

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

24 February 2016

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 UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN FOR 2015

To provide a detailed overview of the progress made in delivering the Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan during 2015.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 At the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 23 June 2015, Report ERG 15/13 presented the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan. It was recommended that the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy be approved; subject to a minor amendment to the 'success measure' for securing high speed broadband services across the Borough to reflect the Government's ambition of 95% by 2017.

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

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

1.1.3 It should be noted that information regarding the monitoring of the impact of the strategy – including statistics relating to VAT registrations and de-registrations,

business survival rates and unemployment levels – will be provided at a later date as much of this data is collected annually and the statistics for 2015 have yet to be released.

1.2 Progress to Date

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

1.2.2 By using a RAG analysis of the actions set out in the Strategy, one can see that the only action marked as being 'Red' concerns the ESCALATE 0% interest loan funding. The re-opening of the scheme has been delayed longer than initially expected as there has been insufficient loan payments generated back into Kent County Council in order to create a large enough pot of funding to allocate out again. As such, no progress has been made towards securing external funding for local business in 2015. However, by around April 2016 there should be enough of a funding pot to re-open a new loan scheme for the area.

1.3 Proposed Priorities for 2016/17

1.3.1 The priorities for 2016/17 are to some extent influenced by the limited progress made in specific areas as well as the level of future financial resources.

- To work with Kent County Council to effectively market and promote the **ESCALATE Programme** in the Borough once it becomes operational.
- In an effort to address the small rise in ESA clients during 2015, to place a greater focus on **work readiness** initiatives – specifically expanding on the Jobs and Training Fairs and working with Circle Housing Russet on Jobs Clubs.
- To promote the new **LEADER Programme** to Tonbridge & Malling businesses and to co-ordinate business advice for prospective applicants.
- To build upon the existing **town and retail centres** activity, specifically through further phases of the Tonbridge Town Centre public realm works and re-engaging with businesses in the district centres.
- To further develop the **skills development** discussions in the Borough and feed these in to the West Kent Partnership to create a skills action plan.
- To work with Kent County Council in addressing remaining **broadband** issues and mobile blackspots in the Borough.
- Subject to funding, to help co-ordinate submissions to the Local Growth Fund Round 3 for **infrastructure projects**, including the Leigh Flood Storage Area.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 There are no financial or Value for Money considerations relating to this report.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 Not applicable.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

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

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan update as set out in Appendix 1 and the priorities for 2016/17 as set out under 1.3, **BE ENDORSED.**

The Chief Executive confirms 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,
Economic Regeneration
Officer

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive