

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 25th February, 2015**

**Present:** Cllr C P Smith (Chairman), Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman), Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr S M King, Cllr Mrs S Luck, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr Miss J L Sergison and Cllr R Taylor

Councillors J A L Balcombe, M A Coffin, B J Luker, Mrs S Murray, M R Rhodes and N J Heslop were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R D Lancaster

#### **ERG 15/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **ERG 15/2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 3 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

#### **ERG 15/3 CONSULTANTS STUDY - THE CASE FOR WEST KENT**

Decision Notice D150022MEM

The key findings of 'The Case for West Kent' consultant's study into the importance of the West Kent economy, commissioned by the West Kent Partnership, were set out for Members consideration. It was reported that these recommendations would be assessed in detail and an action plan prepared to take them forward.

A review of the structure and Membership of the Partnership would also be undertaken with a view to attracting greater representation from local businesses.

Members noted the need to more actively promote opportunities to attract and retain additional inward investment, the development of a pipeline of projects ready to take forward when new funding became available and the recommendation that local authorities should invest additional resources in economic regeneration. The latter would be

addressed in Tonbridge and Malling by the engagement of an Economic Regeneration Officer.

Finally, the Leader referred to the circumstances regarding Aylesford News Print and advised that the administrators (KPMG) had confirmed that 233 employees had been made redundant with immediate effect; 65 staff would be retained to assist with the sale of assets and decommissioning of the site. The production facility was now closed and had been a victim of the increase of digital media and overcapacity in the print market.

Members were advised that the Borough Council was committed to supporting those affected in co-operation with other agencies. Arrangements had been made for Job Centre Plus to provide drop in centres to offer advice and assistance to those made redundant. A local briefing for key partners with KPMG was to be arranged and the Leader and Chief Executive would participate.

There were likely to be operational and financial implications for the Borough Council and Members would be updated in due course once these were fully understood.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the Case for West Kent consultant's report, attached in part as Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and
- (2) a further report on the actions arising be made to the Advisory Board in due course

#### **ERG 15/4 DRAFT BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY**

Decision Notice D150023MEM

The report of the Chief Executive presented a draft Economic Regeneration Strategy for consideration and set out arrangements for consultation and adoption.

Members recognised the importance of effective infrastructure to local businesses and suggested that consideration be given to aligning future infrastructure funding priorities to Kent County Council's 'scoring matrix' when developing projects, to improve the chances of securing funding contributions.

As it was important to expose the draft strategy to external scrutiny prior to formal adoption it was suggested that a consultation be undertaken in March/April. Views of key economic partners, including members of the West Kent Partnership, local business support providers, business representative bodies such as the local Chambers and Federation of

Small Businesses and individual local businesses in the Borough would be sought.

Members welcomed the engagement of an Economic Regeneration Officer to support the work of the Strategy and establish effective and interactive communication with local businesses.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the draft Economic Regeneration Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for the purposes of local consultation.

#### **ERG 15/5 BUSINESS LOAN FUNDING SCHEMES - UPDATE**

Decision Notice D150024MEM

The Chief Executive reported on the local take up of the Escalate loan fund and set out options for future support. Proposals for the introduction of a small business boost programme to support small and medium sized businesses and encourage more local firms to apply were also presented.

Future funding priorities were outlined and two options being considered included continuing the scheme on the same terms as the original Escalate programme and the introduction of a more focused element of loan funding, aimed at smaller businesses with a more streamlined application process. The latter had operated successfully in East Kent as a 'small business boost' programme.

It was reported that a 'small business boost' approach could continue to meet local needs and potentially encourage more local firms to apply given the small business focus and an easier application process.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the success of the Escalate business loan be noted; and
- (2) the County Council be informed of the Borough Council's preference for the introduction of a 'small business boost' element in any future loan programme.

#### **ERG 15/6 GRANT SUPPORT SCHEME - LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES**

Decision Notice D150025MEM

Proposals for extending grant support for local neighbourhood shopping centres, building on the district centre grant scheme launched in 2013, were set out in the joint report of the Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration.

It was noted that a six month deadline for applications to be submitted would be applied. In addition, Members identified Quarry Hill Parade, Tonbridge as a potential eligible neighbourhood retail centre.

The previous scheme had generated a good deal of positive engagement with business communities and a wide range of proposals were developed by local traders' groups, including better signage, promotional materials including new websites and visitor information, and improved street furniture. It was hoped that this new scheme would generate a similar response and would help and support local retail trade. Funding criteria was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposed grant scheme to support neighbourhood retail centres, as detailed in the report and its Annex, be approved.

### **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

#### **ERG 15/7 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP MINUTES**

The Minutes of the West Kent Partnership meeting held on 23 January 2015 were reviewed and noted with particular reference made to the work achieved at West Kent College. It was also noted that there was no detailed information currently available on European Regional Development Funds.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

#### **ERG 15/8 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm