

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY

Mike Whiting

Cabinet Member for Economic Development

DECISION NO:

20/00083

For publication Yes

Key decision*

Yes

Subject: Local Growth Fund Round 3b Third Party Scheme – East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development I approve the progression, via KCC's Local Growth Fund arrangements, for the East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone, allowing it to progress to the stages of development and delivery.

To facilitate this, I agree:

- to confirm that KCC will act as the accountable body for the project;
- to enter into a Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding agreement; and
- to enter into legal agreements with the relevant third parties delivering the schemes to transfer the conditions of the LGF spend and project management to them

I also agree to delegate authority to Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Corporate Directors of Finance and Strategic and Corporate Services, to enter into relevant legal agreements and take other actions necessary to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

As the end of the Growth Deal (March 2021) approaches, a number of projects throughout the SELEP region have experienced difficulty with delivery; and to date £33.396m of funding has been returned to SELEP for reallocation to projects which have demonstrated deliverability by March 2021.

Through this process, an allocation has been made available for the East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone. This scheme is being delivered by external partners (NIAB East Malling Research) and KCC will transfer the LGF on to the third party for the delivery of the scheme. The Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone is an important scheme which has been prioritised for Growth Deal funding by both the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership and SELEP. The scheme, which is to be delivered by NIAB EMR and is fully externally funded, will look to secure the long-term delivery of world-class research, innovation and knowledge exchange for the UK horticultural industry.

This decision will enable a legal agreement to be signed between the County Council and NIAB EMR. The legal agreement needs to be signed before the LGF can be drawn down and transferred to the delivery partners for the delivery of the project and it transfers the responsibilities for the programme management of the East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone to NIAB EMR..

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposal was considered and endorsed by the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at its meeting on 25 September 2020.

20/00083 - Local Growth Fund Round 3b Third Party Scheme - East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone

(Item 7)

Mrs T Dean was present as the local Member for the Malling Central division.

1. Mr Smith introduced the report and reassured the committee that there would be no adverse financial consequences for the County Council in the event of the project not delivering the desired outcomes. He responded to comments and questions from the committee, including the following:-

- a) Members praised the pioneering research and development work undertaken at the East Malling research facility and noted its excellent reputation as a research pioneer and a leading international provider of agricultural training;
- b) asked by the local Member for clarification about the progress of planning permission for the new housing, which would finance the development, Mr Smith undertook to look into the latest situation and update the committee; and
- c) asked by the local Member about the possible negative impact of Britain leaving the European Union upon East Malling's international lead in agricultural training, Mr Smith assured the committee that no negative impact had yet been seen. Monitoring would continue with the aim of identifying any future issues, and the committee would be kept abreast of these.

2. The committee RESOLVED to endorse the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, to:

- a) approve the progression, via the County Council's Local Growth Fund arrangements, for the East Malling Advanced Technology Horticultural Zone, allowing it to progress to the stages of development and delivery,

to facilitate this, to:

- i) confirm that the County Council will act as the accountable body for the project;
 - ii) enter into a Local Growth Fund (LGF) funding agreement; and
 - iii) enter into legal agreements with the relevant third parties delivering the schemes to transfer the conditions of the LGF spend and project management to them; and
- b) delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Corporate Directors of Finance and Strategic and Corporate Services, to enter into relevant legal agreements and take other actions necessary to implement the decision.

Any alternatives considered:

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None



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signed

05/10/2020

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date