

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

06 September 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 VILLAGE STORES INITIATIVE

This report sets out the progress that has been made on the Village Stores Initiative over the course of the 12 month pilot project, and puts forward potential next steps.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In September 2016, the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board approved the recommendation to proceed with a pilot project aimed at supporting our village stores in partnership with Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK).

1.1.2 The offer to local stores has focussed specifically on 1-to-1 guidance and support from a specialist retail advisor on:

- business planning
- store layout
- product sourcing
- networking with other retailers
- diversification

1.1.3 It was estimated that of the 20 retail businesses identified around 6 or 7 would take up the full range of services within the offer. The scheme was costed up at £3,700 with a 25% contribution being made by ACRK from other funded programmes.

1.2 Progress to Date

1.2.1 Once approval for the project had been given, promotional material was produced and an initial tranche of 10 village stores were contacted to offer them advice and support. Surprisingly, the take up of this support was high, with 7 stores responding positively.

1.2.2 The stores that the business advisor has been working with closely are:

- East Peckham News

- East Peckham Butchers and Stores
- Plaxtol Village Stores
- Little Market, Leybourne
- Watlington Post Office
- The Handy Store, Watlington
- Wouldham Village Store

1.2.3 Further information is set out in Appendix 1 on the level of support received by each of the above businesses and the ensuing actions. Due to the confidential nature of this information, this appendix is not publicly available and as such sits under Part 2 of the agenda, falling under the remit of the Local Government Act 1972 – Schedule 12A Paragraph 3 – Financial or business affairs of any particular person.

1.3 Proposed Next Steps

1.3.1 To date, the initiative has been of great success and has been well received by the 7 village stores that have taken up the offer. Full case studies and promotion of the pilot initiative are being produced by ACRK.

1.3.2 The availability of LEADER grant funding for the majority of the stores (unfortunately Leybourne is outside the eligible area) has meant that the support provided has been well timed to help support with capital investment in these stores.

1.3.3 Due to the high take up of the initiative amongst the initial tranche of village shops that were contacted, the level of support required and the benefits that have been delivered to date, it is proposed that this initiative be extended to a second phase in order to ensure that further village stores in the borough benefit for the support on offer.

1.3.4 Discussions with ACRK have concluded that a contribution of £2,800 would enable the initiative to extend into an additional phase that would be delivered over a 12 month period from September 2017. This would be taken from 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 1.3.4 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 an additional phase of the Village Stores Initiative **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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