

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

03 November 2020

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision

1 BOROUGH ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY 2021-2023

This report sets out the proposed changes to the draft strategy in light of the feedback received during the consultation exercise which was undertaken in September - October 2020, and recommends adoption of the strategy as amended.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A report was made to the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board on 02 September 2020 setting out a draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy to guide our work on supporting the local economy in recovering from the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis for the period 2021-2023.

1.1.2 The draft strategy has now been the subject of consultation and the purpose of this report is to present a final draft for approval. The strategy has been amended to take account of the comments received and to reflect views of local businesses on our economic priorities and actions for the local area.

1.2 Results of Consultation

1.2.1 The following measures were undertaken in order to obtain consultation responses from local stakeholders:

- Dedicated webpage inviting people to comment through a short questionnaire.
- Series of Twitter and Facebook messages encouraging feedback.
- Short article in the TMBC Business e-Bulletin which went out to over 600 business and stakeholder contacts.
- Direct email to database of key economic partner contacts.

1.2.2 A total of 11 formal responses were received from local businesses and business representative organisations, partner organisations (such as the West Kent Partnership and adjoining Borough and District Councils), as well as from officers within Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Whilst the numbers of respondents was lower than hoped for, the quality of the feedback from those that did respond

was high and as such extremely helpful in shaping the final draft of strategy. A summary of the comments is provided below:

- Overall respondents were very positive about the content and ambition set out in the strategy, and were pleased that the Borough Council was proactively putting in place plans to aid the economic recovery.
- A number of partner organisations expressed a keenness to support us in the implementation of the plan, for example, JobCentre Plus stated they look forward to supporting initiatives to reduce unemployment.
- The importance of supporting town centres, and making sure they are attractive places to visit.
- Support for any initiatives which support the local economy to become carbon neutral, and to help the growth in 'green jobs'.
- Support for measures that help to boost tourism.
- One respondent made a point that the strategy should look more long term than the 2021-23 timeframe.

1.2.3 On this last bullet point, it is essential that this strategy focusses on recovery and addresses the immediate challenges the local economy faces. Subject to how the recovery pans out, it would be the intention to revert back to a five-year Economic Regeneration Strategy once the recovery strategy has been completed.

1.2.4 Apart from this point, the vast majority of points raised in the consultation have been accommodated within the draft Borough Economic Recovery Strategy as set out in Appendix 1.

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 The actions set out in the strategy can be delivered using existing Economic Regeneration budgets.

1.5 Risk Assessment

1.5.1 Not applicable.

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 Borough Economic Recovery Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, **BE APPROVED**.

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.

Background papers:

None

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