

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

Tuesday, 3rd June, 2014

Present: Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Cllr R W Dalton, Cllr S M King, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr A G Sayer, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr Mrs E A Simpson and Cllr R Taylor

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, J A L Balcombe, O C Baldock, M A C Balfour, P F Bolt, M A Coffin, D J Cure, Mrs S Murray and M R Rhodes were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C P Smith (Chairman), M O Davis and Mrs S Luck and from the Leader, Councillor N J Heslop.

ERG 14/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

ERG 14/11 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 26 February 2014 be approved as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

ERG 14/12 FEDERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES - PRESENTATION

A presentation was given by Mr Graham Taylor, Chairman and Mr Simon Robinson, Secretary of the West Kent Branch of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) on the role and current issues being addressed by the organisation. It was noted that the FSB had a Kentwide membership of over 6,500 and the organisation's key roles were to lobby on issues of concern to smaller businesses and provide opportunities for its members to meet and receive support and advice. Particular attention was drawn to a number of local issues including the A21 dualling, Young Enterprise, the impact of car parking charges, the 'Better Business For All' charter and the withdrawal of Sainsbury's from the Tonbridge town centre development.

Questions were invited from Members and the FSB representatives indicated that they would be welcome to attend West Kent Branch meetings. The Chairman then thanked the representatives for their contribution to the meeting.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**ERG 14/13 WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME 2015-2020**

The report of the Chief Executive referred to the success of the first West Kent LEADER programme between 2007 and 2013 and gave details of a new programme designed to support the rural and land based economy. It was noted that the focus of the new programme's funding would be on direct support for the local economy rather than community projects. An indication was given of the changes to the area of coverage of the new programme and, whilst all rural areas within the Borough would be included, further work was being undertaken on options for extending the West Kent LEADER programme area to accord with the EU population limit of 150,000.

Members were advised that an additional contribution of £5,000 per annum would be required from participating local authorities and it was considered that this would be justified by the considerable economic value likely to be generated by the new LEADER programme.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) development of a new West Kent LEADER programme for 2015/20 be supported; and

(2) appropriate budgetary provision be made to enable the Borough Council to contribute to the administration costs of the new programme as set out in the report.

* Referred to Cabinet

ERG 14/14 ESCALATE BUSINESS LOAN FUND - UPDATE

Decision Notice D140067MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the Escalate Loan Fund scheme, formally launched in December 2013, and the current level of take up by local businesses. It was noted that the adoption of a combined funding pot with the TIGER scheme for north Kent would result in greater flexibility over the loan funding available and accommodate the higher levels of demand from West Kent businesses.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the strong initial demand for business loan funding via the Escalate programme be noted; and

(2) work be undertaken with local partners to make a case for additional loan funding to be made available to the Escalate programme at the autumn review.

ERG 14/15 ECONOMIC REGENERATION INITIATIVES - UPDATE

Decision Notice D140068MEM

The report of the Chief Executive gave an update on various economic regeneration initiatives being delivered locally in the Borough and across West Kent. Details were given of the level of take up of the range of business support initiatives (in addition to the Escalate programme) including one to one business advice, business seminars, the Be Your Own Boss programme, supporting home-based businesses and support for local traders groups.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the update on business support initiatives be noted; and
- (2) parish and town councils be invited to help further promote the supporting home-based business initiative.

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**ERG 14/16 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP MINUTES**

A copy of the minutes of the West Kent Partnership meeting held on 25 April 2014 were presented for Members' information. The meeting had focussed on the importance of West Kent to the economy of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Peter Jones, Chairman of the South East LEP, had attended the meeting. In addition the Kent and Medway Growth Strategy had been discussed and Members were pleased to note the high priority awarded to a number of key schemes in West Kent and Tonbridge and Malling in particular.

ERG 14/17 SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY FLOODING

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the financial support offered to local businesses to aid recovery from recent flooding. Details were given of the take up of rate relief support and grants under the Business Support Scheme and Repair and Renewal Scheme.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**ERG 14/18 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.39 pm