

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic and Commercial Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2015

Present: Councillor Paterson (Chairman), and
Councillors Butler, Cuming, Fissenden, Harper,
Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Sargeant and Mrs Wilson

113. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda should be webcast, except those listed in Part II of the agenda.

114. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from Councillor Powell.

115. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Sargeant was present as a substitute for Councillor Powell.

116. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members.

117. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by members or officers.

118. TO CONSIDER WHETHER ANY ITEMS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE BECAUSE OF THE POSSIBLE DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED: That items listed in Part II of the agenda be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.

119. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2015

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed.

120. CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE REVIEW

Paul Barron, Director of Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs (KFYE), was invited to speak on this item by the Chairman.

Mr Barron made a presentation to the committee that covered the following points:

- KFYE delivered workshops on business skills to young people around the county. These sessions were delivered in schools and colleges, as well as other venues as 'open' courses;
- KFYE targeted young people aged 16+ for these courses, as KFYE tended to have the most success with young people of this age;
- Mr Barron found that there was better engagement from young people who attended the 'open' courses as young people who chose to attend the course, rather than those that had to as part of the curriculum, had more interest in starting their own business;
- The workshops that KFYE delivered taught young people soft skills- such as how to network- as well as the more technical skills required for setting up a business- such as how to write a business plan;
- KFYE charged a fee for delivering these sessions. When the sessions were held as 'open' sessions, rather than run at a school or college, KFYE sought sponsorship to cover the fee;
- KFYE had also set up a mentoring programme for young people who were interested in becoming entrepreneurs. The mentoring programme had around 80 business owners who were prepared to mentor young people; and
- Around 80 young people per year, each year, had received mentoring from KFYE's mentors. Of these 80 young people, around 25 per year end up starting their own business.

Members thanked Mr Barron for his presentation and proceeded to ask him questions.

A member of the Committee asked Mr Barron whether they, or their mentors, ever advised young people that starting a business was not for them. Mr Barron responded that KFYE, and their mentors, encouraged young people who they worked with to explore all of the options available to them so that they could make their own decision.

In response to a question from the committee Mr Barron informed the committee that the approximate cost, excluding promotional work, of running an open session was around £500.

The committee thanked Mr Barron for his evidence and invited Alison King, of Red Rocket Associates, to speak on this item.

Mrs King gave a presentation about Red Rocket Associates that covered the following points:

- Red Rocket Associates was a business set up by two business partners from a corporate background and two business partners from an education background;
- The reason the company was set up was that it had been identified that young people were coming out of education not work ready;

- What was missing were soft skills, for example how to behave when meeting potential employers for the first time;
- To address this, the company had set up a programme called the 'work academy', which was 50 hours of lessons and activities teaching employability skills to young people. This programme was being piloted at a school in Faversham;
- Much of the work that students carried out on the course was carried out by themselves, for example holding their own careers fair on school premises and inviting outside speakers to deliver talks on careers;
- One of the barriers the company had faced was that there were many schools that focused on pupils achieving A* grades, and getting as many of their students to university as possible, rather than ensuring their pupils were work ready. This meant some schools had little interest in the sort of programmes the company were running; and
- The other barrier that the company faced was funding. Red Rocket Associates were run as a business and were delivering a paid for service. However it had become apparent to Red Rocket Associates that the budgets available for delivering careers advice and guidance (including employability skills) were very low.

Following Mrs King's presentation, the committee asked her some questions.

A member of the committee asked Mrs King whether she thought that work experience was essential for developing employability skills. Mrs King responded that although Work Experience was useful, all of the necessary employability skills could be taught in school using the Red Rocket 'Work Academy'.

Mrs King was asked by a member of the committee whether sponsorship could be a solution to the problems with funding she had identified. Mrs King confirmed that sponsorship could help with overcoming the funding barrier.

The committee enquired what were the main barriers to employability for young people that Mrs King had experienced. Mrs King explained that the main barriers for young people tended to be a short attention span, lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem.

Mrs King was thanked by the committee for the evidence that she had given. The chairman invited Alan Reading of South Maidstone Business Association and Lenham Valley Business Association to speak on this item.

Mr Reading gave the committee an overview of his background and involvement in the two business associations he was a member of. Following this he went on to explain that he felt there were two areas that young people needed help with regarding careers advice. The first was that aspirations needed to be raised so that they had a clear idea of what they wanted to do in the future. Mr Reading stated that this was not just a problem for young people, as he had mentored some people over the age

of 50 who did not have a clear idea of where they wanted to go with their career. The second area was that young people needed to experience how a business worked in order to help them focus their career aspirations.

The committee asked Mr Reading whether his business association had much involvement in providing work experience, either to children of school age or for older people. Mr Reading responded that members of his association were willing and able to take people on work experience placements, but that they had not been approached to do so.

The committee thanked Mr Reading for the evidence he had provided.

RESOLVED: That the evidence given for the purpose of the review be noted.

121. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Sam Bailey, Research and Performance Officer, updated the committee on the future work programme. The only change to the draft future work programme was that Marcus Lawler would be bringing a report on options for charging for parking at Mote Park to the next meeting.

Mr Bailey updated the committee on planned activities and other work around the Careers Advice and Guidance Review, which included:

- A possible trip to both Cornwallis Academy and Maplesden Noakes School to observe how Careers Advice and Guidance is delivered;
- A possible trip to the 'Kent Choices 4 U' careers fair on 26 March 2015;
- Kent Association of Further Education Colleges, Federation of Small Businesses and Marden Rural Business Forum were all potential witnesses for the next meeting. Contact had already been made with these organisations;
- Cllr Martin Round had been nominated as a co-optee for the review; and
- A list of questions will be drawn up to address equalities concerns for the review (particularly age and disability) and sent to relevant organisations before the next committee meeting.

RESOLVED: That the future work programme and SCRAIP update be noted.

122. EXEMPT APPENDIX: SCRAIP UPDATE

RESOLVED: That the SCRAIP update contained in the exempt appendix be noted.

123. DURATION OF MEETING

18:30 until 20:27