

# West Kent Partnership Meeting

10am, 21 January 2005 – Delarue Hall, Tonbridge

## AGENDA

1. Minutes/Matters Arising
  - Faith representation - WW
  - Press releases – WW
  - New Director of Public Health for Maidstone Weald correction
2. South East Plan – West Kent response – JM Paper A
3. Vision Statement/Priorities for Action 2005/06/Review of Terms of Reference Paper B
4. Project Funding – WW
5. Conference Paper C
6. Sub-Groups Feedback
  - Transport Paper D
  - Housing
  - Business Development Paper E
  - Learning and Skills Paper F
  - Health
  - Regeneration including presentation of Priority Communities report Paper G
7. Priority Communities – Presentation Paper H
8. KCC Presentation on Local Area Agreements/PS2/Public Service Board  
Trevor Minter/Graeme Brown
9. AOB
  - GOSE annual LSP conference – 15 February 2005, Portsmouth
10. Dates of next meetings
  - April date to be agreed suggest 8 April
  - 21 June (new conference date)
  - 15 July
  - 21 October

## **West Kent Local Strategic Partnership 21<sup>st</sup> January 2005**

### **Proposed Response to the Draft South East Plan**

#### **Summary**

**This report introduces the initial draft of the South East Plan, prepared by the Regional Assembly for the South East (SEERA) and published for the purposes of public consultations between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005. The report summarises the key issues for the West Kent Local Strategic Partnership (WKLSP), relating to levels and distribution of future housing growth, affordability and density, employment policy, the sub-regional strategies, the environment and retail issues and proposes possible responses for discussion at the meeting.**

**It is proposed that the WKLSP Chairman incorporates the comments made at the meeting together with any supplementary comments Members may wish to add into a formal response to SEERA by the deadline (Please note that additional comments can be sent to the Local Development Framework Team at Sevenoaks District Council before Easter – see contact details are at the end of this report).**

**SEERA will publish a second round of consultations in the Summer to determine District level housing allocations, which will form the basis of a future report to the WKLSP.**

#### **1. Introduction and Background**

1.1 In September 2004 a new planning Act came into force, which changes the way land use planning processes are carried out and how developments plans are prepared. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) replaces Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and County Structure Plans with Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). District and Borough Local Authorities will continue to be responsible for preparing LDFs, but the new RSSs will be prepared by the 9 English Regional Assemblies.

1.2 The RSS will set the broad regional planning policy context for guiding development for a 20 year period (up to 2026 in the south east). It will include, for example, targets for an overall level of new housing provision over this period and indicate where this should be located. LDFs will provide more detailed policies, which will reflect local circumstances and aspirations, as set out in

Community Plans. LDFs will have to demonstrate that they are in general conformity with the RSS.

1.3 In the South East region, which includes the local authorities comprising the West Kent LSP, the Regional Assembly is SEERA (for more information on SEERA please visit [www.southeast-ra.gov.uk](http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk)). SEERA has drafted an initial RSS for the region, entitled "The South East Plan" and is inviting comments between 17<sup>th</sup> January and 15<sup>th</sup> April. SEERA's consultation arrangements include a leaflet drop to every household in the region and a series of public meetings including one in each Local Authority, led by the relevant Counties.

1.4 For information, the dates for the meetings for the West Kent LSP authorities are as follows:

Tonbridge & Malling – Council Offices, 7.30pm Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February  
Tunbridge Wells – Council Offices 7pm Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March.  
Sevenoaks - Council Offices, 7pm on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

1.5 Further information on these meetings can be obtained by contacting the planning policy teams of the relevant local authorities or Kent County Council.

1.6 Local Strategic Partnerships will be invited to attend these meetings and to respond to the draft plan. The following suggested comments are intended to facilitate a discussion on the key issues for the West Kent LSP, which can be incorporated into an agreed response to meet SEERA's deadline. These views can also be taken into account by each of the Local Authorities in West Kent when they prepare their responses. The comments below are based on the draft South East Plan approved at SEERA's plenary session on 29<sup>th</sup> November, with amendments.

**(Please note:** It may be necessary to make further amendments to reflect the final draft published for consultation, but at the time of writing this version was not available).

1.7 There will be a second round of public consultations on the District level distribution of the housing figures in the summer before the whole Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State, currently anticipated to be during October this year. Following a Public Examination expected to take place during next year, SEERA anticipate that the final version of the SE Plan will be approved by the Secretary of State by the end of 2006.

## **2. Brief Summary of the Draft South East Plan**

2.1 The document runs to in excess of 350 pages. The first three sections address the challenges facing the region, the context for the plan and strategy options and sustainability. The regional policy framework section is the largest

and deals with cross-cutting policies and the main topic headings one would expect a development plan to address, for example, economy and tourism, housing and communications and transport.

2.2 Over 100 pages are dedicated to the sub-regional policy framework. SEERA in preparing the RSS is obliged by Government guidance to consider if there are any parts of the region, which deserve specific focus at the sub-regional level. There are 10 sub-regional areas identified in the plan. Two of these include parts of the West Kent LSP area, the Kent Thames Gateway and the London Fringe (also referred to as the “Central Arc”).

2.3 The final sections deal with implementation and monitoring.

2.4 Copies of the draft South East Plan can be viewed and downloaded from SEERA’s web-site or inspected at a number of deposit points around the County, including Council offices and libraries.

2.5 SEERA’s Chairman in concluding the plenary session added three caveats to approving the draft, that the background data on which the plan is based is not as thorough as might have been hoped, that it is unfortunate that due to the short timescale the public has not been involved in the process to date and that the plan is approved by the Assembly as a whole and does not reflect the views of individual members.

2.6 It may be desirable to make a general comment about the accuracy of the data or to add reference to this caveat in making more detailed comments on the draft, for example the housing targets.

### **3. Suggested Comments which the West Kent LSP may wish to include in a response to the draft South East Plan – For Discussion**

#### General Comments

3.1 The LSP may wish to consider expressing support for the introductory sections of the draft plan insofar as they recognise some of the same challenges that the LSP recognised in preparing the Area Investment Framework and the three Community Strategies for West Kent, while acknowledging the SEERA Chairman’s caveats, regarding background data and the lack of public engagement set out above.

## Specific Comments

### Housing targets

3.2 These were revised downwards following an amendment proposed by Sir Sandy Bruce Lockhart at the plenary session in November. New figures for the sub-regional areas and residual Counties were agreed at SEERA's Regional Planning Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, representing a filtering down of this reduction. The draft plan now includes three levels of growth for the region over the period to 2026, which are:

1. 25,500 new units per annum (representing recent completion rates)
2. 28,000 new units per annum (representing current Government guidance)
3. 32,000 new units per annum (representing an anticipated increase in regional population based on SEERA's 10 year migration projections)

3.3 In addition, the plan proposes two different policy approaches to the distribution of this growth, the first based on existing policy the second on what has been termed a "sharper focus", which in broad terms represents a greater share of this new housing for the sub-regions (see tables below for those sub-regions covering Kent – the sharper focus option indicates a greater share for the London Fringe and East Kent and Ashford sub-regions, but not Kent Thames Gateway). This means the residual County housing figures (i.e. that part of the projected growth to be shared out across the "white areas" not contained within the sub-areas) are lower for the sharper focus option:

### **Existing Policy**

<b>Distribution by area</b>	<b>25,500</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>32,000</b>
Kent Thames Gateway	2,900	2,900	2,900
London Fringe	1,500	1,700	2,100
East Kent and Ashford	2,400	2,500	2,800
Rest of Kent	700	800	1,000

### **Sharper Focus**

<b>Distribution by area</b>	<b>25,500</b>	<b>28,000</b>	<b>32,000</b>
Kent Thames Gateway	2,900	2,900	2,900
London Fringe	2,000	2,300	2,800
East Kent and Ashford	2,600	2,800	3,100
Rest of Kent	200	200	200

3.4 Parts of the WKLSP area are included within two of the sub-regional areas that cover Kent. The London Fringe 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”. The vast majority of the housing growth in both sub areas is ear-marked 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. (Maps showing the three sub-regional strategy areas affecting Kent are appended)

3.5 While the overall level of housing growth and broad distribution are acceptable, the LSP 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.

#### Other Housing Policies

3.6 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 needed to contribute towards meeting local needs may need to be higher than the regional average of 50%, raising questions over deliverability.

3.7 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. 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

3.8 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 LSP and constituent authorities will 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.

3.9 Housing – Gypsy/Traveller accommodation – A further amendment agreed at the plenary was to include a policy for Gypsy/Traveller accommodation, but it was made clear that the detail may have to follow. The LSP may wish to take this opportunity to provide its views as an input to this further work.

### Sub-Regional Strategy Areas

3.10 While acknowledging the rationale behind the Thames Gateway zone of influence, which includes parts of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Maidstone local authorities, the LSP 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 LSP. 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

3.11 The LSP will wish 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 is currently 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

3.12 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 LSP considers that they should be given greater prominence in the final version of the plan.

### Retail Policy

3.13 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 LSP suggests that SEERA reflects the hierarchy in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan to ensure a more consistent approach.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

4.1 The suggested comments set out in the above report are not intended to be exhaustive, rather they are to stimulate discussion at the January LSP meeting to enable a more detailed response to be compiled and added to once the final draft of the South East Plan has been received and considered. It is proposed that the WKLSP Chairman responds to SEERA by the 15<sup>th</sup> April deadline attaching a formal response based on the comments received.

4.2 Further comments are invited after the meeting and up to the Easter Holiday either electronically by e-mailing ([ian.bailey@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:ian.bailey@sevenoaks.gov.uk)) or by sending to the following address:

Ian Bailey  
Head of Policy & Environment  
Sevenoaks District Council  
Council Offices  
Argyle Road  
Sevenoaks  
TN13 1HG

4.3 To enable LSP members to view the response and incorporate any elements into their own individual responses to the draft South East Plan, a copy will be made available on the LSP web-site in due course

4.4 A further report will be brought to a future meeting of the West Kent LSP when comments are invited by SEERA on the District level Housing figures, expected in the summer.

IB/10.1.05 (amended 12.1.05)

# West Kent Partnership

## Vision Statement

Through promotion, representation and action, we aim to enhance the quality of life for all by supporting the development of vibrant, caring and thriving communities and contributing to building a stronger economy. Through co-ordinated working we endeavour to add value to the local delivery of public, voluntary and community services and provide a voice for the people of West Kent at local, regional and national level.

## Terms of Reference

The West Kent Partnership will undertake to:

1. Act as the formal Local Strategic Partnership for the area to promote West Kent, to explore bids for external funding, and to maintain a working relationship with Central Government, the Government Office for the South East, and other regional bodies including SEEDA and the Housing Corporation.
2. Provide an effective working relationship with the Kent Partnership and to influence its deliberations and future reviews of Vision for Kent to the benefit of West Kent.
3. Represent the interests of the West Kent sub region and provide a strong and influential voice on matters of particular concern to its local communities.
4. Promote effective, joint co-operative working both within the partnership and between the Partnership and other local agencies and bodies.
5. Identify the key issues facing the West Kent area and develop joint actions to address them.
6. Consider and influence the plans, strategies and agendas of other key agencies to ensure that West Kent interests are properly represented.
7. Aim to ensure that the plans and strategies prepared by public agencies align with emerging joint priorities
8. Take a strategic level view of the community strategies for each Borough in West Kent, promoting good practice and better joint working. *Only amendment*

# **West Kent Partnership**

## **Priorities for Action 2005/6**

### **Promoting West Kent and its activities to a wider audience**

- staging a high profile inaugural conference
- maintaining an informative website
- securing press coverage for WKP initiatives

### **Successfully representing the needs of West Kent at county, regional and national level**

- achieving further support from SEEDA and other agencies for projects
- ensuring Vision for Kent reflects West Kent issues
- influencing the South East Plan
- influencing the Local Transport Plan
- influencing other plans as arise during the year

### **Achieving joint projects across West Kent area that will contribute to its wellbeing and prosperity**

- providing financial support for policies and projects which meet adopted funding criteria
- ongoing involvement in funded projects
  - CVS development officer post
  - Volunteering England – rural volunteering pilot
- carrying forward the findings of the Priority Communities study
- securing pilot project to demonstrate how more affordable housing for essential workers can be achieved
- carrying forward the findings of the SEEDA funded projects
  - IT support for home-based micro-businesses
  - supply and demand for business premises in West Kent
- achieving a successful review of the AIF
- addressing the training and education needs of 14-19 year olds including vocational training
- taking forward any jointly identified themes from the 3 community plans

# West Kent Partnership - Inaugural Conference

Tuesday 21 June 2005, HRI East Malling

## Draft Programme

**9.00 arrival and coffee**

**9.30 Opening address**

Mark Worrall, Chairman, WKP

**9.40 Opening keynote speech**

Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Leader, KCC West Kent's role in County

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

Mike Gwilliam, Director of Planning and Transport, SEERA

How will West Kent be affected by future developments, address issues for police, fire, health, local authorities, business voluntary and community organisations

**11.10 coffee**

**11.25 Local business perspective** (session chaired by Melvyn Howell)

(?Allan Willett, Lord Lieutenant of Kent, retired Chairman of SEEDA WW to approach)

**12.15 light buffet lunch**

standing lunch to allow for networking and encourage movement to exhibition

**12.45 exhibition – partners manning own stands**

all partner organisations to provide own small stand which will only be manned for this session to provide an opportunity for delegates to target who they would like to meet. Also to include exhibitions on projects funded, ie, priority communities, Safety in Action, Volunteering England

**1.15 Infrastructure issues for West Kent**

Panel session chaired by Mark Worrall.

Delegates will be invited to submit questions for panel before conference

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

Education and training learning and skills subgroup to nominate who to approach

Voluntary Sector – seeing if Volunteer England would like to do

Transport – Transport subgroup to nominate who to approach

**2.45 Closing keynote speech**

Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester West Kent communities

**3.15 Closing Remarks**

Mark Worrall

**Post** Opportunity to have guided tour of HRI research facilities

**Conf** delegates to sign up ahead of conference

- appropriate representatives from

### **Public Sector**

3 Districts - Councillors  
 KCC - Departments? Members?  
 GOSE  
 SEERA  
 Local MPs  
 MEPs  
 PCTs  
 WK NHS & Social Care Trust  
 Police  
 Fire Service  
 Probation Service  
 Youth Offending Team  
 Housing Associations  
 Town and Parish Councillors  
 KAPC  
 Public Health Director – GOSE  
 Kent & Medway Health Authority

### **Transport**

Rail franchise operator  
 Arriva  
 Freight Transport Association  
 Strategic Rail Authority

### **Voluntary**

CVS  
 VBs  
 Kent RCC  
 KAPC  
 Age Concern  
 CABx  
 VSU  
 Mental Health  
 Faith  
 Disability groups

### **Business**

Locate in Kent  
 BLK  
 FSB  
 Chamber(s)  
 EAWK  
 Key Local Businesses - Fidelity, Aylesford  
 NP, AXA, Kimberley Clark  
 SEEDA  
 KMEB  
 Leisure Trust

### **Learning**

Kent Learning Partnership  
 West Kent College  
 Hadlow College  
 Head Teachers  
 LSC  
 Young People – Youth Council  
 Youth fora  
 Kent Adult Education  
 Common Purpose  
 University of Greenwich – ‘Public & Community Health’  
 University College Canterbury – ‘Health and social policy’

### **Environment**

KWT  
 Developers?  
 Environment Agency  
 MVCP  
 Countryside Agency  
 Kent High Weald Partnership

### **Other**

Lord Lieutenant of Kent  
 Kent Ambassadors  
 Kent Partnership  
 Executives other Kent AIFs

## **West Kent Partnership**

### **Working Group**

Wendy Wood  
Mark Raymond  
Rep KCC events office  
Self-nominations

### **Timetable**

W/c 31 January	working group meet *
February	invitations sent to delegates
April	update to WKP
May	delegates invited to submit questions to panel Delegates to confirm if wish to have tour of HRI research facility Conference packs completed
W/c 7 June	questions to panel for consideration Press release to Kent and West Kent press

### **\* Issues for consideration**

Chief Fuller to advise on attendance/speaking in New Year  
Approach Lord Lieutenant or other business speaker  
Approach potential panel members  
Other exhibitors – access to European money, others?  
Confirm sessions – chairs, timings, format  
Confirm appropriate delegate list, obtain delegate names and addresses  
WKC business database – invite CEO all businesses above 50 employees?

### **Conference packs**

Delegate list  
programme  
Speakers biographies  
Evaluation sheet  
Press release  
Map/directions

Paper D

**West Kent Partnership  
Transport sub group Report**

No meeting has been held but the response to the letter to KCC strongly supporting the LTP bids from West Kent has been sent.

The sub-group is also recently aware that the A228 Colts Hill link has not been included in the Government's settlement for 2005/6 and that the timing of the A21 Tonbridge-Pembury Dualling and Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvement Schemes are now dependent on advice from SEERA. The detail of how this will work is still under consideration, but the Highways Agency expects to know more early in 2006. This will mean a delay in construction of both sections of the A21.

The Partnership is requested to authorise a response expressing the importance of such infrastructure to West Kent and the disappointment in both decisions.

The sub-group will consider further lobbying opportunities for both the A228 and A21 and bring forward recommendations to the next Partnership meeting.

Tony Fullwood  
Chair, Transport sub-group

Paper E

**Business Development Sub Group  
Report to West Kent Partnership – 21 January 2005**

The focus over recent months has been on developing the two SEEDA-funding projects. Contracts have now been exchanged with SEEDA and the projects are working to a completion date of 31 March.

**Analysis of supply and demand for business premises**

The study will provide an analysis of supply and demand for business premises in West Kent with the intention of identifying any mismatches between demand for industrial and business space in West Kent and the property and sites that are currently available. It will provide the basis by which the property market can be more responsive to the needs of business and can plan to provide units in terms of size, type and location that are most in need.

A steering group is in place and considering consultants proposals. The project is on track to be completed within the given timeframe.

**Supporting West Kent's Homeworkers – Feasibility Study**

This study is exploring the needs of home-based businesses in West Kent, particularly in respect of IT development, in order to identify a programme of support to assist this sector. It is anticipated that the study will lead to the development of a partnership approach to meeting these needs and further direct investment during 2005.

A steering group is in place and has appointed a team of consultants. A telephone questionnaire has been developed and is being rolled out to 1000+ home-based businesses in West Kent from Monday 17 January.

**Priorities for 2005**

The full sub-group will next meet on Monday 31 January and will be identifying priorities for the sub-group for 2005. These are likely to include a review of the AIF, the development of further schools based entrepreneurship activities, engagement of the business community and the development of community enterprise within West Kent. It will also be involved in taking forward the recommendations of the two SEEDA-funded projects.

**West Kent Partnership Education and Skills Sub Group Update 21 1 2005**

This group met on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December at Hadlow College.

There was further discussion about the progress of the Learning and Skills Council **Strategic Area Reviews for West Kent.**

The Third LSC West Kent 16-19 Strategic Area Review was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2004 when a range of Education and Skills Priorities and Options for West Kent were discussed.

The StAR objectives are: Raising standards and participation, improving choice, increasing collaboration, securing progression and meeting needs for the 16-19 age group. These will be achieved through a process of:  
Information gathering and analysis, developing and appraising strategic options, consultation leading to decision making and implementation.

Malcolm Staunton LSCKM outlined the challenges identified as a result of the first two consultation events and the information gathering and analysis process:

- Ensure adequate and good quality provision for all young people who do not progress to level 3.
- Support and improve dialogue between employers and providers (complementing Area Investment Framework activities)
- Raise the profile of vocational education amongst young people, parents and institutions
- Increase the range of vocational provision for all young people and improve access to this
- Build on existing collaborative arrangements (including Increased Flexibility Projects)
- Tackle barriers to further collaboration
- Ensure all young people have access to high quality information, advice and guidance on post-16 options
- Ensure all young people are given sufficient support in following the appropriate path of education
- Establish a culture of joint responsibility

At this 3<sup>rd</sup> event strategic options were put forward for consultation:

- Proposals that the West Kent Learning Federation form the basis of a planning forum to agree local curriculum provision in response to employer and student needs
- Increasing participation between the school consortia and West Kent College: in South Sevenoaks to provide more vocational provision. In Tonbridge to further develop collaboration. In Tonbridge Wells to improve post-16 participation. In Cranbrook and Paddock Wood to provide young people with better access to learning to reduce the risk of them joining the NEET Group. The closing date for consultation is 14<sup>th</sup> January.

Whilst awaiting the results of the StARs (late February 2005) the sub-group proposed investigating projects to meet the existing AIF priorities for Action.

**Starting with Priority 1.3. 'Develop coherent programme of pre-vocational and vocational opportunities for disaffected school pupils or those at risk of exclusion.'**

The current educational offer in West Kent does not meet the needs of all young people and in some areas there are particular problems resulting in disaffected youngsters. There is an initial proposal for the two FE Colleges to work closely with 2 identified schools and Connexions to improve information about and support for vocational progression opportunities for students who

are unlikely to access Higher Education and who may fall into the NEET group. (Not engaged in education and training) This would encompass many of the LSC challenges as stated above and could be widened to include more schools if successful. The Education and Skills sub group would like to make a recommendation to the Partnership that this is a project with value that needs resourcing and ask whether any funds could be made available for a pilot project.

**Priority 1.4 'develop a more proactive approach to tackling basic skills requirements by addressing both supply and demand side issues'**

Initial meetings are taking place between West Kent College and the Kent Adult Education Service to look at a closer working relationship to help meet the Basic Skills Targets for West Kent. Depending on the outcomes of these initial meetings further work to engage all the basic skills providers is proposed. The purpose would be to map the range of existing provision and identify any gaps, share good practice with the aim of offering coherent progression pathways and support for those with basic skills deficits.

**Priority 1.6 'Develop a long-term strategy to establish HE provision in the area to capitalise on high levels of educational attainment and encourage students to remain in the area to pursue HE studies. (Potential to attract NHSU)**

Initial overtures will be made to HEKAM to explore the possibilities of working towards this aim. The NHSU however is no longer a possibility as it has been disbanded as part of the recent government cuts.

The sub-group will meet again on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005 09 30 at West Kent College

Wendy Wilton

**West Kent Local Strategic Partnership**  
**Regeneration Sub-Group**

**Progress up-date since October 2004**

1. Deprivation in Areas of Affluence/West Kent Priority Communities

As set out in the bid for funding, the consultant (Liz Haggart Associates) is presenting the Summary Report to this (January) meeting of the WKP. The Summary Report will also be used in the context of the European dynamo regions and will be made available at GOSE/SEEDA dynamo region events.

The Officer Steering Group has been meeting to direct the work: it has been very helpful to have input during the process from Anne Knight of SEEDA.

As will be reported separately, the purpose of the three-stage project was to

- identify areas/communities within West Kent which experience particular difficulties and challenges, through examining and analysing up to date data sets;
- identify current actions in these areas and possible gaps; and
- develop a West Kent Action Plan to address these gaps.

The seven priority communities identified (Para 3.6, Consultant's Summary Report) are:

- Broadwater (TWBC)
- East Malling (TMBC)
- Edenbridge (SDC)
- Sherwood (TWBC)
- Snodland (TMBC)
- Swanley (SDC)
- Trench (TMBC)

These communities have been identified using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) as a starting point, supplemented by other data (2001 Census, Income Support, etc). The consultant then reviewed existing partnerships in the priority communities, and has prepared a draft Action Plan. Community Development/Regeneration work is taking place in certain of these communities, although not in others.

The work identifies "key issues which are specific to the seven communities associated with children, young people and their families, living in relative poverty, with poor educational attainment, low aspirations and consequences such as anti-social behaviour, teenage pregnancy, low income employment etc." (para 6.2, Summary Report)

The report raises a number of important issues, including

- the need to develop a detailed Action Plan with key time-limited targets and initiatives,
- how work in the priority communities is funded, resourced and co-ordinated, and
- the role of the Regeneration Sub-Group.

These points will be considered further at the next meeting of the Sub Group.

2. SEEDA Market Town Initiative

The co-ordinator, Sue Beer, will meet with the four Kent AIF representatives (including Wendy Wood) every 6 months to establish best routes to support potential candidates for SEEDA market town funding. The Sub-Group needs to feed information through on towns with existing or potential partnerships which could be developed with support into a health check leading to a project. This Sub-Group will consider priorities for West Kent market towns at the next meeting - Wendy Wood to produce draft paper for discussion. These will encompass not only the overarching AIF priorities but drill down into the community plans and highlight priority issues raised in those. These criteria will be applied in assessing the suitability of potential projects. Projects should improve the quality of life via a package of improved community infrastructure.

3. Consultation on the future of NRF Funding

The Priority Communities Report has highlighted the priority communities in West Kent and this consultation is a good opportunity to use this work, alongside the new LAA structure, to support a plea that NRF funding should be more flexible and locally directed, in targeting pockets of acute deprivation. Mark Raymond's attached draft response was considered and endorsed, and WKP should be asked to do likewise.

4. Response to SE Plan

The draft response on behalf of the WKP will also be circulated to the Regeneration Sub-group as it has particular relevance regarding housing numbers and affordable and social housing policy.

5. Outstanding item for the sub-group

- Strategic Policy and Investment Framework for Rural Kent

The task of sifting and prioritising the 50 key themes/actions was put to one side while the sub-group focussed on the consultants report - this will be revisited in March.

6. Dates of Next Meetings - all at Sevenoaks District Council offices at 10 a.m.

18 March, committee room, 24 June, conference room, 23 September, conference room

## **Draft West Kent Partnership Response to:**

### **Allocation of the new Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) Resources for 2006/07 and 2007/08**

1. The West Kent Partnership believes that Key Issue 4 - Targeting Pockets of Acute Deprivation, is the major issue that needs to be addressed in the review of the NRF. The current approach of concentrating renewal resources on the 88 most deprived areas using ward level data means that many areas of deprivation have not received any Government support at all. Contrary to the suggestion in para 6.8 that the NRF should be aimed at a reduced number of areas, the West Kent Partnership believes there is a strong case for widening the scope of the NRF to include areas of need not previously included. Individual Super Output Areas which may be isolated from others in need and therefore 'stand alone' can be equally disadvantaged as those within a particular geographical concentration of need. Because of their isolation, other sources of support funding for community development work are rarely available. Their proximity to more affluent areas makes their needs all the more stark. Thus, such communities are left bereft of even small amounts of support funding which could do much to achieve a real difference to these communities. Determining priorities for neighbourhood funding at the national level which favours areas of geographical concentration will always mean that these individual communities will continue to miss out.
2. The West Kent Partnership believes that there should be more local discretion available to Local Strategic Partnerships to set their own priorities for neighbourhood renewal and to receive funding for those priority communities commensurate with the level of need that exists in any area. The development of the Local Area Agreements provides a unique opportunity to achieve a fully devolved decision making system which facilitates the setting of local priorities to meet such needs. We do not accept, however, that there should be any pre-conditions on such arrangements by Government. The requirement (para 3.4) to require confirmation that NRF funding distributed via an adopted LAA should continue to be focused on tackling deprivation in the poorest neighbourhoods within 'eligible' district areas should be removed. Local distribution of funding should reflect locally set priorities and needs. This may well concentrate the majority of funding on the poorest neighbourhoods but local priorities may also support the provision of smaller amounts of funding in other areas, particularly smaller pockets of deprivation where other sources of support funding are not generally available.
3. The West Kent Partnership supports any proposals which enables LSPs to adopt a more proactive and meaningful role within its deprived communities. Flexibility in approach should not be limited to those enjoying success in this task. It is potentially the lack of flexibility and the degree of central intervention and control over eligible areas which is hindering many LSPs from the delivery of innovative and effective community programmes. Cascading NRF monies via a Local Area Agreement with a commitment to flexibility on all sides would do much to provide such freedoms.
4. The West Kent Partnership has undertaken a major study of its area using the IMD 2004 and other data to identify priority communities in West Kent. These communities do not figure in the most deprived nationally and therefore do not

qualify for NRF funding. Nevertheless, they are communities which all contain families and households in real need of support and assistance. Significant changes to the way NRF monies are distributed, particularly via a flexible Local Area Agreement, could result in some support funding being made available to these communities, some for the first time. However, if such an approach is not deemed appropriate, the West Kent Partnership believes that a separate funding pot, drawn from a small proportion of NRF funding should be established to assist this type of priority community. For example, such a fund could seek to support exemplar community development initiatives in such areas which may establish best practice for other initiatives regionally and nationally.

5. In summary, the West Kent Partnership, for the reasons set out above,
- **strongly disagrees** that the primary focus on the NRF should be supporting areas of greatest need
  - **strongly disagrees** that the NRF should be concentrated on a smaller number of deprived areas
  - **strongly disagrees** that that the NRF allocation should be linked to LSP 'performance'
  - **Strongly agrees** that resources should be targeted at small pockets of deprivation (determined locally via a flexible LAA arrangement) in areas not currently eligible for NRF funding