

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: Democratic Services
committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk

23 August 2021

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 Council Chamber, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill on Wednesday, 1st September, 2021 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Members of the Committee are required to attend in person. Other Members are encouraged to participate online via MS Teams.

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

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2. Declarations of interest 7 - 8
- Members in any doubt about such 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 18 May 2021

4. Presentation: The Economic Impact of Covid-19 13 - 14
- An update on the continuing impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local economy and information on support for local businesses will be provided.*

Matters for Recommendation to the Cabinet

5. Shopfront Improvements Scheme - Analysis 15 - 18
- Since March 2019, the Borough Council has been delivering a Shopfront Improvement Scheme to help support local independent retailers. With the current scheme coming to an end on 30 September 2021, this report provides a brief update on the scheme and sets out proposals for an analysis of the scheme to identify lessons learnt and to gain an appreciation of its economic impact.*

6. Business Engagement 19 - 22
- Having engaged with and supported thousands of local businesses over the past 18 months through the distribution of Covid-19 business grants, this report puts forward a proposal to use this relationship with the business community to develop new networking events and engagement activity that gives further support in strengthening the resilience of the local economy.*

7. Additional Restrictions Grant Policy 23 - 34
- Having successfully distributed its initial £3.817m Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocation ahead of the 31 July 2021 deadline, on 16 July 2021 the Borough Council received an additional £1.054m of ARG funding from Central Government to use to support local businesses as the economy moves towards a period of recovery. This report sets out an amended policy to support businesses in key sectors through a new grant scheme.*

Matters submitted for Information

8. West Kent Partnership 35 - 48
- The following Minutes of the West Kent Partnership are attached for information:*
- 23 April 2021
 - 16 July 2021

9. Urgent Items 49 - 50

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 51 - 52

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 53 - 54

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 F G Tombolis (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs R F Lettington (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs J A Anderson
Cllr G C Bridge
Cllr R I B Cannon
Cllr Mrs T Dean
Cllr N Foyle
Cllr N J Heslop
Cllr M A J Hood

Cllr F A Hoskins
Cllr J R S Lark
Cllr B J Luker
Cllr L J O'Toole
Cllr W E Palmer
Cllr J L Sergison
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

Tuesday, 18th May, 2021

Present: 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 M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr D W King, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr J L Sergison and Cllr K B Tanner

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, V M C Branson, A E Clark, M A Coffin, Mrs F A Kemp, N J Heslop, D Lettington, Mrs A S Oakley, M R Rhodes and R V Roud 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.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Foyle, J R S Lark and C J Williams

ERG 21/8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ERG 21/9 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 17 February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 21/10 PRESENTATION: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 CRISIS

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

Particular reference was made to the national economic outlook, Covid-19 rates in the Borough, the impact of Covid-19 on local businesses, unemployment in the Borough, the local jobs market, supporting the local economy and plans for the road to recovery. During discussion, reference was made to the shortage of available labour to support the local farming economy and the West Kent Kickstart Programme which supports youth employment through 6-month placements with local businesses.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**ERG 21/11 UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

(Decision Notice D210044MEM)

The report of the Chief Executive provided an overview of the progress made in delivering the Borough Economic Recovery Strategy Action Plan 2021-23 since its adoption and proposed a number of small amendments to the action plan.

Despite the additional work required in managing the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Borough Council had made good progress in addressing some of the priority actions set out in the Economic Recovery Strategy Plan which was approved in November 2020. Details of progress made in delivering the Action Plan were set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (2) permission to carry out minor amendments to the action plan, as set out at paragraph 1.3.1 of the report, be approved so that it can more accurately reflect the future activities of the Borough Council.

ERG 21/12 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME

(Decision Notice D210045MEM)

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on and set out proposed next steps for the Shopfront Improvement Schemes run by the Borough Council over the past couple of years to support local independent businesses and help improve the look and feel of town and local centres.

Lessons learnt from the Town and District Shopfront Improvement Scheme had been applied to the Local Centres and Parades scheme launched in September 2019. There would be a focus on renewed efforts to promote the scheme in the coming months to help increase take up following the relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) an additional promotional exercise be undertaken in May/July 2021 to encourage uptake;

- (2) taking into consideration the complications related to Covid-19 restrictions, an extension to the Local Centres and Parades Scheme until 30 September 2021 be agreed; and
- (3) in anticipation of a high level of demand, an additional £20,000 be provisionally allocated from the Business Rates Retention Pilot reserve to the Local Centres and Parades Scheme.

ERG 21/13 GREEN BUSINESS GRANTS SCHEME

(Decision Notice D210046MEM)

Further to previous reports on the Business Rates Retention Pilot Programme the report brought forward details of the Green Business Grant Scheme to be launched in July 2021. The report detailed the two intended elements to the scheme and the proposed next steps.

During discussion it was suggested that, if possible, it would be useful if the Advisory Board could be involved in the decision-making process.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) delivery of a Green Business Grant Scheme be approved with a view to launching this initiative before the end of June 2021; and
- (3) authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration to determine applications for the Green Business Grant Scheme.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

ERG 21/14 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.41 pm

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Agenda Item 4

An update on the continuing impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local economy and information on support for local businesses will be provided.

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

01 September 2021

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 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME ANALYSIS

Since March 2019, the Borough Council has been delivering a Shopfront Improvement Scheme to help support local independent retailers. With the current scheme coming to an end on 30 September 2021, this report provides a brief update on the scheme and sets out proposals for an analysis of the scheme to identify lessons learnt and to gain an appreciation of its economic impact.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Over the course of the past couple of years, the Borough Council has allocated over £87,000 of funding to local independent retailers through the Business Rates Retention Pilot. The scheme, which comprised the 'Town and District Centres' scheme (March-December 2019) and the 'Local Centres and Parades Scheme' (March 2020-September 2021) has so far funded 25 shopfront improvement projects (34 if Mill Yard in West Malling is classed as 10 businesses rather than 1 collective). A further 2 projects are currently in train, and 5 have been awarded funding, but subsequently been aborted either because the business was forced to close due to the impact of Covid-19 or because the business felt they could no longer provide match-funding for their project.
- 1.1.2 At the last ERAB it was agreed to extend the 'Local Centres and Parades Scheme' until 30 September 2021. Since then, the Borough Council has gone back out to eligible businesses to notify them of this extension, and has received a moderate level of interest resulting in 2 additional applications being approved at the time of writing this report.
- 1.1.3 Now that the overall scheme is nearing an end, it is appropriate to give consideration to analysing the scheme – whether there are any lessons that can be learnt from its delivery, and to ascertain the economic impact it has had for local businesses.

1.2 Proposed Analysis of the Shopfront Improvements Scheme

1.2.1 It is proposed that there are essentially three areas that the analysis focuses on: 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.

1.2.2 In order to gain a full understanding of the **application process**, it is proposed that the following questions could be asked:

1. How did you find out about the scheme?
2. Did you find the application form difficult to fill in? If so, which section in particular did you find difficult?
3. Did you need any support from the Council in order to fill in your application? If so, was the support provided helpful?
4. Did you receive a decision on your application in a timely manner?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about the application process?

1.2.3 To gain an appreciation of applicants views regarding the **delivery of the project**, the following questions could be asked:

6. Were you given sufficient time to deliver your project?
7. Did you require help from the Council to deliver your project? If so, was help provided in a timely manner?
8. Was the process of claiming your grant clear?
9. Did you receive your grant shortly after submitting your evidence of completion?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say about the delivery of your project?

1.2.4 In assessing the **impact of the scheme as a whole**, it is proposed that the following be asked:

11. Have you received any comments about your new shopfront/energy efficiency measures? If so, what has been said?
12. Has the delivery of your project influenced any of the following:
 - a) Number of customers in your shop
 - b) Turnover generated
 - c) Any cost savings made by the business? If so, please explain.
13. Are there any other impacts that your business has experienced as a result of being part of this scheme?

1.2.5 It is proposed that a short survey (containing the above questions) is sent to participants to gain their views about the scheme, and that this is supplemented by 5 or 6 short interviews to gain a few case studies that provide a more in-depth understanding of how the scheme has been received.

1.3 Next Steps

- 1.3.1 It is proposed that once the overall scheme has completed on 30 September 2021, that this analysis work is undertaken, and that a report be brought to the next possible advisory board meeting.
- 1.3.2 With just over £87,000 currently having been allocated through this scheme (and potentially more by the time this report is published), one of the questions to consider following the analysis will be whether the scheme is closed down, or whether any remaining funding is used to open up a final round for applications (possibly covering both 'Town and District' and 'Local Centres and Parades' areas).

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 £100,000 was set aside from the Business Rates Retention Pilot reserve to cover the cost of these schemes, with an additional £20,000 provisionally allocated at the May 2021 advisory board meeting should it be required. At the time of writing this report, just over £87,000 has been allocated and £71,000 spent on shopfront grants. An additional £1,500 has been spent on advice and support for applicants through the Kent Rural Retailer Programme.

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 The application process for the scheme has been designed to minimise risk. Applications are shared with colleagues in a number of departments (Business Rates, Licensing, Planning, Building Control and Environmental Health) before being considered by the panel, and payments are only made once receipted invoices and photographic evidence of works have been provided.
- 1.6.2 There is a negligible level of risk associated with the analysis work.

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 proposed approach to analysing the Shopfront Improvement Scheme as set out in section 1.2 **BE AGREED**.

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:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Strategic Economic
Regeneration Manager

James Read, Graduate
Economic Development
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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

01 September 2021

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 ENGAGEMENT

Having engaged with and supported thousands of local businesses over the past 18 months through the distribution of Covid-19 business grants, this report puts forward a proposal to use this relationship with the business community to develop new networking events and engagement activity that gives further support in strengthening the resilience of the local economy.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 By the very nature of the work it undertakes, the Economic Regeneration team has always had a close working relationship with local businesses, be it working with independent retailers on projects in town centres, supporting start-up businesses with help and advice or helping established businesses find premises to expand or downsize into.
- 1.1.2 However, over the past 18 months the sheer number of businesses that the Economic Regeneration team has worked with in providing grant support or directing to other financial support packages and advice has been considerably greater.
- 1.1.3 As we gradually move towards a recovery, there is an opportunity to use these connections and relationships to create and offer new networking events and engagement activity that will provide further support to our businesses.
- 1.1.4 Having foreseen this potential opportunity, the Economic Regeneration team has already secured the permission of a large number of businesses that have applied to the various rounds of the Additional Restrictions Grant fund to use their contact details for further information on grants and business support activities. This has helped to increase our database from 590 business contacts to just over 950. With further rounds of grant funding, it is expected this figure could ultimately be close to 2000 business contacts.

1.2 Potential Business Engagement Activity

1.2.1 In terms of business engagement activity, it is proposed that there are three key strands that could be considered – networking events, an e-bulletin (supplemented by social media), and a Tonbridge and Malling Business Awards. This section sets out how each of these could operate:

1.2.2 **Networking Events** – are a good way of meeting businesses face-to-face to discuss local issues and opportunities, and to help share information and advice. From experience of running previous business events in the borough, the following are considerations:

- a) **Times of the Day:** generally, events are best attended during early morning ('breakfast meetings') or early evening (just after a normal working day). However, it is clear that those with care responsibilities often find these times more difficult to manage. As such, it is probably best to mix things up a little bit over time to ensure different potential attendees have a chance to benefit from the events.
- b) **Times of the Week:** historically, events have usually been best attended during mid-week (Tuesday-Thursday), and this is still the case to a great extent. However, as working patterns change and people work less in a less rigid, structured way, this may be changing to a small degree.
- c) **Venue:** with limited budget for venues, the Council will need to work in partnership with local businesses and organisations from across the borough to access venues.
- d) **Length of Event:** it is proposed that events should not be more than 2 hours in length, ideally shorter.
- e) **Topics:** whilst it helps to keep the events relatively informal, it is also helpful to provide a degree of simple structure to networking events. As such, having a short presentation on a specific topic, followed by a 'question and answer' session and networking works well. There are a wide range of potential topics that could be considered, including business mentoring/support; business finance and grants; energy efficiency/carbon reduction; and recruitment/staff retention.

1.2.3 **Refreshed Email Bulletin** – whilst an email bulletin was distributed on a regular basis during the height of the pandemic, to help notify businesses of new grant opportunities, advice and support services and broader good news stories in the local economy, the distribution list did start to decrease as many individual circumstances changed, and people changed roles and organisations. With an updated database of business contacts, there is great potential in using the bulletin to help get information to a wide range of businesses in the borough. It is proposed that a quarterly bulletin be programmed in, with further bulletins being distributed if messaging needs to be shared quicker.

It is also proposed that amendments are made to the style of the bulletin to align it with the new TMBC website.

1.2.4 **Business Awards** – in 2019, the Council did support a ‘Tonbridge Business Awards’ event in partnership with Tonbridge School and Tonbridge Old Fire Station. In recent months, a few businesses have enquired as to whether these awards will be running again in the future. There may be a possibility to run an awards event for 2022 either for businesses across the borough, or potentially across West Kent.

1.3 Next Steps

1.3.1 Should Members be supportive of the three proposed measures, then it is suggested that:

- a) A programme of networking events be created for the remainder of 2021/22.
- b) Work on refreshing the bulletin and building up the database be continued with a view to commencing the quarterly bulleting again in October 2021.
- c) Further research be undertaken to look into opportunities for delivering an awards event during 2022.

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 A sum of £10,000 has been set aside from the Business Rates Retention Pilot to use towards ‘Economic Events and Initiatives’. The costs incurred in delivering these activities will be met through this budget.

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 next steps as set out in section 1.3 **BE AGREED**.

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:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Strategic Economic
Regeneration Manager

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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

01 September 2021

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 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT POLICY

Having successfully distributed its initial £3.817m Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocation ahead of the 31 July 2020 deadline, on 16 July 2021 the Borough Council received an additional £1.054m of ARG funding from Central Government to use to support local businesses as the economy moves towards a period of recovery. This report sets out an amended policy to support businesses in key sectors through a new grant scheme.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In November 2020, the Council was allocated Additional Restrictions Grant funding to use as discretionary grant support for businesses that were ineligible for the Local Restrictions Support Grants being distributed by the Business Rates Team. In total, the Council received £3.817m of Additional Restrictions Grant funding to distribute by the end of July 2021.
- 1.1.2 Over the course of 4 funding rounds, the Council managed to distribute all the funding to local businesses by the end of May 2021.
- 1.1.3 Having successfully distributed the funding ahead of the deadline, Central Government gave the Council an additional £1.054m to support local businesses through discretionary grants for the period up until March 2022.
- 1.1.4 Some of this allocation has already been used to fund existing applicants to the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grants Scheme, however at the time of writing this report it is estimated that there will still be around £800,000 remaining to distribute to local businesses through this amended policy.

1.2 New Additional Restrictions Grant Policy

- 1.2.1 In July 2021, a second round of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grants Scheme was opened to make sure that those businesses that had not applied for funding during the first round (in April-May 2021) were given an additional opportunity to do so.

- 1.2.2 This second round was quieter than all the previous rounds of Additional Restriction Grants, with just over 70 applications, reflecting two key points. Firstly, most businesses in need of funding support had already applied in the first round, and secondly, as the economy started to open up again, most businesses were more focussed on getting up and running again rather than looking for funding support from Government.
- 1.2.3 However, there are still businesses approaching the Council to ask about funding support due to the level of impact on their business, and the slowness of their recovery. These businesses are almost exclusively within a small number of sectors:
- Entertainment/Leisure/Activity venues (including a number of pubs, especially those that are wet-led or have no outside space)
 - Travel and Tourism businesses, or businesses that rely on foreign visitors (such as English Language Schools)
 - Events businesses (and suppliers to the events industry)
 - Wraparound care providers (including nursery care)
 - Certain suppliers to these sectors
- 1.2.4 The amended policy set out in Appendix 1 aims to establish a focus on supporting the above sectors by providing a small additional grant to businesses that have previously applied to Rounds 1 and 2 of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant or the Mandatory Restart Grant.
- 1.2.5 The original intention had been to provide this funding as an automatic payment (off the back of their original application to the previous Restart schemes). However, on 23 July 2021 Central Government released new guidance that requires businesses that have previously not received ARG funding to fill in an application form to access grant support. This would mean any eligible business that received a Mandatory Restart Grant would need to fill in an application form, whereas eligible businesses that previously applied to Rounds 1 and 2 of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant, would simply need to demonstrate they still meet the eligibility criteria. As such, it is proposed that businesses that the Council has identified as eligible using the above criteria will be invited to apply to the fund through an application process (previous Mandatory Restart Grant recipients) or fill in a short form to confirm eligibility criteria are still met (previous ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant recipients). Once the submission deadline has passed, the eligible applicants will be awarded funding using the approach set out in section 3.4 of Appendix 1.
- 1.2.6 Should the policy be agreed, it is proposed that the call for applications be opened as soon as possible (late September 2021). The reason for this being that, whilst the amount of correspondence with businesses looking for funding has subsided in

recent months, there are still a good number of businesses that are in need of funding support to keep them going.

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 On 16 July 2021, the Council was awarded £1.054m of additional ARG funding from Central Government to use for discretionary grant payments to local businesses.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 The application process for the scheme has been designed to minimise risk. The Economic Regeneration team will undertake initial checks, with the Audit Team undertaking further pre-payment checks before payments are made.

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 proposed amended ARG Policy **BE AGREED**.

1.8.3 That, subject to 1.8.2 being agreed, that the timescale as set out in 1.2.6 **BE AGREED**.

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:

Nil

contact: Jeremy Whittaker,
Strategic Economic
Regeneration Manager

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

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Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG)
Discretionary Restart Scheme
July 2021 Onwards

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

‘Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)’ means the additional funding provided by Government. Funding will be made available to eligible Local Authorities at the point that national restrictions are imposed or at the point the Local Authority first entered LCAL 3 or higher local restrictions;

‘COVID-19’ (coronavirus); means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;

‘Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS)’; means the Government department responsible for the scheme and guidance;

‘Effective date’; means, for eligibility of the grant, the date of the local restrictions or the date of widespread national restrictions

‘Hereditament(s); means the assessment defined within Section 64 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;

‘Local lockdown’; means the same as **‘Local restrictions’;**

‘Local rating list’; means the list as defined by Section 41 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

‘Local restrictions’; and **‘Localised restrictions’** means legally binding restrictions imposed on specific Local Authority areas or multiple Local Authority areas, where the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care requires the closure of businesses in a local area under regulations made using powers in Part 2A of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 in response to the threat posed by coronavirus and commonly as part of a wider set of measures;

‘Ratepayer’; means the person who, according to the Council’s records, was the ratepayer liable for occupied rates in respect of the hereditament at the date of the local restrictions or widespread national restrictions;

‘Restart Grants’; means the mandatory business grants scheme available to businesses with effect from 1st April 2021;

‘State Aid Framework’; means the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak published on 19 March 2020;

‘Subsidy’; means the arrangements set by Central Government in place of the previous state aid regime: and

‘Temporary Framework for State aid’; means the same as the **‘State Aid Framework’.**

1.0 Purpose of the Scheme and background.

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to determine eligibility for a payment under the Council's **Additional Restrictions Grant (Discretionary) Restart Grant Scheme** from 1st July 2021 onwards. The Council, as the Business Rates Billing Authority is responsible for payment of these grants.
- 1.2 This discretionary grant scheme has been developed by the Council in response to an announcement made by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy whereby an additional restriction grant payment may be made by the Council to a business which has to close or is severely affected due to localised or widespread national restrictions being put in place to manage coronavirus and save lives.
- 1.3 The scheme is designed to provide a **supplement to existing applicants** of Rounds 1 and 2 of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant **AND** the Mandatory Restart Grant that fit within specific sectors that have been particularly hard hit by the restrictions.
- 1.4 The scheme applies during the 'restart' period.

2.0 Funding

- 2.1 The Council has been provided with additional funds which has allowed a second round of the ARG (Discretionary) Restart Grant scheme. As the funding is fixed, the Council reserves the right to amend the scheme (or end it) at any point funds are exhausted.
- 2.2 This scheme forms part of a series of schemes designed to assist businesses through both local and national restriction periods.

3.0 Eligibility criteria and awards

- 3.1 The Council has decided that for the purposes of this particular scheme funding will be available to the following sectors:
- Entertainment venues (including cinemas, theatres, nightclubs);
 - Leisure and activity venues;
 - Wet-led pubs;
 - Group travel and tour operators;
 - Other tourism businesses (including Bed &Breakfasts and event industry suppliers);
 - Wholesalers;
 - English language schools;
 - Breweries;
 - Freelance and mobile businesses (specifically in arts, catering, events and wedding related businesses); and
 - Wraparound care providers.

- 3.2 Businesses that initially meet these two criteria (recipient of Restart Grant and in an eligible sector) will become ineligible if they:
- have ceased trading;
 - are no longer located in Tonbridge and Malling borough or able to demonstrate trade within the borough;
 - are in administration, insolvent or subject to a striking off notice; or
 - have already received grant payments that equal the maximum levels of state subsidy permitted.
- 3.3 Where businesses feel they fit this criterion but are unsure of their eligibility, contact with the Council via economic.regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk should be made to confirm whether an application will be accepted.

Award Levels

- 3.4 The level of funding provided to each business will be calculated based on the total value of Restart Grant funding that went to eligible businesses, the size of the initial Restart Grant award and the amount of funding remaining in the ARG pot. For example:
- **Example 1** - If the total ARG pot is £700,000, and there are 300 eligible businesses that received a total of £1.5m in total from the Restart Grant scheme, then a business that received an initial £8,000 Restart Grant would be awarded: $(700,000/1,500,000) \times 8000 = £3,733$
 - **Example 2** – If the total ARG pot is £750,000, and there are 500 eligible businesses that have received a total of £2m in total from the Restart Grant scheme, then a business that received an initial £1,500 Restart Grant would be awarded: $(750,000/2,000,000) \times 1500 = £562.50$

The Effective Date

- 3.5 The effective date for this particular scheme is 1st July 2021

Who can receive the grant?

- 3.6 Government has stated that the person who will receive the grant will be the person who, according to the Council's records, was the ratepayer in respect of the hereditament at the effective date. Where there is no entry in the rating list for the business, the Council will have discretion to determine who should receive the grant.
- 3.7 Where the Council has reason to believe that the information it holds at the effective date is inaccurate, it may withhold or recover the grant and take reasonable steps to identify the correct recipient.
- 3.8 Where, it is subsequently determined that the records held are incorrect, the Council reserves the right to recover any grant incorrectly paid.

- 3.9 Where any business misrepresents information or contrives to take advantage of the scheme, the Council will look to recover any grant paid and take appropriate legal action. Likewise, if any ratepayer is found to have falsified records in order to obtain a grant.

4.0 How will grants be provided to Businesses?

- 4.1 As required by Central Government, businesses looking to access this grant support will need to fill in the appropriate application form. Details of how to obtain grants are made available on the Council's website: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/business/apply-business-grant>
- 4.2 In all cases businesses will be required to confirm that they are eligible to receive the grant. This includes circumstances where the Council already has bank details for the business and, is in a position to send out funding immediately. Businesses are under an obligation to notify the Council should they no longer meet the eligibility criteria for any grants
- 4.3 The Council reserves the right to request any supplementary information from businesses, and they should look to provide this, where requested, as soon as possible.
- 4.4 An application for an Additional Restrictions Grant is deemed to have been made when a duly completed application is received via the Council's online procedure.

5.0 Subsidies and EU State Aid

- 5.1 The EU State aid rules no longer apply to subsidies granted in the UK following the end of the transition period.
- 5.2 The United Kingdom remains bound by its international commitments, including subsidy obligations set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the EU.
- 5.3 The Council can still pay out subsidies under previously approved schemes and this includes subsidies related to COVID-19 that have previously been given under the EU State aid Temporary Framework.

6.0 Scheme of Delegation

- 6.1 The Council has approved this scheme.
- 6.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Director of Finance & Transformation is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it meets the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Government guidance.

7.0 Notification of Decisions

- 7.1 Applications will be considered on behalf of the Council by staff from the Economic Development Team, in consultation with the Revenues and Benefits Team and the Director of Finance & Transformation.
- 7.2 All decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email. A decision shall be made as soon as practicable after an application is received.

8.0 Reviews of Decisions

- 8.1 The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for a review of its decision.
- 8.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council within 14 days of the Council's decision and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal.
- 8.3 The application will be reconsidered by a senior officer, as soon as practicable and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

9.0 Complaints

- 9.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

10.0 Taxation and the provision of information to Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC)

- 10.1 The Council has been informed by Government that all payments under the scheme are taxable.
- 10.2 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.
- 10.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to businesses.

11.0 Managing the risk of fraud

- 11.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the schemes or fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain grant money or failing to declare entitlement to any of the specified grants will face prosecution and any funding issued will be recovered from them.

11.2 Applicants should note that, where a grant is paid by the Council, details of each individual grant may be passed to Government.

12.0 Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

12.1 If it is established that **any** award has been made incorrectly due to error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

13.0 Data Protection and use of data

13.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.

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

01 September 2021

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP – MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 23 APRIL 2021 AND 16 JULY 2021

1.1 Key Matters Discussed

1.1.1 The full minutes of the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 23 April 2021 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 Carole Ford, who heads up the Sector-Led Working Group for The Fresh Food/Horticulture Employment Task Force.
- b) An update on the West Kent LEADER as the programme is closed down, and information is awaited from Central Government on future funding for rural businesses.
- c) Information from our local Colleges on challenges and recent successes.
- d) Standing items covering a range of topics, including skills, careers and enterprise, transport and business support.

1.1.3 The full minutes of the recent meeting held on 16 July 2021 are attached as Appendix 2 of this report. The key matters from this meeting were as follows:

- a) A presentation from Produced in Kent about a new initiative called Food Loop which aims to reduce food waste through the use of an innovative app - <https://foodloop.app/>
- b) A presentation from Gatwick Airport about their recent challenges and future aspirations for growth. Poor rail connectivity between Gatwick and West Kent was highlighted as an ongoing issue.
- c) An update on the 'Case for West Kent' – consultants Hardisty Jones are refreshing the original document (from 2015) given the many changes that have occurred since this time. The document aims to be a voice for West Kent

and a tool through which the area can strengthen its calls for infrastructure investment.

- d) Standing items covering a range of topics, including Kickstart West Kent, skills, careers and enterprise, and business support.

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,
Strategic Economic
Regeneration Manager

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

West Kent Partnership Meeting - 16 July 21, Teams

Minutes

Present

Cllr Peter Fleming, SDC (Chair)
Cllr Lesley Dyball, SDC
Cllr David Scott, TWBC
Cllr Brian Luker, TMBC
Lindsay Pamphilon, Hadlow College
Jim Mawby, West Kent College
David Candlin, TWBC
Daniel Cotton, Mid Kent College
Detlev Munster, SDC
Sarah Nurden, KMEP
Tudor Price, KICC (part)
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Summer Fox, IMAGO
Hilary Smith, TWBC
Nigel Smith, KCC
Jeremy Whittaker, TMBC
Allan Baillie, KCC

Emily Haswell, SDC
Hilary Smith, TWBC
James Read, TMBC
Simon Harris, WKP
Wendy Wood, WKP

Apologies

Henry Warde, Squerries
Catherine Brunger, AXA-PPP
Cllr Matt Boughton, TMBC
Paul Baker, FSB

Guests

Floortje Hoette, Produced in Kent
Alison Addy, Gatwick Airport
Stuart Hardisty, Hardisty Jones

Introduction

- Cllr Peter Fleming took the Chair and extended thanks to Cllr Nicolas Heslop for his chairmanship over the last years. The new Leader of TMBC, Cllr Matt Boughton will be attending future meetings
- A welcome was extended to Cllr David Scott and thanks recorded to Cllr Jane March for her support of the Partnership over the years

1. Minutes & Matters Arising

- All actions in hand and updates within Agenda today

2. Food Loop - Floortje Hoette, Produced in Kent - Presentation

- Presentation attached for Partners to follow up direct
- It was noted that this is Important support for the rural economy, especially now as the LEADER programme closes and no successor programme has been announced

3. Gatwick Airport – Northern Runway Consultation and opportunities for West Kent Alison Addy, Head of External Engagement and Policy – Presentation

Discussion points

- Public transport access is still difficult from West Kent for both passengers and workers. Surface access strategy in place and Gatwick are working with Transport

for South East to see how East-West connections can be developed in partnership with the airport

- More information was requested on the 50,000 new jobs to be created. Alison advised that an employment skills and business strategy will be included as part of the consultation on the Northern Runway. This will cover both construction and operation phases. Gatwick will be working in partnership to maximise skills training opportunities for construction, engineering and other sectors. Priority areas are STEM skills in general. From a West Kent perspective the job creation at airport is direct jobs but the economic value report www.gatwickairport.com/economy demonstrates the indirect jobs in wider local area as part of supply chain
- Allan will send London Resort and Thames Crossing employability and skills strategies to Alison
- Colleges and universities are in consultation with Gatwick and already engaging on skills required so colleges can gear up
- Environmental impacts of Gatwick operation and expansion a concern. Alison advised that the Northern Runway consultation will quantify these impacts and set out how Gatwick plan to address and minimise them. Wide consultation is sought.
- Long haul operations will lag behind short haul but will return

AB

4. The Case for West Kent – Refresh – Stuart Hardisty, Hardisty Jones - Presentation

- The refresh will seek to demonstrate the importance of a strong West Kent economy and opportunities and potential for investment. An inception meeting has taken place and collation of stakeholder views important first step
- The Chairman reiterated the importance of a West Kent voice. The reason for the initial study was a concern that West Kent’s unique offer was not being heard
- Partners offered the following comments in response to the questions posed in the presentation
 - Recent changes have the area catapulted forward, much of it opportunity – remote working but still ‘working in London’. Blended working bringing forward increased capacity in office space locally. Café culture here to stay – need to capture the advantages and capitalise on the rapid growth
 - Allan will share the work done by KMEP recently (Steve Matthews – workforce skills evidence base)
 - Retail/wholesale is well above national average in all 3 districts and this at a time when town centres are threatened. Professional services also a strong sector – high skills sets and income levels and need to retain – link to HE provision in WK.
 - Link retail and professional services in town centres - working spaces with cafes etc – ie not working from home but working from our town centres
 - Sarah Nurden will email Stuart with more detail but headline strengths are digital marketing, horticultural, (NIAB EMR) tourism - amazing assets, cultural offer in TW. Clear sectoral strengths. Challenges – commuting pattern changing – rural transport may be an issue. Main HE provision based in Canterbury and Greenwich an Issue. Sarah will Invite Stuart to KMEP business advisory panel

AB

SN

SN

- Squeeze on lower paid jobs – potential to import young people from where jobs are scarce to live, work and train in West Kent – issues to be addressed are affordable housing, east-west transport
- Affordability of living in the area– Highly paid can afford to live in West Kent but not those in less paid jobs
- Existential threat to highly paid residents supporting the WK economy – with blended working patterns, commuting high earners could choose to move further from West Kent where house prices are less expensive
- HE provision is offered within WK at all the Colleges of FE through partnerships with the Universities and there is unused capacity and scope to expand delivery. However, students are not coming forward for some of the courses. The Government’s White Paper on skills will open the door for colleges to deliver more level 4 and 5 technical provision linked to sector need.
- Local industry needs to ‘sell’ progression opportunities to young people within their sectors

- Partners invited to email Stuart with additional thoughts stuart@hardistyjones.com
- Final draft to be presented to October WKP meeting

**All
SH**

5. West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth Action Plan – Wendy Wood

- Quarterly update on recovery priorities for Partners to note. Actions being delivered through West Kent Skills Group, the ED officer group and the WK Enterprise Adviser Network
- A living document - Case for WK research and report will inform priorities and actions going forward
- **Kickstart West Kent**
 - 52 Young people have started in post, further 60 posts being actively recruited to and a total of 167 posts approved since the Scheme began
 - Jobcentres are working hard to match young people and employers and beginning to deliver face to face recruitment events from Tonbridge. Direct engagement between employers and young people is very effective in bringing forward applications

6. West Kent Skills Group – Allan Baillee, KCC - Presentation

Discussion points

- WK is still behind the national curve with skills levels
- Unemployment figures still very high for West Kent but are reducing
- High concentration of unemployment above national average particularly in Swanley
- Average earnings and job density in WK are higher than SE and National figures but if strip out high city earnings, locally earned money will not be so high in an area with very high living costs
- High levels of unemployment in 18-24 year olds
- Underemployment for many young and some older people is an issue

- Young people tend to see their future choices in their family and the negative cycle of unemployment/underemployment needs to be broken
- Skills has a new prominence on the national agenda providing an opportunity to address the skills gap through the local skills improvement plan with a focus on more level 4 and 5 provision
- Construction and landbased have made a lot of noise about skills issues with a resultant greater awareness which Brexit has highlighted
- It was agreed that the next meeting would focus on skills needed for the West Kent economy
- A letter to be sent from the Partnership in support of the specialised landbased education being provided at Hadlow Rural Community School

WW

7. West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network – Simon Harris

- The Network is doing well against national targets for Gatsby Benchmarks 5 and 6 and only recording quality interventions – Encounters with employers (5) and employees and Experiences of workplaces (6). Good progress has also been made against benchmark 1 – A stable careers programme, this, despite it being a very difficult year for all schools
- Young people’s perceptions about sectors can be influenced by businesses engaging with the Enterprise Adviser Network and interacting with school students. As the network in West Kent progresses into a Hub this will create greater links between school and world of work and support delivery of all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks

8. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce – Tudor Price

- Kent is one of 8 areas to be chosen by DfE to become Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) trailblazers. Kent Invicta Chamber is the employer representative body lead
 - LSIPs will help transform how we assess, agree and plan for skills provision and, in time, tackle the pervasive skills shortages that put a brake on business productivity and growth
 - Funding framework that colleges have to operate under is one of main blockers – opportunity to re-write rules so can be more responsive, set pilot programmes and set agenda for change across funding architecture
- Business support helpline – concluded at end of June – handled 19,000 phone calls from businesses across Kent and Medway. Referral routes are still live and signpost to local provision.
- The Chamber is growing at a considerable rate
- Looking to work with Local Authorities and others around supply chain opportunities including Gatwick

9. Kent & Medway Economic Partnership – Sarah Nurden

- Structural shift in how investment made. Next week’s KMEP meeting will look back and review and plan ahead to UK Shared Prosperity Fund

10. Federation of Small Businesses

- Update from the FSB perhaps largely reflects the mood in the media and the country. Good to see restrictions lifting but still a significant degree of caution and concern driven by

- the expiry of concessions such as furlough, Business Rate non-payment and VAT deferments. These do need to end sometime it is acknowledged but all seem to be coming at once
- staff shortages at short notice due to staff being 'pinged' by track and trace
- inflation driving up cost of raw materials but a difficult time to pass these increases onto customers (except in the construction industry where price of materials at trade counters is rocketing)
- There is a difference of opinion among businesses re the restrictions lifting on 19th - some are happy that Government is allowing a common sense approach re home working, wearing of masks etc but a significant number would like greater guidance and direction

11 AOB and priorities for future meetings

- Standing updates to be incorporated into a written report going forward so that each meeting can focus on one or two substantive issues where all can input
- The next meeting will have a main focus on skills.
 - Skilled jobs to be filled, colleges offering relevant courses with capacity to deliver more and yet the courses are not being fully filled
 - Links to LSIP
 - Still comparatively high levels of underemployment and unemployment
 - Sector staff shortages – hospitality, care and landbased
 - Major developments coming forward in West Kent and adjacent areas
 - David Gleed, Chief Executive and Executive Principal of North Kent College to be invited by the Chairman to attend next meeting
- Partners invited to put forward themes for future meetings

WW

WW

PF

All

12 Date of Next Meeting – Friday 8 October, 10am-noon, Teams

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West Kent Partnership Meeting – 23 April 2021

Minutes

Present

Nicolas Heslop, TMBC, Chair
Peter Fleming, SDC
Lesley Dyball, SDC
Brian Luker, TMBC
Jane March, TWBC
Jim Mawby, West Kent College
Allan Baillee, KCC,
Andrew Metcalf, KICC
David Candlin, TWBC
Detlev Munster, SDC
Dr Lindsay Pamphilon, Hadlow College
Daniel Cotton, Mid Kent College
James Read, TMBC
Jeremy Whittaker, TMBC
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Henry Warde, Squerryes
Wendy McGeachy, IMAGO
Summer Fox, IMAGO
Simon Harris, WKEAN
Wendy Wood, WKP

Apologies

Pav Ramewal, SDC
Nigel Smith, KCC
Catherine Brunger, AXA PPP
David Joyner, KCC
Sarah Nurden, KMEP
Hilary Smith, TWBC
Emily Haswell, SDC
Paul Baker, FSB/Wealden Properties

Guests

Carol Ford
Richard Cavendish, SDC

1 Introduction

- Thanks were recorded to Alison Parmar for her contribution to the WKP and best wishes for her new role
- Guests and new members were introduced

2 Minutes & Matters Arising

- Broadband - A letter was sent to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and a response has been received. These are attached.
- Follow up meeting with Trooli has taken place
- Kickstart – update included in quarterly Recovery Action plan update
- Update on LEADER - Nicolas Heslop wrote on 3 December to all West Kent MPs to make representations for a continuation of a grant programme to support rural and land-based sectors. Holding reply received. Jon Regan also wrote to MPs.

3. Skills – Colleges

West Kent College – Jim Mawby

- West Kent College is fully open with 100% of students in College, Covid secure
- Knock on effect of Covid on apprenticeships with end dates, but not a huge impact. Some of the practical work cannot be delivered and may have to continue during summer

- Working with local schools on progression, teacher assessed grades replacing exams in vast majority of qualifications
- Post covid world – looking at opportunities for curriculum development. Upsurge in health and hairdressing applications
- Planning on how to best support sectors badly hit
- Meeting has taken place with Gatwick airport and will work with them on skills required - both technical and tourism
- Strategy to retain travellers in Kent so not immediately lost to London
- Gatwick Northern Runway consultation – Part of a steering group from an education perspective in Kent and Sussex on how to support skills agenda. Long-term project, now restarting. Opportunity to look at skills across age range including adult re-training. Flexible curriculum to support skills needs. Progression route 16 to degree. Work with them to identify what skills needed.
- **Action: Gatwick to attend WKP July meeting.**

WW

Hadlow College – Lindsay Pamphilon

- 16-18 students completing their courses – for landbased largely about skills, so focus on completing with those practical skills. Back in college since March with heavy focus on skills delivered on site since then
- HE students were in group allowed back into college from March so there has been an opportunity to undertake practical training
- New apprenticeship in equine level 2 starting in September
- New general farm worker qualification at level 2, awaiting funding approval. Flexibility to agricultural and horticultural industries as meets a wide range of needs
- New flexi apprenticeship review mentions agriculture – seasonality is still an issue
- Viticulture – meeting with Allan Baillee took place – opportunities for students who have placements in that sector to choose as a specialism
- Skills paper – adults back at front of delivery. Skills fund for adult qualifications started April-July for level 3 courses including some rural courses but currently not listed as continuing beyond end of July. Awaiting government announcement on funding
- Need to build confidence of adults from being at home to coming back to College
- Range of free qualifications for adults in Kent only, 1 day or 3 hour qualifications to take next step into education, expecting rise in interest as furlough ends and people need to look at retraining.
- **Action: Skills Group to work with Colleges around securing funding to deliver level 3, 4 and 5 technical qualifications**
- **Action: Nicolas to raise issue of ongoing funding for adult qualifications at level 3 and possibility of funding for 3, 4 and 5 technical qualifications at Employment Task Force**

AB

NH

Discussion followed on issues for the agricultural sector

- Henry Warde commented that the transient labour needed to support agriculture has reduced and local people are not interested in the work as a rule. Also a real struggle to find back of house catering staff. Front of house staff are repurposing themselves from other careers in the interim and roles are in high demand but not from people looking for a long-term career in hospitality as in Europe. Challenge is to convince people there is a career path in hospitality.
- **Action: Nicolas to raise promoting hospitality as a career at Employment Task Force**

NH

- Peter Fleming commented that younger UK nationals expectations around wage levels is a barrier to recruiting into many traditionally lower paid roles.
- Jon Regan commented that Eastern Europeans are paid a fair wage reflecting the high cost of living in UK but it is seasonal work and UK residents are looking for full time work.

Mid Kent College – Daniel Cotton

- National Skills Fund – frustrated by qualifications that made it onto list – targeted at 24+ and extended diplomas which would traditionally be offered over 2 years. These are not going to suit the needs of local communities where adults are out of work and seeking to reskill
- FE students returned at the beginning of March. HE and adult this week. Challenges around vocational competency based assessments and practical work is underway
- Kickstart – the College has been recruiting its own Kickstarters
- There has been a steady increase in applications, particularly marked in plumbing and electrical at levels 1, 2 and 3 which is welcomed. Huge increase in access to healthcare
- Involved with SELEP bid for Institute for Technology, waiting to hear if approved at stage 1
- Strategic focus as result of white paper around adult skills – English and maths, digital skills, essential business and employability. Flexible delivery – online, night-time, condensed weekends, all options.
- Doubled provision in English and maths, teaching and HR and accountancy qualifications
- HE provision in civil engineering
- Apprenticeships – many employers have furloughed staff so difficult to get long-term commitment to apprenticeships. Believe will recover
- Manufacturing degree apprenticeship with CCCU
- Will run face to face open evenings at the end July
- Retained online short courses at level 2, healthcare, dementia, counselling – free at level 2 and 3

4. Growing our Future, Carol Ford, Fresh Food/Horticulture Employment Task Force sector led working group – Presentation attached

- Carol's presentation was well received and comments and questions followed.
- Henry Warde commented on viticulture. Two associated problems – cost of housing and relatively low paid role. He stated that he is able to house people but as the sector grows there will be a need to create affordable housing, creating a community, long term and beneficial, linked to loyalty and wellness agenda. The younger generation have a more holistic approach to quality of life and local authorities will need to look at exceptional circumstances to generate appropriate housing in greenbelt/AONB
- Jon Regan endorsed the proposed model of moving seasonal workers around so they have a 12 month job but felt there may be some logistics issues. Seasonal work is hard work and very early starts. At his Australian farm they use south Pacific islanders and the scheme is treated like overseas aid. The original Eastern European scheme was similar and was a student scheme. As well as returning home with money and UK values, many also returned with technical and management skills. Picking and packing should still be an attractive offer to UK students and needs marketing

- Simon Harris suggested that Enterprise Advisers who are business owners and strategic managers and advise head teachers and careers leaders about the labour market which filters into lessons, encounters and experiences could inspire and attract young people into the sector.
- **Action – Carol and Simon to meet** SH
- Carol explained that an ideas hack is being held at NIAB-EMR to capture youth ideas and help to find solutions. Employment Task Force is working collaboratively on this
- **Action – Landbased agenda and skills are 2 key priorities for WKP. Carol to feedback to Partnership after the hack and partners to send through any suggestions for topics for the hack via Wendy** CF
All

5. LEADER Update, Richard Cavanagh, LEADER Programme Project Officer, SDC

Richard introduced Paper A. He outlined the main achievements of West Kent LEADER and explained that the grant programme is now closed to applications. Work will be undertaken to December 2021 to close and evaluate all aspects of the programme.

It is hoped that future funding will be available through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The UK Community Renewal Fund is a bridge and pilot to inform what the UKSPF will look like.

Partners had the following comments

- Nicolas Heslop pointed out that the inward investment on the back of LEADER has been very significant and expressed concern that with the government levelling up agenda areas like West Kent may lose out on future funding.
- Peter Fleming pointed out that the UK Community Renewal Fund focuses on 4 priority districts in Kent, and that government is unclear about what it wants from the countryside but suspects it will not be around job creation
- Tudor Price felt that there is very little coherence on Economic Strategy from Government. The next big agenda is climate change and the focus seems to be there
- Jon Regan endorsed the LEADER programme. He has been involved as a member of the Executive Local Action Group for many years and has seen the good it has done in the community and in creating jobs
- **Action: WKP to lobby as appropriate as soon as Government proposals are known for UKSPF, highlighting the benefits of a grant support programme for the rural economy** WW

6. West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth, Wendy Wood, WKP

Wendy introduced Paper B which will be a standing report to future meetings

7. Standing Updates

Skills, Allan Baillee, KCC

Allan introduced Paper C and spoke to a powerpoint presentation which is attached.

- Unemployment creeping up, 10,000 benefit claimants in West Kent of which 2,000 are under 24
- Kickstart up and running and recruiting, gaining momentum
- Concern about impact on unemployment when furlough ends

- Climate change agenda – grants available for retrofitting are not being widely taken up as there are insufficient numbers of trade people trained to install

Peter Fleming advised that previous College administrations had failed to deliver any HE or FE provision within Sevenoaks district over many years. SDC is now looking to potentially provide its own site for an HE provider who may work with an FE provider from WK

Action: Skills group will develop proposals around aspiration to deliver degree apprenticeships from a West Kent hub potentially in project management, law, health and social care and the creative sector

AB

Action: Allan Baillee and 3 Colleges to liaise on making representations to Skills Minister re continuation and extension of funding for adult training and to meet local need. Letter to be sent from the Chairman

AB

Enterprise Adviser Network, Simon Harris, WKEAN

Simon introduced Paper D

- Network in a good position, high quality Enterprise Advisers and almost all schools matched. Challenges for schools this year and surveying schools around what expectations are for next year in careers so we can work with them on addressing
- West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network will continue alongside fledgling hubs from September

Nicolas Heslop commended the work delivered by the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network which he feels to be of a very high standard and committed ongoing support from the West Kent Partnership.

Infrastructure & Transport, Paper E

The report was noted.

FSB – Paul Baker

Paul had sent apologies and provided a short update

A quick update from the FSB as they continue to work with the Council and the Government to help businesses through this period.

As previously stated support from these parties has been good over the last 12 months but it is important not to lose all the good work as there are a number of perhaps unforeseen consequences of Covid - not all about retail businesses that have been closed. Need to consider cost of PPE, cost of setting up employees to work from home, those wholesale or manufacturing businesses that could remain open but have been hit as retail shops etc have meant there is less demand for their products

The Business Rates announcement in the Budget was not as helpful as hoped or anticipated and the FSB will continue to work with all parties to help businesses through this period

Action: A note of thanks to be sent to Alison Farmer for her support of the Partnership as she moves on from FSB

WW

KMEP – Sarah Nurden

Apologies for the meeting received from Sarah as she is unwell

KICC and Growth Hub, Tudor Price - Powerpoint presentation attached

- Chat link on TMBC grants page makes access to the service straightforward for businesses and is reflected in higher usage in TMBC than elsewhere in WK
- SME Brexit support fund is easy to apply for a £2K grant for training/consultancy to assist with Brexit issues
- A joint bid with University of Kent will be submitted to the UK Community Renewal Fund for the creation of a net zero audit hub
- KICC is running one of the largest Kickstart Gateways in the UK and very involved in drafting guidelines and criteria. Drafting issues left some gaps and are working closely with DWP to manage and address. Also having a Gateway Plus conversation to try and set up a Gateway Plus to help sole traders to access
- Skills improvement Plan – Chambers were cited in the White Paper to lead and KICC will be leading on a proposal for Kent and Medway. Currently are bringing Partners to the table.
- **Action: WKP to be engaged with the development of the local skills improvement plan**

TP

7. Next Meeting – 10-12, Friday 16 July 2021

- Invitations for a teams meeting have been sent but the Chairman expressed a hope that we might meet in person
- Gatwick airport are consulting on bringing the Northern runway into use and Alison Addy will be attending to consult with Partners, particularly around opportunities for the West Kent economy from increased capacity and growth at the airport.
- **Action: partners were invited to put forward ideas for inclusion on future agendas**

All

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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