
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Economic Regeneration Strategy – Consultation Draft

2019 - 2023



CONSULTATION DRAFT

Foreword - Economic Regeneration in Tonbridge and Malling: The Need for a Strategy

When the Borough Council adopted Economic Regeneration as a new key priority in 2012/13, we set to work with our partners across the County and West Kent to implement our strategy, which included large a range of initiatives aimed at supporting business start-up and growth. Over the course of this strategy, we managed a number of successes, including:

- Securing Local Growth Funding towards improved flood defences at Leigh and Hildenborough.
- Delivering Public Realm improvements in Tonbridge – including the High Street, River Walk and Town Lock.
- Delivering improvements to Snodland and Tonbridge Stations.
- Establishing the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network and associated events, such as Skillsfest and Skills 30:30.
- Opening and full occupation of The Castle Lodge co-working space for small businesses.
- Introduction of new Jobs and Training Fairs in partnership with JobCentre Plus.
- Improved engagement with local businesses through our networking events and monthly e-bulletin.

However, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. There are a number of challenges that we still face, for example, the need to improve skills attainment and increase our 3-year business survival rates.

This strategy for 2019-2023 sets out the economic initiatives the Council will undertake with its partners to help create a strong, dynamic and inclusive economy that fosters sustainable growth in the borough over the next 4 years.

We will keep the strategy under close review and report on progress on the actions we set out on an annual basis.



Nicolas Heslop, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration

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Appendix 1: List of Key Partners

1. Our Local Economy

In order to make sure we provide the right kind of support to local businesses and add genuine value, it is essential that we understand the key aspects of the local economy. In doing so, it is recognised that Tonbridge and Malling does not represent a self-contained functional economic area, but forms part of the wider West Kent economy – indeed, there is a high level of inter-relatedness between the various parts of West Kent, as well as strong link between the towns and villages in the north of the Borough with Medway and Maidstone.

Analysis of the Borough's current economic profile highlights the following:

- **Strong strategic communications network:** One of the key attractions of Tonbridge and Malling is connectivity. Served by the M2, M20 and M26, movement around the UK and to nearby ports – Gatwick, Eurotunnel (Folkestone) and Dover – is straightforward. Tonbridge has the busiest railway station in Kent, with well over 4.4 million journeys in 2017. In the north of the district, direct services to St Pancras International on High Speed Javelin trains from Maidstone West began calling at Snodland during the morning and evening peak Monday to Friday in December 2014. Direct trains into London Victoria and to Ashford International also serve Barming, East Malling, West Malling and Borough Green & Wrotham railway stations.
- **Key Sectors:** The retail, business administration and support sectors support the highest levels of employment in the borough, with financial and insurance and wholesale industries prevalent in the local economy relative to the wider South East. While there has been limited overall growth in employment over recent years, financial and insurance and professional, scientific and technical sectors have seen relatively significant levels of employment growth, with strong proportionate growth in wholesale industries.

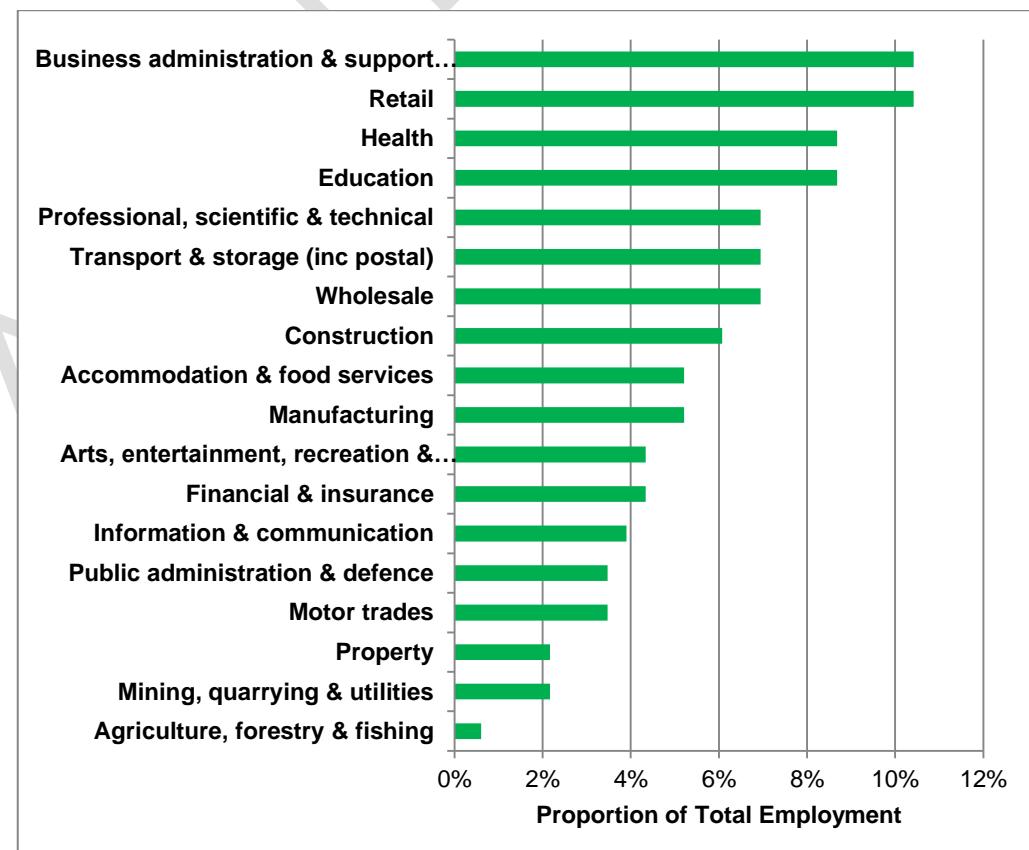


Figure 1: Key Sectors in Tonbridge and Malling

- Recent economic growth:** Local growth in employment between 2009 and 2015 has been relatively flat, with an increase of 3.6% over the course of this period. Further analysis shows that this falls notably below the level of growth seen over the same period in the South East LEP (6%) and West Kent (12%).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Employment	56,000	57,000	58,000	54,000	57,000	56,000	58,000
Change		+1,000	+1,000	-4,000	+3,000	-1,000	+2,000
Total change 2009 – 2015							+2,000
% change 2009 – 2015							3.6%

Table 1: Employment Change 2009-2015

Since 2010, the number of businesses in the borough has increased by 18%. While this surpassed the level of growth recorded across West Kent (15%), the number of enterprises in the South East LEP grew at a slightly faster rate (19%).

In Tonbridge and Malling, growth was primarily driven by a strong increase in the number of micro businesses, with more limited growth in the number of small and medium enterprises as shown in the following chart. The number of large enterprises employing more than 250 people grew by one quarter, albeit from a comparatively small base.

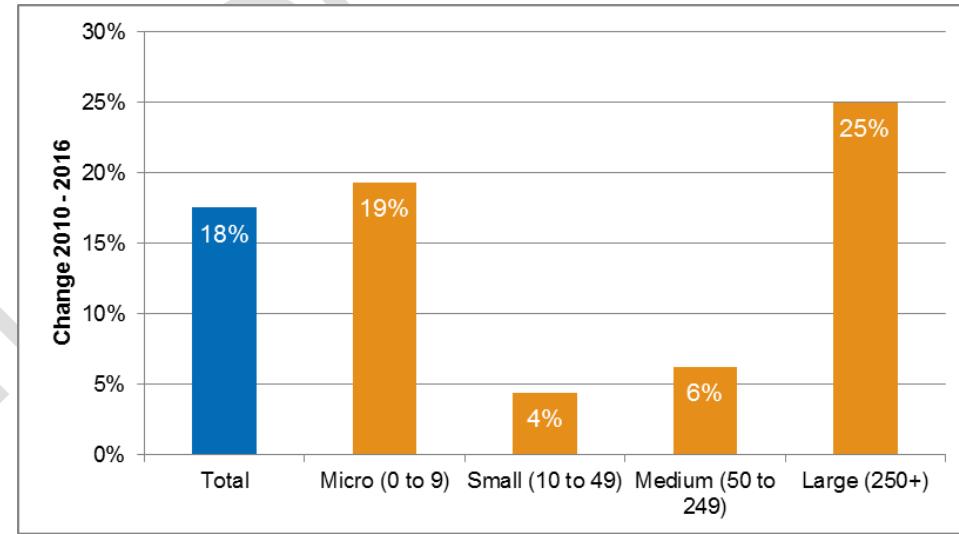


Figure 2: Business Growth 2010-2015

However, this growth does hide a high degree of churn within the local economy, with high levels of business birth and medium to high levels of business deaths. The three-year survival rate for businesses in the borough tends to fluctuate around 60-65% of business start-ups lasting for at least this length of time, this compares with around 58-63% in Kent and around 60% nationally.

- The role of small business:** The majority of businesses in Tonbridge and Malling employ fewer than 10 people, reflecting wider trends in West Kent and the South East. However, small and medium enterprises – employing between 10 and 249 people – are slightly more prevalent in the borough, relative to these comparator areas. However, small businesses continue to be the backbone of the Borough's economy

	Enterprises	%	West Kent %	South East LEP %
Micro (0 to 9 employees)	4,850	89%	90%	90%
Small (10 to 49)	475	9%	8%	8%
Medium (50 to 249)	85	2%	1%	1%
Large (250+)	25	0%	0%	0%
Total	5,430	100%	100%	100%

Table 2: Business Demography

- High weekly earning rates:** Comparatively high earnings are estimated for residents of Tonbridge and Malling in full-time employment, surpassing neighbouring West Kent authorities and the South East LEP. There is, however, variance between the earnings of those living and working in the borough, suggesting that a significant proportion of residents commute elsewhere for higher paid employment opportunities. This is borne out in the most recent statistics (Census 2011), which showed that, at the time, nearly two-thirds of residents commuted out of the borough for work (mostly to Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Westminster and Tunbridge Wells).

Table 3: Residence-based and Workplace-based Weekly Earnings

	Residence-based	Workplace-based
Tonbridge and Malling	£33,372	£28,236
Sevenoaks	£30,989	–
Tunbridge Wells	£29,962	£27,812
South East LEP	£29,778	£26,751

- **Pockets of Deprivation:** The Borough is not characterised by high levels of deprivation, ranking within the 20% least deprived authorities in England. However, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015, there are small pockets of Tonbridge and Malling that do have challenges (these show up in a darker shade of red on Figure 3). Most notably, these include parts of Ditton, Snodland, East Malling, North Tonbridge.

These areas of the Borough are characterised by comparatively higher rates of worklessness and lower rates of higher level skills attainment.

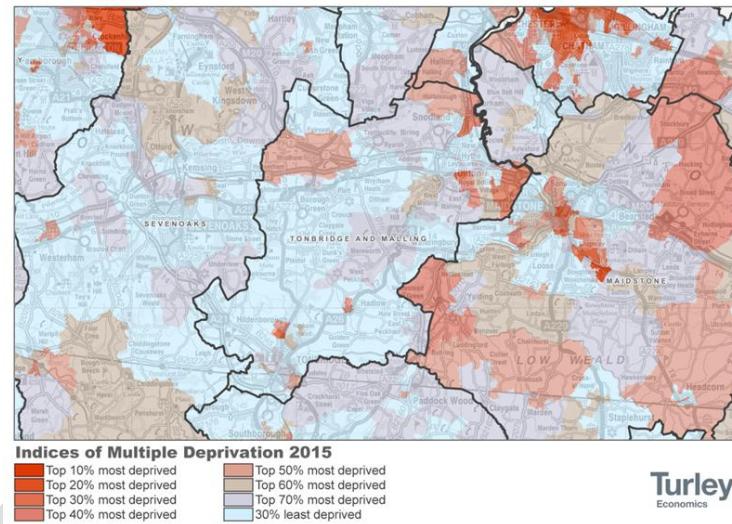


Figure 3: Map of Deprivation in Tonbridge and Malling

- **Economic Vibrancy:** The Economic Vibrancy Index was devised by Grant Thornton in 2018 to provide an overview of economic performance, looking beyond Gross Domestic Product and encapsulating some of the broader indicators of economic success. Taking all the various indicators into consideration, Tonbridge and Malling Borough was the best performing area of Kent, and across the whole of England was ranked as follows:

- Vibrant Economy Index – 45 out of 324 local authority areas
- Prosperity – 46th
- Dynamism and Opportunity – 50th
- Inclusion and Equality – 61st
- Health, Well-Being and Happiness – 40th
- Resilience and Sustainability – 76th
- Community, Trust and Belonging – 156th

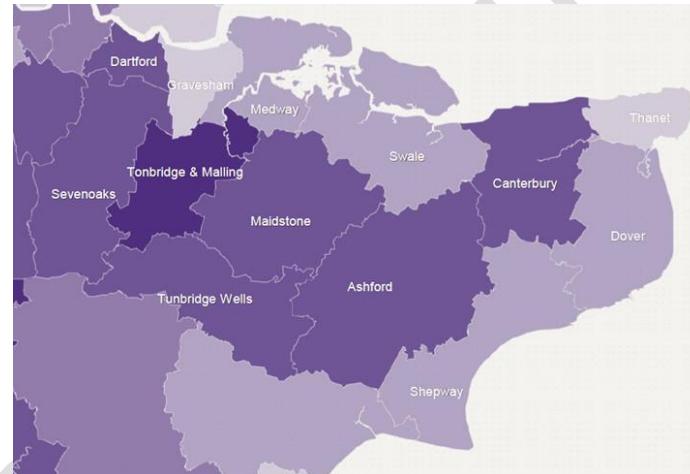


Figure 4: Map showing Vibrant Economy Index Scoring

2. Working with Our Partners

The Borough Council recognises the key role it has to play in supporting sustainable growth in the local economy, both in terms of setting a strategic framework for investment as well as through the various initiatives it undertakes in order to create added-value. However, our positive impact can only really be maximised by working in partnership with a range of partners that also play an equally important role in creating positive change. As such, we are committed to working with a wide range of partners to achieve the actions set out in this strategy. The following are key strategic partnerships that the Borough Council engages with on a regular basis:

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP): is one of 39 business-led public/private partnerships set up by government to make investments and deliver activities to drive growth and create local jobs. SELEP covers Kent, Essex, East Sussex, Medway, Thurrock and Southend and is the biggest Local Enterprise Partnership outside of London. Recent investments into Tonbridge and Malling which have benefited from funding via the SELEP have included Tonbridge town centre improvements (Tonbridge High Street and River Walk) and Tonbridge Station. Funding has also been awarded to Rochester Airport and Leigh Flood Storage Area (including Hildenborough).

Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP): was set up in 2013 as one of the four federated partnerships which comprises the SELEP. KMEP is focussed on driving forward economic growth and prosperity in Kent and Medway and is governed by a Board and chaired by the private sector, with membership drawn from business, local government, further and higher education establishments. KMEP is responsible for delivering the objectives set out in Kent and Medway's Growth Plan.

West Kent Partnership (WKP): is the strategic economic partnership covering the local authority areas of Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells. The WKP vision for West Kent is to sustain a dynamic and well-connected local economy, to ensure that West Kent remains a key location for business success and growth, and to facilitate access to quality jobs and skills development. The three boroughs work closely together to make the most of the resources available to them in order to deliver more for our local businesses. The partnership has been successful in obtaining funding for a number of initiatives, such as West Kent LEADER and the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network.

In addition, there are a number of key partners that the Borough Council works with directly to deliver initiatives or to support work in a specific area of the local economy. A list of these partners is provided in Appendix 1.

3. Policy Context

It is important to recognise that this Economic Regeneration Strategy will be delivered within the context of a wider policy framework. The table below provides a brief overview of the key messages coming from relevant national, regional and sub-regional strategies that look to address a range of issues affecting the economy:

	Policy Document	Organisation	Key Messages
National	Industrial Strategy White Paper	HM Government	5 foundations of productivity are set out to achieve a transformed economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideas: the world's most innovative economy• People: good jobs and greater earning power for all• Infrastructure: a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure• Business environment: the best place to start and grow a business.• Places: prosperous communities across the UK

Regional	Strategic Economic Plan	SELEP	Currently the most up to date SEP is the 2014 version, which prioritises: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially increasing the delivery of housing and commercial developments; • Delivering transport and broadband infrastructure to unlock growth; • Backing business expansion through better access to finance and support; and • Delivering the skills that the local economy needs
	Skills Strategy	SELEP	Provides a regional focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications for all ages. • Simplifying the skills landscape for employers and individuals. • Enabling all in society to access training and employment • Raising the profile of our key sectors • Fostering the spirit of pride, innovation and enthusiasm to bring about growth.
Sub-Regional	Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth	KMEP	Sets out 4 key areas of intervention to help Kent realise its potential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major investment in transport infrastructure • Bring forward strategic (Highways Agency) schemes where they impede growth • Public sector-backed Development Fund – providing investment • New solutions to open up housing delivery • Measures to tackle concentrations of deprivation and housing market failure in coastal Kent
	Kent & Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework	KCC	Sets out the level of investment in infrastructure (such as transport, education, health and social care, utilities) required in the county for the period up to 2031 in order to accommodate planned housing growth, and the current gap in funding in order to deliver this (in the region of £4 bn)
	Kent Adult Skills Strategy	KCC	Sets out the aim to reduce unemployment and improve adult skills levels in the county by 2023.

	West Kent Priorities for Growth	WKP	<p>Aims to create “<i>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</i>”</p> <p>Priority projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River Medway Flood Storage Area • NIAB East Malling Research Biotech Hub • Innovation Park Medway (Rochester Airfield) • Tonbridge Town Centre Regeneration
	Corporate Plan	TMBC	Identifies Economic Regeneration as a key priority of the Borough Council.

Key Issues

Despite having a relatively successful and resilient local economy, there are a number of challenges that the Borough faces, and which need to be addressed if the area is to continue to enjoy a high degree of prosperity. These include:

- The rate of **commercial development** coming forward is currently insufficient to meet the growing demand, and yet at the same time, existing commercial premises are being lost to residential conversions, especially in Tonbridge.
- In order to accommodate future housing and commercial developments, it is essential that **essential infrastructure** is delivered in order to create high quality, attractive environments for both residents and businesses. Without this investment, our existing infrastructure will eventually become insufficient to meet local needs.
- In a changing world, where automation is replacing some lower skilled work and generating new opportunities, it is important that our current crop of students and existing workforce do not get left behind. **Skills attainment** in the borough is higher than the average for Kent as a whole,

but still lags behind that for the rest of the South East, and as such action is urgently needed to provide effective careers guidance and deliver opportunities for upskilling and interaction between employers and residents.

- Although the Borough benefits from an extremely entrepreneurial spirit – with business creation being very high – the survival rates for these businesses is not as high as it could be. Indeed, only around 60-65% of businesses in the borough last 3 years or more. Whilst a high business churn is not always necessarily a bad sign, it does indicate that there is a need for greater **business support and advice**.
- Our **town centres** are evolving in response to how people now shop. With an increased number of transactions online, our High Streets are no longer ‘retail centres’, but are evolving into places where people go to get an ‘experience’, be it having a coffee, visiting the gym or enjoying a meal out. Whilst a lot of this change is happening organically, it is important that we continue to support our businesses through these changes by making our town centres attractive places to visit.
- Whilst the borough has some great **tourism** assets, such as Ightham Mote, Tonbridge Castle, the Hop Farm and Buckmore Park, Tonbridge and Malling does not have a particularly high tourism profile, especially in comparison with other parts of Kent.
- There are some fantastic businesses in our rural areas, however there are a number of constraints to our **rural economy**, these include areas of poor broadband provision and access to finance. In addition, in a number of our villages, the traditional village shop is in danger of disappearing as shopping patterns evolve. In addition to providing an economic function, these stores are also often at the heart of the community.

Objectives

Using the ‘key issues’ highlighted in the previous section as a starting point, the Borough Council has identified the following objectives to help support the local economy over the next 4 years:

- To **plan for future economic growth** so that it supports the needs of the local economy, enabling it to remain competitive and create quality local jobs: the TMBC Local Plan evidence base highlights the need for an additional 46ha of employment space which will need to be met through the allocation of new sites and the intensification of existing sites. These sites include Innovation Park Medway (formerly Rochester Airfield), the former Aylesford Newsprint site and East Malling Research Station.
- To obtain **funding for key infrastructure**, be it from developer contributions or Central Government, to support planned growth and address existing capacity issues. In collaboration with Kent County Council and other strategic partners, the borough council has had considerable success in accessing government funding for road, rail and flood protection schemes. These relationships will need to continue to bear fruit, if not become even more fruitful, in order to ensure there is investment in our infrastructure.

- To embrace the **skills and work readiness** agenda and work directly with schools, local businesses and business representative organisations to develop careers advice that is business-relevant, develop initiatives that provide regular contact between students and employers, and run events that open up new employment opportunities for local residents.
- To create an environment that **supports local business**, providing them with cost-effective information that gives straightforward access to business advice, funding opportunities, council-run networking events and, where possible, to also help with finding business premises that meets their needs.
- To undertake a range of initiatives in our **town centres** that help with their vitality and viability, and help to make them resilient during a time of change.
- To promote the **visitor economy** and, in partnership with Visit Kent, to support campaigns that help to raise the profile of the area as a visitor destination.
- To support the **rural economy** through the delivery of funding and support programmes, and lobbying on rural broadband issues

Action Plan – Priority Actions

Objective	Action	Timescale	TMBC Partners	Success Measure
Planning for Economic Growth	Support the development of a new Tonbridge and Malling Local Plan, including the identification of new employment sites and the protection of existing sites.	2019	Adjoining Local Authorities Town and Parish Councils Local Businesses and Land Owners	Allocation of sufficient sites for employment uses. Adoption of the Local Plan.
	Implementation of the North Kent Enterprise Zone (Innovation Park Medway)	2022	Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Medway Council South East LEP	No. of new businesses relocating to Innovation Park Medway.
	Bring new economic life into the former Aylesford Newsprint site.	2023	Site owner Locate in Kent	No. of new businesses relocating to the former Aylesford Newsprint site.
	Support the development of a new research campus and	2023	NIAB EMR and the East	Creation of masterplan for the

	associated inward investment at East Malling.		Malling Trust	campus. No. of new sector-specific businesses on site.
	Foster additional inward investment to the Borough via the promotion of vacant sites and existing premises.	Ongoing	Locate In Kent	% increase in the number of inward investment projects handled by Locate in Kent.
Funding for Key Infrastructure	Implementation of the Leigh Flood Storage Area and Hildenborough improvements.	2020-2023	Environment Agency Kent County Council Local Businesses Local Residents	Delivery of scheme.
	Design and implementation of viable flood relief scheme in East Peckham	Ongoing	Environment Agency Kent County Council Local Businesses Local Residents	Progress towards implementation.
	Delivery of SMART Motorway between Junctions 3 and 5 of the M20	2020	Highways England	Delivery of Scheme
	Identify a pipeline of potential projects to support key transport infrastructure.	2023	West Kent Partnership SELEP	2 priority schemes funded over the strategy period.
Skills and Work Readiness	Support the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network (WKEAN)	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Careers & Enterprise Company Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC Local Employers Local Secondary Schools	No of schools engaged in the initiative and supported by an Enterprise Adviser
	Deliver 2 Skills 3030 events per year in local schools	Annual Event	Federation of Small Business WKEAN Local Employers Local Schools	No of employers attending No of students participating
	Deliver the West Kent Skillsfest event	Annual Event	West Kent Partnership Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC Local Employers Local Secondary Schools	No of employers attending No of schools participating
	Deliver 2 West Kent Jobs and Training Fairs per year - Spring: alternate between Tonbridge and Sevenoaks - Autumn: Tunbridge Wells	Annual Events	West Kent Partnership Tunbridge Wells BC Sevenoaks DC JobCentre Plus Local Employers	No. of employers attending No. of Job Seekers attending No. of people entering employment or training

	Deliver 1 local Jobs and Training Fair per year	Annual Event	Training Providers JobCentre Plus RBLI Local Employers Training Providers	No. of employers attending No. of Job Seekers attending No. of people entering employment or training
Supporting Business	Deliver 4 business engagement events in the borough per year	Ongoing	Local Businesses and Business Representative Organisations.	No. of events per year No of businesses attending.
	Produce a monthly business e-bulletin	Monthly		No of e-bulletins produced No of businesses reading the e-bulletin.
	Maintain the TMBC Business webpages	Ongoing		No of visits per year.
	Maintain regular messaging through TMBC Social Media	Ongoing		No of followers No of shares and retweets.
	Promote and support the West Kent Business Support Programme (start-ups) and the Kent & Medway Growth Hub	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Kent County Council Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Local Districts/Boroughs	No of businesses using the service.
	Promote and Support the Better Business for All initiative	Ongoing	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Kent Fire & Rescue Service Local Districts/Boroughs	No of businesses using the www.bbfa.biz website.
	Seek new opportunities to provide flexible co-working space for start-up businesses in the borough.	Ongoing	Private Investors	No. of new co-working venues in the borough
	Promote and signpost to key business funding opportunities	Ongoing	West Kent Partnership Kent County Council South East LEP	No. of borough businesses awarded funding.
Our Towns and Local Centres	Work with the Tonbridge Town Team to support the delivery of town centre events and other initiatives aimed at increasing footfall and spend in the town centre.	Ongoing	Tonbridge Town Team	No of events and initiatives delivered per annum.
	Bring forward further retail and mixed use developments and townscape improvements to strengthen the viability and vitality of Tonbridge Town Centre.	2023	Private Investors	Planning permission in place for new schemes by the end of the strategy period.
Visitor Economy	Work with Visit Kent to promote and market Tonbridge and Malling's tourism assets through an annual Service Level Agreement.	Ongoing	Visit Kent	No. of visitors to the borough Visitor spend in the borough (£)

Rural Economy	Promote the take up of LEADER grants by rural borough businesses	2019-2022	West Kent Partnership LEADER Local Action Group	No of grants awarded to borough businesses.
	Work with partners to implement high speed broadband services across the borough and to address local problems with mobile phone coverage.	Ongoing	Kent County Council Service Providers.	% of the borough with high speed broadband coverage. % of the borough with weak or no signal
	Deliver further phase of the Village Stores Initiative.	2019-2020	Action with Communities in Rural Kent.	No. of village stores engaging with the initiative.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council - Open for Business

The borough council has a key role to play, individually and in partnership with others, to provide positive support and advice to the local business community. In addition to this, the council also must, at the same time, undertake a number of regulatory functions which are relevant to, and will impact upon, local businesses.

The council is committed to undertaking such regulation with regard to local business in a measured, consistent and constructive way and to seek to reduce the burden of regulation where possible. Where necessary regulation impacts adversely on a local business, we will take the time to communicate clearly why this is necessary and explore what measures might be open to business to overcome any barriers or problems they face. In this respect, we will use the 'Better Business for All' model across all council services in the form of a 'one stop shop' where contact between businesses and the council is joined up regardless of whether that contact relates to regulation or offering support.

We are committed to recognising the challenges which businesses face, particularly smaller businesses, and will do as much as we can to assist them when some form of regulation is required.

In order for businesses to get the maximum benefit from the activities set out in this strategy, there are a number of simple things they can do, such as:

- Signing up to the monthly business e-bulletin, which has information on new funding streams, advice and support and other business news.
- Engaging with the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network and supporting the workforce of the future.
- Coming along to our informal business networking events – a great opportunity to meet other local businesses.
- Following the borough council on twitter - @TMBC_Kent
- Considering sponsoring town centre events

For further information on any of these, please contact the Economic Regeneration Team via economic.regeneration@tmbc.gov.uk

Monitoring and Reviewing the Economy

Economic Indicator	Previous Performance			Current Trend	Targets					
	2015	2016	2017		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
VAT Registrations (Start-Ups)	775	770	TBC	Yellow	775	780	785	790	795	800
VAT De-registrations	570	675	TBC	Red	625	600	575	560	550	540
3 Year Business Survival Rates (%)	60.6	62.2	TBC	Green	63	64	65	66	67	68
Median Gross Weekly Workplace Earnings (£)	517.10	550.80	536.30	Yellow	550	560	570	580	590	600
Model-based Unemployment	4.1	3.7	3.3	Green	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6

Rate (%)										
16-64 year olds claiming out of work benefits (%)	5.8	5.4	5.2		5.0	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.5
National Vocational Qualification Level 3+ (%)	57.1	55	59.7		60	61	62	63	64	65
Happiness Score (out of 10)	7.44	7.71	TBC		7.8	7.85	7.9	7.95	8.0	8.05

Appendix 1 – List of Key Partners

Action with Communities in Rural Kent	Kent Supported Employment
Better Business For All – Regulatory Services	Locate in Kent
Business Doctors	Mid Kent College
Clarion Housing	National Centre for Micro-Business
Department for International Trade (DIT)	Network Rail
Education Business Partnership Kent	North Kent Enterprise Zone Steering Group – including Medway Council
Environment Agency	Tonbridge and Malling Businesses
Federation of Small Businesses	Tonbridge and Malling Local Strategic Partnership
Golding Homes	Tonbridge and Malling Schools
Hadlow Group	Tonbridge Forum
Highways England	Town & Parish Councils
Homes England	Visit Kent
JobCentre Plus	West Kent Adult Skills Forum
Kent Apprenticeships	West Kent Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Kent County Council	West Kent College (Hadlow Group)
Kent Farmers Market Association	West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	West Kent Partnership – including Sevenoaks DC & Tunbridge Wells BC