

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

**06 July 2017**

**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 NORTH KENT ENTERPRISE ZONE**

**To provide an update on progress with the North Kent Enterprise Zone initiative (which includes a site at Rochester Airfield), and approve next steps in the delivery of the project.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 Established in 2012, Enterprise Zones (EZ) are at the heart of the Government's long-term economic plan, supporting businesses to grow. Since starting in April 2012 they have attracted over £2.4 billion pounds of private sector investment, building world class business facilities and transport links and attracting over 24,000 jobs. The success of the programme led to more Enterprise Zones being announced in the Autumn Statement in 2015 and in the March 2016 Budget. By April 2017, 48 Enterprise Zones were in place across the country.

1.1.2 Businesses that locate on an Enterprise Zone can potentially access a number of benefits:

- Up to 100% business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5-year period.
- Simplified local authority planning, for example, through Local Development Orders that grant automatic planning permission for certain development (such as new industrial buildings or changing how existing buildings are used) within specified areas.
- Government support to ensure that superfast broadband is rolled out throughout the zone, and, if necessary, public funding.
- 100% enhanced capital allowances (tax relief) to businesses making large investments in plant and machinery on 8 Zones in Assisted Areas (these fall outside of the North Kent Enterprise Zone area).

## **1.2 North Kent Enterprise Zone**

- 1.2.1 In September 2015, an Enterprise Zone bid was submitted by the Thames Kent Gateway Partnership to the Department for Communities and Local Government. The bid proposed a 'North Kent Enterprise Zone' comprising sites in three locations – Kent Medical Campus (Maidstone), Ebbsfleet Garden City and Rochester Airfield. An announcement was made by Government in November 2015 that this submission had been successful.
- 1.2.2 Whilst owned by Medway Council, a small section of the Rochester Airfield site falls within Tonbridge & Malling Borough (see Appendix 1) and as such the Borough Council supported the bid submission and is currently represented on the project working group and keeps a watching brief of progress.
- 1.2.3 With the North Kent Enterprise Zone going 'live' on 01 April 2017, the 'Rochester Airport Technology Park' site is currently being promoted as offering "high-value technology, engineering, manufacturing and knowledge-intensive businesses the opportunity to grow in a bespoke commercial development with a collaborative business environment". One of the main promotional tools is the new website – [www.northkententerprisezone.co.uk](http://www.northkententerprisezone.co.uk) which is designed to provide outline information for each site and signpost visitors to the sites for individual schemes where they exist.
- 1.2.4 To date, progress on taking this site forward has been delayed. However, planning consent was given in March 2017 for the first stage of airport redevelopment (hangar replacement and refurbishment) and work on implementing this permission is due to commence shortly. A second stage application is expected to be submitted later in the year, taking account of ecological and other studies which have been undertaken.
- 1.2.5 Work is also currently being undertaken to design a masterplan for the site, which will give an indication of the layout and density of development. Once this has been produced, it will provide a good indication of how the area of the site within our borough could come forward for development.
- 1.2.6 Medway Council are interested in pursuing a Local Development Order (LDO) for the entire site. An LDO is effectively a permitted development tool for particular activities within a defined location which aims to simplify processes and provide certainty for potential investors, developers and businesses. We expect a formal approach from Medway Council about applying the LDO to the area that falls within Tonbridge & Malling Borough shortly. Once this information is received, this matter will go to the relevant committee for consideration.

## **1.3 Accountable Body Role**

- 1.3.1 The Accountable Body for the North Kent Enterprise Zone is Maidstone Borough Council. At a recent project working group meeting, a formal request was made by Maidstone Borough Council for contributions towards the cost of this role. These

costs are essentially legal, financial and administrative. The level of proposed contribution was pitched at £4,000 per site per annum.

- 1.3.2 Given that the majority of the Rochester Airfield site falls within the Medway Council area, it is proposed that a 15% contribution be made towards this cost. This would equate to £600 per annum, which can be met through existing economic development budgets.

#### **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 These are addressed in Section 1.3.2 of 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 updated information in this report **BE NOTED**.
- 1.8.2 That the support given to the North Kent Enterprise Zone to date **BE ENDORSED**.
- 1.8.3 That the proposal to contribute £600 per annum towards the Accountable Body function **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:

None

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