

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**17 February 2021**

**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 SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGN**

**This report sets out the achievements of Christmas Shop Local Campaign and seeks approval to consider future campaigns to support local independent retailers during 2021.**

**1.1 Background**

- 1.1.1 During the November 2020 lockdown, the Borough Council became increasingly aware of the very intense strain that many local independent retailers were under, as the impact of Covid-19 restrictions began to take their toll again.
- 1.1.2 The Borough Council undertook a sample survey of local independent retailers from across the Borough in order to gain a better appreciation of the challenges they faced and to gather thoughts on potential cost-effective measures that we could undertake to support them through this difficult period.
- 1.1.3 In total, 35 independent retailers from across the Borough took part in the survey, and the findings were quite stark:
- During October 2020, only 12% said that business was 'good'.
  - Over half (53%) felt that a poor Christmas could put their business at risk over the following 12 months.
  - 53% also felt that the biggest risk to their business was a lack of local spending power.
- 1.1.4 Given the survey results, the offer of support from the Borough Council was understandably met with enthusiasm. By far the most popular proposed measure was for the Council to develop a multi-media approach to delivering a 'Shop Local Campaign' during the lead up to Christmas.
- 1.1.5 A small pot of funding (£2,500) was set aside for this project from the Business Rates Retention Pilot – Supporting the Town Centre budget, which was used to partner up with the KM group.

## **1.2 Shop Local Campaign**

1.2.1 The short report included as Appendix A sets out the extent of the Christmas campaign. Overall, this campaign included:

- News release setting off the campaign which highlighted the survey results.
- Media interviews
- Social media activity on the Borough Council's social media channels
- Radio advertising
- Targeted digital advertising.

1.2.2 Whilst the introduction of Tier 4 restrictions on 20 December 2020 did curtail the campaign by a couple of days, the impact was still extremely positive, and the feedback from local businesses and residents has been extremely encouraging. In total, there were:

- Advertisements were displayed over 220,000 times on social media accounts and news feeds in the target area
- 75,000 page impressions on affiliated national websites
- Nearly 450 click-throughs to the TMBC 'Shop Local' webpage
- News coverage on BBC Radio Kent, KMTV and trade media
- 114 radio advertisements played on KMFM
- KM social media reach over 17,000 users

1.2.3 Although this campaign was very well received and has been a positive tool to help promote our local independent retailers, it is clear that conditions continue to be extremely tough and will continue to be so, certainly in the short to medium term. As such, it is proposed that rather than being a 'one-off' campaign, that consideration be given to continuing the 'Shop Local' messaging into 2021 in order to demonstrate our support for the economic recovery of the borough.

## **1.3 Next Steps**

1.3.1 At the time of writing this report, the country is in a National Lockdown and will likely continue to be well in March 2021. It is therefore proposed that a further survey of independent retailers be undertaken to re-affirm the level of support for a 'Spring 2021' (post-lockdown) campaign to support our local independent retailers that reinforces the messaging that was so successful in capturing headlines and interest in the lead up to the Christmas period.

## **1.4 Legal Implications**

1.4.1 None

## **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 The funding used to deliver the Shop Local Campaign was from existing Business Rates Retention Pilot funding specifically aimed at supporting town centres. Further Shop Local Campaign activity will be funded through this same budget.

## **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 contents of this report, and the achievements of the Christmas Shop Local Campaign, **BE NOTED**.
- 1.8.2 That the support for further Shop Local Campaign activity during 2021 **BE ENDORSED**.

Background papers:

None

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