

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

04 September 2019

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 SKILLS AND WORK READINESS

This report provides an update on added-value activities that the council has been delivering under the ‘skills and work readiness’ agenda and proposes future activity that will help to meet the aims of the newly-adopted Economic Regeneration Strategy.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A key part of the Economic Regeneration Strategy 2019-2023 is to support people of all ages into sustainable employment, or at least bring them closer to achieving employment. This work has a number of different strands, most notably:

- a) Working in schools to support business-relevant careers advice and improve links with local businesses
- b) Working with Jobcentre Plus and other employment support organisations to help local residents find employment and training opportunities
- c) Working with a large variety of community and charitable organisations to help local residents that are not currently work-ready to aim towards becoming more independent and confident, through activities such as the ‘Help me Out’ events

1.2 Working in Schools:

1.2.1 **West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network:** The Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN) is a national network that connects schools and colleges with employers and careers programme providers to work together to create meaningful encounters with the world of work for young people. The network is based on evidence that a young person who has four or more encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or not in education or training, and can earn up to 18% more during their career. However, many schools still do not offer young people this kind of encounter, and unemployment among young people is three times higher than overall unemployment.

1.2.2 The focus of the EAN is to therefore address this gap by bringing together employers, schools and colleges, and careers programme providers to:

- Give young people multiple opportunities to get to know the world of work, understand what work is, explore their options and build real confidence about their future.
- Bring the right people together to create strong connections between employers and careers programme providers and schools and colleges in ways that put young people's futures first.

1.2.3 Having launched in July 2017, the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network has gone from strength to strength. There are now 2 Enterprise Adviser Co-ordinators covering West Kent, enabling expansion in the capacity of the Network to involve all secondary schools, including all Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools and alternative provision. As of July 2019, 30 schools were in the network with 24 matched with an Enterprise Adviser (EA). Whilst there is a good supply of business volunteer EAs, care is being taken in making an appropriate match to a school.

1.2.4 To support the aims and objectives of the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network, there are a number of events and activities that have recently been delivered, or are planned for the near future:

- **West Kent Skillsfest:** Over 1000 students aged 14-19 from across 12 West Kent schools, and over 75 businesses, will be taking the opportunity to attend the West Kent Skillsfest 2019 at the Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells on 8 October 2019. The aim of the event is to inspire young people as they plan their future careers and is a partnership initiative between West Kent schools, AXA PPP, and The West Kent Partnership (including TMBC).
- **Skills 3030** is an initiative set up by the Federation of Small Businesses to increase positive discussion between local businesses and students about careers paths and opportunities and to ensure that students benefit from business-relevant advice, and businesses have an opportunity to promote their sector to future employees. Since the first Skills 3030 event took place in West Kent at Hugh Christie Technology College in October 2017, a number of other schools have come on board to benefit from greater interaction with local businesses.

The format for the event is relatively simple - whilst students take part in an informative workshop on a careers-related topic, business owners get to find out about a 'hot topic' (such as how they could get involved in the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network). Then both groups come together for an hour of facilitated speed-networking. The next Skills 3030 event in the Borough takes place in Hayesbrook on 25 September 2019, with a further event taking place in Holmesdale School in November 2019.

- **Employability Days:** in partnership with the Education Business Partnership Kent, the Borough Council has helped to deliver a number of whole day events in local schools that are aimed at helping students with work-readiness and providing information on local employment opportunities. The most recent event was held at the Holmesdale School on 04 April 2019 and involved 32 business volunteers working with Year 11s across 5 different business-related activity zones – these were an exhibition fair of local businesses, an interview room, and workshops on CV writing, interviews and teamwork. The feedback from students, teachers and local business volunteers was overwhelmingly positive. The next Employability Day is scheduled for the Malling School on 25 September 2019.

1.3 Helping Local Residents to Find Employment and Training Opportunities

- 1.3.1 **West Kent Jobs and Training Fair:** having delivered a successful Jobs and Training Fair in Tonbridge in March 2019, the next one is to take place on 05 September 2019 at the Assembly Halls, Tunbridge Wells. These events have now become a well-established part of the calendar of activity, and a key part of help given to local residents.
- 1.3.2 In addition, the Borough Council looks to deliver local jobs and training fairs. **The Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair** is taking place on 15 October 2019 at the Capel Morris Centre in Aylesford. This annual event was originally started in 2017 as a partnership between the Borough Council, RBLI and Jobcentre Plus and involved 23 local businesses and approximately 250 jobseekers. This partnership has now expanded to include Clarion Futures and Golding Homes, and will see approximately 30 local businesses and training providers meet approximately 300 jobseekers.
- 1.3.3 In addition to the stands, 2 workshops will take place during the event, both delivered by RBLI on the themes of ‘Self-Employment and Social Media’ and ‘The Hidden Jobs Market’.

1.4 ‘Help me Out Events’:

- 1.4.1 These events are aimed at local residents who are not ready for the world of work, and have issues in their life that they need to overcome in order to get their lives back on track. In May 2019, a ‘Help me Out’ event was held at Snodland. This was the first such event in Snodland and whilst the level of involvement from support organisations was good, turn-out from the public was lower than anticipated. However, following a debrief meeting with partners there is enthusiasm for doing a similar event next year.
- 1.4.2 In addition, there was also a ‘Help me Out’ event in Trench on 03 July 2019 at the Six-in-One Club. This was delivered by the Borough Council in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, Tonbridge Baptist Church, Clarion Housing and the Trench Partnership and attracted over 70 local residents. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

1.5 Next Steps

- 1.5.1 The activities set out in this report will go a long way towards meeting, and in some cases exceeding, the actions set out in the Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan for 2019/20. However it is important that this momentum is maintained, and that work is undertaken to ensure that these events continue to deliver good outcomes for our local schools, residents and businesses.
- 1.5.2 It is proposed that all of these activities continue to be an established part of the work plan (and planning for activities in 2020/21 starts imminently), but that an amendment is made to increase the number of 'Help me Out' events delivered in our priority communities is increased from one per annum to a minimum of two per annum. In doing so, it is also proposed that some amendments to these events are considered, following feedback at the recent Trench event, including:
- Greater promotion of the event through the local health service and schools.
 - Consideration to alternative venues to ensure accessibility for our various communities.
 - More emphasis on healthy lifestyles
- 1.5.3 Any financial contribution towards this additional activity will be met through existing economic regeneration budgets.

1.5 Legal Implications

- 1.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.6.1 These are no financial implications arising from the report.

1.7 Risk Assessment

- 1.7.1 Not applicable.

1.8 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.8.1 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.

1.9 Recommendations

- 1.9.1 That the proposals for 2020/21, as set out in section 1.5.2, **BE ENDORSED**.

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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