

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

**21 February 2018**

**Report of the Chief Executive**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Information**

**1 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP - MINUTES**

**Setting out the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 The minutes of the recent meeting of the West Kent Partnership are attached as Annex 1 to this report.

1.1.2 The meeting dealt with a number of issues which included:

- A presentation from the Greensand Distillery in Shipbourne which was recently awarded funding from the West Kent LEADER programme;
- An update on business support initiatives which included the Kent and Medway Business Fund which provides loan capital for businesses investing in new technologies etc, and the South East Business Boost programme which will provide advice and support for both new and established businesses in the Borough;
- Engagement with Gatwick Airport including the company's desire to forge stronger links and future joint working with the West Kent area; and,
- Updates on a number of on-going initiatives including the Growth and Infrastructure Fund (GIF), and the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network which seeks to forge links between schools and local businesses.

1.1.3 The meeting also discussed issues related to the recently issued invitation to tender for the new South East Rail franchise. This has indicated that current fast speed services via Snodland Station could be reduced to 2 peak hour trains instead of 3 or, as an alternative, the entire fast speed service from Maidstone West could be removed entirely and replaced by a service from Maidstone West to Abbey Wood.

- 1.1.4 The West Kent Partnership raised concerns about the potential diminution of these important services which served many settlements in the Medway Valley. It was also noted that new housing developments at Holborough and Peters Village, along with additional potential new development in the area being brought forward by the Local Plan would mean demand for these services would significantly increase in the near future. It was therefore agreed that the Chairman would raise these concerns with the three bidders for the franchise and would also raise this with other partners including local MPs.

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