

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, 24th February, 2016

Present: Cllr S M King (Chairman), Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr C P Smith, Cllr F G Tombolis and Cllr T C Walker

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, O C Baldock, P F Bolt, V M C Branson, D J Cure, N J Heslop, B J Luker and S C Perry were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S R J Jessel (Vice-Chairman), M C Base, R Betts, J L Botten, R D Lancaster and B W Walker

ERG 16/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

ERG 16/2 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 9 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 16/3 LONDON PARAMOUNT UPDATE

Members were updated on the progress being made on the London Paramount development by the representative from the socio-economic consultants Volterra (Ellie Evans).

The presentation set out the potential opportunities for West Kent including direct and indirect local employment, international and domestic tourism and retail and leisure opportunities. It was intended that the theme park would have a wide range of rides and attractions, onsite hotels, entertainment, retail and food and beverage.

Construction would start in 2017 with an anticipated finish in 2021.

Members raised concerns that the Paramount Park development could have adverse implications for the local housing development/construction programme, increase demand for public transport around Ebbsfleet, require improvements to the surrounding road network and public transport links and have a potentially negative

effect on West Kent tourism. Reference was also made to the potential impacts as a result of the proposals for the Dartford Crossing.

It was indicated that active engagement was ongoing with various agencies, including Highways England, to reduce and mitigate any potential negative impacts and to encourage positive outcomes for as many as possible.

ERG 16/4 TONBRIDGE TOWN TEAM

The Chairman of the Tonbridge Town Team (Howard Porter) reminded Members that the Team had been established as a result of the Portas Review in 2011. The main aim of the organisation was to help make Tonbridge a vibrant and exciting place to live, work, visit and do business and to support the Borough Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy.

Successful initiatives since the establishment of the Town Team included the Taste of Tonbridge, the launch of a Loyalty Card to use in local shops, the popular Dragon Boat Race, the establishment of the Angel Centre Gardens, work with Dementia Friendly, Tonbridge and the recent introduction of the new What's on in Tonbridge magazine. All of these projects were intended to encourage footfall to the town by raising its profile and to support and develop local businesses.

Future ideas included the development of a Tonbridge app, a local Business Hub website and a brochure to encourage inward investment into the town.

Particular reference was made to the positive impact that Farmers Markets had on local retail centres as they were low risk, attracted visitors and encouraged business start-up. There were 50 markets in Kent with 600 producers involved. It was noted that Tonbridge and Malling had 6 Farmers Markets in: Tonbridge, which was the largest, West Malling, Hildenborough, Shipbourne, Offham and Aylesford. Average spend over a month was £50,000 which demonstrated what small pop up business could achieve.

Future challenges for the Farmers Market organisation were addressing the impacts of online shopping, improving promotion and marketing and adapting to new technologies such as social media.

Members discussed issues around the challenges in attracting and retaining good quality retailers to Tonbridge, promoting the town throughout the Borough and being careful not to negatively impact on other local retail centres.

The Town Team would continue to explore all funding opportunities and to support the Borough Council in attracting investment to the Town by encouraging a busy and vibrant High Street.

Finally, the Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration recognised the value and contribution of the Tonbridge Town Team and any increase in the number of visitors to the town was to be welcomed.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET

ERG 16/5 UPDATE ON THE BOROUGH ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2015

Decision Notice: D160024MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided a detailed overview of the progress made in delivering the Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan during 2015.

Overall good progress was being made on a wide range of initiatives as illustrated in Appendix 1 to the report. Particular reference was made to the Escalate 0% interest loan funding as the re-opening of the scheme had been delayed longer than initially expected. This was due to the insufficient loan payments generated back into Kent County Council which was needed to create a new funding 'pot' for further allocation. However, it was anticipated that the scheme would re-open in April 2016.

In addition, the proposed priorities for 2016/17 were set out and took account of the limited progress made in specific areas as well as the level of future financial resources.

Members expressed concern regarding funding for flood protection and the Leigh Flood Storage Area (LFSA). The Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration indicated that further clarity around the deliverability of the LFSA scheme might be available at the Kent Flood Forum on 10 March 2016.

With regard to broadband services across the Borough it was reported that Phase 2 would focus on Kings Hill, where the current service was inconsistent. Members asked that the County Council liaise with local Borough and Parish Councillors as well as any landlord and landowner.

Finally, Members welcomed the new and improved signage at local retail centres such as Aylesford and Ditton which had received positive feedback for traders.

RECOMMENDED: That the Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan update as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the priorities for 2016/17 set out in paragraph 1.3 be endorsed.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION

ERG 16/6 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP - MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2016

The Minutes of the West Kent Partnership meeting held on 22 January 2016 were reviewed and noted.

Reference was made to a 'Growth Hub' and Members were advised that this was a website based signposting service supported by Kent Invicta Chamber.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE

ERG 16/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm