

**TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 2nd September, 2020**

**Present:** Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr N Foyle, Cllr M A J Hood, Cllr F A Hoskins, Cllr D W King, Cllr J R S Lark, Cllr L J O'Toole, Cllr W E Palmer, Cllr J L Sergison and Cllr K B Tanner

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M C Base, Mrs S Bell, R P Betts, M D Boughton, V M C Branson, A E Clark, M A Coffin, D Lettington, N J Heslop, P J Montague, Mrs A S Oakley, M R Rhodes, H S Rogers and N G Stapleton were also present pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 15.21.

**ERG 20/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct. However, in the interest of transparency, Councillors R Betts and M Coffin both advised that their businesses had received grants under the West Kent LEADER Programme (Minute ERG 20/8 refers).

**ERG 20/2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 5 November 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**ERG 20/3 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19**

To assist the Board's consideration of the matters presented to the meeting the Economic Regeneration Manager provided an overview of the impact the Coronavirus Pandemic had had on the economy of the Borough.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET**

**ERG 20/4 ECONOMIC REGENERATION STRATEGY**

Decision Notice D200056MEM

The report of the Chief Executive outlined proposals for a revision of the Borough's current Economic Regeneration Strategy to ensure that it was fit for purpose in supporting the local economic recovery following the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Attention was drawn to the strategic link with the Kent Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan which sets out county-wide actions to support economic revival and

identifies three key principles of 'Cleaner and Greener', 'Productive and Open' and 'Better Opportunities, Fairer Chances'.

It was anticipated that the consultation with key economic partners would be undertaken over a four week period (10 September to 8 October) and a report on the adoption of a Borough Economic Recovery Strategy submitted to the next meeting of the Advisory Board.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the following be included in the consultation on the draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy (as set out at section 1.3 of the report):
  - the economic vision, as set out in the Cabinet report of 3 June 2020 regarding the Corporate Strategy First Year Addendum, be used for the purposes of the Economic Recovery Strategy;
  - the adoption of the five channels and three key principles identified in the Kent Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan;
  - a shorter timescale (2021-2023) than that previously used for the Economic Regeneration Strategy; and
  - the measures set out in Appendix 1 relating to the Action Plan – Priority Actions.
- (2) the framework for the consultation on the draft strategy, as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of the report, be approved.

**ERG 20/5 SHOPFRONT IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME**

Decision Notice D200057MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the two Shopfront Improvement Schemes operated by the Borough Council to support local businesses and improve the attractiveness of the Borough's town and local retail centres.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) an additional promotional exercise of the Local Centres and Parades Scheme be undertaken in October 2020 to encourage further take up of the Scheme; and
- (2) the proposal to close the Local Centres and Parades Scheme to new applications by 31 March 2021 be agreed.

**ERG 20/6 BUSINESS RATES RETENTION PILOT AND POOL**

Decision Notice D200058MEM

The report of the Chief Executive provided an update on the Business Rates Retention Pilot and Business Rates Pool funding and advised that, following total or committed spend to date, £560,000 remained to fund initiatives which supported growth (subject to the support and agreement of the County Council). Consideration was given to a number of potential initiatives (set out at Appendix 1 to the report) which reflected the need to strengthen the resilience of the local economy and the future of town centres in the light of the impact of Covid-19 and embraced economic and environmental opportunities arising from the green agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the initial options to support the local economy (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report) be approved; and
- (3) a list of proposed options for endorsement be reported to a future meeting of the Advisory Board prior to being shared with Kent County Council for its agreement.

**MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION****ERG 20/7 EAST MALLING RESEARCH STATION - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

The Chief Executive reported that the Growing Kent and Medway consortium led by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany East Malling Research (NIAB EMR) had been successful in securing £18m of 'Strength in Places' funding for horticultural sector initiatives within Kent, which included the development of a Green Tech Hub for Advanced Horticulture at EMR. Additionally, the report advised that NIAB EMR had successfully bid for Local Growth Fund Round 3b funding and been awarded £1.7m for the creation of new greenhouses and energy centre at East Malling Research Station.

**ERG 20/8 WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME - UPDATE**

The report provided an overview on the performance and initiatives funded through the West Kent LEADER programme over the past five years. The Chairman advised that, as the programme was scheduled to finish at the end of December 2020, he had written to the MPs within West Kent requesting that they lobby the Government for further funding of this type of programme.

**ERG 20/9 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The report presented details of the key matters discussed at the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 10 July 2020.

**MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

**ERG 20/10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.51 pm