</p>
<p>Foster additional inward investment to the Borough via the promotion of vacant sites and existing premises.</p>	<p>20% increase in number of successful inward investment Borough projects handled by Locate In Kent.</p>	<p>Successes to the year ending March 2018</p> <p>Across West Kent as a whole, Locate in Kent assisted 6 companies to move into or expand within the area. These projects have helped to create and safeguard 117 jobs over the next 3 years. 4 of these companies fell within Tonbridge & Malling, creating and safeguarding 57 jobs over the next 3 years – these 57 jobs are made up of 11 new jobs, 42 retained jobs and 4 indirect jobs.</p> <p>Current Picture as of December 2018</p> <p>Locate in Kent is currently working with more than 20 companies looking to expand into/within or relocate into/Tonbridge & Malling. The majority of these projects lie within the following sectors: Business Services, Other Manufacturing and Construction.</p>
<p>Support the development of the local tourism sector to increase local spend and promote employment</p>	<p>10% increase in local spend by 2018/19.</p>	<p>At the time of adopting the Economic Regeneration Strategy, the most up to date statistics (Cambridge Model 2013) illustrated that the impact of tourism in the borough was:</p> <p>Total Visitor Spend - £129,219,000 Of which: Staying Visitors from the UK - £25,381,000</p>

Appendix 1: Economic Regeneration Strategy Update

		<p>Staying Visitors from Overseas - £11,925,000 Day Visitors - £80,875,000 Other Visitor Related Spend - £11,038,000</p> <p>Having been commissioned by Visit Kent, the Cambridge Model has just been completed for 2017 and shows the following trends:</p> <p>Total Visitor Spend - £143,150,000 Of which: Staying Visitors from the UK - £26,249,000 Staying Visitors from Overseas - £12,612,000 Day Visitors - £89,597,000 Other Visitor Related Spend - £14,692,000</p> <p>This equates to an increase in visitor spend of 10.8%, and therefore exceeds the 10% target.</p> <p>During 2018/19, there have been a number of activities that have helped to stimulate greater spend in the tourism sector including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Events and Promotion – including Music@Malling, Wrotham Festival of Fusion and Light, Tonbridge Carnival and Fete, Summer Band Concerts, Tonbridge Arts Festival, Medieval Fair and Dragonboat racing, open air cinema at Tonbridge Castle and the Tonbridge Food & Drink Festival as well as the ongoing production of a What’s On booklet to promote local events. - Supported Heritage Open Days across the Borough with activities at venues including Tonbridge Castle, Aylesford Priory, Ightham Mote, as well as a host of local churches and heritage centres. - Support for Visit Kent’s Big Weekend which takes place in April 2019 – Aylesford Pottery, Hop Farm, Ightham Mote and Tonbridge Castle have signed up.
<p>Support the development of a new Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan, including the identification of new employment sites.</p>	<p>Adoption of the Local Plan in 2017.</p>	<p>Since the last annual update, there has been considerable progress with the development of the emerging Local Plan. In October-November 2018, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council carried out a Regulation 19 consultation which received in excess of 3,800 responses. The draft Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2019, with an Examination in Public scheduled for Spring 2019 and adoption of a new Local Plan by the end of 2019.</p>

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Economic Indicator	Year							Overall Trend 2011-2017
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
% change in VAT Registrations (Start-Ups)								
Tonbridge & Malling	550	545	675	715	775	770	730	+33%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	725	695	850	735	890	815	745	+3%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	665	615	800	815	740	790	740	+11%
<i>Kent</i>	6,190	6,325	7,745	7,680	8,335	8,730	7,895	+28%
<i>Great Britain</i>	257,625	265,630	341,630	345,780	377,635	408,420	375,030	+46%
% change in VAT De-registrations								
Tonbridge & Malling	450	515	510	480	575	560	670	+49%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	620	640	620	570	660	650	685	+10%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	585	630	710	665	700	775	820	+40%
<i>Kent</i>	5,580	6,010	5,875	5,700	6,390	6,550	7,620	+37%
<i>Great Britain</i>	224,745	247,620	232,315	242,080	277,875	283,530	351,875	+57%
3 Year Survival Rates								
Tonbridge & Malling	65.0%	54.7%	60.2%	63.6%	60.6%	62.2%	65.0%	0%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	59.7%	64.3%	63.9%	62.1%	61.9%	64.7%	64.6%	+8%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	63.7%	64.1%	60.0%	62.4%	63.4%	66.3%	62.0%	-3%
<i>Kent</i>	60.5%	60.3%	58.4%	60.3%	59.6%	62.4%	63.3%	+5%
<i>Great Britain</i>	-	-	57.1%	60.5%	59.4%	60.9%	61.3%	
Median Weekly Full-Time Earnings (Workplace Based)								
Tonbridge & Malling	£491.90	£527.70	£525.20	£529.20	£517.10	£550.80	£547.70	+11.3%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	£503.00	£507.40	£537.90	£535.80	£490.90	£526.50	£543.00	+8.0%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	£488.70	£555.10	£526.10	£520.50	£517.90	£524.00	£536.20	+9.7%
<i>Kent</i>	£489.20	£490.80	£482.30	£489.80	£504.10	£517.50	£542.00	+10.8%
<i>Great Britain</i>	£500.00	£507.90	£517.60	£520.40	£528.50	£540.20	£570.90	+14.2%
Unemployment Rate (Claimant Count)								
Tonbridge & Malling	2.0%	2.1%	1.8%	1.2%	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	-60%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	1.8%	1.8%	1.5%	1.1%	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	-61%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	1.7%	1.5%	1.2%	0.9%	0.7%	0.7%	0.8%	-53%
<i>Kent</i>	3.1%	3.2%	2.8%	2.0%	1.5%	1.6%	2.0%	-35%
<i>Great Britain</i>	-	3.4%	2.5%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	2.3%	
% 16-64 claiming out of work benefits								
Tonbridge & Malling	7.1%	7.4%	7.0%	6.2%	5.8%	5.4%	5.3%	-25%
<i>Sevenoaks District</i>	6.6%	6.7%	6.3%	5.7%	5.3%	4.9%	4.7%	-29%
<i>Tunbridge Wells Borough</i>	7.4%	6.8%	6.5%	6.0%	5.5%	5.2%	5.2%	-30%
<i>Kent</i>	13.1%	10.6%	10.2%	9.2%	8.4%	7.7%	7.4%	-43.5%
<i>Great Britain</i>				9.7%	9.0%		8.3%	

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

20 February 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP - MINUTES

This report sets out the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2019

1.1 Background:

1.1.1 The minutes of the recent meeting of the West Kent Partnership are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

1.1.2 The meeting dealt with a number of issues which included:

- A presentation from Hugh Lowe Farms about the business and the creation of the Fruit Rooms, which were part-funded through the LEADER Programme.
- An update on drainage from Kent County Council following on from the flooding of The Pantiles in 2018.
- 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.
- The endorsement of the West Kent Economic Priorities for Growth and Action Plan.
- An overview of funding and business support programmes.

1.1.3 The partnership also received an update from the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network, which is building upon its success and expanding to provide full coverage of all State mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools in West Kent.

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Economic Regeneration Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Minutes - West Kent Partnership Meeting – 11 January 2019

Present

Nicolas Heslop, TMBC (Chair)
 Sean Holden, KCC
 Roddy Hogarth, SDC
 Jane March, TWBC
 Brian Luker, TMBC
 Paul Hannan, Hadlow Group
 Mark Raymond, TMBC
 Hilary Smith, TWBC
 Andrew Stirling, SDC
 Jacqui Ward, KCC
 Simon Harris, WKP
 Wendy Wood, WKP

Guests

Tomasz Lewandowski, Hugh Lowe Farms
 Earl Bournier, KCC
 Carole Valentine, KCC

Apologies

Peter Fleming, SDC
 Tracy Moore, TWBC
 Iain McNab, BEIS
 William Benson, TWBC
 Caroline Shaw, IMAGO
 David Joyner, KCC
 Catherine Brunger, AXA PPP
 Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
 Henry Warde, Squerryes
 Adam Bryan, SELEP
 Sarah Nurden, KMEP
 Alison Parmar, FSB
 Andrew Metcalf, KICC
 Tudor Price, KICC

1 Minutes & Matters Arising

Rural Focus event

Advice on timings and type of event has been sought from Stuart Gibbons (rural consultant) and Caroline Lingham, West Kent LEADER programme manager. An event will be staged later in the year with high profile speakers. Alongside this a business support package will be developed to enable farmers to manage the gradual transition away from subsidies. West Kent Leader ELAG group and Hadlow College will also be involved in shaping the event and programme.

WW

Paul Hannan kindly offered Hadlow as a venue for the event.

2 The Fruit Rooms – Tomasz Lewandowski, Packhouse Manager, Hugh Lowe Farms

Thanks are recorded to Hugh Lowe Farms, and Jon Regan, in his absence, for hosting the meeting. It was noted that the creation of the Fruit Rooms above the Packhouse was part funded by LEADER.

Tomasz gave an overview of the business – powerpoint attached.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made

- The polybags used are compostable and recyclable
- Although growing in the tunnels can be undertaken independent of external soil and weather conditions not all produce grown is premium. This is because the market for premium produce is smaller and a range of produce is required
- Precision irrigation has made a huge difference to the water bill which was the second largest bill on the farm. As fruit cannot be over-watered it has also improved the quality of the produce
- Labour force is predominantly seasonal foreign workers. These are well looked after. The business has invested in accommodation available at a fair rent and pays everyone at least the national minimum wage irrespective of age
- Work is also available to local students and others and the business is seeking to expand its local workforce as this will be more sustainable
- It is challenging for all farmers to secure sufficient seasonal labour and this impacts directly on productivity levels
- The business operates a graduate scheme and there are good career progression pathways available in the agricultural sector
Action – through Enterprise Adviser Network – messaging to young people of the opportunities available in the agricultural sector from seasonal work through to highly specialised professions
- Brexit impacts for the business include investing in 11 truckloads of packaging to secure supply, concerns about reduced availability of migrant labour and potential sourcing of plants as not all supply is from the UK.

SH

The Chairman thanked Tomasz for his presentation and underlined for Partners the substantial contribution that the business makes to the local economy with a Gross Value Added anticipated in excess of £20M of which £13M is spent in Kent.

3 Flood Prevention – Earl Bournier, Acting Asset Manager, Drainage, KCC

Concern was raised at a previous WKP meeting about the maintenance of gullies, in particular, the impact to businesses of the flooding at The Pantiles and the Chairman welcomed Earl Bournier and Carole Valentine to the meeting. Presentation attached.

In response to questions raised the following points were made

- Report on Tunbridge Wells flooding is going to Tunbridge Wells Joint Transport Board on 21 January. The report is attached along with associated information.
- There is now one engineer in each District, reflecting recognition that drainage has been underfunded

- Appropriate asset management is essential to preventing future problems. Districts assist by scheduling leaf sweeping before gully clearance operations and assuring roads clear of parked cars. A meeting is taking place next week with Districts to identify collaborative pathways to better asset management
- New machinery is now in place which can jet severe blockages all the way through to the sewers and deployment is coordinated with Southern Water who have responsibility for the sewers
- As rare events are now happening with more frequency systems need to be adapted and now looking to be prepared for events with 1/100 frequency
- No deal Brexit money is being invested in work including resilience work on the A20 and A25, strengthening ironwork and cleansing gullies
- Seven Mile Lane flooding problems are currently being addressed
- Community information an element to keeping gullies clear – Simon offered students for a social media project
- A suggestion was made that KCC engagement with Parishes could be enhanced by heading up items *Drainage Maintenance and Cleansing*, rather than *Flooding*

SH

4 Planning Policy and Economic Development – Shared Issues – Roddy Hogarth Paper A

Points arising from the Paper and presentation included

- Across West Kent projections are for a greater need for employment space against a net erosion year on year. Making provision for this in the Local Plan process is challenging
- Urban environment is changing and space increasingly being delivered in volume (ie taller buildings) rather than hectares
- Green belt restrictions impact on rural development, employment opportunities and food security
- Meeting scheduled with West Kent officers and Liz Harrison at KCC to explore how we can collaboratively deliver good broadband connectivity to the last 5%. Likely to look to replicating successful community projects across West Kent which have delivered without BDUK funding as this funding going forward should only be used for fibre to house rather than fibre to cabinet.
- Consultation is out on 5G. Liz Harrison is working on a county-wide response. West Kent authorities to also respond. Government pressure on networks is required to provide the critical infrastructure to deliver a network fit for purpose and which could potentially deliver broadband connectivity to the last 5%.
- Investment in electric charging infrastructure required to support any significant progress such as adoption by bus fleet operators

HS/AS/MR

- Successful High Streets are visitor destinations with mixed retail, office, residential and leisure. Flexibility required in planning policies to support this
- Local authorities have a strategic role in determining the right mix in the High Street so that sufficient retail is retained to maintain vibrancy – local solutions for local problems

5 West Kent Economic Priorities for Growth – Wendy Wood – Paper B

Partners were thanked for their responses to the consultation. The Action Plan is the focus of the document with progress against objectives to be reported quarterly into the Partnership under the 5 Industrial Strategy headings of Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place. A print quality pdf strategy will be produced, supplemented with a flyer highlighting key messages to business about a proactive WKP working to create an environment conducive to business growth.

Partners endorsed the Strategy.

Once the Strategy is available a Press Release will be produced and the Chairman will write to the Chairs of KMEP and SELEP and to the 5 West Kent MPs. Partners will also be asked to share with their Networks.

WW

6 West Kent Update – Wendy Wood

Partners were invited to note a number of points from the report

- **Business Support Programme** – recommendation from the provider, National Centre for Microbusiness that a small amount of Seed funding could make a big difference to a number of clients they see
Action: Research to be undertaken on possible models/sources of funding
- A series of workshops will be offered to the growing number of alumni from the programme to keep them networked and provide ongoing support beyond the initial 2 hours free 1:1
- **West Kent LEADER** – 9 full applications are currently on the table with a total grant request of nearly £600,000 - nearly double the remaining budget. There is a small possibility of being able to draw down additional funds from the national pot (from exchange rate gains and funds given up by less successful LEADER groups).
- A request to extend the closure date of 29th March 2019 (for all funds to be fully committed) by 6 months, as reported to the last Partnership meeting, will be made to the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) in February once we have the outcome of our additional funds bid. This closure date is for LEADER monies to be contracted to projects, the actual spend and payment of claims can still be made up to December 2020.

WW

7 West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network – Simon Harris

- Recruitment is underway for a second full time Enterprise Coordinator which will provide full coverage of all State mainstream and SEND schools in West Kent
- Strategic focus is now on reaching Governors with Career's responsibility alongside Headteachers. The intention is to connect all Enterprise Advisers with the relevant governor in their schools
- Employer feedback from Skillfest was overwhelmingly positive – 72% enjoyed, 77% felt important for business to help the next generation and the vast majority of employers would like to be involved in future events
- Gatwick Airport are bringing a mini terminal to Hadlow Rural School on 29 March based on their exhibition space at the Big Bang, Sussex. This will be interactive and include opportunities to meet pilots and engineers and have a mini airport experience
- Poster competition has been launched to schools to encourage their students to design a poster linking the curriculum to the world of work and involving employer encounters
- A business and education conference is being scoped for delivery later this year which will involve young people in its delivery
- The West Kent Network is a main partner on the WOW show produced by CTN as a corporate social responsibility project – a construction special is being promoted to our schools with a suggestion to bring construction professionals into school to participate in Q&A with the students
- The three Economic Development portfolio holders are attending an Enterprise Adviser breakfast meeting on Thursday 17 January

Partners commented that business insurance and health and safety policies can prevent work experience for under 18s and Simon responded that many schools are now moving away from solid blocks or work experience to meaningful encounters with the world of work and visits to the workplace.

The Chairman commented that the KMEP lead on careers engagement was very impressed with our West Kent model with the clear links to economic development.

8 **KMEP** – The Paper was noted.

9 **FSB – Paper C** – the Paper was noted

10 **AOB**

- BEIS is requesting business feedback on the impact of Brexit. Jacqui will forward Growth Hub response

JW

- KCC has received £29M from Government to keep Kent's roads open in the event of No Deal
- West Kent Scale Up presentation to next WKP meeting TP

11 Next Meetings – all 10-12, venues to be advised. Outlook invitations sent.

- Friday 26 April, 2019
- Friday 5 July, 2019
- Friday 4 October, 2019

Agenda Item 9

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 10

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 11

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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