

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL



## EXECUTIVE SERVICES

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### 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: Democratic Services  
[committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk)

26 October 2020

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 online via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2020 commencing at 7.30 pm. Information on how to observe the meeting will be published on the Council's website.

Yours faithfully

JULIE BEILBY

Chief Executive

## A G E N D A

### PART 1 - PUBLIC

1. Apologies for absence 5 - 6
2. Declarations of interest 7 - 8

*Members in any doubt about declarations are advised to contact Legal or Democratic Services in advance of the meeting.*

3. Minutes 9 - 12

To confirm as a correct record the Notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 2 September 2020

4. The Economic Impact of Covid-19 Crisis - An update 13 - 14

*A presentation by the Economic Regeneration Manager (Jeremy Whittaker) on the continuing impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local economy. Information on support for local businesses will also be provided.*

#### **Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet**

5. Borough Economic Recovery Strategy 2021-23 15 - 38

*This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in September - October 2020, and recommends adoption of the strategy as amended.*

6. Business Rates Retention Pilot and Pool Update 39 - 44

*This report gives an update on the Business Rates Retention Pilot and Business Rates Pool funding and, following on from an initial report to the Board in September 2020, provides more detail on potential priority projects for funding in light of the impact of Covid-19.*

7. West Kent Kickstart Programme 45 - 48

*This report outlines the national Kickstart Scheme and updates the Board on measures being undertaken to set up a 'gateway' to help tackle youth unemployment in West Kent, and the potential for the Borough Council to support the programme.*

#### **Matters submitted for Information**

8. West Kent Partnership Update 49 - 56

*The report provided a summary of the key matters discussed at the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 9 October 2020.*

9. Urgent Items 57 - 58

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**

10. Exclusion of Press and Public 59 - 60

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**

11. Urgent Items 61 - 62

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 F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr G C Bridge  
Cllr R I B Cannon  
Cllr Mrs T Dean  
Cllr N Foyle  
Cllr M A J Hood  
Cllr F A Hoskins  
Cllr A P J Keeley

Cllr D W King  
Cllr J R S Lark  
Cllr L J O'Toole  
Cllr W E Palmer  
Cllr J L Sergison  
Cllr K B Tanner  
Cllr C J Williams

Apologies for absence

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Declarations of interest

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## TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 2nd September, 2020

**Present:** Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr N Foyle, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr D W King, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr L J O'Toole, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr J L Sergison and Cllr K B Tanner

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M C Base, Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, A E Clark, M A Coffin, D Lettington, N J Heslop, P J Montague, Mrs A S Oakley, M R Rhodes, H S Rogers and N G Stapleton were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

#### **ERG 20/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However, in the interest of transparency, Councillors R Betts and M Coffin both advised that their businesses had received grants under the West Kent LEADER Programme (Minute ERG 20/8 refers).

#### **ERG 20/2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 5 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **ERG 20/3 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19**

To assist the Board's consideration of the matters presented to the meeting the Economic Regeneration Manager provided an overview of the impact the Coronavirus Pandemic had had on the economy of the Borough.

### MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

#### **ERG 20/4 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY**

Decision Notice D200056MEM

The report of the Chief Executive outlined proposals for a revision of the Borough's current Economic Regeneration Strategy to ensure that it was fit for purpose in supporting the local economic recovery following the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Attention was drawn to the strategic link with the Kent Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan which sets out county-wide actions to support economic revival and

identifies three key principles of 'Cleaner and Greener', 'Productive and Open' and 'Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances'.

It was anticipated that the consultation with key economic partners would be undertaken over a four week period (10 September to 8 October) and a report on the adoption of a Borough Economic Recovery Strategy submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the following be included in the consultation on the draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy (as set out at section 1.3 of the report):
  - the economic vision, as set out in the Cabinet report of 3 June 2020 regarding the Corporate Strategy First Year Addendum, be used for the purposes of the Economic Recovery Strategy;
  - the adoption of the five channels and three key principles identified in the Kent Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan;
  - a shorter timescale (2021-2023) than that previously used for the Economic Regeneration Strategy; and
  - the measures set out in Appendix 1 relating to the Action Plan – Priority Actions.
- (2) the framework for the consultation on the draft strategy, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of the report, be approved.

**ERG 20/5 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME**

Decision Notice D200057MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the two Shopfront Improvement Schemes operated by the Borough Council to support local businesses and improve the attractiveness of the Borough's town and local retail centres.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) an additional promotional exercise of the Local Centres and Parades Scheme be undertaken in October 2020 to encourage further take up of the Scheme; and
- (2) the proposal to close the Local Centres and Parades Scheme to new applications by 31 March 2021 be agreed.

**ERG 20/6 BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT AND POOL**

Decision Notice D200058MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the Business Rates Retention Pilot and Business Rates Pool funding and advised that, following total or committed spend to date, £560,000 remained to fund initiatives which supported growth (subject to the support and agreement of the County Council). Consideration was given to a number of potential initiatives (set out at Appendix 1 to the report) which reflected the need to strengthen the resilience of the local economy and the future of town centres in the light of the impact of Covid-19 and embraced economic and environmental opportunities arising from the green agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the initial options to support the local economy (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) be approved; and
- (3) a list of proposed options for endorsement be reported to a future meeting of the Advisory Board prior to being shared with Kent County Council for its agreement.

**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION****ERG 20/7 EAST MALLING RESEARCH STATION - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The Chief Executive reported that the Growing Kent and Medway consortium led by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany East Malling Research (NIAB EMR) had been successful in securing £18m of 'Strength in Places' funding for horticultural sector initiatives within Kent, which included the development of a Green Tech Hub for Advanced Horticulture at EMR. Additionally, the report advised that NIAB EMR had successfully bid for Local Growth Fund Round 3b funding and been awarded £1.7m for the creation of new greenhouses and energy centre at East Malling Research Station.

**ERG 20/8 WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME - UPDATE**

The report provided an overview on the performance and initiatives funded through the West Kent LEADER programme over the past five years. The Chairman advised that, as the programme was scheduled to finish at the end of December 2020, he had written to the MPs within West Kent requesting that they lobby the Government for further funding of this type of programme.

**ERG 20/9 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The report presented details of the key matters discussed at the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 10 July 2020.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**ERG 20/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.51 pm

# Agenda Item 4

*A presentation by the Economic Regeneration Manager (Jeremy Whittaker) on the continuing impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local economy. Information on support for local businesses will also be provided*

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

**03 November 2020**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision**

**1 BOROUGH ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY 2021-2023**

**This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in September - October 2020, and recommends adoption of the strategy as amended.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 A report was made to the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 02 September 2020 setting out a draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy to guide our work on supporting the local economy in recovering from the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis for the period 2021-2023.

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

**1.2 Results of Consultation**

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

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

1.2.2 A total of 11 formal responses were received from local businesses and business representative organisations, partner organisations (such as the West Kent Partnership and adjoining Borough and District Councils), as well as from officers within Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Whilst the numbers of respondents was lower than hoped for, the quality of the feedback from those that did respond

was high and as such extremely helpful in shaping the final draft of strategy. A summary of the comments is provided below:

- Overall respondents were very positive about the content and ambition set out in the strategy, and were pleased that the Borough Council was proactively putting in place plans to aid the economic recovery.
- A number of partner organisations expressed a keenness to support us in the implementation of the plan, for example, JobCentre Plus stated they look forward to supporting initiatives to reduce unemployment.
- The importance of supporting town centres, and making sure they are attractive places to visit.
- Support for any initiatives which support the local economy to become carbon neutral, and to help the growth in 'green jobs'.
- Support for measures that help to boost tourism.
- One respondent made a point that the strategy should look more long term than the 2021-23 timeframe.

1.2.3 On this last bullet point, it is essential that this strategy focusses on recovery and addresses the immediate challenges the local economy faces. Subject to how the recovery pans out, it would be the intention to revert back to a five-year Economic Regeneration Strategy once the recovery strategy has been completed.

1.2.4 Apart from this point, the vast majority of points raised in the consultation have been accommodated within the draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy as set out in Appendix 1.

### **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

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

### **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 Not applicable.

### **1.6 Equality Impact Assessment**

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

## 1.7 Recommendations

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

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

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Economic Regeneration  
Manager

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

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# Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

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## Borough Economic Recovery Strategy

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2021 - 2023

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Images (from top) courtesy of NIAB EMR (Advanced Horticultural Technology Zone, East Malling); Pannatoni (Pannatoni Park Aylesford) and David Hodgkinson (Tonbridge High Street)

## Foreword - Economic Recovery in Tonbridge and Malling

This Economic Recovery Strategy sets out Tonbridge & Malling's response to the economic crisis that has arisen from the Covid-19 pandemic. Combined with the health crisis, the economic crisis has impacted every sector, business and worker and together they present the greatest threats we have faced in generations.

In recent months, and in the face of considerable pressures, the Council has been working quickly and diligently to support our local businesses and residents. Over 1,500 local businesses have received grant support through via the Borough Council, amounting to an injection of over £20 million into the local economy. In addition, the Borough Council has:

- Set up and run a Community Hub for our most in need residents
- Part-funded the Kent-wide Covid-19 Business Helpline which has been used by over 750 local businesses
- Advised our High Street businesses and licensed premises in moving out of lockdown and adapting to Government guidance.
- Supported new work place opportunities for young people through the introduction of the West Kent Kickstart scheme.

As we continue to support our local businesses and residents through this crisis, it is essential that we look to the future and set out a framework detailing how we and our partners can facilitate a strong recovery and build back better. This document is our starting point and it is our intention to review it annually. We look forward to working with you to get our local economy back on track.



Nicolas Heslop, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Working with Our Partners	4
3.	Policy Context	5
4.	The Impact of Covid-19 on our Local Economy	7
5.	Key Issues	10
6.	Vision & Objective	12
7.	Action Plan	14
8.	Open for Business	16
9.	Monitoring the Economy and Reviewing Progress	17
	Appendix 1: List of Key Partners	18

## Introduction

Covid-19 has severely affected our communities and economy, forcing the Council to revisit its previous priorities and plan of action, set out in the *Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023*. This Economic Recovery Strategy focuses on the short term and considers how the Council can respond to the current crisis and build back better. Whilst it is understandably focused on delivering results over the next few years, the Council will review the strategy on an annual basis and the current intention is that we will ultimately revert back to a five-year horizon once the hugely detrimental impact of the pandemic has started to subside.

Page 22 The Council's approach to recovery revolves around working in partnerships with others to tackle the problems we face at present. Indeed, the Borough's recovery strategy reflects the Government's national recovery goals, the recovery framework outlined at County level and the local priorities of the West Kent Partnership and local residents and businesses. It is by aligning our efforts and resources that we will be able to get through the current crisis.

The recovery framework developed by Kent County Council (KCC) and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) revolves around 5 channels of activity anchored by 3 key sustainable principles, which are set out in the 'Vision and Objectives' section of this strategy, and forms the basis for this document.

Despite moving to this new recovery strategy, there is a continuity with the former Economic Regeneration Strategy, and a number of previously trialled and envisaged projects are included in the revised **Action Plan**. However, all the actions set out in the strategy are focused on achieving a quick and sustainable recovery of the local economy. The adherence to a wider framework was adopted so as to ensure a seamless operation and integration of wider regional and national programmes, whilst also allowing for future revisions.

## Working with Our Partners

The Borough Council recognises the key role it has to play in helping the local economy to recover, both in terms of setting a strategic framework for its approach as well as through the various initiatives it undertakes in order to contribute towards the creation of a better economy. However, our positive impact can only really be maximised by working with partners that also play an equally important role. As such, we are committed to working with a wide range of partners to achieve the actions set out in this strategy. The following are key strategic partnerships that the Borough Council engages with on a regular basis:

**The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP):** is one of 39 business-led public/private partnerships set up by government to make investments and deliver activities to drive growth and create local jobs. SELEP covers Kent, Essex, East Sussex, Medway, Thurrock and Southend and is the biggest Local Enterprise Partnership outside of London. Recent investments which have benefited from funding via the SELEP have included Tonbridge town centre improvements (Tonbridge High Street and River Walk) and Tonbridge Station. Funding has also been awarded to projects at East Malling Research Station and Leigh Flood Storage Area Expansion & Hildenborough Embankment.

**Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP):** is one of the four federated partnerships which comprises the SELEP. KMEP is focussed on driving forward economic growth and prosperity in Kent and Medway and is governed by a Board with membership drawn from business, local government and education establishments. KMEP delivers the objectives set out in Kent and Medway's Growth Plan.

**West Kent Partnership (WKP):** is the strategic economic partnership covering the local authority areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. The three boroughs work closely together to make the most of the resources available to them in order to deliver more for our local businesses.

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

## Policy Context

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

	Policy Document	Organisation	Key Messages
<b>National</b>	National Industrial Strategy	HM Government	May be reviewed following the Covid-19 crisis. The Industrial Strategy has 5 foundations of productivity to achieve a transformed economy: 1. Ideas: the world's most innovative economy; 2. People: good jobs and greater earning power for all; 3. Infrastructure: a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure; 4. Business environment: the best place to start and grow a business; and 5. Places: prosperous communities across the UK
<b>Regional</b>	Local Industrial Strategy	SELEP	Final production of this document is currently on hold whilst a response to the Covid-19 pandemic is considered. However, the LIS has two core aims - 1. To increase productivity & realise potential 2. Allow all communities to contribute to & benefit from economic prosperity.
<b>Sub-Regional</b>	Economic Renewal & Resilience Plan	KCC	Sets out 5 'channels' of activity - communications, confidence and trust; open for business; supporting business, people and investment, underpinned by three key principles - cleaner and greener; productive and open and better opportunities, fairer chances.

	West Kent Priorities for Growth	WKP	Amended in light of the pandemic. Aims to create <i>“a dynamic and well connected economy, a key location for business growth where businesses are supported to innovate and thrive and our local population has access to quality jobs and skills development”</i>
Local	Corporate Plan (with First Year Addendum)	TMBC	Aims to “continue to be a financially sustainable Council with strong leadership that delivers valued services, a commitment to delivering innovation and change to meet the needs of our Borough” and highlights the need for sustainable growth, regeneration and encouraging partnership working to support the local economy.
	Emerging Local Plan and Evidence Base	TMBC	Identifies a range of strategic sites and employment allocations to meet the needs of the borough up to 2031. The Local Plan is supported by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which sets out critical, essential and desirable infrastructure investments needed to enable growth and development.
	Digital Strategy	TMBC	Sets out a vision for TMBC to become an authority where the communities and businesses we serve are able to engage and transact with us responsively and seamlessly, irrespective of the services they access. It highlights economic growth and becoming a smart borough as key objectives.
	Climate Change Strategy	TMBC	Sets out a strategy to meet the aspiration of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 through a package of measures focussed on cutting the Council’s own carbon footprint and supporting residents and businesses in taking action across the borough.

## The Impact of Covid-19 on our Local Economy

The effects of Covid-19 and measures to combat it have had a severe effect on business activity on both a national and local level.

On 23 March 2020, Central Government imposed a lockdown to contain the spread of the virus, which included the closure of all non-essential stores and destinations. This set of enforced closures impacted supply chains, reduced demand for non-essential goods and resulted in a large increase in unemployment. Through the Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme, along with introduction of loans and grants for businesses, the immediate impact was significantly reduced. Indeed, figures from the Bank of England and the Office for Budget Responsibility indicate a 12.4-13% drop in GDP in 2020 is now expected, which is smaller than previously forecast. However, there is much uncertainty regarding the impact resulting from the conclusion of the Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme and the introduction of the Job Support Scheme, the end of the Brexit transitional period as well as the extent of any further waves of the virus, and the resultant measures required to address them.

Page  
26

In Tonbridge and Malling, by the end of September 2020, the picture was as follows:

- 18,000 workers had been placed on the Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme, though this has reduced and is nearing completion.
- 5,300 self-employed people had accessed the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme
- Over 1,500 businesses had received a Small Business Grant or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant
- A further 150 businesses had received a Discretionary Business Grant
- 3,630 people are currently unemployed (up from 1,260 in February 2020).

However, the realities of the situation have resulted in considerable negative and unforeseen impacts in many areas of the local economy. As set out in table 1, one of the clear impacts, beyond the overall increase in unemployment, is the impact on 18-24 year olds. In

September 2020, 8.4% of people in this age bracket were claiming unemployment benefits, a figure that has steadily increased since February 2020, whilst unemployment levels for over 24 year olds has to some extent plateaued since May 2020. This could be partly as a result of the higher percentage of young people that work in sectors that have been disproportionately hit by the virus, but it will also reflect the real difficulties in entering the jobs market at a time of severe economic downturn. Research on this issue by the Institute of Fiscal Studies found that the “pandemic has severely dented the career prospects of young people and threatens to have a prolonged negative economic impact on them as a result”. As such, efforts aimed at mitigating against further damage and providing opportunities and support to young people are a key component of our strategy.

Page 27

	Number			Rate		
	18-24	25-49	50-64	18-24	25-49	50-64
February	265	665	330	2.9%	1.6%	1.3%
March	280	690	330	3.1%	1.7%	1.3%
April	480	1425	625	5.3%	3.5%	2.4%
May	705	2005	850	7.8%	4.9%	3.3%
June	705	1825	815	7.8%	4.5%	3.1%
July	720	1855	815	8.1%	4.5%	3.1%
August	730	1940	855	8.2%	4.7%	3.2%
September	755	1975	900	8.4%	4.8%	3.4%

KCC figures: Unemployment in Tonbridge & Malling 2020

The Government’s Business Impact Covid-19 Survey (BICS) illustrates some other key trends that are happening in the local economy (data relates to the end of September 2020):

- To date only a small number of businesses have ceased trading permanently - mostly in the Construction and Professional Services sectors. However, it is likely there will be further closures in the coming months.

- Most businesses are now trading, but the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector still has a high percentage of businesses that are temporarily closed (around 20%).
- The vast majority of businesses have at least 4 months of cash reserves in order to keep their operations going.

Analysis of the resilience of the local economy through the KCC Dashboard (2020) shows that pre-Covid-19, the local economy was performing well, however two key 'vulnerable' elements stand out as areas where the local economy might be disproportionately impacted:

- 18% of the workforce in the borough is self-employed (in comparison to 10% nationally) - whilst this demonstrates the local dynamism of our workforce and the ease of setting up a business in the local area, these workers are more vulnerable to a number of negative economic shocks associated with the pandemic.
- A high representation within the borough of businesses with specific sectors that are highly sensitive to the impact of the current crisis - namely, the motor trades industry, construction and to a lesser extent quarrying and utilities.

This information is constantly evolving and so close monitoring of the data will be undertaken on a regular basis in order to ensure the strategy is as relevant as possible, and will feed into the annual review of the strategy.

## Key Issues

Despite having a comparatively resilient local economy, there are a number of challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated and is forcing the Borough to face, and which need to be addressed if the area is to create a better quality of life for its residents and businesses. These include:

- To help build confidence back into the local area, it is essential that the Borough Council helps to facilitate sustainable housing and commercial developments (such as the regeneration of the Former Aylesford Newsprint site and the East Malling Research Station), along with the **essential infrastructure** that is needed in order to create a more resilient transport (including walking and cycling) network, better flood defences and improved broadband provision (especially in rural areas) to ensure a high quality of life for both residents and businesses. Without this investment, our existing infrastructure will soon become insufficient to meet local needs.
- There is no question the labour market is tough at the moment. Even though Tonbridge & Malling fares better than most places in Kent, the impact on local businesses has been considerable, and it will be a while before many of them get back on an even keel. It is therefore essential that the Borough Council is supportive of sustainable development in the borough that creates new employment opportunities, and also supports initiatives that link local people to **job and upskilling opportunities**. There is a real risk that young people will miss out on entering the jobs market, gaining skills and building a platform for future success. The Council is proactively seeking to address this key issue through a number of initiatives, headlined by the West Kent Kickstart Scheme. Kickstart will see 18-24 year olds at risk of long-term unemployment offered 6 month placements in various industries to learn specialist skills and provide a vital source of income. Kickstart is operating in addition to other programmes with wider scope. The Council has also started initial discussions with the DWP to support their recently announced Sector Based Work Academies Programme and Job Finding Support assistance in the Borough.
- Although the Borough benefits from a dynamic and entrepreneurial local business identity - with high levels of self-employment - this is also potentially a vulnerability in a situation where the impacts of Covid-19 persist. In recent years, only around 60-65% of businesses in the borough last 3 years or more. Whilst this high business churn is likely created by a wide variety of different factors,

it does indicate that there could be a need for more targeted **information sharing, business support and advice, recruitment support and better access to suitable business premises.**

- Whilst our **town centres** have been evolving for a number of years, the Covid-19 crisis has greatly accelerated these transformative changes. With an increased number of transactions online, our High Streets are no longer just ‘retail centres’, but will need to evolve into destinations where people go to get an ‘experience’, be it going to a park, having a coffee, visiting the gym or enjoying a meal out. Whilst some of this change is happening organically, it is important that we continue to support our businesses through these changes by continuing to make our town centres attractive places to visit and to pilot innovative approaches.
- Whilst the borough has some great **tourism** assets, such as Ightham Mote, Tonbridge Castle, the Hop Farm and Buckmore Park; Tonbridge and Malling does not have a particularly high tourism profile, especially in comparison with other parts of Kent. With potentially greater numbers of people holidaying locally, there are opportunities to help our attractions and visitor accommodation providers to recover from closure and adapt to a new normal for the foreseeable future.
- Tonbridge & Malling comprises a relatively high coverage of rural land. This **rural identity** is reflected in the significant agricultural and large estate sector in the Borough. Local farmers and retailers of local goods were caught in the initial supply chain severances at the beginning of the crisis and while they have rebounded, questions over the availability of labour, grant funding and transport arrangements beyond 2020, leave the sector vulnerable and in need of assistance. To help combat the detrimental effects of the current crisis, the Council is lobbying Government to provide more clarity on the emerging UK Shared Prosperity Fund and wider support for our rural businesses.
- The **sustainability** of the initiatives and developments undertaken in the Borough is a critical concern for the Borough Council with our aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. With this aspiration encompassing all the Council’s sites, contracts and partner developments, the Council must be diligent and proactive in ensuring that this mission guides our response, as acting now will increase the long-term resilience and prospects of local businesses and residents.

## Vision & Objectives

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

Our vision is to build upon the traditional strengths within the local economy, to help recover from the recent Covid-19 pandemic and to build resilience in order to put our businesses in as strong a position as possible in case of future, currently unforeseen, impacts.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Borough Council has been closely engaged with colleagues at Kent County Council (which has overall responsibility for recovery) and other districts and boroughs through the Kent Economic Recovery Cell, which has been leading on the development of a Kent & Medway Economic Renewal & Resilience Plan. In order to ensure synergy, this Recovery Strategy will be using the same five ‘channels’ of activity in order to structure its approach:

- **Communications, Confidence and Trust** - providing better intelligence to inform our actions and ensuring collaboration and partnership to drive our activity
- **Open for Business** - taking action to build confidence and demonstrate that the Borough is open and accessible
- **Supporting Business** - supporting resilient and innovative businesses to drive future growth
- **People** - enabling people to access work and skills and reach their potential
- **Investment** - planning and investing now for a sustainable future.

Each of these five channels is broken down into sub-themes, which give this recovery plan a more local flavour.

In addition to the channels, the three key principles set out in the Kent & Medway Economic Renewal & Resilience Plan, which are, in effect, cross-cutting themes will be employed, not only to ensure synergy with the Kent-wide plan, but also to enable links to the Borough Council’s other key plans and strategies such as the Digital Strategy, Climate Change Strategy and new Local Plan. These three key principles are:

- **Cleaner and Greener** - contributing towards net zero and encouraging sustainable growth.

- **Productive and Open** - supporting productivity growth (through measures such as long-term skills development and technological innovation) and being open to new ideas, products and markets.
- **Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances** - addressing the uneven impacts of recession (such as youth unemployment) through an inclusive approach.

The Action Plan in the next section uses this framework as a means of highlighting how the individual activities and initiatives planned for the next few years will help to meet our vision and objectives.

## Action Plan - Priority Actions

Page 33

Five Channels	Sub-Themes	Possible Actions Could Include....	Key Principles		
			Cleaner and Greener	Productive and Open	Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances
Communications, Confidence and Trust		Build up subscription to the T&M Business Bulletin.	Y	Y	Y
		Use of new TMBC website and social media channels to ensure accessible and timely information is provided for local businesses.	Y	Y	Y
		Investigate use of technology to replace business networking events.	Y	Y	Y
Open for Business	Our Town Centres	Completion of Town and District and Local Shopfront Schemes.	Y	Y	
		Develop a new West Kent Retail Support Programme to support our High Streets		Y	Y
		Pilot a project to trial out a SMART places initiative within the borough.	Y	Y	Y
		Investigate role of the Council in encouraging vehicle charging points in key town centre locations across the Borough.	Y	Y	
		Set up a Town Centre Regeneration Fund to support investment that will help to stimulate confidence in our high streets.	Y		Y
	Tourism Promotion	Work with tourism partners and key attractions to promote the borough as a visitor destination	Y	Y	Y
Supporting Business	Business Finance	Promote and signpost external funding support for business (such as LoCASE, South East Business Boost, Kent and Medway Loan Fund, any other future Covid-19 related Government funding)	Y	Y	Y

		Set up a Green Business Grant Scheme to help existing green businesses and to improve energy efficiency of commercial premises in the Borough.	Y	Y	Y
	<b>Business Support</b>	Promote and refer businesses to the West Kent Business/Start-up Support Programme	Y	Y	Y
		Promote and refer to the Covid-19 recovery helpline/Kent & Medway Growth Hub	Y	Y	Y
<b>People</b>	<b>Skills and Work-Readiness Events</b>	Virtual Events to support people back into work or new training opportunities (Jobs Fairs, Skills events, webinars).	Y	Y	Y
	<b>Initiatives to Tackle Youth Unemployment</b>	Support apprenticeships and internships in the borough - through opportunities at the Council as well as establishing an apprenticeship fund to support opportunities in the local economy.		Y	Y
		Support the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network in local secondary schools to ensure young people receive quality careers advice and guidance, and interactions with the workplace.		Y	Y
		Support the West Kent Kickstart Programme, providing 6 month placements for 18-24 year olds		Y	Y
<b>Investment</b>	<b>Delivery of the Local Plan</b>	Work towards the adoption of the Local Plan and the allocation of strategic sites and new employment allocations.	Y	Y	Y
	<b>Strategic Commercial Projects</b>	Continue to support to LEHES and Hildenborough Embankment Scheme	Y		
		Work with NIAB EMR on bringing forward proposals for East Malling Research Station	Y	Y	Y
		Review strategic asset base (especially with regards to Tonbridge Town Centre)	Y	Y	Y
		Work with Panattoni to deliver a high quality commercial development at the former Aylesford Newsprint site.	Y	Y	Y
		Support continued roll out of broadband infrastructure.	Y	Y	Y

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

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

We are committed to recognising the challenges which businesses face, particularly smaller businesses, during the current time and will do as much as we can to assist. In order for businesses to get the maximum benefit from the activities set out in this strategy, there are a number of simple things they can do, such as:

- Sign up to the monthly business e-bulletin, which has information on new funding streams, advice and support and other business news.
- Get involved with the West Kent Kickstart Programme - [www.kickstartwestkent.co.uk](http://www.kickstartwestkent.co.uk) - and support a young person into the workplace.
- Engage with the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network and help young people to work out their career opportunities
- Be aware of the potential to work with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies to help our workforce find employment.
- Follow the Borough Council on twitter - @TMBC\_Kent - and Facebook
- Get in touch via [economic.regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:economic.regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk) with any query about the local economy or your business. We are always happy to answer questions!

## Monitoring the Economy and Reviewing Progress

The data available is constantly being updated, but the following sets out the measures through which it is planned to track the recovery in the local economy:

Economic Indicator	Current Situation (most recent data as of Oct 2020)	Current Trend	Aspirations		
			2021	2022	2023
VAT Registrations (Start-Ups)	735 (2018)		720	730	740
VAT De-registrations	615 (2018)		600	580	570
3 Year Business Survival Rates (%)	59.4% (2018)		60%	62%	65%
Median Gross Weekly Workplace Earnings (£)	£552.7 (2019)		£560	£580	£600
Unemployment Rate (%)	4.4% (August 2020)		3.5%	2.2%	1.6%
18-24 year olds claiming out of work benefits (%)	8.2% (August 2020)		5.5%	4.0%	2.5%
National Vocational Qualification Level 3+ (%)	56.8% (December 2019)		60%	62%	64%
Happiness Score (out of 10)	7.8 (December 2019)		7.5	7.8	8.0

## Appendix 1 - List of Key Partners

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

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

**03 November 2020**

**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 BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT AND POOL**

**This report gives an update on the Business Rates Retention Pilot and Business Rates Pool funding and, following on from an initial report to the Board in September 2020, provides more detail on potential priority projects for funding in light of the impact of Covid-19.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Funding through the Business Rates Retention Pilot and the Business Rates Pool are key resources through which the Borough Council can implement measures that support our local economy. In report ERG 20/6, an update was provided on projects that had been allocated funding, and an initial framework of potential priority areas to be funded through the remaining funding was shared with the Board for their endorsement. It was agreed that a report, containing more detailed proposals, would come back to the Board in November 2020, before being shared with Kent County Council for their agreement.

**1.2 Business Rates Retention Pilot and Pool**

1.2.1 Although it has only been two months since the last board meeting, there has been some progress on existing funded projects. These include:

- On-site progress with two more shopfronts that were part-funded through the Town and District Scheme – one in Larkfield (completed) and one in Tonbridge (part-completed) – plus progress on working towards a planning application for a shopfront in West Malling.
- The Local Centres and Parades Shopfront Scheme was re-launched in mid-September and letters were sent out to eligible businesses across the borough. To date, we have received 7 initial expressions of interest and one application, which we are currently assessing.

1.2.2 In report ERG 20/6 it was highlighted that there was £560,000 still within the total pot of funding for initiatives that support economic growth and resilience. Since the

writing of that report, the amount of funding available has reduced slightly to £555,000. This is directly due to changes in the level of funding towards measures directly related to supporting our economy through the Covid-19 crisis:

- the contribution towards ‘Information Officers’, which were used when High Streets ‘re-opened’ in July and August, increasing; and
- the amount of funding needed as part of the Discretionary Small Business Grant Scheme reducing as a small number of businesses benefited from a reassessment of their premises by the Valuation Office that resulted in them accessing a Covid-19 Business Rates grant instead.

1.2.3 The priorities set out in Appendix 1 very much build upon the priority areas endorsed by the Board in September 2020. These priority areas were:

- Strengthening the resilience of the local economy through **skills development and a work-ready workforce**,
- Tackling the increasingly pressing issues regarding **the future of our town centres** and
- Embracing the opportunities arising from **the green economy agenda**.

In addition, given the increasing likelihood of the need for further interventions in relation to supporting the economy through further waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has also been proposed that £25,000 be set aside as a ‘**Covid-19 Contingency Budget**’ in order to provide assistance quickly if required. This element already has agreement from Kent County Council should it be required.

1.2.4 In terms of tackling worklessness, the following should be highlighted:

- The creation of virtual events and initiatives to support school leavers and people who have found themselves unemployed will, for the foreseeable future, replace a number of the events and activities the Council had in place before the pandemic.
- The two apprenticeship schemes will help to complement the West Kent KickStart Programme and help provide a pathway for young people at a time when the number of business offering apprenticeships is unfortunately decreasing.

1.2.5 To support our town centres, the Regeneration Investment Fund will allow the Council to have an additional resource at its disposal to invest in the borough in a way that meets our objectives and helps to stimulate confidence in the area. In addition, the allocation towards the SMART cities agenda will help us to meet the aspirations of the Digital Strategy and help to generate efficiencies.

1.2.6 This fund also has the potential to support the aspirations of our Climate Change Strategy. The proposals set out in Appendix 1 highlight the outline of a Green

Business Grant Scheme and a budget to support the introduction of vehicle charging points.

### **1.3 Timescales**

1.3.1 The timescales on delivery of these initiatives is dependent on how the current pandemic pans out, but the current aspiration is to deliver these initiatives during the course of the Economic Recovery Strategy (up to 2023), with a number of these initiatives – such as the Apprenticeship Grant Scheme and the Green Business Grant Scheme - coming to the Board for endorsement in early 2021.

### **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 Any initiatives that are ultimately agreed through this process would be funded through the Business Rates Retention Pilot and Business Rates Pool.

### **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 report **BE NOTED**

1.8.2 That the table set out in Appendix 1 **BE APPROVED** and shared with Kent County Council for agreement once finalised.

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  
Manager

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

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## Appendix 1: Proposed Funding Areas

Project Ideas	Strategic Fit	Project Description	Proposed Allocation	Lead Department
Covid-19 Contingency Budget	Economic Recovery Strategy	A pot of money set aside to deal with any <b>issues arising from covid-19</b> – funding has previously been used for the Covid-19 Helpline, grant support and Information Officers.	£25,000	Economic Regeneration
Tackling Worklessness and the Skills Agenda - given the impact of covid-19 on unemployment this agenda is central to the refreshed Economic Regeneration Strategy, and provides the opportunity to build upon other initiatives such as the Government's KickStart Scheme.	Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances Priority in the Economic Recovery Strategy	A programme of <b>virtual events and initiatives</b> relating to tackling worklessness, upskilling and careers development, including virtual jobs fairs, careers fairs, and school employability days.	£10,000	Economic Regeneration
		Contribution towards the <b>TMBC Apprenticeship Programme</b>	£25,000	HR
		<b>Apprenticeship Grant Scheme</b> (for Higher Level Apprenticeships) – look to support 20 apprenticeships at local businesses through a grant of £1,500.	£30,000	Economic Regeneration
Supporting our Town Centres - the challenges facing our high streets have been brought even further to the fore following the covid-19 crisis – particularly the increase in internet sales and the struggles of large multinational retailers.	Economic Recovery Strategy	<b>Town Centre Regeneration Investment Fund</b> – a flexible fund to support the high street and support investment that will help to stimulate confidence in the local economy and meet the objectives of the Borough Council's emerging asset review work.	£200,000	Property/Planning/Economic Regeneration
	New Local Plan			
	Digital Strategy	Pilot project to trail out a <b>SMART Cities</b> initiative or initiatives in the Borough.	£75,000	IT/Economic Regeneration

Supporting a Low Carbon Economy – a key area that will help to meet the ambitions set out in the Climate Change Strategy.	Corporate Plan	<b>Green Business Grant Scheme</b> – the intention would be to have two elements to this scheme:  1. Grant support of up to £5,000 specifically aimed at helping local green businesses to survive the current uncertain business climate and invest in business development issues to build short-term resilience and provide the foundations for future growth. Grants could contribute towards R&D, physical infrastructure and equipment, marketing support and digital/IT support.  2. Grant support of up to £5,000 to improve the energy efficiency and environmental footprint of commercial properties in the Borough.	£150,000	Economic Regeneration
	Climate Change Strategy  Cleaner and Greener Priority in the Economic Recovery Strategy		<b>Vehicle Charging Points</b> – the introduction of charging points within certain Borough Council run car parks.	£40,000
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£555,000</b>	

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

**03 November 2020**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 WEST KENT KICKSTART PROGRAMME**

**This report outlines the national Kickstart Scheme and updates the Board on measures being undertaken to set up a ‘gateway’ to help tackle youth unemployment in West Kent, and the potential for the Borough Council to support the programme.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 As illustrated clearly in recent economic statistics, unemployment levels across the country are high and are likely to rise further as the country grapples with the challenges presented by the Covid-19 crisis. In response to this challenge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his ‘Plan for Jobs’ in July 2020 to outline how the government planned to boost job creation in the UK.
- 1.1.2 Many of the sectors that are hardest hit by the crisis – Leisure and Hospitality, Travel and Retail – have a high percentage of young people within their workforce, and this has clearly been a factor in the steep growth in the number of people under 24 years of age that are now claiming Universal Credit.
- 1.1.3 Kickstart is part of the ‘Plan for Jobs’ that targets this talent pool and gives them an opportunity to get back into the world of work.

**1.2 Kickstart Scheme**

- 1.2.1 The Kickstart Scheme can be used to create new 6-month job placements for young people who are currently on Universal Credit or in danger of becoming long-term unemployed. The job placements should support the participants to develop the skills and experience they need to find work after completing the scheme.
- 1.2.2 The scheme runs until the end of December 2021, with first placements coming on stream in October 2020. It is government sponsored, with funding available for 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

1.2.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) assess applications from employers or representative organisations who wish to offer or co-ordinate Kickstart placements. In short, the minimum assessment criteria are:

- i. The applicant must be an existing company/organisation and have a track record of fiscal competence to be eligible to apply for funding.
- ii. The application should be for at least 30 vacancies and the jobs should be new and in addition to the current workforce; i.e. they must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing staff to lose or reduce their hours. In practice this means completely new part-time roles (or full-time roles if budget is available to make up the balance of hours), and a comprehensive support and development plan including support to look for long-term work, i.e. career advice and setting goals, support with CV and interview preparations, supporting the participant with basic skills, such as attendance, timekeeping and teamwork
- iii. The scheme is for 16 to 24 year olds and the vacancies must be for a minimum of 25 hours per week and last for at least 6 months and be paid at least the National Minimum Wage for the age group
- iv. The applicant must demonstrate what employability support they will give to the participant whilst on the scheme, which will give them the skills to ensure they are able to capitalise on their Kickstart experience and use it as a stepping stone into work, training (such as apprenticeships) or education.
- v. The applicant must demonstrate how the jobs being offered through the scheme are quality placements, offering meaningful and suitable employment which offer clear benefits to the participant.
- vi. The applicant must demonstrate how they will put effective controls in place to monitor progress throughout the placement, to meet the compliance and quality requirements of the Kickstart Scheme. This should also cover things like ensuring safety of participants, employer liability insurance, risk assessments for vulnerable groups, Disclosure and Barring Service for 16/17 year olds. These controls will be used as part of the payment and assurance process.

1.2.4 For many businesses, offering 30 placements is simply not feasible, and so an alternative to becoming a host employer directly is to work as a member of a consortium of employers, managed and overseen by a 'gateway' host.

### **1.3 West Kent Kickstart Programme**

1.3.1 In recent months, the West Kent Partnership has been proactively working towards becoming a 'gateway' host for a consortium of businesses and organisations in West Kent that would be unable to access the programme themselves directly because of the 30 placement threshold.

- 1.3.2 At the time of writing this report, the West Kent Partnership has been receiving regular expressions of interest and full applications from local businesses and organisations. As a result, it has just submitted a first 'batch' of applications to the DWP, covering 19 different businesses/organisations across West Kent.
- 1.3.3 Of these 19 organisations, the breakdown across the West Kent districts is as follows – 10 from Sevenoaks District, 3 from Tonbridge and Malling Borough and 6 from Tunbridge Wells Borough. To date, the Borough Council has only promoted the initiative in a limited way via social media, but the intention is to put greater resource into promoting the scheme ahead of the West Kent Partnership submitting a second 'batch' of placements to the DWP.
- 1.3.4 In addition, the Borough Council has made contact with the West Kent Kickstart Programme to register an interest in providing a couple of placements – most likely within the Licensing and Customer Service teams - but is yet to submit full applications.

## **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 None

## **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 None

## **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 support for the West Kent Kickstart Programme, and specifically the provision of placements at the Council through the programme, **BE ENDORSED**.

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

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker  
Economic Regeneration Manager

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

**03 November 2020**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 09 OCTOBER 2020**

**1.1 Key Matters Discussed**

1.1.1 The full minutes of the recent meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 09 October 2020 are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

1.1.2 The key matters dealt with at the meeting include the following:

- a) A presentation from Allan Baillee at Kent County Council on the importance of skills development in recovering from the Covid-19 crisis.
- b) Feedback from West Kent College, Hadlow College and Mid Kent College on their priorities, and some of the challenges they currently face.
- c) An update on the Kick Start West Kent Programme
- d) An overview of the Kent Renewal and Resilience Strategy
- e) An update on the draft addendum to the West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth strategy
- f) Updates from Members of the Board as set out in the minutes.

**1.2 Legal Implications**

1.2.1 None

**1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.3.1 None

**1.4 Risk Assessment**

1.4.1 Not applicable

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,  
Economic Regeneration  
Manager

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

## West Kent Partnership Meeting – 9 October 2020

<p><b>Present</b></p> <p>Nicolas Heslop, TMBC, Chair          Peter Fleming, SDC          Jane March, TWBC          Lesley Dyball, SDC          Brian Luker, TMBC          Jim Mawby, West Kent College          Emily Haswell, SDC          Alison Parmar, FSB          Allan Baillee, KCC, KICC,          Andrew Metcalf          David Candlin, TWBC          Detlev Munster, SDC          Dr Lindsay Pamphilon, Hadlow College          James Read, TMBC          Jeremy Whittaker, TMBC          Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms          Jon Weller, IMAGO          Nigel Smith, KCC          Ross Gill, KCC          Tudor Price, KICC          Sarah Nurden, KMEP          Wendy Wood, WKP</p>	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>David Joyner, KCC          Catherine Brunger, AXA PPP          Pav Ramewal, SDC          Hilary Smith, TWBC          Simon Harris, WKEAN</p> <p><b>Guests</b></p> <p>Chris Hare, Mid Kent College</p>
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### 1. Minutes & Matters Arising

- Minutes of previous meeting were approved
- Nicolas sent letters to each of the 5 MPs, lobbying for action on LEADER style funding to bring forward jobs and growth in the rural and landbased economy. Each MP is pursuing a different route within government and Partners will be kept updated on progress
- Partners endorsed again the value of the LEADER programme to our rural economy and a desire to see the work extended

### 2. Economic Recovery – Skills – Presentation and Discussion

Powerpoint presentation attached.

- How do LA's and FE sector respond to current challenges?

- Concern was expressed that the Jobcentres may not have the infrastructure or capacity to support those out of work. Reinstating more local provision would benefit job seekers
- The lack of HE provision in West Kent an ongoing concern and would be beneficial to have FE provision in all 3 districts
- Southampton study on destination of graduates show that vast majority end up working close to the university they attended. West Kent needs to find a way to attract young people to stay here for HE study
  - University of Kent has closed School of Creative Art and opportunity for West Kent College to lead on this locally
  - Colleges can specialise in different areas. Mid Kent are planning an advertising campaign *stay local go far*. Covid will have an impact on way people choose to study
  - FE/HE physical presence in Sevenoaks District sadly lacking – potential for a business school linking into lifelong learning
- We need to respond to an underlying trend of lower skills and meet Allan’s challenge to become a high skills high value economy.
- Nicolas a member of employment task force.

#### West Kent College

- Now part of North Kent College with Principal reporting into Chief Executive there
- During recent education administration process student numbers haven’t fallen and achievement rates have improved on previous years
- Aspirations to develop HE offering partnering with CCCU Kent and University of Greenwich - currently 280 HE students
- Less level 3 provision this year in response to employer demand
- Adult provision has fallen in response to less demand as difficult for adults to access funding and has to be repaid. The government’s commitment to lifelong learning should help address this trend and could be opportunities to work with industry sectors to develop skills provision for adults
- 18-24 unemployment peak is not mirrored with increased numbers of students – could be supported with further education
- College now in a much more stable position and looking to future and how to respond to challenges

#### Hadlow College

- White paper should support colleges as centre of communities and centre for lifelong learning.
- Priorities now out of transition is settling students into college and learners back into education.
- Numbers for FE 10% up against last academic year
- Over 220 HE students on 5 pathways following on from level 3
- Course offer is agile
- It was a challenge to support apprenticeships during lockdown. Rural sector has been able to cope with challenges better than in other sectors
- No recruitment for apprenticeships in the summer and although recruitment started in September there is a gap to address
- Covid cases are low so students attending and engaging

- Have to ensure students confident and able to learn in a variety of forms including online and will be a focus going forward

#### Mid Kent College

- Maidstone on fringe of partnership area – Malling.
- Dedicated HE campus in Maidstone and work with three universities on HE courses delivering part time in engineering and building services industries.
  - Most of recruitment is internal progression, level 2 into 4 and above. Shift in market over last 3 years – real move to Higher Apprenticeship provision – now 60% of all provision.
- Blended learning mode, trying to get youngsters to understand social distance
- Marginal increase in numbers, but also seen greater increase in level 3 and decrease in level 2
- Apprenticeships are at only 60% of normal level – usually have 300 new starts. Of the reduced numbers starting only half have an employer
- Are a Kickstart employer, taking on 30 placements
- Kent colleges have come together to see how they can support Kickstart employers and placements in developing skills utilising the £1500 grant
- Barriers to success – teacher/lecturer recruitment – particularly in skills where employer demand is high. Looking at initiatives to attract skilled tradespeople to move to teaching

### **3. Kickstart West Kent [www.kickstartwestkent.co.uk](http://www.kickstartwestkent.co.uk)**

- West Kent Partnership team is leading on the initiative. A dedicated website has been built – [kickstartwestkent.co.uk](http://kickstartwestkent.co.uk)
- creating a package of wrap around support to offer to businesses that join the West Kent scheme to ensure success for employers and young people alike drawing on the expertise in delivering employability support and training of Enterprise coordinators and professional careers guidance practitioners, Simon and Usha
- Businesses are offered the opportunity to benefit from being networked through the gateway and to receive pre-placement training, advice and guidance. This will prepare them for employing a Kickstart placement, identifying what is expected of them in terms of support in the workplace and how we can supplement this through the wrap around programme
- The gateway will have a role in disbursing grants to businesses and ensuring the young people receive appropriate support to succeed in the placement and access progression opportunities
- First West Kent gateway application has been submitted for a total of 51 placements across 19 organisations. Government aims to respond to applications within one month. We are now building a second cohort
- There was discussion around the £1500 grant for set up, training and support which is payable to employers and the need for consistency across Kent in the quality of the offer
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to the young people to receive a day a week vocational skills training and that the colleges may be able to identify an additional funding stream to deliver this
- Kent Invicta Chamber are partnering with the FE colleges for skills delivery to safeguard integrity of delivery and compliance. 950 placements so far and guidance and information on full role of gateway still to be confirmed

- Important that those 25 and over and out of work aren't disadvantaged by the Kickstart scheme
- Partners will be kept updated on progress of Kickstart programmes

#### **4. Kent Renewal and Resilience Strategy**

- Renewal and Resilience – not just about recovery but how county generally looks to the future
- Acts as a framework for Partners across the county and reinforces message that Kent is open for business and promotes the County
- Evidence base will be renewed soon
- Sets out 3 overarching principles - Greener futures, productive and open, and better opportunities, fairer chances,
- Five channels
  - Communications, Confidence and Trust – providing better intelligence to inform our actions and ensuring collaboration and partnership to drive our activity
  - Open for Business – taking action to build confidence and demonstrate that Kent is open and accessible
  - Supporting Business – supporting resilient and innovative businesses to drive future growth
  - People – enabling people to access work and skills and reach their potential
  - Investment – planning and investing now for a sustainable future.
- The Growth Hub Covid Business support helpline has been extended to 31 December
- Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF) has been relaunched
- Employment task force has been established.
- Getting Building Fund (GBF) will draw Investment into the County
- Intelligence gathering continues through helpline - revisiting businesses who did business impact survey – phoned over 5000 and got 986 responses. 200 across broad range of sectors will be deep dive with more narrative questions about how they can best be supported. Stats will be in district format quite soon but deep dive a little longer
- Concern regarding digital connectivity and its huge importance in the current situation with businesses being run from home and often from rural locations
  - Crucial to social agenda as well with students studying at home. Hardware, not just connectivity
  - There will be Getting Building Fund available to be spent by March 22 for digitally connecting rural areas
  - Action: to be a focus for January meeting, Liz Harrison to be invited

#### **5. Economic Recovery Strategy – Draft Addendum to West Kent Priorities for Growth**

- Partners who took part in a meeting to scope an approach to recovery in West Kent were thanked for their input
- Paper A is a draft addendum to current West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth and identifies short term actions to supplement and extend activities
- Partners were invited to review the document and feedback to Wendy - distributed after meeting (and again with these Minutes) Feedback would be welcome by 31 October
- Action: Economic Recovery Discussion at January WKP meeting

- Action: Finalised document as well as being an action plan will also be used as a lobbying document highlighting recovery issues in West Kent

## 6. Standing Updates

### ***West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network***

#### School

- All mainstream schools are in the network with the exception of Orchards Academy (Sevenoaks) and Bennett Memorial (Tunbridge Wells). The reason these two are not included is because they have chosen not to engage, but the door remains open.
- Two Bridges Pupil Referral Unit became the latest non-mainstream to join the network.

#### Activities

- Enterprise Adviser Induction
- Careers Leader Induction (mirrors the above)
- Ofsted Education Framework Inspection training targeted at school career leaders, careers link governors and Enterprise Advisers
- Labour Market Information training to be rolled out to school careers leaders in 2021.
- Revised LinkedIn training for schools to be delivered, probably from November 2020.
- Schools did not deliver as fully last academic year due to Covid. However DfE took these as exceptional circumstances and team have worked hard and creatively to ensure that virtual encounters and experiences will impact young people this year.

#### Strategies

- Three strands make a strong chord to pull schools in the right direction. The three strands are careers leader, careers link governor and Enterprise Adviser and we ensure they all understand their roles, how they connect and how they work together.
- All schools to build from a strong strategic careers foundation – encouraging review and evaluation of strategy and design of new fit-for-purpose programmes and delivery plans.
- Encouraging schools to employ a young person on Kickstart on careers strategy and impressing that this person could really get their careers delivery in good shape.
- Every school to have developed an expansive network of its own with help from its EA and drawn from governing board, parents, alumni, friends of teachers, suppliers.
- Adoption of Compass +
- Preparation to be 'hub ready'

#### Ambitions for Next Year

- Careers hub for West Kent
- Careers Link Governor in every school and engaged with the network
- The 'chord' working in every school, supported by the ECs and riving high-quality careers work with young people

### ***FSB***

- 26% of business owners lack confidence in digital skills. A wide range of free courses are available through the digital partnership
- Skills 3030 speed networking – exploring how can pick up in a virtual environment – important pipeline to keep going – linking business and education
- Broadband report from 2019 asks government for full fibre by 2025

- Pushing for additional discretionary grants for hard hit sectors, culture, arts, hospitality
- FSB will be part of a commission on future of self-employment and are talking to government around Covid support for the self-employed. There are 24,000 in West Kent

#### ***KMEP***

- Minister for Energy will attend the BEIS meeting with SELEP on 20 October – discussion will include what government can do to enable businesses to take advantage of green recovery, role of local networks and key barriers to pivoting
- SELEP had paused on Local Industrial Strategy work but is now recommencing
- Focus on Getting Building Fund and getting cases through and funding awarded for delivery by 22.
- Network rail strategy consultation for Swanley to Medway Towns route

#### ***KICC/Growth Hub***

- Growth hub helpline extended to 31 December – it has been accessed by businesses all over the county, many who had not engaged before
- Businesses struggling the most now are those that didn't apply business skills and have an inability to pivot - supporting them to develop new alternative revenue streams
- Chamber is a gateway for Kickstart and will be working with the FE colleges on wraparound employability support offer
- Membership is growing, reflecting the increased need for support
- Lobbying for sector based support – let the economy transition to a new normal
- Brexit – EU transition end December. Chamber acting as an agent for customs declarations and from 1 January large numbers will have to be processed

#### **7. Next Meeting**

Friday 22 January 2021, 10-12 Microsoft Teams

- West Kent Recovery Strategy
- Digital connectivity

# 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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