

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMIC REGENERATION ADVISORY BOARD

3 September 2014

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 LEADER PROGRAMME 2015-2020 – UPDATE

To provide an update on the development of a further LEADER programme for West Kent.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 I reported to your June Board meeting on the proposals to develop a new, five year LEADER programme for West Kent from 2015, building on the highly successful programme which was in place between 2007 and 2013. This report provides a further update on progress with that bid and specifically addresses two key outstanding issues:

- The proposed geographical extent of the new LEADER area across West Kent
- The proposed local priorities for the new LEADER programme on which comments have been requested.

1.2 The Area of Coverage

1.2.1 As reported previously, the EU has set a maximum population of 150,000 for each LEADER area. Given the growth in population that has occurred locally since the last programme was developed in 2007, there has been a need to revisit the area of coverage of the new programme area to ensure that maximum population was not exceeded. There was also a possibility that a wider area could potentially be adopted but this would be subject to DEFRA being able to obtain a 'derogation' from the EU to enable the minimum population to be increased. Alternatively, there could have been a need to reduce the area of coverage to meet the maximum population level leaving some rural parts of West Kent ineligible for the programme.

1.2.2 Following further discussions with DEFRA representatives and with local partners, it has now been established that most of the area previously covered by the first LEADER programme can continue to be included. The only significant changes

now proposed relate to the Gravesham/Medway area. Here, the Hoo Marshes area previously covered by West Kent is now to be taken in by the adjacent North Kent Downs and Marshes LEADER group. This change now enables a larger part of the Gravesham rural area south of the M2 to be included in the West Kent area than previously. On this basis, the proposed area has now been agreed.

1.3 Local West Kent LEADER Priorities

1.3.1 In order for the West Kent LEADER team to prepare a Local Development Strategy for the programme, setting out how the programme is to operate across West Kent, consultation is underway on the overall priorities for the programme.

1.3.2 Nationally, all LEADER programmes must aim to cover 6 key priorities specified by the EU:

- Support for increasing farm productivity
- Support for micro and small enterprises and farm diversification
- Support for increasing forestry productivity.
- Support for rural tourism
- Provision of rural services
- Support for cultural and heritage activities

1.3.3 Local programmes, however, have the freedom to determine the level of priority to be attached to each of these areas so that they may seek to meet specific local needs and channel grant funding to the parts of the rural economy most in need of support.

1.3.4 The earlier LEADER programme maintained a clear focus on supporting farming enterprises, rural businesses and forestry as a priority. It is proposed that the next programme continues to have this focus and that an indicative proportion of 75% of the total funding should be focused on these first three priorities with the remaining 25% then available for tourism, rural services and culture/heritage projects. Given the need to continue to focus on job creation and promoting growth within the rural economy, it is recommended that these suggested priorities be supported.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 None

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 Financial matters related to the LEADER programme were considered at the previous Board meeting.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 N/a

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

1.8 Recommendation

1.8.1 The further progress in relation to the new LEADER programme **BE NOTED** and that the suggested priorities for the new programme, as set out in the report, **BE SUPPORTED**.

The Chief Executive confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

Julie Beilby
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The LEADER programme must deal with all funding applications on a fair and consistent basis.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	n/a	
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.