

## **TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**Wednesday, 17th February, 2021**

**Present:** Cllr B J Luker (Chairman), Cllr F G Tombolis (Vice-Chairman), Cllr G C Bridge, Cllr R I B Cannon, Cllr Mrs T Dean, 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, Cllr K B Tanner and Cllr C J Williams

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

#### **ERG 21/1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

#### **ERG 21/2 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the notes of the meeting of the Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 3 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **ERG 21/3 THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 CRISIS**

Members received a comprehensive update on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the local economy. Attention was drawn to the support available to local businesses; the impact on the 'High Street' economy and to planning for its recovery.

Particular reference was made to the number of business support grants being managed by the Borough Council and Members were pleased to note the effective and timely distribution of this funding. In addition, reference was made to the West Kent Kickstart Programme, which supported young people, and the continued interest in the Shop Front Initiative, which the Borough Council intended to operate until later in the year.

In conclusion, the Borough Council had a robust economic strategy in place to support local businesses, recognised the risks around new variant strands of the coronavirus and continued to work with key partners on resilience, support and economic recovery.

**MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CABINET****ERG 21/4 ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT**

Decision Notice D210029MEM

The report set out progress to date with regards the use of Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to support local businesses and outlined proposals for the future application of the remaining funding in order to support resilience and recovery during the period up to March 2022.

Additional Restrictions Grant funding had been provided by Government predominantly to distribute financial assistance to local businesses that met the required eligibility criteria, as well as to provide 'wider business support'. Guidance indicated that at least 80% was to be spent on direct grant assistance to eligible businesses within the Borough and any remainder to be spent on direct business support. The approach proposed for the short term (April – June 2021) and medium term (July 2021 – March 2022) established some key principles for this fund to ensure that the funding was spent in a timely manner on support that was helpful to local businesses and also met the key objectives of the Borough Council.

Members were reminded that a number of other grant schemes were also available to support local businesses during the current climate. To date the Borough Council had distributed in the region of £25million, with further funding to be allocated to eligible businesses as soon as possible and whilst money was available.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the outline approach to the allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant for the short term (April – June) and the medium term (July – March) during 2021/22, as detailed in paragraph 1.4.2 of the report, be endorsed.

**ERG 21/5 SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGN**

Decision Notice D210030MEM

The report set out the achievements of the Christmas Shop Local Campaign and sought approval to consider future campaigns to support local independent retailers during 2021.

In order to demonstrate the Borough Council's support for economic recovery in the Borough it was proposed that the 'Shop Local' messaging continued into 2021 and that a further survey of independent

retailers be undertaken to confirm the level of support for a 'Spring 2021' (post lockdown) campaign.

**RECOMMENDED:** That

- (1) the contents of the report and the achievements of the Christmas Shop Local Campaign be noted; and
- (2) the support for further Shop Local Campaign activity during 2021, as detailed at paragraphs 1.23 and 1.31 of the report and summarised above, be endorsed

### **MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**

#### **ERG 21/6 WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP**

The report presented details of the key matters discussed at the meeting of the West Kent Partnership held on 22 January 2021.

### **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PRIVATE**

#### **ERG 21/7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm