

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

04 June 2018

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 WEST KENT PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

This report sets out the initial thoughts on the refresh of the West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth Strategy and seeks views on future priority areas.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In September 2015, the council endorsed the transformational priorities set out in the West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth 2015-2018 strategy document. This document has subsequently been used to illustrate a strong strategic case for investment within the borough (within the context of West Kent), and has helped in securing Local Growth Fund Round 3 funding for improvements to key infrastructure, such as flood defences and the road network.
- 1.1.2 The progress that has been made provides a strong foundation for further developing and refining the case in order to attract further investment within West Kent. In addition, since the Industrial Strategy White Paper was published in November 2017, there is a need to ensure that there is greater alignment with the current thinking nationally on how to boost productivity and grow the economy.
- 1.1.3 As such, the West Kent Partnership have decided to carry out a refresh of the existing strategy and to give consideration to an updated set of priorities for investment which are required to create the right environment for local businesses to thrive and create local growth.

1.2 Proposed Focus

- 1.2.1 As the refresh of the document is in its embryonic stages, little more than a proposed structure and key potential areas of focus have been produced. However, there is sufficient information at this stage to obtain a clear indication of the direction of travel.

1.2.2 The proposed objective for the West Kent Partnership is to create:

“A dynamic and well connected economy, a key location for business growth where businesses are supported to innovate and thrive and our local population has access to quality jobs and skills development”

1.2.3 The West Kent Partnership is proposing to use the ‘5 pillars’ of the Industrial Strategy in order to meet this objective and structure the strategy, essentially supporting businesses to maintain and enhance productivity through:

- **Ideas:** securing investment and funding to underpin innovation and growth through helping facilitate business access to innovation investment and promote strong local links with the Research & Development sector and Further and Higher Education establishments.
- **People:** delivering the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network to secure our future workforce and championing (re)training in the workplace for older people
- **Infrastructure:** demonstrating the need for infrastructure and transport investment for West Kent at a local, county and regional level – including improvements to the road and rail network, as well as upgrades to the broadband infrastructure.
- **Business Environment:** delivering an environment that supports start-ups and stimulates growth through the provision of live/work space, business incubator and grow-on space; the availability of business support and advice; and regular communication and networking.
- **Place:** engendering a strong West Kent sense of place and ensuring quality of life is maintained with a balanced approach to development and equal opportunity for all by supporting vibrant town centres, bringing forward key locations for growth and reducing levels of deprivation in priority wards.

1.2.4 In addition, it is proposed that the following place-specific initiatives within our borough are flagged up as priority investment projects:

- River Medway Flood Storage Area
- NIAB East Malling Research Biotech Hub
- Innovation Park Medway (Rochester Airfield)
- Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration

1.3 Next Steps

1.3.1 The West Kent Partnership is aiming to produce a draft of the refreshed West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth Strategy by autumn 2018. This document will then

come to the next Economic Regeneration Advisory Board in September 2018 for further comment.

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 no financial implications arising from the 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

1.9.1 That the proposed outline structure, objectives and priorities of the refreshed West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth Strategy as set out in this report **BE SUPPORTED**.

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.

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