

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING

Improvement and Innovation Committee Meeting - 27 February 2020

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| Report of | Sarah Robson - Chief Officer People and Places |
| Status | For information |
| Also considered by | People and Places Advisory Committee - 3 March 2020 Cabinet - 5 March 2020 |
| Key Decision | No |

Executive Summary: The monitoring report summarises the performance of the targets in the 2018-2021 Economic Development Strategy. The performance targets are 86% green, 14% Amber with 0% Red.

This report supports the Key Aim of “Build on the District’s thriving economy through the regeneration of our market towns, and by enhancing both the visitor and rural economies” and “Support new and existing businesses through our ‘Team Around Your Business’ approach” from ‘Our promises’ The Council plan. It also supports the priorities in the Dynamic Economy section of the Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

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

Recommendation to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:

To note the progress to date on the Economic Development Strategy delivery plan.

Recommendation to People & Places Advisory Committee:

To note the progress to date on the Economic Development Strategy delivery plan.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

To note the progress to date on the Economic Development Strategy delivery plan.

Reason for recommendation: Delivery of the Economic Development Strategy is progressing well against the delivery plan.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Economic Development Strategy 2018-2021 was adopted following a comprehensive consultation including residents and businesses. Work began on delivery of the strategy in January 2019. The strategy was designed to have flexibility to adapt actions to respond to economic changes and the needs of business customers.
- 2 The Sevenoaks District economy continues to perform well. The 2019 Business Count (NOMIS) listed 6770 enterprises in Sevenoaks District with 90.8% of these in the micro business category (0-9 employees). Business survival rates in 2018 Sevenoaks District remained slightly higher than the Kent and UK averages. Skills levels are varied with 32% of the population (aged 16+) with level 4 and above skills contrasting with 19% with no skills.
- 3 A summary of progress with delivery of the strategy is given below under the 5 themes set out in the Economic Development Strategy 2018-2021, with monitoring information provided in Appendix A.
- 4 **Theme 1 - Growth and Investment** aims to support the regeneration of our key market towns, enabling viable and vibrant town centres that provide employment and retail opportunities for all. The measure of employment floor space shows a small decline in availability of floorspace highlighting the challenge to provide space for employment in the District. We are working to support retailers in town centres and rural areas and encouraging a new mix of services to develop within our high streets. Progress against this objective is good with more work to be done to provide additional support for retailers in partnership with the West Kent Partnership. We are currently supporting the feasibility work for potential meanwhile use and workhub initiatives in both a rural and town centre location to provide business space to stimulate entrepreneurship.
- 5 **Theme 2 - Infrastructure** aims to stimulate infrastructure and improvements in our District. Whilst infrastructure takes time to change and is in many cases outside of the control of the District Council, we have a key influencing role and have worked with partners to help them understand the issues. For example mapping work has taken place to better understand the areas of the District with particular broadband issues, support for improving these areas is available from the County Council. The measure shows that broadband speeds within the District are improving, our work will continue to provide information to those communities seeking solutions to improve their connectivity. The project to renovate Swanley Station will provide substantial investment to create a station better suited to the future needs of the town.
- 6 **Theme 3 - Visitor Economy** - Aims to engage with and support the Visitor Economy sector. Tourism is a key sector within the Sevenoaks economy, with a growing number of visitors and providing 10% of the Districts employment. The Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership has been established to help promote the area to visitors, residents and businesses encouraging sustainable travel. The Visitor Economy forum has also be

established providing a sector led approach to promotion of tourism in Sevenoaks District.

- 7 **Theme 4 - Skills.** The Sevenoaks economy has a high percentage of highly skilled people with over 38% qualified to NVQ level 4 and above and relatively low unemployment compared to neighbouring areas, yet 19% of the population have no qualifications. There are however still challenges to provide employment opportunities for all and to retain and encourage skills development within the District to ensure skilled labour is available for the businesses and key sectors within the District. Working jointly with the West Kent Partnership and Job centre plus we have run a successful series of jobs fairs in the area - the September event in Tunbridge Wells saw 283 job seekers attend with at least 9 confirmed job hires following the event. Working with young people via the West Kent Enterprise Advisor Network and the Sevenoaks supported internship project will continue to ensure that young people have opportunities to meet businesses and a greater understanding of the skills required for work.
- 8 **Theme 5 - Enterprise.** Working with businesses to ensure Sevenoaks District continues to be a place where businesses can prosper and grow. The Economic Development team has a positive image and relationship with businesses in the District providing business support, advice and Team Around Your Business assistance. Much work takes place around this objective to ensure that we continue to meet and engage with businesses in the District so we can fully understand their needs and target support to these.
- 9 In conclusion the Economic Development Strategy continues to report positive progress in all of the thematic areas. Monitoring of the delivery of the strategy indicates that 86% of the targets are green meaning that they have been achieved or are on track to achieve and 14% amber indicating that further work needs to continue to ensure these actions are on track. Members are therefore asked to note the contents of the monitoring report in Appendix A.

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
Delivery Plan Monitoring Jan 2019 - Dec 2019

Background Papers

[Economic Development Strategy 2018 - 2021](#)

Sarah Robson

Chief Officer People and Places