

From: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 1 February 2018

Subject: Members' recent visit to Swale Borough

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: This report is in two parts. Firstly it summarises the outcomes of the recent visit by KCC Members to Swale Borough. The second part of the report outlines plans for further proposed visits to other Kent districts during the first half of 2018.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and endorse the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the November meeting of this Cabinet Committee, Members agreed that officers be tasked with arranging a programme of informal visits to each of the Kent districts. The objective of the district visits programme is to provide an opportunity for Cabinet Committee Members, as well as other KCC Members, to gain an understanding of the economic development and regeneration opportunities and challenges within each of the Kent districts.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to summarise the main outcomes of Members' recent visit to Swale Borough on 28 November, and to outline the programme of proposed district visits for the first half of 2018.

2. Outcome of the visit to Swale Borough

- 2.1 The visit to Swale Borough on 28 November was arranged with the full support of officers and Members of Swale Borough Council, who were also on hand during the visit to provide details about the main economic development and regeneration opportunities and challenges for the district. The itinerary for the visit is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.2 Some of the main opportunities and challenges for economic development and regeneration in Swale Borough are summarised below, and are described more fully in Appendix 2 to this report.
 - a) **Kent Science Park** – the site has a strong focus on life sciences, with over 60 businesses and employing over 1,600 people. Ideally the owners of the site would like direct access to the M2. There are no immediate concerns about skills and recruitment, although parking for employees can be problematic.

- b) **M2 Brenley Corner junction improvements** – This is a priority both for the Kent local authorities as well as Department for Transport, and is important to realising the longer term benefits of the Lower Thames Crossing.
- c) **Sittingbourne Town Centre regeneration** - this regeneration project received planning consent for mixed use in 2015, and will bring in some £330m inward investment and over 400 new jobs.
- d) **Eurolink, Sittingbourne** – this is Kent’s largest industrial estate, and has a significant manufacturing presence. The latest planned expansion at Eurolink East 5 is now under construction, and there is already a lot of interest from companies wishing to locate there. The completion of road links to the A249 would add significantly to the site’s attractiveness to inward investment.
- e) **Peel Ports, Sheerness** - This is a very competitive port operation with a range of commercial uses, especially car imports. A big challenge for the port is to expand its operations in relatively older port infrastructure, although there are longer term plans for further expansion nearby.
- f) **Shepherd Neame, Faversham** – the company has ambitious proposals for becoming a major tourist attraction as well as maintaining its presence as one of the country’s principal breweries.

3. Plans for Further Visits

- 3.1 It is intended to arrange further Member visits to Kent districts over the next 12 to 18 months, in collaboration with district and borough officers and Members. The format for each visit would be similar to that for Swale, involving a day-long tour of the principal economic development and infrastructure developments within each district.
- 3.2 The second visit is currently being arranged to Dartford Borough on 9 February 2018. The itinerary has yet to be finalised with borough council colleagues, but it is anticipated Dartford town centre, Eastern Quarry and major transport and housing schemes within the borough will feature.
- 3.3 Because of the scale and complexity of the proposed development, a separate visit to the Ebbsfleet Garden City will be arranged for Members later in the year.
- 3.4 The Committee may wish to discuss their suggestions for subsequent visits for example to Thanet, Dover and/or Ashford by the summer.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of coach hire is expected to be £350 per visit.

5. Recommendation

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to receive and endorse the report.
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6. Contact details

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