

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE**

**08 July 2014 at 7.00 pm**  
**Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks**

**AGENDA**

**Membership:**

Cllrs. Ayres, Mrs. Ayres, Ball, Mrs. Bosley, Butler, Mrs. Cook, Fittock, Hogarth, Horwood,  
Maskell, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

	<b><u>Pages</u></b>	<b><u>Contact</u></b>
<b>Apologies for Absence</b>		
1. <b>Appointment of Chairman</b>		
2. <b>Appointment of Vice Chairman</b>		
3. <b>Minutes</b> To agree the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 May 2014, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 6)	
4. <b>Declarations of Interest</b> Any interests not already registered		
5. <b>Actions from Previous Meeting</b>	(Pages 7 - 8)	
6. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		Cllr Hogarth
7. <b>Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)</b>		
8. <b>Confirmation of Working Groups</b>	(Pages 9 - 12)	Vanessa Etheridge Tel: 01732 227199
9. <b>Car Parking Technology Working Group - verbal update</b>		
10. <b>Emergency Plan update</b>	(Pages 13 - 18)	Richard Wilson Tel: 01732 227262
11. <b>Local Enterprise Partnership Regulations Bid</b>	(Pages 19 - 30)	Richard Wilson Tel: 01732 227262
12. <b>Economic Development Strategy – Consultation Draft</b>	(Pages 31 - 60)	Lesley Bowles Tel: 01732 227335
13. <b>Work Plan</b>	(Pages 61 - 62)	

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

(At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.)

To assist in the speedy and efficient despatch of business, Members wishing to obtain factual information on items included on the Agenda are asked to enquire of the appropriate Contact Officer named on a report prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you require a copy of this agenda or any of the reports listed on it in another format please do not hesitate to contact the Democratic Services Team as set out below.

For any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact:

**The Democratic Services Team (01732 227241)**

**ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman)

Cllr. Horwood (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Butler, Ms. Chetram, Mrs. Cook, Davison, Fittock

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Ball and Maskell

39. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Committee held on the 26 February 2014, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

40. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

41. Actions from Previous Meeting

The Health and Communities Manager advised Members that information on Local Dementia Support Services had been put on the District Council's website. There was now a Kent 24 hour helpline run by specialists which was available for those living in Kent with questions regarding Dementia. 60 front line SDC Officers had received training for Dementia awareness and it was hoped that training could be run for Members and Service Managers. It was being investigated whether the signage in the Council reception could be changed to help those suffering with Dementia. It was confirmed that there would be Officers attending the Dementia Friends event on the 21 May 2014.

The Health and Communities Manager advised that action 2 had been completed and Members of the Health Liaison Board had received their information packs from Carers First. If other Members required the packs more could be requested.

42. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Chairman and Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development reported that 'real Business', the Council's Business newsletter was circulated to 650 business in the District and also to Members at the end of each month. Businesses could sign up for the newsletter on the District Council's website and it was being investigated how to increase the number of businesses registered for the newsletter. Members suggested whether the subject title of the email should be changed.

It was suggested that a working group could look into ways to raise awareness of the newsletter, and that someone from a business should be invited as they would have the knowledge of what businesses were looking for. It was also suggested that Cllr. Miss.

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**Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 1 May 2014**

Stack could be able to provide some advice on marketing techniques. Cllr. Horwood and Cllr. Hogarth expressed their interested at sitting on a working group should there be sufficient interest.

Members were also advised that the Economic Development consultation was still underway and that a few key businesses and groups had not yet responded. The questions were available on the website. The Chairman expressed his thanks to officers for the way the face to face consultations were held.

**43. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)**

Members noted the referral from Cabinet, which requested the Committee to set up a working group to look at car parking technology. Members discussed what car parking technology could include and that advances in technology could cause problems for non computer users. They queried whether this was something the scrutiny working group had looked at. Members expressed their preference for the working group meetings to take place in the evening.

Resolved: That

- a) the working group examine car parking technology such as smart ticketing and;
- b) the membership include Cllrs Mrs. Bosley, Butler, Ms Chetram and Hogarth.

**44. To note minutes of the Health Liaison Board**

Cllr. Mrs Cook, Chairman of the Health Liaison Board, expressed her thanks for the number of health related meetings that Members attended as it provided information on the changing situations within health. She highlighted to Members that there were problems with the patient transport service and that an additional £1.6 million would be going into funding this.

The Health and Communities Manager confirmed that Minute 35, Action 5 had not been completed yet but would be before the next meeting of the Board. Cllr. Davison advised Members that it was a Patient Participation Chairs meeting that he had attended and that patient transport had gone to tender a year ago.

Resolved: That the minutes be noted.

**CHANGE IN AGENDA ITEM ORDER**

With the Committee's agreement the chairman brought forward consideration of agenda item 9.

**45. Local Strategic Partnership Employment Sub-Group**

The Health and Communities Manager advised Members that the LSP Employment Subgroup was a forum which brought education, training and employment services

together providers' together look at sharing working opportunities to improve opportunities for young people in the District.

The Kent Integrated Adolescent Support Service (KIASS) were providing drop in sessions for young people for help with training opportunities and interviews. There would be drop in sessions in Sevenoaks at House in the Basement on Monday evenings at the STAG and another would be starting in Edenbridge. Other providers would attend to ensure young people had the support and advice.

K College currently provided practical training two mornings a week at Orchards Academy. They also hosted short courses in the Summer for those starting College in the Autumn to introduce them to the college and build their self esteem.

The Health and Communities Manager also informed Members that there was a cooking school in Crowborough who took on apprentices with a passion for food. They were involving young people from the District and, as the placements for young people had to be near to where they lived, local businesses would also be involved.

It was discussed how prepared young people were for employment and further training. Feedback which had been received by those in the LSP Employment Sub Group suggested many lacked interview skills, lost work placements due to their social media footprint, and were not dressed appropriately. Members also questioned whether schools still arranged work experience placements and what schools were doing to help their students. The Health and Communities Manager informed members that KIASS, one of the LSP Partners were doing a lot of work with the young people and the courses being led by K College also helped. Members were advised that Job Centre Plus was preparing drop in centres and that two local schools had Career Advisors sitting on the LSP Employment Sub Group. Knole Academy was working with the Employment Sub Group to hold a careers day in the autumn and Officers were working with the school to organise this event.

Resolved: That a future report be submitted on the progress of the LSP Employment Subgroup.

**46. Funding Schemes Available For Businesses In The Sevenoaks District**

The Chief Officer Communities and Business presented a report that advised Members of the funding, grants and loans available to businesses in the Sevenoaks District through the District Council or it's partners. She advised Members that business cards had been produced to promote Escalate and asked Members who could help promote the scheme to take a supply of the cards. There were 11 applications in the pipeline from businesses in the Sevenoaks District, the second highest number in the area of benefit.

Members were updated that since the report had been written two applications had been received for the Flood Support grants and 20 expressions of interest had been made for the Flood Repair and Renew grants. The Central Government guidelines had only just been published for the Repair and Renew grants and the local Guidelines would be presented to Cabinet for approval at its May meeting. Members would be informed when applications in their ward were made.

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The Business Area improvement Fund had £10,000 obtained from the Sevenoaks District Community Plan Delivery Fund. Information was available on the website and InShape the Council's magazine.

Members raised concerns that the website was the main place where information was available, and not everyone would think to look on the website. Information should be placed in other locations such as banks, train stations and post offices.

*Action 1: Chief Officer Communities and Business to ensure information is available in other locations other than the District Council's website.*

Concerns were raised at the additional pressure the grant applications could have on officer resources. In response the Chief Officer Communities and Business advised that Kent County Council (KCC) was the responsible body for Escalate and the District Council's role was to publicise the scheme. Members were informed that the Officer responsible for dealing with the grants had prior experience, and was well-versed in the Council's grant-making protocol. The repair and review grant scheme needed technical advice in addition and a corporate group had been set up to deal with these.

As a way of promoting the work of the Council when submitting an application for the grant scheme applicants were automatically included on the distribution list for 'real Business'.

Resolved: That the report was noted.

#### 47. Volunteer Award Scheme (Discussion)

The Chief Officer Communities and Business advised Members that a Volunteer Award Scheme had been recommended as a way to celebrate the work that the voluntary sector undertook within the District. It was suggested that there could be different awards available in recognition of the work that had been done. Members were advised that there would be limited cost implications. Members questioned whether local businesses could be approached for sponsorship, and questioned the implications on Officer time resources. It was noted that other volunteer awards take place such as the Triangle awards, Police and KCC Social Services. The Chief Officer Communities and Business advised that the volunteer awards would be specific to the District but could also reaffirm what others had achieved through the other awards.

The Chief Officer Communities and Business advised that sponsorship could be investigated. The Communities and Business team had good experience for organising events and this would not take too much organising, particularly if the voluntary sector itself was involved in the organisation. Members agreed that this would be a good idea.

Resolved: That a further report be submitted to a future meeting.

#### 48. Work Plan

Members agreed that the work plan for October and February be populated at the meeting in July and that the Parking working group feedback and Introduction to the Business Development Manager be added to the work plan for the July meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their work over the past year.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.25 PM

CHAIRMAN

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**ACTIONS FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 01.05.14**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Status and last updated</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
ACTION 1	Chief Officer Communities and Business to ensure information is available in other locations other than the District Council's website.	Business cards had been printed advertising 0% business loans. Information is in InShape, and in the business newsletter which was also circulated to Town and Parish Councils. Press releases have been sent and business cards to business breakfasts, banks and will also be going to business consultant companies.	Lesley Bowles

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## CONFIRMATION OF WORKING GROUPS

### Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee – 8 July 2014

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: No

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**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Hogarth

**Contact Officer** Vanessa Etheridge Ext. 7199

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**Recommendation to Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee:** That the Committee consider whether the working groups as detailed in the report should continue, and if so, agree membership and reconfirm terms of reference.

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**Reason for recommendation:** It is necessary to review and if necessary reconstitute any working groups each municipal year, especially in light of changed membership to the Advisory Committee.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 During the last municipal year the Advisory Committee formed two working groups. It is necessary for the Committee to review the need for these working groups and confirm the terms of reference and membership.

### Rural Broadband Working Group

2. At the meeting held on 18 June 2013 (Minute 9) it was resolved that a Working Group be set up with the following terms of reference:
  - a) The membership of the Working Group to consist of 5 Councillors and made up of, where appropriate, of Members from the Advisory Committee and other appropriate members of the Council with relevant experience.
  - b) The Working Group to be set up for the consideration of the following only:
    - (i) any work already undertaken in order to improve broadband in the District to date;
    - (ii) any additional work that might usefully be undertaken by the Council;
    - (iii) consideration as to whether the Council has a role in promoting private broadband provision through small providers.
  - c) The Working Group to regularly report back on its findings to the Advisory Committee via 'Action Sheets'.

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3. The membership was agreed as Cllrs. Ball, Hogarth, Horwood, Piper and Scholey.
- 4 Cllrs. Piper and Scholey are no longer on this Committee.

### **Car Parking Technology Working Group**

- 5 At the meeting held on 1 May 2014 (Minute 43), following agreement with Cabinet, it was resolved that a Working Group be set up to consider car parking technology such as smart ticketing and the membership be Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Butler, Ms Chetram and Hogarth.
- 6 Cllr. Ms Chetram is no longer on this Committee.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

None directly arising from this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Working groups are only constituted for a municipal year, and must be reconstituted each new municipal year. Members would only be allowed to claim travel expenses for formally constituted working groups.

#### Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

### **Conclusions**

Members should consider whether they wish the three working groups to continue to meet, agree the membership and reconfirm the terms of reference for each one.

**Background Papers:**

[Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee – Agendas and Minutes 2013/14](#)

**Christine Nuttall**  
**Chief Officer for Legal and Governance**

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## **EMERGENCY PLANNING UPDATE**

### **Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee – 8 July 2014**

Report of Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report provides an update to the Advisory Committee on current Emergency Planning practises and procedures.

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**This report supports the Key Aim of** Safe Communities; Healthy Environment; sustainable economy and effective management of Council resources.

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. R Hogarth

**Contact Officer(s)** Kevin Tomsett – Head of Parking and Surveying Services  
Ext: 7368

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**Recommendation to Advisory Committee:** That the Committee note the report.

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### **Introduction and Background**

- 1 Members last considered a report on emergency planning at the Services Select Committee on 10 June 2008. Since that time the arrangements for the Council fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to emergency planning have changed considerably.
- 2 Following a budget saving agreed in 2010, the post of a dedicated Emergency Planning Officer was deleted from the establishment and responsibility for the function was absorbed into the Building Control team with a greater emphasis on corporate responsibility and greater resilience in knowledge and response being spread over a number of Officers rather than through one dedicated Officer.
- 3 An internal audit of the Emergency Plan was undertaken prior to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games and recommendations made, however, due to the unique demand of this period and the District being a host Authority to the Paralympic Road Cycling Event, bespoke PAN Kent Multi agency plans were put in place for this event.
- 4 The key recommendation was to review the Emergency Plan to reflect the new management organisational arrangements.

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### **Statutory Responsibilities**

- 5 The Council has statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as a Category 1 responder, along with the 'Blue Light' emergency services, Kent County Council, the Environment Agency and the NHS.
- 6 The District Council's main responsibilities are to provide humanitarian assistance during any event or evacuation, immediate care and longer term housing needs whilst aiding recovery, and throughout any event assisting with multi agency response, sharing information and mutual aid.
- 7 An Emergency is defined, under the Act as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare or the Environment.

### **Major Emergency Plan**

- 8 The major emergency plan is a framework document cross referencing with Councils' and other Agencies' plans, consisting of numerous documents, but principally are:
  - Major Emergency Plan
  - Mutual Aid Agreement
  - Contacts List
  - District Emergency Centre Operations
  - Business Continuity Plan
- 9 As a result of the SDC organisational changes and those of the Emergency Planning team at KCC it has been necessary to review and update all the above plans, with the exception of the Business Continuity Plan, to ensure information held is current.
- 10 These documents have not been reproduced in the report as they run to many pages, however, a copy has been made available in the Members Room and are available on the Members Portal.
- 11 The Business Continuity Plan is currently under review and amendment and a Business Continuity Plan and Management System will be presented to your next Committee meeting.

### **Key Roles and Responsibilities**

- 12 To increase resilience across the Council, and to embed Corporate responsibility, an Officer Emergency Planning Working Group has been set up chaired by the Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services, and comprising Officers from Building Control, Housing, Environmental Health, Customer services, CCTV, Communications, HR, Direct Services, Facilities Management and Communities and Businesses.
- 13 Key roles are:
  - Emergency Planning Co-ordinator and Assistant Co-ordinator
  - Information Managers
  - GIS Mapping
  - Call Handlers



- Communications Officers
  - Incident Liaison Officers
  - Function Co-ordinators, and
  - Representatives for Strategic Command (Gold) and Tactical Command (Silver).
- 14 Furthermore additional staff are trained in areas such as Rest Centre Management and Operation of the District Emergency Centre (DEC).
- 15 Exercises are regularly delivered to test the group's preparedness and resilience and to identify any further areas for development.
- 16 Examples of exercises and real emergencies to test preparedness and resilience:
- February 2011 – Exercise BALDR – Local Multi Agency Flood Plan Validation exercise
  - November 11 – September 12 – Torch Relay and Paralympic Cycling Planning & Testing
  - January 2012 – Severe Power/Gas Outage
  - October 12 – Temporary Accommodation of Stranded Dutch Students
  - April 2013 – East Coast Flooding workshop/exercise
  - September 13 – Exercise EDEN – Multi Agency & Voluntary Sector evacuation exercise
  - December 13 – March 14 – Severe Weather including Flooding/Power Outages
  - Ongoing – Ash Dieback
  - Ongoing – Severe Weather Monitoring
  - Ongoing – Potential Restriction in Fuel
  - Ongoing – Various Gas Leaks/Cylinder Fires/Small Scale Evacuations

### **Training**

- 17 Training both internal and external has been undertaken by various Officers since 2011 covering the following areas:
- Introduction to Civil Protection
  - Strategic Emergency and Crisis Management
  - Working in Safety Advisory Groups
  - Public Safety at Mass Gatherings
  - Developing & Maintaining Business Continuity Management
  - Recovering from Emergencies
  - Television & Radio Interview training
  - Mass Evacuation & Shelter training
  - 'Berwicks' Emergency Management training/exercises
  - Rest Centre Management training
  - Incident Liaison Officer Training
  - Scientific and Technical Advisory CELL (STAC)

### **Relationship with Other Emergency Planning Agencies**

- 18 The Council is a member of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) and continues to build strong relationships with Multi Agency Partners such as Kent County Council, the newly formed Kent Resilience Team (KRT comprises KCC, KF&RS and Police Emergency Planning Departments) amongst other partners such as the Environment Agency and Voluntary Sector.

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- 19 The Council is a representative on the following KRF groups:
- Risk Assessment Group
  - Voluntary Sector Group
  - Resilient Communications Group
  - Local Authority Emergency Planning Group
- 20 The District is also the Vice-Chair of the Mass Evacuation & Shelter working group, currently tasked with writing a new plan for the County.

### **Safety Advisory Groups**

- 21 Since the 2012 Olympic Games there has been a greater emphasis on all Local Authorities to host and Chair Safety Advisory Groups (SAG) potentially covering any public show or event within the District. Key responsibility here, is to ensure public safety.
- 22 The Council has traditionally held such SAGs for large scale events such as at Brands Hatch and the London Golf club but now Chairs a SAG for any event which may cause partners agencies such as the Police, Highways or any other agency concern for public safety and well being.
- 23 The role has developed and continues to develop with attendance at cross boundary SAGs (Tonbridge half marathon) with the potential for a Kent wide attendance and approach to create greater efficiency for all agencies attending.
- 24 The Council also has a representative on the Kent Safety Advisory Steering Group.

### **Community Resilience**

- 25 With particular reference to severe weather, the Council continues to work with Parish Councils such as Edenbridge to support and enhance where possible their local and immediate response to an unfolding event.
- 26 Further to recent flooding, greater links and pre-deployment of sandbags have been agreed with Westerham and Otford, whilst work is currently underway with Brasted and Shoreham Parish Councils.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

The Council has a small budget for Civil protection (£33,000) which is largely salary allocations for key staff responsibilities. In the event of invoking emergency Planning procedures and actions funding would need to be found from Partner Agencies, or from Council reserves, depending on the nature of the response. In certain larger scale events, where expenditure exceeds a certain limit, funding can be recovered from Government above this limit (Belwin Scheme).

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The Council has statutory responsibilities as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingency Act 2004.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	No	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

**Conclusions**

**Background Papers:**

Major Emergency Plan and Appendices  
 Mutual Aid Agreement  
 District Emergency Centre Operations

**Richard Wilson**  
**Chief Officer, Environmental and Operational Services**

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**A LOCAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESSES, SOUTH EAST LEP (LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP) AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

**Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee – 8 July 2014**

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This paper considers how local authority regulators in the South East might work with the LEP to help regulatory services work more effectively with business, with the aim of supporting economic regeneration.

It introduces the Better Business For All (BBFA) scheme which aligns regulators with the current push to reduce red-tape and to support economic growth.

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**This report supports the Key Aim of Supporting and Developing the Local Community**

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. R Hogarth

**Contact Officer(s)** Annie Sargent Ext. 3085

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**Recommendation to: Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee**

It is recommended that Members endorse the Council's involvement in this initiative.

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**Reason for recommendation:** If the Council supports its regulators being involved in this initiative, it will facilitate their access to skills and funding that will enable better cross working with regulatory agencies in the District, across the County and nationally. The programmes and projects that will be thus facilitated, will lead to reduced regulatory burdens and encourage greater prosperity for local businesses.

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**Introduction and Background**

1. Good regulatory delivery provides essential protections from risks posed by day-to-day business operation. It protects citizens from unsafe food and products, from public and occupational health risks, and from fraud and financial detriment. It also protects businesses, ensuring fair competition and a level playing field.
2. Good regulation is also good business. This is an important message to convey to the business sector. Regulatory services should be seen to positively support businesses. It can reduce compliance costs by clarifying requirements, providing accessible advice about solutions, developing monitoring processes, and enabling recognition of investment in compliance. By supporting local and national businesses to grow, it can also contribute to the development of economic wellbeing within communities,

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creating new jobs, raising levels of income and providing greater choice and availability of local services.

3. It is no surprise perhaps then that **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** have identified that regulators have a potentially important role to play in supporting economic development. The Government response to the consultation on Transforming Regulatory Enforcement published in January 2012 also highlighted the potential for LEPs to bring regulators and business together.
4. The report recognises that, to create the conditions for growth, not only does legislation need reviewing but there also needs to be consideration of the way in which regulation is delivered and enforced. The majority of legislation affecting businesses is enforced by local authority regulators.
5. Among the report's key findings is that:
  - The local regulatory system is too often a burden.
  - Businesses complain of inconsistency and unpredictability.
  - There is a need to transform the relationship between regulators and business from one based on central oversight and intervention towards one built upon better local accountability and transparency.
6. In response, the report made a number of proposals. They include:
  - LEPs using their position to promote best practice across business sectors.
  - Building greater understanding between local authority regulatory services and the business community.
  - Identifying ways to work together to simplify things for business and save money for local authorities.
  - Combining the work of regulators with other business services (e.g. creating a 'one stop shop' for businesses).
  - Using business forums to discuss regulatory priorities and agree key priority areas.

### **Scope of the Multi-Agency Group**

7. The aim of this Group is to develop the Better Business for All Partnership model [Appendices 1 and 2] in the South East LEP area. The model is intended to promote co-operation between local regulators and businesses to deliver specific support and improvements to assist businesses comply with the law quickly, easily and economically.
8. Regulatory service delivery is both about the way in which inspections, advice, service of notices and prosecutions are carried out and the attitudes, competency and actions of inspectors. All these activities have potential for greater co-operation and sharing of good practice amongst Kent, Southend, Thurrock, Essex, East Sussex and Medway regulators. It is suggested that initially the local regulatory functions within

the scope of this work in the South East could include Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue, with the potential to widen it out to other regulators such as the Environment Agency, Planning and Building Control as the scheme gains momentum. The Health and Safety Executive, HM Revenue and Customs and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are currently being approached to join the group.

9. In the Sevenoaks District , the Environmental health team are already engaged in supporting local businesses through the delivery of accredited qualification training, seminars and drop-in sessions to support small food businesses achieve the aims above. This is in addition to the advice given to start up food and licensed businesses and also to using every inspection visit as an opportunity to deliver advice and support to proprietors.
10. It is important that through coordinated corporate working across the Council we continue to develop the culture of regulatory services adding value to business in a positive way. This can apply across the board to a range services and be coordinated through a cross cutting group of officers.

### **Priorities for the South East**

11. Pilot projects have already been established in a number of LEPs across the country, supported by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO), aimed at improving regulation in their locality. These involved the LEPs consulting businesses to identify their priorities. These local consultations reinforced the findings of the Government Consultation response and highlighted some additional specific areas. Responses to the consultations revealed very similar results and the following were identified as priorities for regulators to address:
  - building stronger partnerships between local authorities and business
  - improving accessibility to information, advice and support, such as a single point of contact;
  - developing clear, simple and consistent messages/communication
  - helping officers to understand business pressures
  - ensuring the transparency of inspections
  - improving communication and coordination across regulatory services
12. It is certainly the case that local authority regulators in this region also wish to concentrate their efforts upon these aspects of improving both direct service delivery and perception of the business community. However, the challenge coming from business is also what can be done collectively across local authorities to create an easier interface with a range of regulators. Specifically, what can regulators in the South East do to share good practice amongst themselves and be seen to positively support businesses across those various fields of regulation to maximise their contribution to supporting local economic development and growth?

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13. It is suggested that there would be merit in tackling the issues collectively. This could involve sharing good practice and innovation, and developing new arrangements which might deliver improved benefits to business and help create an environment that attracts new business to the region.
14. It is also suggested that there would be merit in improving understanding across different regulators within the region of what each other does and how this is delivered in order to help improve linkages and better signpost business to other sources of advice and information which might also be of benefit.

### **Working with the SE LEP**

15. The Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) has supported the Leicester and Leicestershire LEP as a pathfinder initiative to identify areas where progress could be made in respect of improving local regulation and supporting economic growth. This has generated a wide range of activity some of which could be replicated in the South East in working with our own LEP to deliver similar or even greater benefits. A flavour of that broad range of activity and the perceived achievement to date is captured in their first 'end of year report' which is attached with this report.
16. To date initial discussions have taken place between the region's regulatory services, BRDO and business organisations to explore the opportunities for the work of regulators to contribute to the South East LEP priorities for economic regeneration. Additionally the Group has been represented on the Kent Business Advisory group and responded to the consultation on the Kent and Medway Economic Plan.
17. Our next steps are to meet with the relevant representatives of the LEP to establish their appetite for supporting the progression of the better regulation agenda.
18. Our proposal to the LEP will comprise:
  - Evidence that greater consistency of approach would deliver benefits to business as well as regulators
  - a common approach to regulation could be adopted
  - single point of contact that could be developed with their support and the support of local business organisations
  - progression towards the Better Business for All model promoted by the BRDO

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

19. The Group is likely to be seeking funding from the BRDO for developing certain aspects of its work programme such as the development of a single point of contact.
20. By better empowering and equipping local businesses to meet their legal duties, this will reduce the need for intervention by enforcement agencies and potentially the resource required for reactive work.



Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

21. This initiative underpins the approach to regulation promoted by the Regulators Code and aims to support responsible and responsive businesses to improve compliance, whilst applying a consistent approach to enforcement to those small number of businesses that blatantly refuse to make efforts to meet minimum legal requirements, for gain.
  
22. This initiative has the potential to be beneficial for existing and new businesses across the area. It complements the work of a number of the Council’s operations teams, including Environmental Health (Food Safety, Health and Safety and Environmental Protection), Community and Business and Licensing.

Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	Proposals are designed to assist local businesses through the application of regulatory services.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Better Business for All Partnership model

Appendix 2 – Better Business for All - 12 Months Summary

**Background Papers:**

None

**Richard Wilson - Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services**

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## Briefing Note for Regulatory Services Staff



This briefing note gives the background to *Better Business for All* and explains what is happening, who is involved, and how you can help.

### What is the national context?

The number one priority for this Government is economic recovery. To assist this growth all elements of the regulatory system need to enable businesses to create wealth and jobs as well as protect communities and citizens. The Government is committed to cutting red tape and ensuring this translates into a reduction in the burden on businesses at a local level. This means effective local regulation is required and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) can help deliver this.

### What are LEPs?

LEPs are partnerships between business and local regulators to drive local growth and create local jobs. There are currently 39 LEPs, and the representation on their governance bodies often extends to universities and the voluntary and community sector. Although the scope of their activities varies from area to area, they all provide a means to generate local solutions to local needs. LEPs can choose to adopt the Better Business for All (BBfA) programme as part of their work.

### What is BBfA?

BBfA involves the development of new relationships between businesses and local regulators to support growth by identifying the issues facing local businesses and shaping the provision of effective support services to them. While it is aimed at all businesses there is a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as these generally need most support to comply with the law.

BBfA comprises a brand and a toolkit of resources for LEPs. The brand was created by Leicester and Leicestershire LEP and then adopted by Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, both LEP regulatory pathfinders. The toolkit is being developed by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO), drawing on material provided by LEPs and nationally respected good practice. In essence, the elements of the toolkit grow from local LEP activity and benefit from a national perspective, but can then be adapted for delivery in accordance with local LEP needs. They also carry the BBfA brand, to give businesses and regulators greater confidence in their quality.

This is about helping those who want to be helped, while maintaining a strong enforcement profile where there is deliberate non-compliance or uncontrolled risks.



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## Briefing Note for Regulatory Services Staff

### **What are the objectives of BBfA?**

The aims of the programme are to:

- reduce the regulatory burden on businesses;
- promote two way communication between businesses and regulatory services;
- improve the business perception of regulators;
- support regulators to find the right balance between encouragement, education and enforcement;
- develop a joint offer of support from regulatory services for businesses;
- build trust of both regulators and businesses; and
- advise government how to do things better for both businesses and regulators.

### **How can I help?**

Businesses have told many LEPs that they would like advice and guidance from regulatory services officers, as it is these people who will ultimately check whether they are complying.

You may often be the only 'official' a small business encounters, which puts you in a key role. You can signpost the business to relevant sources of support, help your organisation obtain information about the local business community, and act as the 'eyes and ears' for other regulatory agencies.

Your relationship with a business may even determine whether it decides to grow. If you encourage expansion by providing solution-focused advice and removing regulatory barriers – whether real or perceived – then this supports your local economy.

The LEPs are aware that you may well be operating with reduced resources and tighter budgets due to the recession. This is forcing regulatory services to become more innovative and more risk-based in their approach to enforcement. In the face of this changing environment, you can act to ensure that what is good in the present system is not lost, while thinking more creatively about supporting businesses.

This is about a different approach rather than doing more. Helping businesses become compliant reduces the level of interaction they require with regulatory services, thus releasing resources to target non-compliant and rogue businesses. In addition, closer working between regulatory services enables the more effective use of limited resources. For example, do local businesses really need a separate newsletter or email alert from each regulator?

### **What are the benefits of BBfA for regulatory services?**

The chance of regulatory officers receiving a hostile reception when they visit premises is reduced through the new relationship with businesses. When they are perceived as enablers, their advice and support are welcomed.

More resources can be targeted at non-compliant and rogue businesses as increasing numbers of businesses become compliant and no longer need frequent regulatory interventions.

Operational tasks can be undertaken more efficiently due to closer working between regulatory services. Any duplication within the system can also be identified and eliminated.

The profile of regulatory services is enhanced by recognition of their role in assisting growth.

### **What underpins BBfA?**

To maximise the impact of BBfA in removing real and perceived barriers to growth, the LEPs view three cultural changes as necessary:

1. Businesses need to overcome their fear of accessing help from regulators.
2. Regulators need to be regarded, and regard themselves, as enablers as well as enforcers.
3. Regulatory services need to recognise their role in supporting growth.

### **How can I find out more?**

Your line manager is your first port of call (and you may well have received this briefing note during a presentation from him or her on BBfA). Your local authority will also have a representative in your local LEP who will be able to answer any questions.

Any thoughts, suggestion or ideas you have on how the current system could be enhanced are very welcome. Your views count because to achieve the desired outcomes of BBfA, all frontline regulatory services officers need to be on board. It is true that for some the required shift in approach will be greater than for others, but this is an opportunity for all to make a difference to local businesses and citizens.

To achieve the desired outcomes all frontline regulatory services officers need to be on board. For some the required shift in approach will be greater than for others but this is an opportunity to make a difference to your local area. Thriving businesses create vibrant high streets and support local communities through employment and investment.

The BBfA brand guidelines and toolkit are at: [www.bis.gov.uk/brdo/business/leps/bbfa-resources](http://www.bis.gov.uk/brdo/business/leps/bbfa-resources)

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## Better Business for All – The First 12 Months Progress....

### Advice & Support

- Business Support Scheme:
- Business Support Officer
- Single point of access
- Advice line
- Advice packs for start up business
- Attendance at business groups
- Dissemination of specific advice & guidance
- Regulatory Support offer for businesses relocating to Leicester & Leicestershire
- Regulatory support offer for businesses relocating to MIRA Enterprise Zone

### Culture & Competence

- Leadership & culture training for team leaders
- Business awareness sessions for 95 operational officers
- Acknowledgement by officers of good practice
- Reward and recognition scheme drafted
- Common approach to competency adopted
- Earned recognition pilot with mobile food vendors
- Licensing enforcement & consistency project
- Leading for change workshop with managers
- Development of feedback mechanism

### Coordination and Communication across Regulatory Services

- Regulatory Services Partnership established
- Priorities and work programme agreed
- Organisational awareness sessions for 167 operational officers
- Data sharing protocol 6 month trial
- Consistency exercise for complaints procedures
- Consistency exercise for enforcement policies
- Combined inspection project
- Coordinated communication across services through Business Support Officer
- Weekly emails to all regulatory staff
- Joint training events

### Better Partnerships

- Business Support Officer to coordinate and facilitate the programme
- Steering Group established
- Programme priorities and work programme agreed
- Partnership Charter agreed and signed
- Statement of Support signed by Business partners
- Business Focus Panel established
- Baseline surveys completed
- Wider engagement with additional regulatory organisations including Leicestershire Constabulary and the Care Quality Commission
- Inclusion of development control services within programme

## Better Business for All – The First 12 Months Outcomes....

### Advice & Support

- Businesses have a single point of access into the complex and often daunting regulatory system
- Operational regulatory officers wanting to provide advice and support to business to help them to comply
- Business feeling less afraid to ask regulators for advice and support
- Regulatory officers providing advice and guidance in business friendly style
- Regulatory officers are confident in signposting business to either the most appropriate regulatory service for their needs or the single point of contact

*'I now think of myself as a resource as well as a regulator'* Duncan Robertson, Oadby & Wigston BC

*The Better Business for All programme by LLEP has the potential to transform the local regulatory system for local small businesses - for example the introduction of one telephone number will improve the likelihood of businesses contacting regulators by reducing the confusing array of contact details. It is my belief this will vastly improve the quantity of businesses positively engaging with regulatory services'* Kate Cowan, Spring into Action

### Culture & Competence

- Operational regulatory officers recognising the role they have in supporting business growth
- Business recognising the positive role regulators have in ensuring a level playing field
- Regulatory services consulting with business on how to approach new projects
- Business know what they are doing right in terms of compliance
- Operational regulatory officers have a greater understanding of the pressures business face
- Regulatory officers giving positive feedback to business

*'I now understand what it is like to run a business and the different pressures involved,* Fiona West North West Leicestershire DC

*'The most frequently mentioned feature/theme from our partners to... BBfA..is that "we're beginning to feel more like customers rather than potential offenders".'* Michael Weir, Skillspoint

### Coordination and Communication across Regulatory Services

- Regulatory managers from across the regulatory system working together to find more efficient and effective ways of working and supporting business
- Operational regulatory officers have a better understanding of the system they work in and the roles and responsibilities of other regulators
- Inconsistencies in policies and approach are starting to be recognised and addressed

*'I have better knowledge of other regulators and therefore am able to advise'* Lisa Westwood, Leicester City Council

*"All fire inspectors, without exception gained from the opportunity to meet partner regulators and broaden their awareness, put faces to names and have the opportunity to educate and publicise fire safety to others in the regulatory field".* Trevor McIlwaine, LFRS

### Better Partnerships

- Business organisations and regulators meeting, discussing, developing ideas and working together to implement changes to the local regulatory system

*'...in my business a meeting between my management team and a number of regulators was quite an eye opener to both sides in terms of the how each saw the problems of the workplace differently, and where discussion prompted by Better Business helped both sides to take a more constructive view of the way forward'* James Bowie, Belmont Hotel

*'The benefits (of BBfA to businesses) are that business & regulators have stopped seeing issues as them v us and have started to understand each other's points of view.'* Phil Bates IOSH



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – CONSULTATION DRAFT**

**Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee –8 July 2014**

Report of Chief Officer Communities & Business

Status: For consideration

Key Decision: No

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**Executive Summary:** This report seeks comments from Members on the District Council's Consultation Draft of the Economic Development Strategy

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**This report supports the Key Aim of** the Community Plan's Dynamic & Sustainable Economy priorities and the District Council's Corporate Plan

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Hogarth

**Contact Officer(s)** Joe Middleton Ext. 7128

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**Recommendation to the Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee:** Members views are sought in advance of circulation of the Consultation Draft to consultees.

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**Reason for recommendation:** to ensure that Members are happy with the Consultation Draft before it is released for consultation

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**Introduction and Background**

- 1 The Sevenoaks District Community Plan makes a commitment to a thriving local economy where businesses flourish, where people have the skills for employment and where tourism is supported. The Community Plan also commits to a sustainable economy where people can live, work and travel more easily and are empowered to shape their communities. One of the Council's five promises in the Corporate Plan is to support and develop the local economy.
- 2 The Council's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan will help us to prioritise our ambitions and provide support for our local economy. Officers and Members have been holding consultation workshops with interested groups such as Town & Parish Councils, town partnerships, business support and inward investment organisations, rural support groups, businesses, tourism groups, young people and Council officers engaged in associated work. Members were invited to consultation workshops and this Advisory Committee held its own workshop. Businesses were also consulted by way of a survey which was e-mailed to them and publicised in the Council's e-publication 'real Business'. The results of the consultation were used to inform this draft strategy.

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- 3 It is proposed to send the draft strategy out for consultation over the Summer with a view to bringing back a final draft to this Committee at its October meeting.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this consultation draft. Work identified in the action plan will be funded within existing resources or from external funding where this can be accessed.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications associated with this report. A full risk assessment will be completed on the final document when it is drafted.

#### Equality Impacts

A full equality impact assessment will be completed on the final document when it is drafted.

### **Conclusions**

Members' views are sought on the consultation draft.

### **Appendices**

Consultation draft Economic Development Strategy

### **Background Papers:**

South East LEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan

Results of consultations

West Kent Priorities for Growth

**Lesley Bowles**

**Chief Officer Communities & Business**

**SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
AND ACTION PLAN**

**CONSULTATION DRAFT**

**JULY 2014**

**Foreword**

Sevenoaks District offers both exciting opportunities and interesting challenges in terms of its economy. With strong retail offers, a highly skilled workforce and unrivalled connectivity; the District can look forward to a prosperous and bright future. We continued to perform excellently throughout the recession, with town centre vacancies some of the lowest in the country and business survival rates continuing to be higher than the county and national averages. We continue to attract strong inward investment and ensure that the most innovative and exciting companies stay here in Sevenoaks District.

Despite the success of the local economy, this is no time to rest on our laurels. As a council we are proud of being proactive with our businesses. One of our biggest challenges is retaining land in employment use at a time when residential values are compelling for potential developers. This strategy aims to support for business, attract inward investment and growth and provide more innovation and employment opportunities. We want to continue to make this a great place to live, do business and prosper.

**Cllr Roddy Hogarth**

**Portfolio Holder for Economic Development**

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## INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the major priorities for economic development in the District over the next three year period (2014-2017). Sevenoaks District Council is committed to developing the local economy and securing future jobs and growth. The document sets out 8 key priorities which support the vision set out in the Sevenoaks District Council Corporate Plan and the Sevenoaks District Council Community Plan. Specifically, it supports *Promise 5* in the Corporate Plan which is 'Supporting and developing the local economy'. It also supports the 'Dynamic Economy' and 'Sustainable Economy' priorities in the Community Plan.

We have consulted widely with the business community and partners to shape the content of this strategy. We are confident that the strategy reflects the concerns and aspirations of local businesses.

### Who have we consulted?

The following groups have been consulted in the preparation of this document:

- Businesses through a District-wide questionnaire.
- Business Support organisations
- Inward investment organisations
- Tourism groups and businesses
- Rural support groups and businesses
- Sevenoaks District Council Members
- Town Partnerships
- Town and Parish Councils
- Sevenoaks District Council officers engaged in Planning, Property and Housing and Business Rates
- Young people at the Youth Café at Stag Community Arts Centre, Edenbridge House Project and students at Hextable School

## ABOUT SEVENOAKS DISTRICT

Sevenoaks is a large District lying to the south east of London with an overall area of just over 143 square miles (370 square km). It is long and relatively narrow measuring 20 miles north-south by about 7 miles east-west. The Thames Gateway lies to the north, Surrey and East Sussex to the west and south and the rest of Kent, including Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells to the east and south east.

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Despite adjoining the outer edge of London it is predominantly rural with 93% of the District designated as Green Belt. The quality of the landscape is a distinctive feature of the area. The national significance of the landscape is recognised by the inclusion of 60% of the District within either the Kent Downs (to the North) or High Weald (to the South) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are also extensive areas recognised for their nature conservation importance. It is rare to find such extensive areas of high quality landscape so close to London. This uniqueness makes Sevenoaks District one of the most desirable places to live and work in the Country.

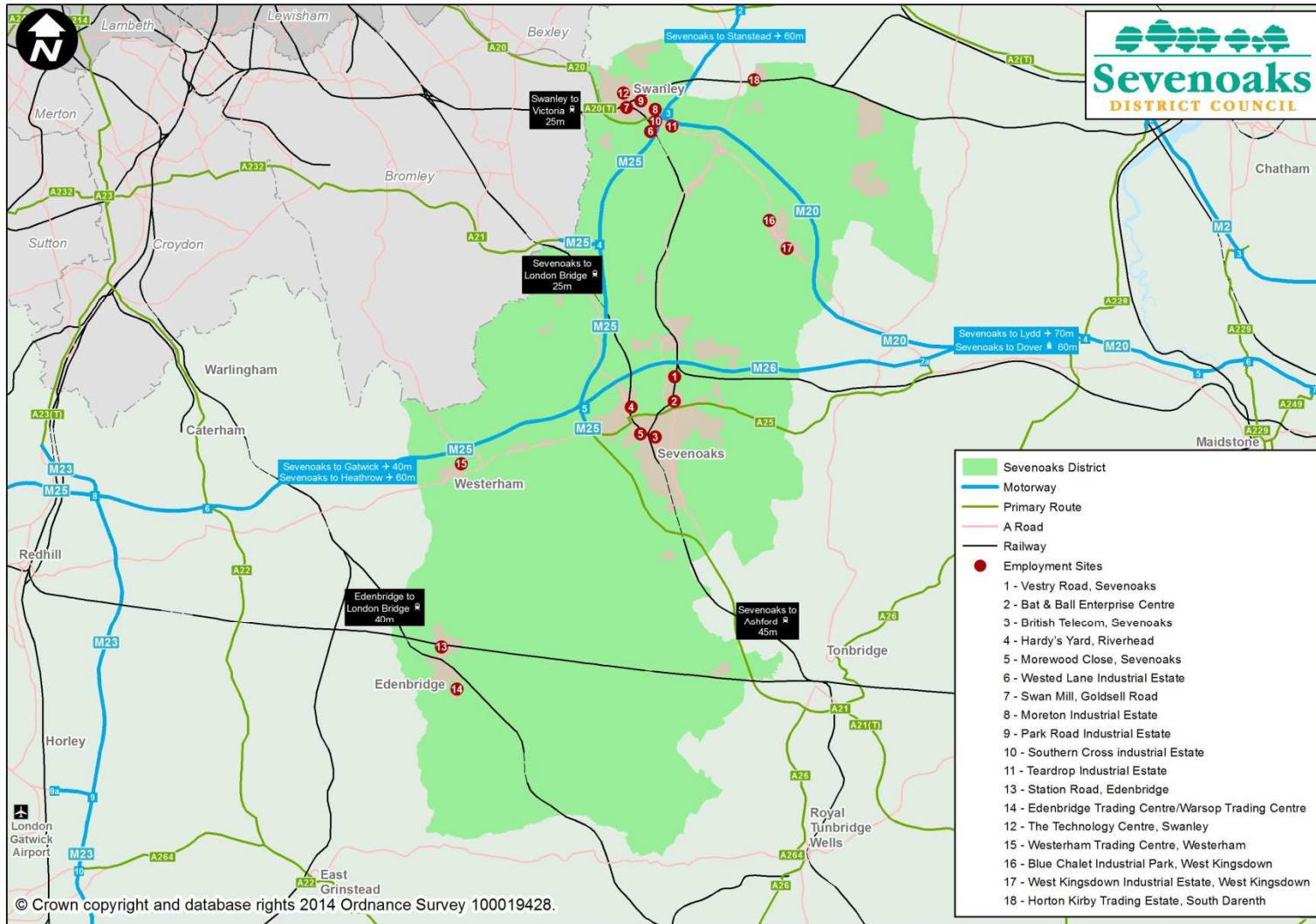
The District has a thriving business community and strong foundations in place for future economic growth. The resident workforce is very highly skilled, with nearly 50% of the resident population educated to degree level or above. There is a culture of entrepreneurialism; we have a very small number of larger employers. The vast majority of businesses are what are called 'microbusinesses' which have 5 employees or less. We also have some of the highest levels of homeworking, self-employment and home-based businesses in the County.

Our highly skilled local population is reflected in our large finance sector and continually growing businesses in the 'knowledge economy'. These firms and others are brilliantly placed to access the powerhouse of the finance industry, the City of London, often in less than 40 minutes. Locating in Sevenoaks District gives them to distinct advantage of far lower overheads, cheaper business rates and access to a highly skilled, yet competitively priced workforce.

Even during a time of fiscal conservatism, the District's main urban settlements have continued to attract strong inward investment. The land West of Bligh's in Sevenoaks Town Centre is being redeveloped by Marks and Spencer. Late in 2014 a new supermarket store and apartments will be completed. Swanley Town Centre has made a remarkable recovery since the recession, with a number of new high street brands opening in the shopping centre. Edenbridge Town Centre is awaiting the start of construction on a brand new Sainsbury's store and recently welcomed Waitrose to the town.

The District has an important tourism offer and historic and cultural legacy with 17 nationally designated historic parks and gardens including Knole House and Park. Sevenoaks has a number of historic houses including Penshurst Place, Hever Castle and Lullingstone Roman Villa. The District features a substantial legacy of historic towns and villages, with 40 Conservation Areas, 2,112 listed buildings and 23 scheduled ancient monuments. We hosted the Paralympic Games 2012 at Brands Hatch which boosted our profile even further. This legacy acts as an important base for our burgeoning tourist industry which is worth over £232 million a year, and is continuing to grow.

The rural economy plays a large part in the economic success of the District with over half of the population living in the 40 or so villages and hamlets around the District. The success of the West Kent Leader Programme highlights the strength of our rural business offer. The recent investment in Westerham by the Westerham Brewery and Squerryes Estate highlights the strength of this sector.

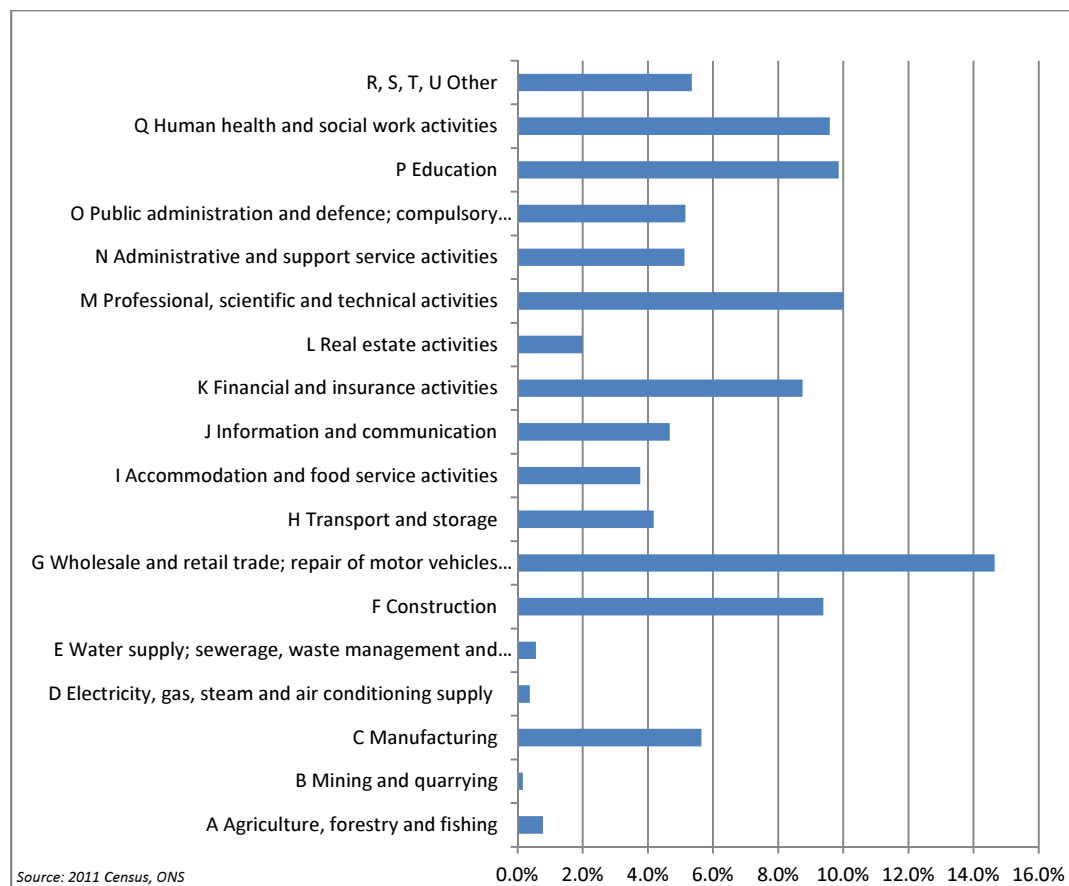


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## THE ECONOMY

The economy in Sevenoaks is broad based. There are no dominant sectors or large employers that substantially skew the balance of employment. The District has low public sector dependency.

*Figure 1: Employment by industry*

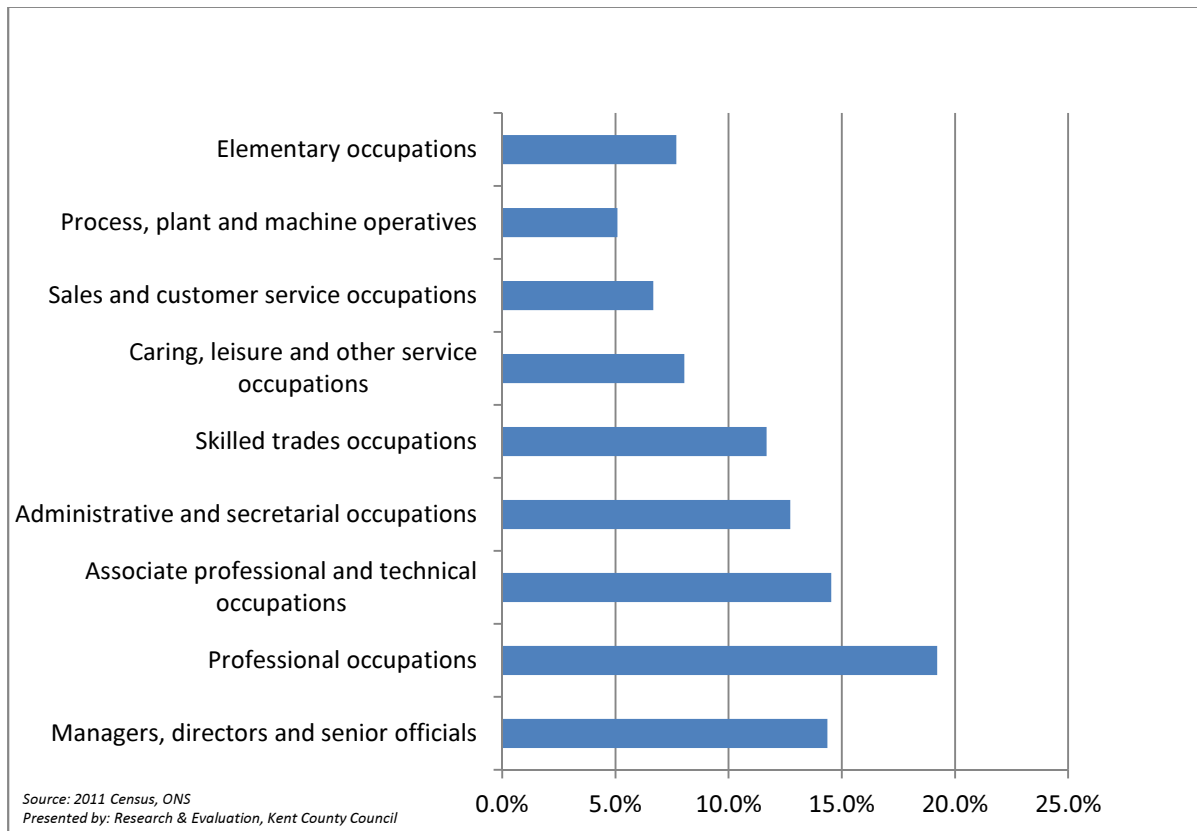


The District also has a large 'knowledge economy' with around 7,500 jobs in 2010. Sevenoaks has one of the highest concentrations of jobs in knowledge rich sectors in Kent. Using Kent County Council's definition of the knowledge economy it is evident that the majority of these are in scientific research and development, most of which are likely to be linked to operations at Fort Halstead.

There are also notable concentrations of employment in head office and management consultancy activities (800), legal and accounting services (700), architectural and engineering activities (700), activities auxiliary to financial services and insurance activities (600) and computer programming and related activities (500). Such employment tends to be focused in smaller sized organisations. In 2008 around 40% of knowledge economy jobs were in businesses of 1 to 10 employees and a further 20% were in businesses of 11 to 49 employees. There were only around 20 knowledge economy businesses with 50 employees and over in the district.



Figure 2: Employment by occupation



The District is not dominated by large employers; 87% of businesses employ less than 10 people. Businesses employing 50 or more staff only account for 2% of the total businesses in the District. This is further reflected in the very high percentage of home-based workers, home-based businesses and self-employed people we have in the District.

**Workforce (Economically Active population)**

Economic activity relates to a person who was aged 16-74 and working, looking for work or not working at all at the time of the 2011 Census. Those who are economically active include; employees (both full and part time), the self employed, full-time students and the unemployed. Those who are economically inactive include; a person looking for work but not able to start within two weeks, as well as anyone not looking for work or unable to work such as people who are retired, looking after home/family or disabled.

Sevenoaks District has a current economic activity rate of 71.5%. This is above the county average of 69.9% and the national average of 69.7%. However Sevenoaks will see a 6.4% decline in the resident workforce up to 2030.

**Earnings**

Average earnings for those resident in the District are typically far higher than the County and national average. Median weekly full-time earnings in the district are £690.70, compared with £610.40 in Kent and £558.80 in Great Britain. This translates to high local spend locally and undoubtedly has a positive impact upon our high streets and cultural attractions. The median

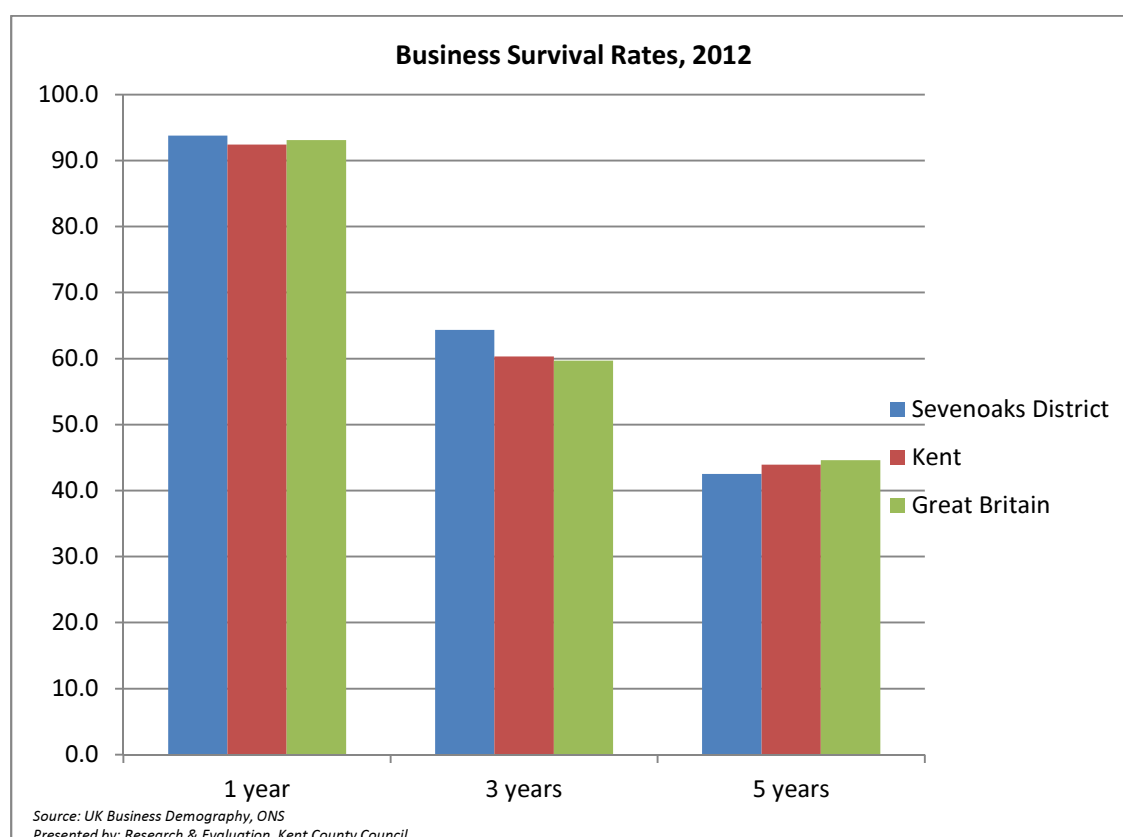
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workforce earnings show a similar trend. Median full-time earnings in the district are £602.00, compared with £542.70 in Kent and £558.30 in Great Britain. Median workforce earnings are slightly higher, reflecting the highly skilled nature of the resident workforce.

There is a significant disparity between the resident earnings and workplace earnings in the District. The likely reason for this is due to the high levels of out commuting that the district experiences, with median earnings in London significantly higher than in Kent.

### Business Survival Rates

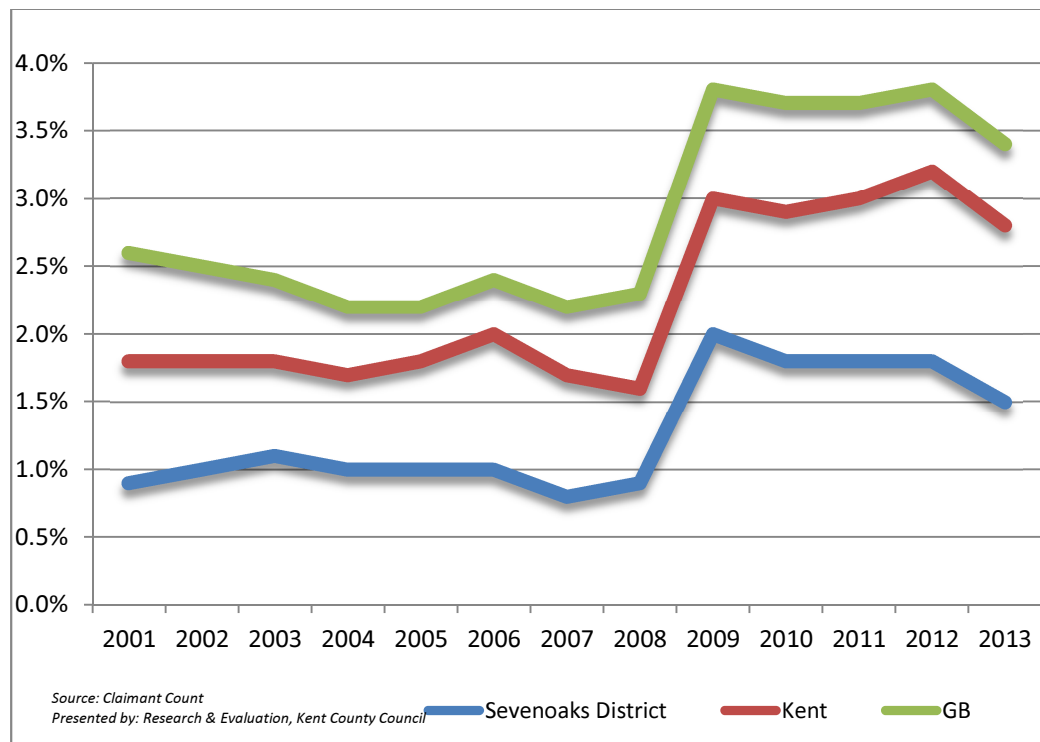
Business survival rates in Sevenoaks in Year 1 and Year 3 are above the county and national average. Survival rates are below the county and national average for Year 5. This indicates that although businesses find it easy to start up and survive within the District in the first instance, they are slightly less likely to sustain this than average.



### Unemployment

Unemployment is typically low in most parts of the District. The average rate of unemployment has consistently stayed below the regional and national averages, even during the 2008 recession. The district has pockets of unemployment which are above the regional averages; these are often found in Swanley and Edenbridge.

**Figure 4- Annual Average Unemployment Rate- 2001-2013**



**Economic Output (Gross Value Added)**

Gross Value Added (GVA) is a measure of economic output. It is primarily used to monitor the performance of the national economy and is now the measure preferred by the Office for National Statistics to measure the economic wellbeing of an area. GVA and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are not the same. GVA measures the economy excluding tax and subsidies.

Sevenoaks District has a GVA of (£mil) 2,090; this is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in the County. The GVA per head is also the 6<sup>th</sup> largest in the County at 18, 112.

We must exercise caution with these estimates for a number of reasons. Firstly, national statistics are not available for District GVA. It is an approximation based on the total GVA for Kent. This can be misleading as the estimate is based on the number of employees, rather than actual productivity. Secondly the estimate excludes the self-employed. We have one of the highest self-employed workforces in Kent. Thirdly the GVA per head figure is grossly affected by out-commuting. A high proportion of our residents commute to London each day.

**Connectivity**

The connectivity in Sevenoaks District is often seen as one of its most appealing traits for the commercial sector. There are excellent transport links to London, Europe and the Thames Gateway via rail, air and road. There is also easy access to a number of major roads which cross the District including the M25, M26, M20, A25, A20 and A21. The rail services are excellent, with services to London, Kent/Sussex coasts, Redhill, Uckfield and East Croydon. The main priority airports are easily accessible and the Port of Dover is just over an hour away.

Large areas of the District have been part of the countrywide expansion of the 4G service for mobile communications. Broadband is one of the top issues for businesses throughout the

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District. There has already been significant investment in this area through the BDUK project led by KCC, independent providers and community based projects. However broadband speeds are still substandard in some parts of the District and this must be addressed. This form of connectivity is vital to the ongoing growth of the rural economy and will continue to be a priority.

### Economic Strengths

The economy continues to perform strongly in the face of increasing economic uncertainty and pressure:

- There are strong levels of **inward investment** such as Blighs (Sevenoaks) and the West Kent Cold Store (Dunton Green). We host some of the most exciting companies in Europe and the rest of the world such as BT, Siemens Nixdorf, QinetiQ and Marks and Spencer.
- Sevenoaks District has **exceptional connectivity**. There is excellent access to London (London Bridge, Waterloo, Charing Cross, London Victoria and Blackfriars) from any of the major towns in the District (Sevenoaks: 25 minutes, Swanley: 26 minutes and Edenbridge: 40 minutes). All of the major airports in the south east (Gatwick, Heathrow, Stansted and London City) are easily accessible by rail or car. Road access is exceptionally good with strong links to the M25, M26, M20, A25, A20 and A21. Access to Europe is easy with the Port of Dover a short distance away.
- Sevenoaks District has a strong base of **very high skilled** workers. Over 40% of workers in the area have qualifications at NVQ4 and higher level. This is far above the UK and South East average.
- There are a number of **key sectors** with strong growth potential such as: Tourism, Financial Services and Professional Scientific and Technical
- **Unique landscapes and scenery** which attract people from all over the world.
- **Superb cultural and leisure facilities**.
- The District has a **very high quality of life**. Sevenoaks is consistently named as one of the top places to live in the UK, combining beautiful countryside with a host of cultural attractions.
- The **tourism industry** continues to grow strongly year upon year. It is now worth over £230 million annually and continues to go from strength to strength.
- **Resilient and entrepreneurial culture**. Our business survival rates in Year 1 and Year 3 are better than the UK and County average. We have some of the highest levels of **self-employment** in the County.
- **Robust retail offering**. Sevenoaks, Westerham, Swanley and Edenbridge have some of the lowest retail vacancy rates in the County, offering an eclectic mix of independent shops and high street brands.

### Key Challenges

The local economy faces a number of challenges that need to be addressed in order to facilitate further growth:

- Swanley Town Centre has seen some incremental improvements since the recession, however there are still areas in the town centre which could be improved and regenerated. **Bevan Place and the Meeting Point** are key strategic sites for regeneration.
- New Ash Green Village Centre can no longer provide the services and amenity that residents require. **Regeneration** of this area is a key strategic priority for the Council.

- **Fort Halstead** is a major developed site within the green belt. The current occupier is DSTL, who have announced that they will be leaving the site in 2017. This one of the largest employment sites in West Kent and as such, needs strong commercial development.
- **Bat and Ball and the BT Exchange** have been identified as potential regeneration sites within Sevenoaks Town. The future development of these sites will play a vital role in the prosperity of the town in years to come.
- **Loss of employment land to residential**
- Supporting growth in our burgeoning **tourism industry** through increased marketing and the availability of suitable accommodation for tourists.
- Making sure **broadband speeds** are superfast in rural areas of the District.
- **Graduate retention** is falling and more level skilled staff is being lost to London due to out-commuting.
- Ensuring we continue to have the best transport links to London. Enabling **Zone 6** in Swanley and Bat and Ball will kick start regeneration and further improve connectivity.
- A high proportion of the District have a high level of skills and qualifications, however there is still a small proportion that **lack of skills and work readiness**.
- Apparent affluence masking pockets of **deprivation** and low levels of educational attainment.

### NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

The vast majority of public funding to support the local economy and employment is channelled through various national, regional and sub-regional agencies. The government has introduced a series of policy initiatives and legislative changes designed to assist economic growth. The main channels for stimulating economic growth are:

#### Localism Act

The Localism Act aims to give more power to local authorities and communities to influence planning and housing decisions. In particular, the Community Right to Challenge could potentially foster a spirit of entrepreneurialism in local communities. Another important aspect of this act is Neighbourhood Planning, allowing communities the opportunity to get the right type of development for their community.

#### Local Enterprise Partnerships

In 2010 the government decided to abolish the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) and replace them with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). LEPs are private/public sector partnerships that have a clear remit to drive sustainable private sector led growth. Sevenoaks is part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), which consists of Kent, Essex and East Sussex .The Lord Heseltine review 'No Stone Unturned' in 2013 encouraged the government to devolve further powers and funds to LEPs so that they can drive economic growth. The SELEP has developed a strategic growth plan which includes our two major growth areas in the District, Fort Halstead and Swanley.

Our submission to the LEP included a number of other areas for growth which they have not currently accepted into their plans but that we think is vital to the further regeneration and prosperity of the District. They are listed as priorities below.

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## **Growing Places Fund**

The Growing Places fund is designed to improve local funds in order to unlock growth on specific development sites, infrastructure projects and stimulate economic growth.

## **Regional Growth Fund**

The £1.4 billion Regional Growth Fund has been developed to support the creation of more private sector jobs. Currently, businesses in Sevenoaks are able to access the £5.5 million Escalate fund. The fund is designed for high growth businesses along the A21 corridor.

## **Regional and Local Context**

At the District and sub-regional level there are a number of plans that either link or support delivery of our economic priorities.

## **Unlocking Kent's Potential**

Unlocking Kent's Potential sets out Kent County Council's overarching vision for how the County should look in the next 10 years. It assesses the major opportunities and challenges facing the County.

## **West Kent Priorities for Growth**

The WKP for Growth is a strategy developed by the West Kent Partnership which is an economic partnership of Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The strategy sets out a proactive and strategic approach to the future investment needed to support the West Kent economy now and in the future.

## **Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy**

The Core Strategy was adopted by full council in February 2011. It sets out the vision and policies for future development in the District up to 2026. The core strategy sets out the general approach to the scale and location of development, it does not deal with specific development sites, nor does it deal with the most detailed policy issues.

## **Sevenoaks District Council Draft Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP)**

The ADMP allocates specific sites for development such as housing and employment land.

## **Sevenoaks District Council Corporate Plan**

The Corporate plan sets out the council vision up to 2015. It commits to 5 promises in the coming years which are to provide value for money, to work in partnership to keep the District of Sevenoaks safe, to collect rubbish efficiently and effectively, to protect the green belt and to support and develop the local economy. The overriding vision for Sevenoaks District is "to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving economy".

## **Community Plan**

The Economic Development Strategy has been developed to complement the Sevenoaks District Community Plan. The Community Plan sets the long term vision for Sevenoaks District and encompasses the community's priorities for action. This vision already includes a number of

priorities related to economic growth and employment. The document is a 15 year vision which is the result of widespread consultation with the community.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

#### 1. Economic Growth and Investment

The core aim of any Economic Development strategy is to deliver projects and actions which facilitate business growth, expansion, inward investment and to create an atmosphere of entrepreneurialism.

It means that we have to ensure that businesses already located here are sufficiently supported in being able to grow. The Sevenoaks Business Demand Survey, compiled by URS in September 2013; has given us a robust evidence base for understanding the needs of businesses in the future. The following results give us a strong steer for our future objectives:

- The top issue effecting businesses surveyed was the 'Building or site size'.
- The majority of respondents to the survey expected the market to grow gradually over the next five years.
- For businesses intending to move, the most popular reason is that they area ready to expand and need larger premises. Furthermore, the majority of businesses intending to move required larger office space.
- 87% of those businesses planning to move premises want to stay within Sevenoaks District. This is a 23% increase since the last telephone business survey in 2005.

It is clear that Sevenoaks District is becoming a much 'stickier' location for businesses. Businesses want to stay within the District, and are anticipating strong growth in the future. It is vital that the size and quality of office space is developed to ensure that these businesses stay here.

Our consultations corroborated the findings from the business survey and identified additional need for employment space that is required. Start up business units or a 'business hub' was frequently mentioned throughout the consultations. It was felt that there is a lack of space for people starting a business who might need flexibility with their working arrangements until they are able to grow their business and move into a longer term lease on a property. This is a need which has also been identified in the West Kent Investment Strategy. Additional units or hubs would help engender a stronger sense of entrepreneurialism and ensure that more businesses develop and grow in the district.

A recent report compiled by Locate in Kent confirmed that there is significantly less commercial property to choose from in Sevenoaks District in comparison to the rest of West Kent and the County.

Our pro-business attitude at the Council has led to significant amounts of inward investment such as the recent Marks and Spencers development in Blyths. A number of innovative multinational companies have chosen to locate and invest in the District such as BT, Siemens

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Nixdorf and Bayerngas. As well as growing businesses already located here, we want to ensure that the District continues to attract strong investment and the most exciting businesses.

We cannot achieve significant economic growth in the District without enforcing strict protections on our current employment land. Current land values mean that it is more profitable for developers to build housing than good quality commercial premises. Our planning policy stipulates that we will protect employment land where feasible. This is vital if we are to attract and keep businesses in the District.

The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 1.1: Market Sevenoaks District as a place to invest and grow

Aim 1.2: Development of local business support and advice

Aim 1.3: Develop start up units and work hubs

Aim 1.4: Encouraging viable and vibrant town centres through a range of partnerships

Aim 1.5: Ensure fast growing businesses are able to access finance and support.

Aim 1.6: Maintain and protect employment land and commercial premises

### 2 Employability and Skills

Sevenoaks has a very highly skilled population who are primarily educated outside the District in some of the highest achieving schools in the country. The District has a higher proportion of individuals with NVQ4 and NVQ3 and above equivalent qualifications compared to the South East (41.9% in Sevenoaks District compared to 36.2% in the South East and 32.9% in Great Britain). The District has a higher proportion of individuals with NVQ3 and above equivalent qualifications (62.7% in Sevenoaks compared to 56.7% in the South East and 52.7% in Great Britain). People rightfully point out that we have a very skilled populace.

The issue is that we also have a high proportion of residents with very low qualifications. The proportion of individuals in Sevenoaks District with no qualifications is higher than for the South East as a whole, but lower than Great Britain (11.1% in Sevenoaks District compared to 9.1% in the South East and 12.3% in Great Britain). Evidence of low skills in the District has been corroborated by a number of local businesses who have had to import workers from outside the district due to a skills shortage at the local level. A common theme throughout the whole consultative process is that businesses struggle to find the right staff with the right attitude. The following points are just a selection of those that were mentioned during consultation:

- Not enough young people with the right attitude to work
- Generational worklessness
- Poor links to training for young people in the District
- More links with businesses needed.
- Gap in sector skills- especially catering

The Local Strategic Partnership Employment sub-group; which is a multi-agency partnership of organisations who work to reduce unemployment were also consulted. They highlighted two important issues: the trouble young people have in getting to work from rural areas in the District



and the lack of links between themselves and the private sector. A similar response was encountered in the consultations with young people who found public transport expensive and unreliable and wanted more links with local businesses so that they can build up their experience.

Unemployment in Sevenoaks District is below the county and country average. The perception is that unemployment is low throughout the District. This is incorrect. There are a number of unemployment hotspots throughout the District.

We are unfortunate in that we do not have a Jobcentre plus within the District or a College.

The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 2.1: Improve the skills and employability of residents in the District.

Aim 2.2: Work with businesses to identify skills gaps.

Aim 2.3: Ensure that jobs and training within the District is well marketed and available to all people.

### 3 Transport and Infrastructure

Infrastructure is vital to the continuing economic growth of the District. There are a number of key infrastructure projects that need to be delivered over the timescale of this strategy in order for us to facilitate economic growth. The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport (2010-2026) is a document which sets out the range of transport issues facing the District. The strategy will seek support the initiatives identified in this document. The consultation process identified a number of other key areas of improvement in the District such as the inclusion of Swanley and Bat and Ball in Zone 6.

The Sevenoaks Business Survey (2013) indicated that Transport and Infrastructure were still very important considerations for businesses throughout the District.

The consultations highlighted that many areas want to take advantage of our close proximity to London. In particular, those in Sevenoaks and Swanley want to be included in zone 6. This has obvious advantages for businesses and residents. For Swanley, inclusion in zone 6 would help to kick start significant regeneration in the area and create new jobs. For Bat and Ball, zone 6 would take pressure off the service to London Bridge and also stimulate local regeneration projects.

The flooding and bad weather that visited us over Christmas 2013 had dire consequences for residents and businesses. Our consultations identified that those areas flooded would like additional support from us to engage with the Environment Agency on flood protection and funding for those affected.

Car parking has been another consistent theme during the consultative process. Businesses and local communities are very concerned about future parking capacity.

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The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 3.1: Inclusion of Swanley in Zone 6 and improvements to the rail station

Aim 3.2: Inclusion of Swanley in Zone 6 and improvements to the rail station

Aim 3.3: Support efforts to improve car parking in the District

Aim 3.4: Ensure areas are sufficiently protected from extreme weather and flooding

### 4 Support and Services for business

The District Council delivers a number of services to businesses. It is vital to ensure that different departments in the Council communicate to one another to enable businesses to feel welcomed into the District and that they can turn to the Council if they need assistance. Whether it be from a planning application, business rates or licensing. It is clear that we need to be able to work more closely together to ensure that businesses are nurtured and feel they are supported by the District Council rather than simply looking upon us as the billing authority.

Our consultations identified a need for the Council to provide more clarity in regards to businesses support and what funding is available. Businesses sometimes find the large amounts of information on offer confusing and don't know who to contact in order to get the best information. We need to ensure that the Council is providing clear, concise advice that businesses find easy to access.

The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 4.1: Set up the 'team around the business'- the purpose of the team is to assist businesses coming into the District.

Aim 4.2: Clarify the business support and funding available and ensure that there is one single point of contact.

### 5 Energy and Sustainability

Local authorities are being encouraged to make cuts in energy costs and 'go green'. Businesses are also looking to cut overheads in the face of ever climbing energy prices. The 2013 and 2014 Sevenoaks District Council business surveys indicated that energy costs were one of the most important concerns for businesses looking forward.

The District Council is supporting the Climate Local initiative led by Kent County Council. This is a Local Government Association initiative to drive, inspire and support council action on climate change. As part of this we are committed to a number of actions to reduce our carbon footprint and ensure that residents and businesses are given the right information to cut costs and go green.

We have already started a number of initiatives to support this exciting programme of work. In partnership with the KCC Low Carbon Team we have delivered two Steps to Environmental

Management (STEM) workshops. We are also developing an information pack for businesses so that they can make the right decisions when it comes to being energy efficient. Our consultations showed that there was some confusion amongst businesses and other organisations as to what schemes are operating and that there needs to be greater clarity and understanding about what support and funding is available.

We need to ensure that the green infrastructure is in place to enable businesses and residents to be able to buy more energy efficient vehicles. Charging points for electric vehicles are becoming increasingly prevalent in London and surrounding boroughs. The installation of charging points in the District will be a priority.

The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 5.1: Ensure that businesses are able to access training and funding opportunities that will enable them to become more energy efficient and cut costs.

### 6 Places for Growth and Improvement

After consulting our corporate plans, emerging local plans and the business community's, a number of areas were identified for improvement:

#### Swanley Town Centre

Swanley is the second largest town in the District. It is located adjacent to Junction 3 of the M25.

It has services which include a youth and community centre, leisure centre, library, civic centre, schools, railway station and a range of other community facilities and support services. The town centre itself contains a pedestrianised shopping centre which includes a major food superstore. There is scope for improvement to the town centre.

The Retail Study update 2009 showed that the town was at that time only capturing a low proportion of available spend, particularly for non-food goods and suggested that the town could be more attractive to shoppers if larger units were available in order to attract more high street names. Currently there is no additional land available adjacent to the pedestrianised centre to enable this. However, recent incremental improvements have been welcomed.

The local market continues to attract a large number of people into the centre and there is scope for additional marketing.

Land at the vehicular entrance to the town could provide additional employment and possibly a small business hub for new businesses and workshops and at the same time improve the attractiveness of the 'gateway' to the town. This could nurture a new generation of businesses which will go on to stimulate further economic growth and jobs in the town. Land at Bevan Place is earmarked for housing.

A key part of the regeneration of Swanley is ensuring that the transport links are of sufficient quality and dealing with some traffic congestion. The train station is not currently up to standard and the aim of the local community is that they be included in Zone 6.

Another opportunity to help skills and employment on Swanley would be to bring back into use the technical and vocational centre at the Orchards Academy.

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### New Ash Green Village Centre

New Ash Green was developed as a new community in 1960s with its own village centre. The centre has proved to be far less successful than other aspects of the development and continues to suffer from a high amount of vacant units and environmental issues. The Council is attempting to work with landowners and the local community to develop proposals for its regeneration so that it better meets the needs of the local community, while retaining a scale appropriate to the size of the community it is intended to serve and a form that respects the distinctive character of the settlement. An element of residential development could be included as part of the regeneration scheme. The final form of development will follow local consultation and will likely be mixed use.

### Sevenoaks Town Centre and Bat and Ball

Sevenoaks has a successful town centre although it faces competition from other larger centres outside the District and, in common with other town centres has suffered from an increase in vacant premises due to the recession. It has benefited from the completion of the Bligh's Meadow development in 2007 and has a good range of independent shops and services and multiple stores. The town centre benefits from a high quality environment that needs to be maintained and enhanced as it continues to develop. An active town partnership ensures a focus on the town with a variety of events and marketing activities.

Further growth will be needed over time if the town is to maintain its position relative to other centres. Vital to this is two main regeneration projects, Bat and Ball and the BT Exchange.

Bat and Ball lies just to the north of Sevenoaks Town and has an issue with empty properties. The rail station is of a substandard quality and the surrounding environment could be significantly upgraded in order to support the vibrant business atmosphere at the Bat and Ball Enterprise Centre. The inclusion of Bat and Ball in Zone 6 is key to the regeneration of this area and will hopefully take pressure off the London service from the nearby Sevenoaks town station.

The BT Exchange site is located in the centre of Sevenoaks Town and is of vital strategic importance for the town's economy. There is strong demand for high quality office space from businesses looking for a location with excellent connectivity to London, but without the hefty business rates and rent bill.

### Fort Halstead

Fort Halstead is a previously developed site situated in the Green Belt and the Kent Downs AONB that was originally a Ministry of Defence research establishment and is still occupied by defence related industries. It is currently the largest employment site in the District.

Since the adoption of the Core Strategy, DSTL, the largest employer, has announced its intention to withdraw from the site by 2017. The Council is working with DSTL, QinetiQ and the site owners to develop redevelopment proposals for the future. In line with our policy (Fort Halstead is identified as a Major Employment Site in the Green Belt) we expect future development to be employment led.

The site currently employs over 1200 people. The District Council expects that any future redevelopment would provide the same number of jobs. QinetiQ have indicated that they plan to stay on the site and are keen to work with us on the site. Our ambition is that Fort Halstead is transformed into a park specialising in science and engineering. We want to develop a new

studio school onsite which will provide businesses with the specialist skills they need and young people with the bespoke training, education and experience that will land them a job straight after leaving school. We want to take advantage of the excellent strategic position and expansive location at Fort Halstead and develop a start up business hub. Our vision is that the site will harness the skills and expertise of residents in West Kent either with new innovative start up businesses or working for a smorgasbord of high flying science and engineering firms. There is also space on the site for a high quality hotel with conference facilities. This would support business visitors and take care of a well established need in the district for high quality conference facilities. It would also accommodate our growing tourist industry.

### Vestry Estate

The Vestry Estate is located on the edge of Sevenoaks Town with access to the motorway network via Junction 5 of the M25. The estate comprises a mix of industrial, warehouse and workshop units covering a range of sizes. Some of the B1 and B8 properties located on this site are old and need redevelopment. This site has been identified as an area appropriate for new business development within these areas, including the provision of sites for small and medium sized businesses and start up facilities.

A number of other sites are listed in the draft ADMP which are identified for intensification and regeneration for B1-B8 uses:

- Erskine House
- Hardy's Yard, Riverhead
- High Street, Sevenoaks
- London Road, Sevenoaks
- Morewood Close (excluding housing area), Sevenoaks
- South Park, Sevenoaks
- Lime Tree Walk, Sevenoaks
- Wested Lane Industrial Estate, Swanley
- Swanley Town Council Offices, Swanley
- Swan Mill, Goldsel Road, Swanley
- Media House, Swanley
- Moreton Industrial Estate, Swanley
- Park Road Industrial Estate, Swanley
- Teardrop Industrial Estate, Swanley
- The Technology Centre, Swanley
- Edenbridge/Warsop Trading Estate
- Station Road, Edenbridge
- Westerham Trading Centre, Westerham
- Blue Chalet Industrial Park, West Kingsdown
- West Kingsdown Industrial Estate, West Kingsdown
- Horton Kirby Trading Estate, South Darent

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The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 6.1: Positively engage with landowners and relevant partners to encourage the successful redevelopment of these key growth sites.

### 7. Tourism and the Rural Economy

The tourism industry is a major contributor to economic growth in the District. We have a wealth of excellent tourist attractions which bring hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The tourism industry is worth over £230 million to the local economy and visitors are increasing on a yearly basis. The District hosted the Paralympic Cycling events as part of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics at Brands Hatch and has a high profile in the South East. During our consultation with tourism businesses and town and parish councils a number of important issues were raised:

- Join things up with Visit Kent- more work with other local businesses and providers
- Limited accommodation an issue
- Parking- integrated transport
- Large central hotel
- Tourism hub

The rural economy is a significant part of the District's economic output. We have some of the highest levels of homeworking, self-employment and home businesses in the County. We also have a broad and diverse agricultural industry which continues to dominate in the smaller rural hamlets and villages throughout the District. There is a large amount of

A key part of our support for the rural economy is the West Kent Leader programme. This £1.5 million pound fund worked diligently to support rural enterprise. We are hopeful that the next funding round will start in 2015 and continue to support rural businesses in accessing funding and providing local jobs.

The following aims will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 7.1: Enhance and improve the rural economy

Aim 7.2: Market the District as a place to 'stay, play and visit'

Aim 7.3: Help facilitate growth in the tourism industry

### 8. Broadband and Connectivity

Broadband is a vital 21<sup>st</sup> century amenity for both residents and businesses. The speed and access to services can have a severe detrimental effect on business performance and is even starting to negatively hit house prices. The 2013 business phone survey indicated that broadband is now the number 1 concern of businesses within the District. Many of our

businesses are located in rural areas which may not feel the benefit of normal commercial broadband upgrades. For the district to remain competitive we must ensure that superfast broadband services are rolled out to all areas of the District. The number one concern for businesses in the 2014 Business Survey was access to superfast broadband services; 91% of those surveyed thought that this was the most important issue. In the face to face consultations with business groups this was highlighted as the most important infrastructure upgrade in the District.

Our consultations also highlighted another important issue. Mobile phone signals and 3G/4G signals are often very poor in the rural parts of the District.. We must ensure that future connectivity is first rate. Wifi is an increasingly sought after service and currently the service is limited. Increasing the scope of Wifi is vital for the visitor experience, for those accessing services and shopping in our main towns.

The following aim will be progressed by the Council in order to achieve this ambition:

Aim 8.1: Ensure that the District has 21<sup>st</sup> Century connectivity to encourage growth and promote well-being.

### Equality and Inclusion statement

We recognise that everyone has a contribution to make to our society and a right to access services without being discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their:

- Race, colour, nationality, ethnicity
- Gender, marital status or caring responsibility
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Physical or mental disability or mental health
- Religion or belief
- Health status
- Employment status

### Abbreviations

3G- Third Generation Wireless

4G- Fourth Generation Wireless

ADMP- Draft Allocations and Development Management Plan

AONB- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DSTL- Defence Science and Technology Laboratory

GVA- Gross Value Added (£)

LEP- Local Enterprise Partnership

NVQ- National Vocational Qualification

RDA- Regional Development Agency

SELEP- South East Local Enterprise Partnership

WIFI- Wireless Local Area Network

WKP for Growth- West Kent Partnership for Growth

Economic Development Strategy- Action Plan

Action	How are we going to do this?	Outcomes
<p><b><i>Economic Growth and Investment</i></b></p> <p>1.1 Market Sevenoaks District as a place to invest and grow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an investment prospectus featuring the USPs and case studies of successful businesses.</li> <li>• Work closely with partners; especially Locate in Kent to advertise business development opportunities.</li> <li>• Work closely with commercial agents in the District to identify and market important strategic sites.</li> <li>• Promote access to vacant buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Investment prospectus is completed and distributed to businesses and associated organisations who deal with inward investment.</li> <li>• The SDC website is easy to use and provides excellent up to date information for businesses.</li> </ul>
<p>1.2 Development a programme of local business support and advice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with colleagues in the West Kent Partnership to develop a business support offer that reflects local concerns and needs.</li> <li>• Engage with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to ensure that we can access funds and specialist advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme of local business support and advice successfully implemented in West Kent.</li> <li>• Funding is successfully bid for to support the delivery of a business support programme.</li> </ul>
<p>1.3 Develop start up units and work hubs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review our available land and office space.</li> <li>• Work with colleagues in the Property team to identify investment opportunities.</li> <li>• Work with private sector partners to identify opportunities for start up units and hubs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses in the District</li> </ul>
<p>1.4 Encouraging viable and vibrant town centres through a range of partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with town partnerships to help them progress their objectives.</li> <li>• Help town partnerships access funding and support for local priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for support progressed.</li> </ul>



1.5 Maintain and protect employment land and commercial premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocating and safeguarding the District Council's planning policy land for employment use.</li> <li>• Resisting changes of use from employment to other planning use classes</li> <li>• Encourage viable and vibrant town centres through a range of partnerships</li> <li>• Encourage, through the planning system, a supply of modern, well designed business accommodation</li> <li>• Work proactively with developers to identify new brownfield sites for development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment land is protected conversion to residential.</li> <li>• New commercial space is developed.</li> </ul>
1.6 Ensure fast growing businesses are able to access finance and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise and engage with businesses interested in the Escalate fund.</li> <li>• Work with partners to investigate further European funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of businesses in the District accessing the Escalate funding</li> </ul>
<i>Employability and Skills</i> 2.1 Improve the skills and employability of residents in the District.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting 16-24 year olds into employment through a range of training courses.</li> <li>• Work with the Local Strategic Partnership to progress actions on employment issues throughout the District.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the number of young people who are not in employment or education.</li> <li>• Number of opportunities for unemployed people to access skills and employment advice.</li> </ul>
2.2 Work with businesses to identify skills gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with businesses in the SELEP and at the West Kent Partnership to understand the skills that businesses want.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and skills providers well informed about local skills needs and responding to those needs.</li> </ul>
2.3 Ensure that jobs and training within the District is well marketed and available to people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to create a series of jobs fairs showcasing local employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People accessing job fairs in the District.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and training providers.</li> <li>Support job fairs and other initiatives around employment</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Transport and Infrastructure</b></p> <p>3.1 Inclusion of Swanley in Zone 6 and improvements to the Rail Station</p> <p>3.2 Inclusion of Bat and Ball in Zone 6 and improvements to the Rail Station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrange meetings with TFL to discuss future expansion of Zone 6 outside London.</li> <li>Arrange meetings with South Eastern to discuss further improvements to the Bat and Ball and Swanley Rail Stations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvements to Swanley Rail Station</li> <li>Improvements to Bat and Ball Rail Station.</li> <li>Inclusion of Swanley in Zone 6.</li> <li>Inclusion of Bat and Ball in Zone 6</li> </ul>
3.3 Support efforts to improve car parking in the District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the development of Buckhurst 2 decked car park.</li> <li>Support the expansion of the Darenth car park in Westerham.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buckhurst 2 decked car park is built.</li> <li>The expansion of the Darenth car park is successfully delivered.</li> </ul>
3.4 Ensure areas are sufficiently protected from extreme weather and flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the Environment Agency to support flood relief in specific hotspots.</li> <li>Enable businesses to access funding for flood protection if they are liable to flood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of businesses accessing support for flood prevention measures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support and Services for Businesses</b></p> <p>4.1 Set up the 'team around the business'- the purpose of the team is to assist businesses coming into the District.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with all departments at the Council who have some kind of contact with businesses.</li> <li>Distribute the Sevenoaks Business Guide and Burrows Directory to ensure that businesses have a clear understanding of our services.</li> <li>Clarify the business support and funding available and ensure that there is one single point of contact.</li> <li>Continue to publish the monthly Real Business newsletter.</li> <li>Continue to advertise and promote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses are satisfied with contact with the District Council. Information channels are clear and the number of businesses accessing the Real Business newsletter increases.</li> </ul>

	sources of funding.	
<p><b>Energy and Sustainability</b></p> <p>5.1 Ensure that businesses are able to access training and funding opportunities to become more energy efficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a series of STEM workshops in partnership with the Low Carbon team at Kent County Council.</li> <li>• Work with colleagues in the Housing team to collate and distribute information to businesses on funding opportunities</li> <li>• Contribute and complete actions in the Climate Local Kent framework.</li> <li>• Engage with local businesses who work on sustainability issues to see if we can partner on specific programmes or projects.</li> <li>• Support the rollout and delivery of the Green Deal.</li> <li>• Work with colleagues to install charging points for electric vehicles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of businesses accessing the Green Deal.</li> <li>• A completed energy efficiency information pack.</li> <li>• Deliver three STEM workshops a year with the Low Carbon team.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Places for Growth and Employment</b></p> <p>6.1 Improve and redevelop the sites mentioned</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work proactively with landowners and developers to encourage redevelopment opportunities.</li> <li>• Engage with the SELEP to leverage funds which will progress development on these sites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in the amount of commercial space in the District.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tourism and Rural Economy</b></p> <p>7.1 Enhance and improve the rural economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a funding bid for the next round of Leader funding and, if successful, promote the scheme.</li> <li>• Work with relevant partners to identify projects around community hubs.</li> <li>• Ensure that rural and home-based businesses are able to receive business support and advice</li> <li>• Promote local produce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of businesses taking up West Kent Leader funding.</li> <li>• The number of rural and home-based businesses taking up business support services.</li> </ul>

<p>7.2 Market the District as a place to ‘stay, play and visit’.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance the visitor experience by working with a wide variety of partners.</li> <li>• Provide additional support, networking and skills workshops for tourism businesses.</li> <li>• Work with town councils, tourism businesses and town partnerships to ensure that the tourism offer for each area is sufficiently supported and marketed widely.</li> <li>• Develop cultural attractions and activities with relevant partners.</li> <li>• Promote the District to travel journalists and tourism promoters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of tourism businesses accessing workshops and networking events.</li> </ul>
<p>7.3 Help facilitate growth in the tourism industry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase staying accommodation for tourists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of bedrooms provided by tourist accommodation providers.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Broadband and Digital Connectivity</i></p> <p>8.1 Ensure that the District has 21<sup>st</sup> connectivity to encourage growth and promote well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prove the need and demand for faster broadband by engaging with local communities.</li> <li>• Applying for funding to support communities in getting superfast broadband</li> <li>• Support local communities in finding alternative broadband solutions.</li> <li>• Work with independent broadband providers to develop innovative solutions in rural areas of the district.</li> <li>• Work with mobile phone providers to ensure that rural areas have sufficient mobile signal coverage.</li> <li>• Work with broadband providers to ensure that towns in the District have a reliable and fast WIFI service.</li> <li>• Develop a programme of Digital inclusion with appropriate partners to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding is successfully applied for to improve broadband connectivity.</li> <li>• The number of communities accessing superfast broadband.</li> <li>• A programme of skills workshops/events is developed to support Digital Inclusion.</li> <li>• A Wifi service is set up in each main town in the District.</li> </ul>

	ensure that all residents and businesses have the skills to embrace new technology and connectivity.	
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**Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee Work Plan 2014/15**

8 July 2014	21 October 2014	12 February 2015	23 April 2015
<p>Emergency Plan update</p> <p>Economic Development Strategy &amp; Action plan</p> <p>Business prospectus</p> <p>Car Parking Technology Working Group feedback</p>	<p>Economic Development Strategy – final draft</p> <p>Business Continuity Strategy and System and Plan</p>	<p>Community Grant Scheme</p>	

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