

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 (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 WEST KENT KICKSTART PROGRAMME

This report outlines the national Kickstart Scheme and updates the Board on measures being undertaken to set up a ‘gateway’ to help tackle youth unemployment in West Kent, and the potential for the Borough Council to support the programme.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 As illustrated clearly in recent economic statistics, unemployment levels across the country are high and are likely to rise further as the country grapples with the challenges presented by the Covid-19 crisis. In response to this challenge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his ‘Plan for Jobs’ in July 2020 to outline how the government planned to boost job creation in the UK.
- 1.1.2 Many of the sectors that are hardest hit by the crisis – Leisure and Hospitality, Travel and Retail – have a high percentage of young people within their workforce, and this has clearly been a factor in the steep growth in the number of people under 24 years of age that are now claiming Universal Credit.
- 1.1.3 Kickstart is part of the ‘Plan for Jobs’ that targets this talent pool and gives them an opportunity to get back into the world of work.

1.2 Kickstart Scheme

- 1.2.1 The Kickstart Scheme can be used to create new 6-month job placements for young people who are currently on Universal Credit or in danger of becoming long-term unemployed. The job placements should support the participants to develop the skills and experience they need to find work after completing the scheme.
- 1.2.2 The scheme runs until the end of December 2021, with first placements coming on stream in October 2020. It is government sponsored, with funding available for 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.

1.2.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) assess applications from employers or representative organisations who wish to offer or co-ordinate Kickstart placements. In short, the minimum assessment criteria are:

- i. The applicant must be an existing company/organisation and have a track record of fiscal competence to be eligible to apply for funding.
- ii. The application should be for at least 30 vacancies and the jobs should be new and in addition to the current workforce; i.e. they must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing staff to lose or reduce their hours. In practice this means completely new part-time roles (or full-time roles if budget is available to make up the balance of hours), and a comprehensive support and development plan including support to look for long-term work, i.e. career advice and setting goals, support with CV and interview preparations, supporting the participant with basic skills, such as attendance, timekeeping and teamwork
- iii. The scheme is for 16 to 24 year olds and the vacancies must be for a minimum of 25 hours per week and last for at least 6 months and be paid at least the National Minimum Wage for the age group
- iv. The applicant must demonstrate what employability support they will give to the participant whilst on the scheme, which will give them the skills to ensure they are able to capitalise on their Kickstart experience and use it as a stepping stone into work, training (such as apprenticeships) or education.
- v. The applicant must demonstrate how the jobs being offered through the scheme are quality placements, offering meaningful and suitable employment which offer clear benefits to the participant.
- vi. The applicant must demonstrate how they will put effective controls in place to monitor progress throughout the placement, to meet the compliance and quality requirements of the Kickstart Scheme. This should also cover things like ensuring safety of participants, employer liability insurance, risk assessments for vulnerable groups, Disclosure and Barring Service for 16/17 year olds. These controls will be used as part of the payment and assurance process.

1.2.4 For many businesses, offering 30 placements is simply not feasible, and so an alternative to becoming a host employer directly is to work as a member of a consortium of employers, managed and overseen by a 'gateway' host.

1.3 West Kent Kickstart Programme

1.3.1 In recent months, the West Kent Partnership has been proactively working towards becoming a 'gateway' host for a consortium of businesses and organisations in West Kent that would be unable to access the programme themselves directly because of the 30 placement threshold.

- 1.3.2 At the time of writing this report, the West Kent Partnership has been receiving regular expressions of interest and full applications from local businesses and organisations. As a result, it has just submitted a first 'batch' of applications to the DWP, covering 19 different businesses/organisations across West Kent.
- 1.3.3 Of these 19 organisations, the breakdown across the West Kent districts is as follows – 10 from Sevenoaks District, 3 from Tonbridge and Malling Borough and 6 from Tunbridge Wells Borough. To date, the Borough Council has only promoted the initiative in a limited way via social media, but the intention is to put greater resource into promoting the scheme ahead of the West Kent Partnership submitting a second 'batch' of placements to the DWP.
- 1.3.4 In addition, the Borough Council has made contact with the West Kent Kickstart Programme to register an interest in providing a couple of placements – most likely within the Licensing and Customer Service teams - but is yet to submit full applications.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.5.1 None

1.6 Risk Assessment

- 1.6.1 Not Applicable

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.7.1 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.

1.8 Recommendations

- 1.8.1 That the support for the West Kent Kickstart Programme, and specifically the provision of placements at the Council through the programme, **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.

Background papers:

None

contact: Jeremy Whittaker
Economic Regeneration Manager