

Scrutiny Committee - 2 April 2014

Cllr Roddy Hogarth, Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development

Cllr Hogarth will update Members on the following three challenges:

1. Supporting the local economy by enabling businesses to access funding for development and jobs
2. Improving broadband provision, particularly in rural areas
3. Reviewing parking capacity in Sevenoaks Town

1. Supporting the local economy by enabling businesses to access funding for development and jobs

One of the key economic development challenges has been to keep a focus on Sevenoaks and West Kent, particularly with regard to access to funding. At a time when our businesses need to be able to compete with other parts of the County, both East Kent and the Thames Corridor have compelling cases for growth, both in terms of need and opportunity. Making the argument for West Kent, as an area where businesses can and do thrive and where small amounts of investment can generate fast and significant improvements, has therefore been a priority.

As a result of lobbying and working with partners in East Sussex as well as West Kent, the Council has attracted Regional Growth Fund money to provide zero per cent loans to local businesses who can prove that they can grow and generate additional jobs.

2. Improving broadband provision, particularly in rural areas

With low broadband speeds in many rural parts of the District, a key challenge has been to assist local communities in attracting better broadband provision. We have done this in three ways:

- Proving the need for faster broadband, through the Make Kent Quicker campaign involved working with local communities, schools and businesses to prove that Sevenoaks District could take advantage of improved provision through the BDUK scheme.
- Making funding applications to Defra for faster broadband speeds in particular parts of the District.

- Reviewing whether there was scope for the District Council to start a broadband company or invest in existing broadband companies make provision in the District

3. Reviewing parking capacity in Sevenoaks Town

This was the subject of a report to Cabinet on 6 March 2014