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TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 1st September, 2021

Present: Cllr F G Tombolis (Chairman), Cllr Mrs R F Lettington (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr Mrs T Dean, Cllr N Foyle, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr B J Luker and Cllr L J O'Toole

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, W E Palmer, V M C Branson, M D Boughton, M A Coffin, D Keers, M R Rhodes and Williams participated via MS Teams and joined the discussion when invited to do so by the Chairman in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

(Note: As Councillors Mrs Anderson, Palmer and Williams were unable to attend in person and participated via MS Teams they were unable to vote on any matters)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R I B Cannon, N J Heslop and F A Hoskins

ERG 21/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ERG 21/16 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 18 May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 21/17 PRESENTATION: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

Members received a comprehensive update on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the national and local economy.

It was reported that although the rate of unemployment in Tonbridge and Malling had levelled at 3.4% this was higher than pre-pandemic levels. Claimants for Universal Credit had also levelled at around 9.5% in the borough compared to 15% nationally. The number of people on furlough had reduced steadily since Spring 2021 and was now at 5%.

The Borough Council would now focus on supporting local economy and business recovery and future prosperity by developing a new programme of initiatives and engagement.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**ERG 21/18 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME - ANALYSIS**

(Decision Notice D210083MEM)

The report provided an update on the current Shopfront Improvement Scheme which was due to end on 30 September 2021. Proposals for an analysis of the Scheme to identify lessons learnt and to gain an appreciation of its economic impact were also set out.

It was proposed that the analysis focused on the three key areas of:

- (a) the process of applying for a shopfront improvement grant
- (b) support and advice during the delivery of the shopfront projects
- (c) the overall economic impact of the scheme

RECOMMENDED: That:

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the proposed approach to analysing the Shopfront Improvement Scheme, as detailed in 1.2 of the report and summarised above, be agreed.

ERG 21/19 BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

(Decision Notice D210084MEM)

The report presented a proposal to develop new networking events and business engagement activity to further support and strengthen the resilience of the local economy.

Three key strands were presented for consideration:

- (a) a programme of networking events be created for 2021/22;
- (b) work be undertaken on refreshing the e-bulletin with a view to commencing the quarterly bulletin from October 2021; and
- (c) further research be undertaken to look into opportunities for delivering an awards event during 2022

RECOMMENDED: That:

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the next steps, as detailed in 1.3 of the report and summarised above, be agreed

ERG 21/20 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT POLICY

(Decision Notice D210085MEM)

Following the successful distribution of its initial Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocation ahead of the 31 July 2021 deadline, the Borough Council received an additional £1.054 million of ARG funding from Government to use to support local businesses as the economy moved towards a period of recovery.

An amended policy (attached at Annex 1) was presented for consideration and aimed to establish a focus on supporting those in the entertainment, leisure, activity, travel and tourism, events businesses and wraparound care sector by providing a small additional grant to businesses that had previously applied to rounds 1 and 2 of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant or the Mandatory Restart Grant.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the proposed amended Additional Restrictions Grant Policy, set out at Annex 1, be agreed; and
- (3) the timescale for applications be opened as soon as possible (late September 2021)

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**ERG 21/21 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP**

The report presented details of the key matters discussed at the meetings of the West Kent Partnership held on 23 April and 16 July 2021.

Members noted that the Borough Council's responses in relation to a number of Gatwick airport consultations would be considered by the Planning and Transportation Advisory Board in due course.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**ERG 21/22 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

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The Impact of Covid-19 on the Tonbridge & Malling Economy - Update

James Read

Graduate Economic Development Officer

ERAB – September 2021



Update

- Key National Trends

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Economy

- What we're doing

- What's the plan moving forward?

CONBRIDGE & MALLING

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Key National Trends

- Policymakers balancing twin demands of covid-recovery and move to carbon neutral
- End of restrictions means all businesses are now open
- Nationally there is an issue with supply, but demand is surging - so we'll either see inflation or a dampening of demand (ONS, BOE, OBR)
- Inflation is slowly rising as demand for jobs and wages rise and the number of products available decreases (ONS)



Tonbridge & Malling Economy (Part 1)

- Unemployment in the Borough has levelled out around 3.4% - with 5.8% among 18-24 year-olds
- Universal Credit claimants has also levelled out at around 9.5% (compared to 15% nationally)
- Take up of SEISS has been reducing – only 53% of eligible people claimed in SEISS4 compared to 75% for SEISS1.





Tonbridge & Malling Economy (Part 2)

- Number of staff on furlough has been reducing steadily since the Spring - now less than 5%
- Anecdotally, seen a reduction in businesses enquiring about the availability of grants.
- As such, we're currently focused on supporting businesses to get back on track
- As we move on from this point, we'll focus on the various aspects of recovery and supporting future prosperity



What we're doing

- Covid business support – potential top-up grant
- High street support – Kent wide working group + Local Review, Shopfront Improvement Scheme
- Employment support – Tunbridge Wells + Aylesford Jobs Market
- Skills support – working with businesses, DWP and local schools and colleges (e.g. West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network and Kick Start)
- Green business support – the Green Business Grant Scheme



What's the plan moving forward?

- Review of our business support and engagement
- Skills focus
- Events schedule
- Green initiatives



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