

THE EDENBRIDGE ECONOMIC STUDY

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 3 October 2017

Report of **Lesley Bowles - Chief Officer for Communities and Business**

Status For information

Key Decision No

Executive Summary: The Edenbridge Economic Study considers the Edenbridge Town Centre now and looks at the way the population is likely to grow in the future. Allowing consideration of how best to support the future Economic Development of the area so that the town can thrive.

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. Roddy Hogarth

Contact Officer Emily Haswell - Economic Development Officer, Ext.7261

Recommendation to Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee:

To be aware of the contents of the report as a framework for economic development in Edenbridge in the future and to note the suggestions for potential activities and actions to stimulate economic growth for the area.

Reason for recommendation:

The report combines statistical information, input from local stakeholders and examples of best practice from elsewhere. This will provide background to future economic growth of the area.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The report was commissioned by the Economic Development Team following discussions with Edenbridge Town Council. The Town Council has been involved in both setting and approving the brief and providing the local context to the appointed consultants, Regeneris Consultants. A wide group of stakeholders were engaged and provided input to the consultation.
- 2 Some key highlights from the statistical analysis include

- The importance of the manufacturing sector in Edenbridge was highlighted this makes up around a fifth of Edenbridge's employment. Jobs in the sector are more than twice as concentrated as the National average.
 - Edenbridge has a lower representation of medium and large size businesses than the wider area and a higher proportion of self employment.
 - Population growth in Edenbridge (14%) has been higher than that experienced across the wider Sevenoaks District (5%) and the figure for Kent (10%).
 - The skills statistics reveal that 26% of the working age population have a Level 4 qualification or higher. However 20% of the working age population have no qualifications. This is generally a weaker performance than the Sevenoaks District average but similar to Kent figures.
 - Edenbridge has a proportion of socially rented households (17%) that exceeds both the local authority (13%) and county level (14%) and also a higher level of house price growth than Sevenoaks and Kent.
 - Retail vacancy rates are higher than the National average and rents (£13 per sqft) significantly lower than the average level across Sevenoaks District (£21 per Sqft).
 - Edenbridge has one of the largest allocations of employment land in the Sevenoaks District. This is around Enterprise Way and Fircroft Way although feedback from the consultation indicated that much of the space is of low quality.
 - The challenge for the future is the predicted population growth, which is higher than previous levels of growth in the area.
- 3 The data above was discussed with key local stakeholders as part of the consultation. This has allowed the consultants to compare the local feelings and perceptions to the statistical analysis ensuring that the proposed actions are appropriate.
- 4 The priorities for action are organised into 4 themes, Place and Infrastructure, High Street and Services, Business and Employment and Community. These included a selection of quick wins, short term interventions and Medium to Longer term actions.
- 5 It is hoped that the Edenbridge Partnership and Edenbridge Economic Development group will be best placed to deliver actions given their strong local representation. The SDC Economic Development Team will continue to provide assistance as required.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications for the Council associated with the delivery of the suggested actions within the report as it is proposed that these are delivered and resourced locally by working in partnership with other organisations.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications for delivery of the Edenbridge Economic Study Report and associated proposed actions.

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

- 6 The report has provided a good overview into the current and potential future situation in Edenbridge and given consideration to how the Economic Development of the area can be enhanced by a range of potential projects and actions. The next steps require the consideration of which actions are the best to stimulate economic growth and it is hoped that existing groupings can work to identify the resources and drive actions forward.

Appendices

Appendix A - Edenbridge Economic Study Report

Background documents

None

Lesley Bowles

Chief Officer for Community and Business