

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

05 November 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 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

This reports sets out early progress to date on the Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan and notifies the Board of the aim to recruit a Graduate Economic Regeneration Officer for a 12 month period to assist in future delivery, using funding from the growth element of the Business Rates Pool.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Following the successful delivery of the Economic Regeneration Strategy 2015-2019, the Borough Council adopted a new strategy in June 2019 for the period 2019-2023 which sets out an ambitious programme of activities and investments that have a positive impact on the local economy.

1.1.2 To date, the Borough Council and external partners such as the West Kent Partnership, the Federation of Small Business, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Kent County Council have delivered or made progress on a wide range of initiatives in the first 6 months.

1.1.3 The availability of Business Rates Pool Growth Funding offers up the opportunity to provide some time-limited support to the Economic Regeneration Manager in ensuring the delivery of the new strategy remains on track.

1.2 Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan

1.2.1 The Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan sets out a range of activities that need to be delivered in order to help meet the following overarching objectives:

- Planning for Economic Growth
- Funding for Key Infrastructure
- Embracing the Skills and Work Readiness Agenda
- Supporting Local Business
- Helping Our Towns and Local Centres
- Promoting the Visitor Economy

- Supporting the Rural Economy

1.2.2 An overview of these activities, and progress in delivering them, are set out in Appendix 1. However, some key highlights to date include:

- 04 April 2019 – Holmesdale School Employability Day
- 04 April 2019 – Business Networking Event (Tonbridge)
- 20 June 2019 – Innovation Park Medway Consultation Starts
- 03 July 2019 – Trench ‘Help Me Out’ Event
- 03 July 2019 – Business Networking Event (Tonbridge)
- 18 September 2019 – NIAB EMR Strength in Places Bid Submitted
- 20 September 2019 – Local Centres and Parades Grant Scheme Launched
- 25 September 2019 – Hayesbrook Skills 3030 Event
- 25 September 2019 – Malling School Employability Day
- 08 October 2019 – West Kent Skillsfest Event
- 11 October 2019 – East Malling ‘Can I Help?’ Event
- 15 October 2019 - Aylesford Jobs and Training Fair
- 22 October 2019 – Renewal Application Submitted for Fairtrade Tonbridge

1.2.3 Looking ahead, there remains a considerable amount of work to deliver in order to maintain good progress. It has therefore been decided, in conjunction with our partner Kent County Council, to use funding from the growth element of the Business Rates Pool to provide additional staffing resource into the Borough Council’s economic regeneration activity for an initial 12-month period. This does not represent a change to the establishment. A Graduate Economic Regeneration Officer will be able to provide assistance with the delivery of the wide range of economic regeneration initiatives across the Borough, with specific duties of the role likely to include:

- Assisting in the delivery and promotion of business support programmes
- Helping to deliver a range of skills and employability events
- Exploring opportunities to bid for external funding
- Administrative support with arranging meetings and running business networking events.
- Undertaking research and data analysis in support of project development and in monitoring the delivery of the Economic Regeneration Strategy Action Plan.
- Maintaining and developing business information via multiple channels and assisting with business enquiries.

1.2.4 It is also envisaged that the Graduate Economic Regeneration Officer will be involved in green economy measures that will support the emerging Climate Change Strategy.

1.3 Legal Implications

1.3.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.4.1 As set out in section 1.1.3, this post will be covered in its entirety, approximately £30,000 (including on-costs and overheads) through the Business Rates Pool growth funding. The Business Rate pool growth funding is ring-fenced for activity that supports economic growth in the borough. The governance arrangements are such that any spending has to be agreed between the Borough Council and the County Council. Agreement to this spend has been agreed with the County Council.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Without the additional support provided through this 12-month post, the delivery of actions within the Economic Regeneration Strategy will be limited.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 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.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 That the action plan update including the arrangements to provide a Graduate Trainee support post for 1 year, fully funded by Business Rates growth funding **BE NOTED**.

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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