

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY MONITORING REPORT

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 17 July 2017

Report of Chief Officer for Communities and Business

Status For consideration

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: The report summarises performance of the targets in the Economic Development Strategy. Performance against the targets has improved since the last report and 86% of the targets are reported as green, 12% as amber and 2% as red.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Supporting and developing the local economy from the Corporate Plan and supporting the Dynamic and Sustainable economy priorities in the Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Roderick Hogarth

Contact Officer Emily Haswell, Ext. 7261

Recommendation to Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee:

To be updated on progress with delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and its associated action plan.

Reason for recommendation:

Good progress has been made with delivery of the strategy and associated action plan. As we approach the final phase of the strategy term the majority of actions remain on target.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Economic Development Strategy sets out an extensive action plan and the majority of actions are expected to be completed during 2018. The delivery of the targets is now reaching its final phase before a new Economic Development Strategy commences in 2018.
- 2 A summary of progress is given below and monitoring information provided in the appendix. The Strategy was adopted during an economic downturn affecting every sector of the economy and subsequent economic and policy changes have had an impact on the ability and priority for completion of

actions. Additionally there are some actions against which performance is outside the influence of the Council.

- 3 The Sevenoaks District economy continues to perform well. Sevenoaks District has a relatively high percentage of SME's with 90.6% having 0-9 employees (NOMIS 2017). It has continued to maintain its position relative to other local areas and has continued to have low unemployment, 0.7% (NOMIS 2017) high numbers of Micro businesses 90.6% (0-9 employees) (NOMIS 2017) and a high percentage of people working from home. The amount of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants within the District has decreased throughout the strategy period with 870 (1.2%) claimants in March 2014 compared to 525 (0.7%) claimants in April 2017.

- 4 Strategic Objective 1 - Inward Investment.

Good progress has been made with this target with continuing work taking place to encourage businesses to set up within the District. The actions related to employment land allocation and retail frontage are reporting slightly below the target figures as they are symptomatic of the changing market conditions and national planning policy decisions.

- 5 Strategic Objective 2 - Skills and Support

The Economic Development team have made great progress with this objective through a number of different business support programmes being in place and delivered. The West Kent Partnership Programme offering up to 4 hours of free business support has been delivered with 26 hours of support so far to 17 Sevenoaks businesses.

This programme continues to be promoted to local businesses and numbers are increasing as the service becomes more popular. A realBusiness newsletter is now reaching an increased audience with almost 800 businesses signed up to receive this and an average opening rate of 30% which is high for this type of publication.

A greater audience on social media is being reached with there being 1,284 followers of the Economic Development Team's twitter account, an increase of 137 new followers since September 2016 to date due to positive and regular tweeting. National business campaigns have also been covered through social media campaigns, such as Small Business Saturday. On that day 13 tweets were seen 2233 times, with 81 interactions occurring.

The Team Around Your Business service has been provided to new and existing businesses throughout the District and provides information and assistance with Council services. This has benefitted 31 local companies and generated positive feedback from businesses about our approach.

- 6 Strategic Objective 3 - Transport and Infrastructure

Whilst progress has been made, this is an objective where delivery is reliant on others and the Council's role may be limited. Broadband connectivity has

increased in the District and phase 2 of the BDUK project is currently being delivered by Kent County Council. The aim is that 95% of the District will be receiving UK superfast broadband speeds by the end of this phase. We are working with the County Council to identify options for alternative provision for those hard to reach areas in the District.

Improvements to Bat and Ball Station are currently being progressed by Sevenoaks Town Council with planning permission being granted on refurbishments to the station on 28th April 2017. A new planning application for Buckhurst 2 Car Park is being submitted in preparation for the construction of the car park in 2018.

7 Strategic Objective 4 - Energy and Sustainability

A new STEM (Steps to Environmental Management) workshop has been organised for June 2017 following the success of the previous programme. The LoCASE (Low Carbon Economy Across the South East) scheme offering businesses match funded energy efficiency grants from Kent County Council has been promoted by the Economic Development team resulting in 4 Sevenoaks businesses being awarded a total of £31,960 in grant funding from the scheme.

8 Strategic Objective 5 - Places for Growth and Improvement

The Economic Development team are working closely with planning colleagues on the development of the Local Plan, including contributions to the production of the evidence base and the preparation of the Issues and Options consultation. The team have been assisting colleagues with development of the Master vision for Swanley and Hextable by encouraging businesses to take part in consultation and on the feasibility of a work hub business incubation facility in the area. An Edenbridge Economic Development study is being produced to consider the future requirements of Edenbridge town centre in the light of development and population change predictions.

9 Strategic Objective 6 - Rural Economy

Funding for rural businesses is being delivered by the LEADER programme which provides EU funding for rural businesses across West Kent. To date this programme has awarded 12 grants with a total value of £336,824. Specific application support for businesses is provided as part of the West Kent Partnership business support scheme. The team is working with local food producers and Produced in Kent who support this sector. It is intended to incorporate opportunities for local food producers in the emerging Visitor Economy Study detailed below.

10 Strategic Objective 7 - Tourism

Successful Bed and Breakfast workshops and networking events have been delivered supported by Sevenoaks District Accommodation Forum and Visit Kent with future events planned. It was originally proposed to prepare a

Destination Management Plan but following initial scoping meetings it was agreed that there would be more value in development of a Visitor Economy Study. An increase in tourism accommodation in the District will be provided through the development of a new Premier Inn on the Sennocke site and that is due for completion in May 2018.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications for the delivery of the strategy which is resourced through the Economic Development budget and by working in partnership with other organisations.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications for delivery of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on ends users.

Conclusions

The delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and associated action plan is on target reporting 86% actions as Green indicating that they are either already achieved or well on the way, 12% Amber indicating a target in progress or slightly uncertain and 2% red with the target unlikely to be achieved. This is an improvement on the last monitoring report and is hoped for some further improvement as we reach the final reporting stage.

Initial work on the new Economic Development strategy for 2018 onwards is underway and a workshop on the new strategy will be held at the next meeting of the Committee.

Appendices

Appendix A - Economic Development Strategy
Monitoring Report - July 2017

Background Papers

[Economic Development Strategy](#)

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer for Community and Business