

WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP

8 April 2005, 10am, Hadlow Manor Hotel

AGENDA

1. Minutes/Matters Arising
 - welcome faith representative
 - South East Plan – WK response Paper A
2. Project Funding
 - Safety in Action – Paper B
 - WKCVS Development Officer – Paper C
 - Volunteering England – verbal update MWy
3. Conference – Paper D
4. Tunbridge Wells Community Plan – Paper E
5. AIF progression – paper F
6. Sub group updates
 - Regeneration – Paper G
 - Business development – Paper H
 - Learning and Skills – Paper I - to follow
 - Transport – Paper J
 - Health – verbal update DH
 - Housing – Paper K
7. Presentation – West Kent Legal Services Partnership - Stephen Rogers
8. AOB
9. Dates of next meetings
 - 21 June, 9.30am, West Kent Conference, East Malling Conference Centre
 - 16 July, 10am
 - 21 October, 10am

PAPER A

West Kent Local Strategic Partnership 8th April 2005

Response to the Draft South East Plan

Summary

On 21st January the WKLSP considered a report summarising the Draft South East Plan and the forthcoming consultation arrangements. The report also suggested a response to those policies and issues that are key to west Kent and invited further discussion and comments to be forwarded to the Head of Policy & Environment at Sevenoaks District Council for compiling a final response by the deadline of 15th April 2005.

Appended to this report is a final draft of a response for approval.

It should be noted that since the January meeting SEERA have decided not to hold a second round of public consultations on the District level housing allocations originally planned for the summer and instead have invited Local Authorities to carry out this work and submit their findings to SEERA in September.

1. Update since January

1.1 SEERA launched the draft South East Plan on 24th January for a 12 week public consultation period due to end at 5pm on 15th April. The consultation exercise included a series of public meetings in each Local Authority area, a leaflet drop to every household in the south east, a MORI poll and public notices, radio advertisements.

1.2 The coverage of the leaflet drop entitled "Your Shout" was intermittent, yet SEERA were reported to be fairly satisfied with the 20,000 responses received by the beginning of March. Attendance at the public meetings in Kent was consistent. The meeting in Sevenoaks held on 3rd March attracted in excess of 40 attendees.

1.3 The sub-groups of the WK LSP were provided with the opportunity to comment further on those parts of the plan that are relevant and the three Council's making up the Partnership have also reported their responses to their Cabinets.

1.4 SEERA has advised that responses received after 5pm on the 15th April will not be considered further.

2. Next Stages

2.1 While the consultations have been taking place, Local Authorities have been progressing the next stage, namely the District breakdown of the housing growth to 2026. The tight deadlines imposed by SEERA for completing this work to enable the draft plan to be submitted to Government in the autumn had caused the Local Authorities some concern. SEERA were advised that it would not be possible to prepare the work and allow time for the relevant member approvals before forwarding the work to SEERA.

2.2 In response to these concerns SEERA's Regional Planning Committee on 23rd March agreed to a proposed amendment to the process of completing the draft South East Plan. Local Authorities now have until September to complete the District level breakdowns and to consider how best to consult on these locally rather than SEERA collecting in the data and undertaking a second major public consultation over the summer. SEERA will consider the results in the autumn before submitting the revised draft South East Plan to the Government early in 2006.

2.3 While this proposal overcomes the immediate problem of meeting the deadlines, Local Authorities will now be required to resource and undertake the whole process, including any consultation. It will also be confusing for the general public who have been advised that SEERA will be conducting a second major public consultation in the summer. It is likely that those consultations that do take place before the revised, September, deadline will be more targeted towards key stakeholders rather than a full public consultation.

2.4 The attached covering letter and comments represent a co-ordinated response incorporating comments made at the January meeting of the WKLSP, at sub-group meetings and through the individual Local Authorities.

3. Recommendation

That:

3.1 the update on the consultations on the draft South East Plan are noted; and

3.2 the attached letter and comments are agreed as a formal response from the WKLSP.

Ian Bailey
Head of Policy & Environment
Sevenoaks District Council

The West Kent Local Strategic Partnership Response to SEERA's Draft South East Plan "A Clear Vision for the South East" (April 2005)

General Comments

The West Kent Local Strategic Partnership (WKLSP) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft South East Plan. WKLSP supports the introductory sections of the draft plan insofar as they recognise some of the same challenges facing the Partnership when preparing the Area Investment Framework and the three Community Strategies for West Kent. However, the WKLSP acknowledges the caveats, regarding background data and the lack of public engagement as introduced by SEERA's Chairman at the Plenary session in December.

Specific Comments

Housing targets

Parts of the WKLSP area are included within two of the sub-regional areas that cover Kent and Surrey. The London Fringe/Central Arc includes part of Sevenoaks District around the built up area of Sevenoaks Town and areas to the west, while northern parts of Sevenoaks District and Tonbridge and Malling Borough are included in the Kent Thames Gateway "Zone of Influence". Tunbridge Wells Borough is not affected by the sub-regions and is wholly contained within the residual county area or "rest of Kent", as are the remaining parts of the other two local authorities making up the WKLSP.

The vast majority of the housing growth in both sub areas is earmarked for the Thames Gateway growth area and Surrey respectively. This means, therefore, that the potential district level distribution of new housing in the three West Kent LSP Local Authorities is likely to be very low, in fact far below existing rates of development, particularly if the sharper focus approach is eventually taken.

While the overall level of housing growth and broad distribution are generally acceptable, the WKLSP and the constituent authorities will wish to carefully consider the district level distribution when drafted later this year to ensure that the level of growth in West Kent has regard to existing commitments and is sufficient to meet local needs. The Housing Sub-Group of the WKLSP expressed the concern that the proposed housing growth for the "Rest of Kent" may be too low to meet local needs. For example, one of the options shows only 200 units per annum for the residual County of Kent.

Other Housing Policies

Policy H4 (Affordable Housing) The policy seeks the provision of 35-50% affordable housing over the region as a whole. Affordable and key worker housing issues are a priority in west Kent, were highlighted in the AIF and have been a focus of one of the sub-groups of the LSP. With a potentially low overall housing figure in west Kent, the percentages of affordable units (particularly social rented housing) needed to contribute towards meeting local needs may need to be higher than the regional average of 50%, raising questions over deliverability.

Policy H5 (Density) – This policy proposes an overall regional target of 40 dwellings per hectare (dph). This again raises questions of deliverability, as it is 10 dph over the Government's suggested minimum density for the south east. It also raises questions as to how the policy will be monitored and managed by SEERA.

For example, many residential areas in west Kent are characterised by low density and/or are remote from access to public transport. If LDFs include policies that seek to balance the need to protect and enhance the character of these areas against the need for higher density schemes resulting in an average density below 40dph, how will SEERA compensate for this in other parts of the region to ensure the regional policy is achieved? There may also be phasing and implementation problems in bring forward larger brownfield sites across the region.

The Housing Sub-Group of the WKLSP also noted that higher densities may result in more taller, thinner housing, which may conflict with carbon indexing policies. SEERA may wish to consider resolving this potential conflict through the Sustainability appraisal of the Draft South East Plan.

The potential combination of lower housing targets, higher proportions of affordable housing and the need to balance density/character issues may make the delivery of housing in west Kent difficult. The WKLSP and constituent authorities wish to bring these matters to SEERA's attention and seek reassurance that these local issues can be reflected in LDFs without jeopardising the requirement for these plans to be in general conformity with the South East Plan.

Gypsy/Traveller accommodation – A further amendment agreed at the SEERA plenary session in December 2004 was to include a policy in the draft plan for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation. This has become more urgent with publication of a draft revised Circular by the Government (Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation December 2004), which places new requirements on Regional Planning Bodies.

Sub-Regional Strategy Areas

While acknowledging the rationale behind the Thames Gateway zone of influence, which includes parts of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone local authorities, the WKLSP and constituent authorities will wish to reinforce the statement included in the sub-regional strategy that the zone of influence should not be seen as a first resort in the event that the growth area reaches capacity. There may be related issues with the Ashford growth area to the east of the WKLSP. In such an eventuality the distribution of the shortfall should be considered at the regional rather than the sub regional level and considered fairly and fully in the light of the comments made under the Housing sections above.

Employment Land Policy

The WKLSP wishes to emphasise to SEERA that it is crucial that housing growth is accompanied (and phased) with employment growth to ensure sustainable development, yet the plan as currently worded is weighted towards meeting housing numbers. This should be redressed in the final version of the plan and linkages between housing, employment and infrastructure policies strengthened.

Environmental Constraints

The inclusion in the draft South East Plan of environmental policies that reflect national and international guidance is welcomed. However, given the importance of these policies, particularly in west Kent, the WKLSP considers that they should be given greater prominence in the final version of the plan.

Retail Policy

The draft South East Plan takes a different approach to the hierarchy of town centres than the current Kent and Medway Structure Plan. Bluewater Regional Shopping Centre is included alongside existing centres, while Sevenoaks Town Centre is absent. The WKLSP suggests that SEERA reflects the hierarchy in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan to ensure a more consistent approach.

Transport Policy

The Transport Sub-Group of the WKLSP stress the importance of ensuring adequate infrastructure provision through the implementation of the South east Plan for existing and proposed developments in west Kent. To illustrate this the Sub Group wrote to the Minister for Transport in February expressing concern over the continuing delay and uncertainty relating to the dualling of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury. SEERA's support for such schemes through the South East Plan and the Regional Transport Strategy is welcomed.

IB/1.4.05

Letter to:

Secretariat
South East of England Regional Assembly
Berkeley House
Cross Lanes
Guildford
GU1 1UN

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to the Draft South East Plan

Please find attached a copy of a response to the above on behalf of the West Kent Local Strategic Partnership. I welcome the opportunity to respond and the comments attached represent the views of the Partnership members and its Sub-Groups, which were agreed at a meeting on the 8th April.

The Partnership is particularly concerned that the South East Plan acknowledges and addresses the issues facing west Kent to enable Local Planning Authorities to develop detailed policies through their Local Development Frameworks, which together will deliver the aspirations of the three Community Plans and the Area Investment Framework.

I hope this is of assistance and look forward to being further engaged in the District level housing distribution exercise due to take place over the summer.

If you wish to discuss any matters arising from the detailed comments attached, please contact Ian Bailey (Head of Policy & Environment at Sevenoaks District Council) on 01732 227439 or ian.bailey@sevenoaks.gov.uk in the first instance.

Yours Faithfully,

Mark Worrall
Chairman West Kent Local Strategic Partnership

PAPER B

West Kent Education Business Partnership



Safety in Action 2005

**Dorton House School
Seal**

28th February – 11th March 2005

Sponsored by



West Kent Safety in Action is an exciting safety initiative now in its 16th year. During this time well over 9500 students from West Kent primary schools have experienced the scenarios staged by the supporting agencies.

The ten scenarios you will see this morning are a practical way of teaching young people how to keep safe, reduce crime and understand the dangers of chemicals, electricity, fire and deep water.

To give the event added interest it is also run as a competition.

The scenarios are:

Coach Safety

This scenario is supported by KCC's Coach Safety Department

The students will be tested on the importance of wearing seat belts on coaches as well as their knowledge on the location of the emergency exits and fire extinguishers. They will be asked about safe places to store their luggage and finally they will be asked to demonstrate a safe disembarkation and a place to cross the road.

Fire Safety

This scenario is supported by Kent Fire and Rescues service

The Fire Service scenario is set in a mock holiday chalet occupied by two drunken adults. The students are tested on the various dangers found in a poorly maintained room. They will be expected to spot such faults such as overloaded sockets, damaged plugs, defective smoke alarms, towels covering lights and pans. In addition they will be tested on their reaction when the room suddenly fills with smoke from an overheating pan. The students will also have the opportunity to practice making a 999 call.

The scenario is also designed to compliment the Service's school visits.

Farm Safety

This scenario is supported by The Health & Safety Executive

The scenario consists of a 10 minute talk to each group of children with a hazard spotting exercise using a model farm (table top farm model approx 580mm x 520mm x 220mm). There will also be a mock pesticide store - a small number of empty containers, a few drinks bottles amongst them to highlight the fact that pesticides may not always be marked. A box of grain will also be used - getting the children to stand in an imaginary silo to demonstrate the dangers of drowning. Finally a danger slurry store sign will be used to ensure that each child is made aware of the risks from slurry lagoons.

Railway Safety

This scenario is supported by South Eastern Trains

The students are confronted with a model railway layout which shows a variety of hazards connected with rail transport. The students will be tested on these including the dangers of playing near railways. They will be asked about safe places to cross railway lines and their knowledge of signs found near railway lines.

Water Safety

This scenario is supported by The Royal Life Saving Society

The students are tested on their knowledge of aspects of water safety. They will be expected to carry out a simulated rescue and be tested on their general knowledge of safety signs and dangers associated with water.

The students will be expected to know a variety of signs, which are advisory, informative, mandatory and prohibitive.

Home Safety

This scenario is supported by two Local Authorities:

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

The students will be tested on their ability to recognise the dangers in a poorly organised kitchen. They will be expected to point out such dangers as overloaded sockets, dirty cutting boards, panhandles over the edge of the cooker, sharp knives laying on the work surface, decanted liquids in unmarked bottles and opened bottles of alcohol within reach of young children.

The students will also learn about the dangers of gas and carbon monoxide emissions from defective water heaters.

Electrical Safety

This scenario is supported by EDF Energy

The students will use a fully interactive model to point out various dangers involving electricity and gas. They will be assessed on their ability to recognise various warning signs and the dangers of high voltage overhead cables as well as the additional dangers of using electrical equipment outside.

First Aid

This scenario is supported by St John Ambulance

Students will be confronted with an unconscious casualty lying on a bedroom floor next to an empty tablet container. The students will be marked on how they react. They will gain extra marks if the casualty is placed in the recovery position and if all the information is passed to the emergency services using the 999 system. In addition the students will be tested on their general first aid knowledge.

Road Safety

This scenario is supported by KCC's West Kent Road Safety Department

The road safety scenario consists of asking the group to cross a road between a row of parked cars. One of these has a figure in the driving seat. The team will be watched to see how they select which point to cross (avoiding the one with a driver), and how they carry out the Green Cross Code. They will then be involved in a discussion as to which is the best place to cross, and how, carefully correcting any mistakes they will have made. They will then be asked questions on safe places to cross the road.

Drugs Safety

This scenario is supported by the Grey Zebra Project (Kennard Trust)

The students will be invited to attend a disco. While they are dancing they will be approached and offered substances. This tests their self control especially in the light of substantial peer pressure. For the last five minutes the children will analyse their reaction to this situation and then have a general input about the dangers of drugs. Teams will be scored on their ability to resist the peer pressure and their general drugs awareness.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors West Kent Partnership, our hosts Dorton House School and all the agencies running the scenarios.

Rob Wilson

Rob Wilson
West Kent Education Business Partnership



Interim Report on Safety In Action 2005

It is very difficult to give a detailed and definitive evaluation of this event at this point in time. The feedback meeting for all the agencies involved will take place on Monday 21st March and there has not been sufficient time to fully evaluate the comments of teachers and pupils on the evaluation forms that they completed.

However, we can conclude the following from reactions during the event and an examination of the resources supplied to schools:

Issues to do with crime were addressed in the following scenarios:

Railway Safety and Drugs Safety

All 10 scenarios listed in the "Dignitaries Guide" (accompanying this document) will have addressed personal safety.

The resources given to schools for follow up (the pupil book and the teacher PHSE curriculum ideas) address both crime and personal safety issues. Discussions with teachers at the event clearly indicated that many intended to use them as follow up. Last year we did a survey of schools with regard to the use of these resources. The results of this survey also accompany this document.

Discussions with school staff during the two weeks showed that by taking part in the event areas that needed revisiting with the pupils had been highlighted for schools.

A full report will follow in due course.

Rob Wilson
Acting Manager
West Kent EBP

18th March 2005

PAPER C

WEST KENT CVS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER REPORT

March 05

The West Kent Partnership agreed to fund this key voluntary sector position from 1st October 2004. The Development Officer has had an exciting and successful first six months. In particular, the post holder has been actively involved in securing funding for new projects aimed at capacity building the sector in West Kent in general, as well as helping to achieve the targets set out in the initial bid.

Activities and progress in relation to those specific targets is as follows:

- *Strengthen local groups to enable them to deliver PSA and Community Plan actions and targets through capacity building and enhanced partnership working*

Whilst we have engaged directly with around 60 VCOs in the last 6 months, we feel it would be premature to claim that all these groups are directly engaged in achieving Community Strategy & PSA objectives. Nevertheless, most of the VCOs are to some extent engaged in activities that are in line with those objectives, although the VCOs themselves may not explicitly recognise this to be the case. It is envisaged that as the Community Plan review process continues this will provide opportunities for VCO involvement and through that VCOs will develop a clearer appreciation of the role they play in the achievement of community objectives. This process will also encourage VCOs to be proactive in seeking to meet Community Strategy outcomes. We are developing a framework to enable VCOs to have the capacity and skills to better understand their role in the delivery of Community Plan actions and targets.

Before engaging proactively with VCOs we felt we needed to get a better understanding of effective ways in which partnership relationships could be fostered, so that the voluntary sector in particular could be more confident in the sustainability of their partnership arrangements. With this in mind, we are engaged in a piece of work to develop partnership protocols. Draft protocols have been produced and we will be piloting these shortly. The results of this work will provide a framework for the voluntary and statutory sectors to utilise when entering into partnership arrangements.

A crucial component of VCO capacity building lies in the delivery of appropriate and affordable training opportunities. With this in mind we are currently undertaking two pieces of work to ensure the sustainability of our training programme. Firstly, we were awarded a small grant from the Community Initiatives Project to accredit our training courses with the Open College Network. We are hoping to receive formal accreditation at the end of April. We then hope to resume our franchise agreement with West Kent College which will enable us to offer training courses at subsidised levels to all our members.

We are in the late stages of contract negotiations with the Learning & Skills Council in a partnership ESF project. The project is in 3 stages. The first "research" stage, aims to identify training needs and produce a gap analysis with VCOs in West Kent. This will be followed by the

completion of organisational and individual training plans. Finally, training will be delivered in order to address the needs and gaps identified. The project will take place over the next 3 years.

- *The development of a "toolkit" to offer support and advice to newly developing Social Enterprises and VCOs undertaking a range of social enterprise activities.*

The development of this "toolkit" is well advanced and we anticipate that this will be achieved by the target date of September 2005. Charlie Fox has attended a number of events and workshops, enabling her to attain a good view of current opportunities and ways of working. These include a workshop, arranged by RAISE, the launch of Future Builders and the RAISE AGM and conference, which adopted a Social Enterprise theme. We have additionally begun compiling a library/database of applicable resources. Fact finding visits have also been made to social enterprises in other areas.

- o *Increased support for Black and Minority (BME) groups.*

As has always been the case, there are few formally organised BME groups in the West Kent area. However, we have identified a number of possibilities for identifying and contacting some informal groups. We have provided considerable support and networking opportunities to a newly formed BME group in the Tunbridge Wells area and continue to work closely with them. The Development Officer has liaised with the North West Kent Racial Equality Council (NWKREC) in order that we adopt 'best practice'. She has established that a local BME forum/network would usefully link into the Kent-wide network that the NWKREC is setting up. She has also met with the Kent Police Diversity Officer for this area in order to determine existing fora. It is crucial to determine that any newly formed grouping avoids duplication and ensures that additional meetings bring benefit to the groups involved.

Caroline Shaw
22nd March 2005

PAPER D

The Way Forward for West Kent – An Inaugural Conference

Tuesday 21 June 2005, East Malling Conference Centre

Report to West Kent Partnership Meeting – 8 April 2005

Revised Agenda attached. Each session allocated 40 minutes – 25 minutes speech followed by 15 minutes questions and answers. Speakers will be requested to address specific issues for West Kent.

Lunch is now extended to the full hour but WKP members will be requested to 'man' their stands for the second half hour. A special lunch station will be set up to facilitate quick access to lunch for those concerned and delegates will be invited to use the opportunity to meet with WKP members. The exhibition element to be low key. No tour of HRI will be offered.

Panelists are being contacted with guidance on how the panel session will work. Delegates will be requested to submit written questions ahead of the conference.

A delegate list is being compiled. Approximately 300 invitations will be sent out. The venue can accommodate up to 200 and we are working to absolute minimum numbers of 100. Invitations with draft agenda and other supporting paperwork will be sent out by email at end of April.

The conference working group met at the beginning of March and will meet again in early April, May and June. All tasks have been listed, with responsibilities and deadlines agreed.

Wendy Wood
15 March 2005

The Way Forward for West Kent – An Inaugural Conference

Tuesday 21 June 2005, HRI East Malling

This Conference will highlight the West Kent Partnership, its priorities and achievements and its commitment to making a difference to the lives of people in West Kent.

Draft Agenda – Revised 15 March 2005

9.00 arrival and coffee

9.30 Opening address

Cllr Mark Worrall, Chairman, WKP

9.40 Opening keynote speech

Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Leader, KCC

10.10 Regionalism, South East Plan (session chaired by Alison Cook)

Mike Gwilliam, Director of Planning and Transport, SEERA

10.50 coffee

11.10 Local business perspective (session chaired by Melvyn Howell)

Sir Brandon Gough DL, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent

11.50 Transport (session chaired by a KCC Member – to be nominated)

Speaker to be advised

12.30 light buffet lunch and Networking

1.30 Infrastructure issues for West Kent

Panel session chaired by Cllr Mark Worrall.

Health – Steve Ford, Chief Executive, South West Kent PCT

Education and training - Bill Fearon

Voluntary Sector – tbc

Social care – Janet Hughes

Housing – Barbara Thorndick

Community Safety – Jeremy Price

2.30 Regeneration (session chaired by David Aikman)

Cllr Alex King, KCC

3.10 Closing keynote speech

Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester

3.40 Closing Remarks

Cllr Mark Worrall

PAPER E

West Kent Partnership Tunbridge Wells Borough Community Plan Progress Report Summary – Year One

Introduction

A detailed monitoring report was recently produced looking at the progress of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Community Plan in the first year since its adoption in January 2004. It was found that of those objectives due to be carried out, 87% of the actions, 80% of the targets and 80% of the Quality of Life Indicators have been achieved.

The full report is available on our website www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk and a summary sheet will be provided at the West Kent Partnership meeting on 8th April.

Monitoring

A traffic light system was used to monitor the progress of each of the actions and targets in the Community Plan. Of the 77 actions due to be measured this year, 87% were green (achieved or on track), and only 4% were red (not achieved). The remainder were coded as amber as they had been delayed but would be implemented shortly.

Of the 35 targets due to be measured this year, 80% were green and 14% were red. Some of the reasons for targets being red were due to a need for improvement in monitoring information. At least 25% of the targets had been exceeded.

Of the 10 Quality of Life Indicators due to be measured 80% were green and only two were red. Thirty per cent of the National Quality of Life Indicators measured had been exceeded.

West Kent Partnership

The West Kent Partnership has been fundamental to many of the achievements of the Community Plan.

The Partnership and its sub-groups have had a number of beneficial outcomes by bringing together the appropriate partners to discuss issues which affect us all. Some of the more specific outcomes which can be directly attributed to the West Kent Partnership include:

Achieve the following road improvements: - Lobby for east facing slip road at M25 Chevening - Lobby for A21 Lamberhurst Bypass-Flimwell on-line improvements -	Additional slip roads at M25 J5 shown as “Committed” in approved Regional Transport Strategy. Letter written to Department of Transport.
Lobby Government for increased funding for affordable housing	Sub-regional housing strategy being produced by April 2005

Define the term “key worker”, research the need for provision and work in partnership to secure key worker housing	Housing Corporation funding received to do this. Borough wide survey carried out to research key worker needs.
--	--

The Way Forward

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council now has a Community Planner (Estelle Grant) who started in post in January 2005. The appointment of a dedicated officer to work on the Community Plan will help to co-ordinate the review of the document, and assist with engagement.

In addition, a partnership group to focus upon the Tunbridge Wells Borough is due to be established. This is intended to complement the work of the West Kent Partnership.

The proposals for Tunbridge Wells Borough include a main “Partnership” with themed forums (reflecting the themes of the Community Plan) as sub-groups. In some cases there will be no need to establish new groups, as many of these themes are already covered more than adequately by the West Kent Partnership. In other cases it may be beneficial to have a specific group for the Tunbridge Wells Borough to focus on more detailed issues and feed this back to the West Kent Partnership.

The Tunbridge Wells Borough Partnership has yet to be fully developed but it is envisaged that this will provide a suitable mechanism to engage stakeholders in the review and delivery of the Community Plan.

PAPER F

West Kent Partnership

Item 5 – AIF Progression

The West Kent Area Investment Framework was published in January 2003. West Kent is the only non-priority area in Kent and as such receives no devolved SEEDA funding. A decision was taken to produce an AIF for West Kent to identify and address the economic issues for West Kent. This framework has facilitated a mechanism for SEEDA to involve West Kent in the small rural towns initiative as the AIF Boards have an essential role to play in identifying priorities and assessing projects. In autumn 2004 SEEDA allocated discretionary funding of £50,000 to West Kent for the financial year 2004/5 and this has been used to fund the Homeworker IT study and the implementation of a Designation Management System for the Heart of Kent Tourism partnership.

Copies of the current West Kent Area Investment Framework will be distributed at the meeting. A document (AIF Progress) providing an overview of the current status of the Priorities for Action is attached to the Agenda papers and it can be seen that considerable progress has been made. Consolidating on that progress and the successful drawing down of SEEDA investment into West Kent, an Action Plan (also attached) for specific projects which can be delivered during the coming financial year has been drawn up. This has a focus on the SEEDA criteria for funding and meeting the current WKAIF objectives. .

It is proposed that an update should be undertaken, identifying the key themes for the West Kent economy for the next 3-5 years and putting these into context with the rest of the South East region. The objective is to produce a current statement of investment sought for West Kent backed up with a clear demonstration of need.

The updated AIF will focus on the delivery of existing actions which remain relevant and the development of new actions that address emerging key issues.

Review Context

- considerable investment in adjacent growth areas leaves the West Kent economy vulnerable and a longer term strategic vision is now required which takes into account how West Kent might relate to those growth areas and meet strategic objectives for the wider region
- SEEDA focus for funding is Innovation and Enterprise and this needs to be considered in West Kent's assessment of economic priorities. SEEDA funding is not limited to devolved funding
- Revision can accommodate a mechanism to obtain funding for small projects
- The Regional Economic Strategy review process is about to start and this is an ideal opportunity to review our own economic strategy and priorities to feed into and influence the regional review

- A need to ensure that barriers or potential barriers to economic success have been identified such as the increasingly voracious residential property market and a need to address the loss of employment land to residential use
- A need to address town centre and rural issues
- Rolling forward and updating the action plan in the light of new work and emerging issues
 - recent LA research
 - Priority communities study
 - Home workers and ICT study
 - jointly identified themes from Community Plans and LDF's
 - cross reference to Vision for Kent and other Kent AIF strategies
 - Kent Rural SPIF
 - StAR review

Process

- workshop for stakeholders in May to consult on the review process
 - map AIF review
 - identify key themes for reviewed WKAIF
 - identify barriers to growth next 3-5 years
 - identify potential projects, large and small scale, matched to need
- assimilate and progress workshop findings
- engage in consultation process for RES via KMEB and SEEDA
- draft review document for consultation - autumn 2005
- revised AIF published spring 2006

Wendy Wood
23 March 2005

PAPER G

West Kent Local Strategic Partnership Regeneration Sub-Group

Progress up-date since January 2005

The Regeneration Sub-Group met in March to discuss two main issues

1. The South East Plan

The Sub group received a presentation from Ian Bailey and considered particularly the implications for balanced communities (housing issues and loss of employment).

2. Priority Communities Strategy Group

The Sub-group discussed possible proposals regarding setting up a strategy group to progress the Priority Communities report, as requested by the West Kent Partnership.

The aim of the Priority Communities strategy group would be to scope possible West Kent wide action which would address the issues set out in the report relating to the identified areas of particular need. It is envisaged that the Group will identify possible funding to meet identified needs and progress this through appropriate funding bids. However, resources will be needed to support this work.

As the focus of the report particularly relates to children and young people, it was proposed that membership of the group should include the Chairs of the Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Children's Consortia, representatives from the Connexions Service, KCC Youth and Community; PCT, representatives from the three Borough/District Councils who are responsible for youth/community issues in their authorities: Tonbridge and Malling (Mark Raymond) Tunbridge Wells (Linda Mortley) Sevenoaks (Merle Bigden) and from the voluntary and community sector Rob Marsh, Chief Executive of the West Kent YMCA who is also a Trustee of the Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust and Eamonn Dillon, Chief Executive of West Kent Extra . It is suggested that it would be appropriate for Eamonn Dillon representing the voluntary/community sector to Chair the Group, particularly in view of his previous experience as KCC County Manager for the Supporting Independence Programme focussing on areas of deprivation across the County.

It is envisaged that the Priority Communities Strategy Group would be time limited, meeting say three times to scope and action recommendations. It is envisaged that progress would be reported back to the West Kent Partnership.

Summary of focus for Strategy Group.

- decide issues for inclusion within a West Kent Priority Communities Programme.
- determine external funding streams for further evaluation.
- agree local agencies which need to be engaged.
- draw up action plan including resourcing.

Jean Morgan

Chair, Regeneration Sub-group

PAPER H

West Kent Partnership

Business Development Sub Group – Report

The group met at the end of January to review progress on the SEEDA funded projects and identify priorities for 2005. A project group has been established to progress the AIF, identifying an Action Plan for 2005/6 and to begin a Review of the AIF. (see AIF Report at item 5 of the Agenda) As part of this process a workshop is to be convened for May and members of the Business Development Sub-group will play an active part in this.

Other priorities identified for the group are to play an active role in the development of schools entrepreneurship in West Kent, business breakfasts and community enterprises.

SEEDA Funded Projects (£50,000 for 2004/5 Projects)

Home-based businesses

The telephone survey was most successful with a higher than average response rate by those contacted. It was extended to obtain a higher sample and the SEEDA funded element of this project is now £25,000.

The analysis of the survey has identified a need to provide specific IT support to home-based businesses. The nature of preferred support varies considerably by gender and age and this has implications for service development by business support organisations.

Key messages from the research are:

- there is potential for growth in certain sectors, amongst people of different age groups and gender and amongst those more mobile businesses, some of which may be attributable to a lack of application of IT
- as a significant number of people are happy with their current arrangements for IT support there is perhaps a need to focus more on the delivery of services for those people who are not so confident about using IT at present
- a wide range of IT needs have been identified and this points to the need for general support provision
- awareness about computer security appears relatively low and perhaps needs raising amongst some home based businesses
- there appears to be little scope to encourage those not using IT to take this up without added support

The business development sub-group will follow through on the recommendations from the study. The final report will be circulated when available and a presentation could be made at the July WKP meeting.

Sites and Units

Due to the need for this project to be based on a high level of consultation and to tie into employment land studies associated with the production of Local Development Frameworks, being undertaken separately at the three district councils, it cannot realistically be delivered to SEEDA's timescale. Therefore, the Business Development Sub-group will re-scope the remit of the project, building in the analysis currently being undertaken elsewhere and seek funding to deliver it in the financial year 2005/6.

Heart of Kent Destination Management System

This project replaces the Sites and Units project and has been approved by SEEDA who are contributing £25,000 for this financial year.

The project is to implement a Destination Management System across a region known as 'The Heart of Kent'. This region comprises 5 local authorities (The 3 West Kent districts plus Maidstone and Ashford). This partnership will share the same data, and maintain one database to agreed standards and protocols. The project has been scoped and a provider commissioned. The funding is to finance the set up costs, including licences for 5 sites, DMS hosting and support, set up, training and implementation and website development and integration.

The Destination Management System allows information to be updated quickly and allows on line booking, which enables small businesses such as hotels and B&B accommodation providers to take advantage of modern methods of bookability which they may not otherwise be able to access. It supports the partnerships between the local authorities, and widens access to those LA's information and services. It encourages e-delivery and e-payments and small businesses to use ICT. It improves efficiency savings in terms of staff time and resources, whilst still improving delivery for customer services.

The system speeds up fulfillment and saves time by generating confirmations and responses. It provides marketing information, customer analysis and performance indicators, all of which can be used to focus more effective marketing and business initiatives. There is potential to increase revenue from increased bookings and advertising, from cost savings on postage and telephone bills, and possible redeployment of staff to less well performing areas such as business or conference tourism. It also enables staff to be upskilled to take a more active part in the control and development of the system.

In a climate where Tourist Information Centres are generally funded by Local Authorities who are facing stringent budget rationalisations, and small businesses are being squeezed by larger companies with wider funding sources, this system will add value to a service which is under enormous pressure by championing a new approach to the way that information is provided. As an ongoing and developing project, the Heart of Kent would be in a prime position to lead on Best Practice policies in Tourism and to open up this culture to other Authorities and interested parties in the Region.

Roger House

PAPER J

TRANSPORT SUB-GROUP REPORT

Major Infrastructure

A21

West Kent Partnership letter sent 15 March 2005.

Commons Debate

Debate in the House of Commons on 1 March 2005 led by Archie Norman MP (TW) and John Stanley MP (TMBC). The reasons for early implementation of the schemes included:

- the economic benefits to TW, Tonbridge and Hastings;
- operational police difficulties, despite siren assistance;
- servicing the new Pembury District General Hospital.

Highways Agency Press Release

A recently-issued press release states:

“While both the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Dualling and A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvement schemes remain in the Government’s programme, for schemes of regional importance such as these, priorities and decisions will take into account advice from the regional planning body, the South East Regional Assembly.

The detail of how this will work is still under consideration, but we expect to know more early in 2006.”

“This means that construction will not start before the financial year 2008/09 at the earliest.”

There is clearly a need to attempt to understand the SEERA criteria for selection, and the process involved, and the sub-group will pursue this prior to the next Partnership meeting. In the light of this, the case for high level representation to SEERA and/or the Minister for Transport will continue to be examined.

A228

West Kent Partnership letter sent 15 March 2005.

Local Transport Plan Bids

Following the Partnership submission of September 2004, bids have been developed by the KCC Area Officer in preparation for the County Council LTP bid to Government.

Kent Franchise

Officers and Members from the three WKLSA authorities and representatives from the Rail User Groups took the opportunity in March to meet with the four bidders for the Integrated Kent Franchise for an update on the process and to ask further questions. The presentations, which took place in Sevenoaks over two days on the 22nd and 23rd March, were well received. The bidders are DSB, a Danish company, GNER, First Group and the Go Ahead Group.

The Government's timetable for the exercise has changed. The bidders noted that the specification for the franchise was originally expected in June 2004, but was eventually received in January 2005. Contracts for new trains for the CTRL domestic services were expected to be signed by the end of March, after which the bidders will have 60 days to submit.

The bidders were as helpful as they could be without compromising commercial confidentiality. Each highlighted what it considered to be the strengths arising from their current franchises and experiences.

PAPER K

Report of Housing sub-group to West Kent Partnership meeting 8th April 2005

On 4th March West Kent Partnership Housing sub-group held a lunchtime launch of the two research documents on getting employers involved in essential worker housing. Despite the weather, which was atrocious, the launch was reasonably well attended. This was because we had 'piggy-backed' the event onto a GOSE/Regional Housing Board consultation event being held in Rochester regarding the Regional Housing Strategy. There was a small amount of coverage of the launch in the local and professional press.

In addition to the launch the Housing sub-group discussed the South-East Plan and contributed some thought to the response drafted by Ian Bailey of SDC.

Members of the sub-group have also been to meetings at KCC (with Alex King and Robert Hardy) in an effort to engage the council in contributing to an essential worker housing scheme.

Barbara Thorndick

DIRECTIONS TO HADLOW MANOR

HOW TO FIND US

From Tonbridge

A26 Towards Maidstone pass through Hadlow Village, half mile outside of village on the right hand side. Large Manor House visible from the main road. Signed Hadlow Manor Hotel, distance from Tonbridge five miles.

From Maidstone

On A26 on the left-hand side of road. Large Manor House , signed Hadlow Manor Hotel.

From Tunbridge Wells

On A26 follow signs towards Tonbridge through Town centre take left hand turning towards Hadlow at traffic lights by Ivy House pub follow signs to Maidstone/ Hadlow pass through the village of Hadlow half mile outside village large manor house signed Hadlow Manor Hotel on the right hand side.

From London

From Blackwall tunnel take A2 turn right onto the M25, turn left onto M20. At Wrotham roundabout turn onto A2 to Maidstone (not M20) from there, after traffic lights take the first turning on the right to paddock Wood (B2016). At first main roundabout take road to Tonbridge (A26). The Hotel is on the left-hand side of road approximately two miles along this road, before Hadlow Village.

From Dover

Towards London on the A20 then M20, take junction 4 to Tonbridge and West Malling turn left, at next roundabout follow sign to Paddock Wood. When you reach the A26 turn right heading for Tonbridge. The Hotel is approximately two miles on the left hand side of the road.

From Dartford Bridge

South towards Maidstone on M25 then onto M20 and continue directions from above from London.