

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2014 - 2017 FINAL MONITORING REPORT

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 11 December 2018

Report of Chief Officer Communities and Business

Status For Decision

Key Decision No

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**Executive Summary:** The report summarises performance of the targets in the 2014 -2017 Economic Development Strategy. The performance outcomes against the targets since the last report are: 86% of the targets are reported as green, 7% as amber and 7% as red.

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**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

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

To note the performance outcomes of the targets in the 2014 - 2017 Economic Development Strategy and its associated action plan.

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### **Reason for recommendation:**

The 2014 -2017 Economic Development Strategy is being replaced with a new Strategy for the period from 2018-2021 and the report highlights the final outcomes of the targets in the original strategy.

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## **Introduction and Background**

- 1 The 2014 - 2017 Economic Development Strategy included an extensive action plan and the report sets out the outcomes of the action plan and performance information.
- 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 90.5% having 0-9 employees (NOMIS 2018). It has continued to maintain its position relative to other local areas and has continued to have low unemployment, 0.7% (NOMIS 2018) high numbers of Micro businesses 90.5% (0-9 employees) (NOMIS 2018) 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 470 (0.7%) claimants in September 2018.

4 Strategic Objective 1 - Inward Investment.

The actions relating to employment land allocation and retail frontage are reporting slightly below the target figures. These are symptomatic of the changing market conditions and national planning policy decisions, which enabled conversion of office accommodation to residential use under Permitted Development Rights.

5 Strategic Objective 2 - Skills and Support

The Economic Development team have made great progress with this objective and are becoming a valued source of advice and support for local businesses. Throughout the plan period there has been support available to businesses through the West Kent Partnership. In 2017/18 49 hours of one to one support have been provided through the Centre for Micro Businesses to 27 companies in Sevenoaks District, this scheme is ongoing. The support the team provide in promoting and facilitating this service has been praised by the Centre for Micro Businesses and by some of the clients they support.

Through the realBusiness newsletter and increased social media presence the Economic Development Team are a conduit of information and advice on local support and funding schemes, ensuring that local companies are making the most of the opportunities available to them. The team regularly engage directly with businesses to ensure that they are well connected to local support, sources of advice and taking part in National campaigns. Regular liaison with business support organisations enables the team to ensure they have current relevant information to share.

The Team Around Your business service continues to provide support to businesses accessing Council Services. It is estimated that 50 hours Team Around Your Business support has been provided between May 2016 and October 2018, the nature of this support has helped businesses to grow and prosper generating positive feedback.

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. The BDUK phase 2 contract has now been completed. A County wide review of provision is being undertaken on a Parish by Parish basis and that will highlight those geographical areas which require further improvement. The District Council

will work closely with communities, infrastructure providers and the County Council in those areas to find new solutions.

Construction work commenced on the Buckhurst 2 multi storey car park in January 2018 and the car park is due to open in March 2019.

#### 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 13 Sevenoaks businesses being awarded a total of £91,000 in grant funding from the scheme.

#### 8 Strategic Objective 5 - Places for Growth and Improvement

The Economic Development team have worked closely with the planning policy team 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 Edenbridge Economic Development study has been completed. A similar study for the Sevenoaks Urban Economic Area is currently being completed.

#### 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. The programme has awarded grants totalling £221,455 for 6 projects submitted to the programme between January 2016 and December 2017. Specific application support for businesses has been 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.

#### 10 Strategic Objective 7 - Tourism

The new Premier Inn opened in August 2018 and has provided 83 bedrooms for use by visitors to the town and District. The sector led Visitor Economy Study has been completed and new Tourism webpages have been prepared and these are hosted by Visit Kent.

### Conclusions

The outcomes of the targets in the 2014-2017 Economic Development Strategy and associated action plan are reporting 86% actions as Green indicating that they are either already achieved or well on the way, 7% Amber indicating a target in progress or slightly uncertain and 7% red with the target unlikely to be achieved.

## **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.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Economic Development Strategy  
Monitoring Report - December 2018

## **Background Papers**

2014 - 2017 Economic Development Strategy

## **Lesley Bowles**

**Chief Officer Communities and Business**