

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

26 February 2014

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 LOCAL RETAIL CENTRES – ENGAGEMENT

To provide an update on the engagement with traders from the Borough's local retail centres and to agree a revised process for approving applications for grant support.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A process of engaging with traders from the Borough's local retail centres was agreed at the meeting of this Board in July 2013. The intention was to seek views from traders and other interested parties, including Parish Councils, about the strengths and weaknesses of each centre and to explore how the Borough Council might assist with the offer of some grant support.

1.2 Update

1.2.1 Meetings have now been held with West Malling Chamber of Commerce, Snodland Chamber of Commerce, Martin Square Traders Association, and informal traders groups in Borough Green, Wrotham, Hadlow, and Aylesford. Two further meetings are being arranged with East Peckham and Kings Hill traders.

1.2.2 All meetings held to date have resulted in positive and productive discussions. The main issues arising for each centre can be summarised below:

West Malling – parking issues, need to help promote independent traders, need for wider marketing/advertising for the centre, some concerns about anti-social behaviour.

Snodland – need to upgrade street furniture, organise a wider range of markets to attract more trade, more marketing of the centre, road signage from the bypass, possible interest in a local loyalty scheme.

Martin Square – concern about long term parking in the square, need to link with traders on the A20, concern about potential loss of library which helps generate trade, disabled access to shops, street lighting issues.

Borough Green – need to form new traders group possibly to include Wrotham, organise local events eg wedding fair, interested in loyalty card scheme, local marketing/business directory.

Wrotham – additional local events such as a Farmers' Market, improved shop signage, signage to the village from main roads and the Pilgrims' Way, new bus shelter with local information.

Hadlow – lack of short stay parking reducing passing trade, need for additional car parking spaces, loss of local shops, need for better parking enforcement.

Aylesford – need to promote village to local residents via marketing, re-launch of annual events eg annual festival, develop a website, better signage to the centre, street cleaning issues, need for a formal traders group.

1.3 Grant Funding

1.3.1 As agreed at the meeting of this Board in November 2013, local traders groups have been advised that grant support of up to £7,500 is available for them to bid for. This offer of support had been well received by local traders and each group engaged with to date are now working on applications. Feedback, however, suggests that the original deadline of the 31st March to receive grant applications may be difficult to achieve for some groups, particularly where meetings have only just taken place. In the light of this, it is suggested that late applications beyond the original deadline should now be accepted. To enable grant decisions to be made quickly and funds released to local groups without further delay, it is suggested that authority be delegated to the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance, Innovation and Property to determine grant applications and for those decisions to be reported to a future meeting of this Board for information.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 Assessed when grant support to local centres was agreed.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 n/a

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the outcome of discussions with local traders held to date **BE NOTED** and that authority **BE DELEGATED** to the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance and Transformation to make decisions regarding applications for grant support from local traders groups.

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:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Not relevant to the subject of this report.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.