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To: Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview
and Scrutiny Committee, 17 November 2010

Subject: Update on REDPOSC District Visits

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides Members with a summary and assessment of the priorities identified from their visits to Kent districts over the last year.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Over the past year, REDPOSC Members have been undertaking a programme of visits to Kent districts, starting with Swale in November last year and finishing with the visit to Maidstone at the beginning of October this year. The main purpose of the visits was to identify those regeneration and economic development issues that Members consider are potential priorities for future investment by the County Council.
- 1.2 Each district visit was accompanied by district council representatives (both members and senior officers), and for some visits by the chairman of the Learning and Development Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Priorities identified by REDPOSC

- 2.1 In total, over 40 potential priorities for future investment across the county were highlighted by Members during the visits. A summary of these is set out in the appendix to this report. The appendix also provides updated information in relation to those visits that were made several months ago, as well as updates on district councils' progress in preparing Local Development Framework Core Strategies.

3. Assessment of priorities

- 3.1 In order to assist REDPOSC in its deliberations, we have selected four criteria against which to assess each of the priorities identified during the district visits. Each of the criteria is consistent both with the main objectives of the Kent Regeneration Framework and Bold Steps for Kent, and with the coalition government's imperative to rebalance the economy

and create the conditions for future economic growth. However, Members may wish to use an alternative means of deciding which are their most important priorities.

- 3.2 The criteria used during the assessment are set out below:
1. Supports business growth to rebalance the economy, create jobs and revenue;
 2. Champions regeneration that creates value through the entrepreneurial use of assets;
 3. Increases rates of economic participation and independence for people in areas of high benefit dependency; and
 4. Creates the conditions for growth that achieve longer term outcomes beyond the current Comprehensive Spending Review period.

Each of the REDPOSC priorities was scored and given a High, Medium or Low rating to reflect the degree of fit with the criteria, and the provisional outcomes of this assessment are summarised in the appendix.

- 3.3 It should be noted that many of the priorities rated High or Medium by this assessment are already established and important priorities for KCC, and include, for example:
- Maintaining the critical nature of Ashford as a growth point;
 - Supporting joint working with the east Kent district councils;
 - Supporting port development at Dover's Western Docks;
 - Balancing new growth at Ebbsfleet with town centre regeneration in Dartford and Gravesend;
 - Supporting the development of Folkestone's seafront;
 - Developing a multi agency approach to people based regeneration on Sheppey;
 - Supporting Margate Task Force in tackling deprivation in central Margate and Cliftonville West; and
 - Improving accessibility to Thanet via HS1 and a parkway at Manston.

- 3.4 Several of the Medium rated priorities were common to a number of districts, and also reflect corporate regeneration priorities within KCC linked to learning and skills, culture and transport. Examples of these include:
- Supporting the development of learning and skills provision in Ashford, Kent Thameside, Shepway and Maidstone;
 - Making the case for better transport infrastructure in Dover, Thanet and Maidstone
 - Maximising the opportunities for cultural regeneration across east Kent; and
 - Supporting town centre regeneration at Dover, Dartford, Gravesend, Maidstone, Swanley, Margate, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

- 3.5 The large number of priorities identified by REDPOSC means that it is unlikely, given the new public expenditure landscape, that all or even most of them could be accommodated in our future work programme – and indeed some of the priorities would be for other directorates to take forward. However, some could well emerge as new priorities if they align closely with KCC and coalition government objectives for strong and sustainable economic growth, and subject to available resources both in the public and private sectors. We will endeavour to engage fully with the private sector to support the development of new and emerging priorities.
- 3.6 The future role of the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership in determining the investment priorities for the county will also be crucial here, as will the Local Investment Plans for east, north and west Kent and Ashford being prepared by the Homes and Communities Agency in association with KCC, Medway Council and the district councils. Indeed, many of the priorities identified during the REDPOSC visits are also LIP priorities, and may therefore be included in future bids for RGF and other potential funding streams.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to discuss the priorities identified from the visits and to agree a priority order.

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Background Documents:

None