

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

06 September 2017

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JULY 2017.

1.1 Minutes

1.1.1 The minutes of the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 28th July 2017 are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

1.1.2 In summary, the meeting focused on the following issues:

(a) skills issues across the West Kent area including the need to create more effective links between employers and skills providers including schools and colleges;

(b) the development of sector-based skills initiatives by employer groups led by a number of 'Guilds' across the County;

(c) the need to engage local SMEs in discussions about skills needs and future recruitment given that West Kent business sector comprises of over 80% of SME companies.

1.1.3 The meeting also discussed the recently launched Kent and Medway Business Fund which is now providing loans to local businesses to assist with growth and expansion plans. This county-wide programme has replaced earlier schemes for different parts of Kent including the former 'Escalate' programme in West Kent. Recycled funding from those schemes, from repaid loans, is now funding the new Kent-wide scheme.

1.1.4 After the West Kent Partnership meeting, the launch of the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network took place. As reported to this Board at your February meeting, this new, and much needed, initiative will provide a co-ordinator and a network of volunteer advisers across the area whose aim will be to forge and sustain more effective and long lasting links between local schools and local employers. This aims both to help young people with career choices and to meet the skills needs of our local businesses.

- 1.1.5 Support and funding for the West Kent Network has been provided by the three West Kent district councils, the West Kent Partnership, the Hadlow Group and KCC. Further updates on this programme and the progress being achieved will be made to future meetings of this Board.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive