

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

**3 June 2014**

**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 ECONOMIC REGENERATION INITIATIVES - UPDATE**

**To set out an update of local business support programmes including grant support for local traders groups.**

**1.1 Background**

1.1.1 This report provides a further update on various economic regeneration initiatives being delivered locally in the Borough and across West Kent.

1.1.2 In addition to the ESCALATE programme, dealt with as a separate agenda item, a range of business support initiatives are now being delivered. An update on each of these is set out below.

**1.2 One to One Business Advice**

1.2.1 This programme is being delivered by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and offers free advice sessions to entrepreneurs wishing to set up in business and to small and medium-sized enterprises needing support or looking to expand. The programme is delivered by experienced business advisers.

1.2.2 When first launched in late 2013, take up of the service was initially steady but then demand fell to low levels in early 2014. A number of booked appointments were not being taken up. In response to this, a change of approach was agreed with the provider to focus delivery of the support at the business premises themselves rather than at remote locations. In addition, a co-ordinated marketing campaign linked to the Escalate programme was also launched to reach a wider business audience. As a result, take up of the service has been increased and the target of 20 1-2-1 sessions per month is now being met.

**1.3 Business Seminars**

1.3.1 A similar pattern of demand for business seminars has also arisen with a strong take up in late 2013 followed by a decline in take up in the new year. Poor

weather and the impact of local flooding may have contributed to this situation. However, a new programme of seminars has now been drawn up with two being sessions being delivered in April and a further 3 for May covering issues of food safety, use of social media and marketing.

#### **1.4 Be Your Own Boss**

1.4.1 This programme seeks to provide support for those not in work who are considering self-employment as an option. It is being delivered by the Centre for Micro Business (CMB) in close partnership with Job Centre Plus. So far, the programme has been very successful and has exceeded initial expectations. To date, 24 engagement events have been held and the CMB have worked with 34 individuals. 8 of these are currently receiving on-going support to develop a business proposal.

#### **1.5 Supporting Home Based Businesses**

1.5.1 A total of 42 home-based businesses have been engaged by this programme to date, also run by the CMB. 1-2-1 advice meetings take place at West Kent College. A programme of additional engagement events is now underway using West Kent libraries. Four engagement events have been held at ASDA in Swanley and this is to be rolled out to the ASDA at Kings Hill.

1.5.2 The success of this programme does depend on local publicity and promotion. Further engagement with local Parish and Town Councils in the Borough is therefore needed to help promote the support which is available and maintain high levels of take-up.

#### **1.6 Support for Local Traders Groups**

1.6.1 Members will be aware that a grant scheme was launched recently to support local traders groups improve the retail appeal of larger local retail centres in the Borough. To date, the following proposals have been approved in principle by the Cabinet Members for Economic Regeneration and for Finance, Property and Innovation:

Aylesford: signage to the village centre, information boards, planters and additional Christmas lighting (total £7,000)

Martin Square/Larkfield: additional signage and new website (total: £3,146)

Hadlow: hanging baskets, notice board, village information leaflets, additional Christmas lighting (total: £4817)

1.6.2 Borough Green traders (TN15 Local Businesses) has very recently submitted a proposal covering a local business directory and publicity board. Five further bids are still being developed. Detailed proposals for East Peckham and Snodland

centres have been submitted and are being further refined. Other centres are still considering their detailed bids.

## 1.7 Legal Implications

1.7.1 None

## 1.8 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.8.1 No issues to note.

## 1.9 Risk Assessment

1.9.1 n/a

## 1.10 Equalities Impact Assessment

1.10.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## 1.11 Recommendations

1.11.1 That the update on business support initiatives **BE NOTED**;

1.11.2 That Parish and Town Councils **BE INVITED** to help further promote the supporting home-based business initiative.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	n/a	

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*