

Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee

Date: 22 June 2020

Reporting officer: Assistant Director (Communities)

Subject: An Economic Development Strategy for Gravesham, 2019 to 2023

Purpose and summary of report:

To report a draft economic development strategy, a plan on a page and an unpacking of Theme 4 of the draft strategy to assist understanding of the wider actions being taken in respect of enterprise support.

Recommendations:

1. That the Committee makes its views known on this next stage of preparation of an economic development strategy for Gravesham.
2. Members of the Committee are requested to indicate how far the illustrative example in respect of Theme 4 - Supporting Enterprise (Appendix 5) meets their expectations.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Cabinet Committee in November 2019 considered a report on work to prepare an economic development strategy for the Borough and commented on the emerging themes. The minutes of the meeting can be found [here](#).
- 1.2 The meeting concluded that further thought be given to the prioritisation of themes, especially in recognising the importance of the Borough's rural economy and the need to upskill the local workforce. It was noted that an action plan would be prepared to accompany the strategy and that this would have particular focus on delivering key outcomes.
- 1.3 A draft strategy was to be included on the agenda for this Committee in March 2020, but due to the Covid-19 lock-down that meeting did not take place.
- 1.4 Given that the pandemic is having a major impact on the economic context within which investment in business and jobs in the Borough will take place, adjustments will need to be made to the council's priorities for economic development. However, the draft strategy and its main themes remain a valid basis for engaging with local businesses, investors and other stakeholders over the coming months as the impact of Covid-19 becomes known and we adapt to what is likely to be a profoundly changed context.

2. Covid-19 Recovery – Economic Themes

- 2.1 With many businesses yet to be fully operational and staff continuing to be furloughed, it is still too early for a clear picture of what the immediate and longer term impacts will be of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recovery work for Kent, reported via the Kent Resilience Forum, is moving forward and initial work indicates that the following economic themes are emerging:
 - 2.1.1 Severe increase in unemployment is expected later in 2020, requiring active labour market measures;
 - 2.1.2 Recovery will be protracted with slow output growth in 2021 and employment growth lagging behind;
 - 2.1.3 Mixed sectoral picture with some resilient and others heavily impacted with slow recovery expected;
 - 2.1.4 Worst impacted sectors tend to employ more people on lower wages and in disadvantaged areas;
 - 2.1.5 Need to balance ‘open for business’ with social distancing and supporting customer confidence.
- 2.2 Monthly unemployment figures for Gravesham show a significant increase in the number of claimants of unemployment benefits – 5.8% in April, a 64.1% increase on the month previously and 96.6% over the year (compared with a Kent figure of 108.7%). May’s figures will be available in time for the Committee.

3. A Draft Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.1 The themes, reported previously to the Cabinet Committee, and proposed within the draft Economic Development Strategy remain a basis for taking forward actions post Covid-19. The emphasis within these will change in response to the impact that Covid-19 has on Gravesham’s economic position, but Gravesham’s geographical position and its connectivity remains strong and may well be enhanced if people’s behaviour and values change and more residents decide to work closer to home with easy access into Central London.
- 3.2 A draft Economic Development Strategy is attached as Appendix 2, together with a ‘plan on a page’ (Appendix 3). Priority actions listed for 2020-21 are included in Appendix 4.
- 3.3 The Committee is asked to comment on the draft strategy and the actions set out in Appendix 4.
- 3.4 Appendix 5 is an unpacking of *Theme 4 – Supporting enterprise to encourage business growth*, prepared for the Cabinet Committee in March to help understanding of current and planned activity in relation to that theme. Members are requested to indicate how far this illustrative example meets their expectations.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 This is a critical time to gauge the views of businesses and stakeholders in Gravesham’s economic future. It is the intention that over the coming months, local businesses, investors, key strategic partners, education and training

providers, together with the wider public are engaged in a discussion on the issues. Their responses will be reported back to the Council via Cabinet and they will be invaluable in developing the strategy further and confirming interventions.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

5.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	Preparation of an economic development strategy is not a statutory requirement.
Finance and Value for Money	The financial implications of the strategy and action plan will be detailed as the plan is implement and the case for any additional resources then made. The strategy will help influence external resources to achieve the Council's overall ambition of 'a vibrant and productive' economy.
Risk Assessment	Risk assessments will take place for individual actions when required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. Yes - an overarching objective is to expand the range of economic opportunities in the Borough.</p>
	<i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i>
Corporate Plan	#2 Place - a dynamic borough defined by a vibrant and local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and activity community.
Crime and Disorder	No implications at this stage.
Digital and website implications	Place branding and actions to communicate more effectively with the business community has implications for the Council's digital and website activity.
Safeguarding children and	No implications.

vulnerable adults	
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