

## **Item 08 – Economic Development Strategy Update**

The attached report was considered by the Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee on 5 December 2023. The relevant Minute extract is below.

### **Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee (5 December 2023, Minute 27)**

The Economic Development Officer - Business Support & Town Centres presented the report, which updated the committee on the first year of the Economic Development Strategy. The Strategy had no additional funding associated with it, and thus partnership working and available funding were maximised. The UKSPF investment plan was aligned with the EDS, which has meant the funding could deliver projects covering both areas.

The Strategy was a framework centred on supporting the local economy. This approach kept a level of flexibility within the Strategy, which would allow it to adapt to external circumstances and opportunities. 86% of actions were either Green- or Amber- coded, which meant progress had been made towards the objective. The 5% of actions which were Red-coloured were being actively worked on, to bring them to amber before the completion of the strategy.

Members asked questions regarding broadband coverage within the district and its impact on professional services. The officer explained that the council were engaging with Kent County Council regarding the Broadband Delivery Plan, to add value within the district. It was noted that smaller businesses had taken advantage of the Meeting Point hub and similar businesses, which could guarantee strong internet connections. Community-led solutions for broadband in rural areas were also a possible avenue to address this.

Members asked questions of clarification regarding specific projects. The redevelopment of 96 High Street, Sevenoaks had been linked to the Land east of High Street, Sevenoaks, and would be included within the proposed consultation in February 2024. Several ideas were being investigated, but stakeholder engagement was necessary before further developing them.

Members discussed the report, and raised some areas of potential further investigation, including the re-establishing the Otford Road Park and Ride and the impact of sustained roadworks on local businesses.

Resolved: That the report be noted.