

A G E N D A

West Kent Partnership

Friday 21 October 2005 – Kings Hill Conference Centre

1. Minutes/Matters Arising
2. Presentation – Malcolm Staunton, LSC – issues and implications for West Kent identified from both adult and young persons StAR reviews
3. Co-ordinator's Report (Paper A)
 - Priorities for Action 2005/6 - update
 - Financial Report
 - Project Appraisal – revised procedures
4. Project Funding
 - Voluntary Action West Kent – update report, Caroline Shaw (Paper B)
5. AIF Position Statement – Wendy Wood (Paper C)
6. Briefing – Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium Kent and the Infrastructure Development Plan for the County – what it will mean for West Kent - Caroline Shaw (Paper D)
7. Sub group updates
 - Business Development (Paper E)
 - Learning and Skills (Paper F)
 - Housing (Paper G)
 - Transport (Paper H)
 - Health (verbal)
8. Any Other Business
9. Proposed Dates Next Meetings
 - Friday 20 January 2006
 - Friday 28 April (Easter 14-17 April)
 - Friday 16 June – Conference
 - Friday 13 July
 - Friday 20 October

PAPER A

West Kent Partnership Meeting – 21 October 2005 Co-ordinator's Report

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION 2005/06 updated September 2005

Action

action to deliver

Promoting West Kent and its activities to a wider audience

Staging a high profile inaugural conference

delivered

Maintaining an informative website

quarterly updates

Securing press coverage for WKP initiatives

regular press releases

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

Achieving further support from SEEDA for projects

applications for funding for current projects

Ensuring Vision for Kent reflects West Kent issues

liaison Kent Partnership

Influencing the South East Plan

liaison 3 councils

Influencing the local Transport Plan

draw together all WK issues

Influencing other plans as arise during the year

input as arise

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

appraisal of projects reporting to WKP

Securing pilot project to demonstrate how more affordable housing for essential workers can be achieved

follow up on affordable housing studies, lobby land owners and planners

Carrying forward the findings of the SEEDA funded projects

follow up on findings

Achieving a successful review of the AIF

steering group has underway

Carrying forward the findings of the Priority Communities study

steering group has underway

Achieving increased provision of vocational training for 14-19 year olds

learning and skills group

Taking forward any jointly identified themes from the 3 community plans

annual review after community plans produce their own annual reviews

WKP Financial Report - October 2005

	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	TOTAL
	Actual	Actual	Projected	Projected
Income	50000	55000	55000	160000
overhead (co-ordinator + marketing)	2429	22955	31616	57000
Projects	11360	27450	64190	103000
Total	13789	50405	95806	160000

Projects

Key Worker	11360		3640	15000
WKCVS post		6250	18750	25000
Priority Communities		7000		7000
Safety in Action		4600		4600
Volunteering England		9600		9600
AIF review			5000	5000
TOTAL allocated	11360	27450	27390	66200
Total Unallocated				36800
Grand Total				103000

External Funding (SEEDA)

Home based businesses Project	25,000
Destination Management System	25,000

WEST KENT PARTNERSHIP

PROJECT FUNDING – ADVICE NOTE

The WKP has a small amount of funding available for projects brought to its attention by one of its partners. Each project is considered on its own merits and in the context of funding available at the time of application.

Project – Suitability Criteria

Delivers clear community outcomes benefiting the West Kent area either by

- a) tackling the key issues of crime and safety, health, transport, housing, the local economy, social care and building stronger communities, or
 - b) addressing one or more of the WKAIF strategic objectives, ideally targeting the identified *priorities for action* listed under each strategic objective
- Contributes to the creation of a strong local infrastructure that is responsive to business needs
 - Maximises opportunities for individuals to enhance their skills
 - Strengthens competitive performance of local businesses
 - Reduces disparity between deprived and affluent areas
 - Enhances tourism's contribution to the local economy

Project Application Procedure

The project application must demonstrate achievement of identifiable goals in a specified time scale and cover the following:

- Clear identification of need, supporting consultations and data
- The expected outcome with timeframe and performance indicators
- Outline business plan demonstrating the feasibility of the project
- Breakdown of costs, including competitive quotes
- Identified match funding or opportunities for match funding within a given timescale
- Lead delivery agency, partners involved and mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and report back, ie, existing sub-group or a new project group or direct to the Partnership.
- Evidence that other funding possibilities have been considered
- Define other beneficial outcomes wider than immediate project

Project Appraisal Process

Applications for project funding will be considered on a rolling basis. They should be filed with Wendy Wood one month ahead of quarterly partnership meetings to allow time for appraisal by the appraisal group prior to the partnership meeting. The following appraisal criteria will be applied:

- project suitability criteria met
- application requirements met

- objectives match LSP and AIF strategic objectives/priorities for action
- viable business plan and good value for money
- level of reserves held in WKP budget
- consideration of other funding opportunities explored and consequences if funding not secured
- period funding required for
- process for administration of grant, basic assurances, probity etc.
- role of sponsoring partner
- the level of mainstream provision available for project

Wendy Wood, October 2005

PAPER B

VOLUNTARY ACTION WEST KENT DEVELOPMENT OFFICER REPORT September 05

The West Kent Partnership agreed to fund this key voluntary sector position from 1st October 2004. This report relates to the period April – September 2005. The Development Officer has continued to be 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*

We have engaged directly with 47 VCOs in the last 6 months. Most of these VCOs are directly engaged in Community Strategy & PSA objectives, although they may not explicitly recognise this to be the case. We continue to develop 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. A particular example is the Allsorts project in Edenbridge where we are working in partnership with KCC social services.

An event has been arranged for late October to bring together representatives of a number of community groups from across the West Kent area in order that they can share best practice and network with their peer groups. This is being conducted in partnership with High Weald housing.

We have now completed a piece of work to develop partnership protocols. Draft protocols have been produced and piloted. We will be disseminating the results of the pilot and offering a series of workshop sessions across both voluntary and statutory sectors within the next few months.

A crucial component of VCO capacity building lies in the delivery of appropriate and affordable training opportunities. Our project to accredit our training programme is now nearing completion and we expect to be in a position to deliver bespoke, accredited courses during the next academic term.

We have, together with partners across much of Kent, entered into an agreement with the Learning & Skills Council to deliver a European Social Fund co-financed project to research, identify and deliver tailored training courses to VCOs across most of Kent. Stage 1 is now well under way and we have commenced work on stage 2. Training delivery is scheduled to begin in April 2006.

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” continues to progress and the target publication date is April 2006. We are investigating various Social Enterprise training courses, particularly those designed for advisers/consultants in this field. We continue to expand our library/database and this has now been documented electronically.

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

It has now been decided to create and support a Kent wide BME network. This work is being undertaken by the Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium Kent (VICK) as part of the Change Up agenda, and is being led by the North West Kent Racial Equality Council. We sit on the VICK committee and are involved with all aspects of work. As opportunities arise to include West Kent based groups we are well positioned to disseminate information as well as support the work of local groups.

- *Examples of successful outcomes*

- *Good Neighbour Network*

We are leading an Invest to Save (ISB) funding bid for this newly formed organisation in Tunbridge Wells. We have worked with the organisation from the earliest stage and have assisted in drawing up a Constitution, governance issues, HR policies, etc. If successful, the project will provide support and befriending services to older people.

- *Tonbridge Volunteer Bureau*

There is now a requirement for volunteer bureaux to undergo two different quality assurance processes. The first is the national Volunteering England accreditation scheme. However, they now also have to undergo PQASSO (practical quality assurance system for small organisations). Many find that they do not have the in house expertise or resources to do this. We are assisting Tonbridge VB with this process. The first step was to purchase the workbook and CD on their behalf as they did not have the resources to do so. We will now be helping them to achieve accreditation.

- *Edenbridge*

We have helped form and now one of our Trustee's chairs a new organisation to offer services to children and families in Edenbridge. We have worked closely with KCC Social Services who have assisted with organisation development issues and securing future funding. We have also been working closely with a newly formed residents group, helping them to respond to the local need.

An unexpected, yet exciting bonus of this development post has been the identification of previously hidden needs. VAWK are now actively investigating the possibility of securing funding to

develop and support a Health and Social Care network across West Kent. We envisage that this will encompass both voluntary and statutory sectors and will be a way of supporting community plan process as well as encouraging joined up working both within and across sectors. Finally, it has become apparent that many VCOs would benefit enormously from affordable and appropriate financial management and advice. With this in mind we are exploring ways in which we might meet these needs.

15th September 2005

PAPER C

West Kent Area Investment Framework Review: Position Statement

October 2005

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report outlines the work carried out since August 2005 and the key themes to be taken forward as part of the West Kent AIF Review.
- 1.2 The West Kent Partnership is asked to
 1. endorse the identified themes, and
 2. authorise the executive and sub groups to prioritise the themes and develop detailed action plans and funding proposals

2. Background

- 2.1 The initial West Kent AIF was prepared during 2002 and the Partnership Board agreed the need for a review in order to arrive at a statement of investment sought for West Kent based on identified need.
- 2.2 Elizabeth Haggart Associates was commissioned in August 2005 to undertake a desktop study to:
 - review changes that have occurred since the initial AIF was prepared, building on the studies undertaken by the Partnership.
 - identify and examine issues not included in the initial AIF (rural economy, town centres, loss of employers and floorspace)
 - review, with Sub Group Chairs, current achievements, actions to be continued and further areas for action
 - build on the strong themes which emerged from the June 2005 Conference
- 2.3 Following the presentation of an initial report in September, an executive group looked at the issues of town centres and rural areas in more detail.
- 2.4 The findings were reported to an AIF workshop on 5th October where delegates were invited to add to identified themes and look in more detail at how specific projects might be worked up.
- 2.5 The scope of the review did not include a full evaluation of the Vision and Strategic Objectives of the AIF, which were considered to be broadly correct but perhaps need sharpening. It did include an examination of the Barometer Indicators identified in the initial AIF concerning West Kent's relative position within the South East economy.

3. Summary of findings

- 3.1 The overall position of West Kent remains largely unchanged¹. West Kent generally performs better than other Kent sub-regions, is near to the overall South East picture (sometimes better, sometimes worse) but lags behind Surrey. West Kent continues to be characterised by
- High levels of economic activity
 - Highly skilled resident workforce but issues to address for those with no/low attainment and among lower achieving pupils of secondary school age
 - High inward and outward commuting levels
 - High levels of self employment/business starts
 - High house prices impacting on the affordability of homes for a wide range of people and occupations (not just public sector workers)
 - Small areas of West Kent remaining less affluent with lower economic activity levels, skill levels, etc.
- 3.2 For one of the barometer indicators however this position has been reversed. West Kent has recently outperformed Surrey in terms of growth in business stock. In addition, the proportion of finance and business services enterprises has also increased. With over 900 additional businesses it highlights the importance of West Kent as a centre of entrepreneurial activity and innovation and a strength to be built on.
- 3.3 The competitiveness of some town centres appear to be suffering in the face of competition elsewhere, yet increasingly town centre employment is dominated by retail activity as employment land has been developed for housing.
- 3.4 With significant investment both now and in the future in the North Kent and Ashford growth areas, these areas are catching up with West Kent and could well overtake West Kent in Economic activity. The implications for the future West Kent labour market are unknown but could be serious as the economy is heavily reliant on non-residents to fill local jobs.
- 3.5 The importance of the Partnership in maintaining a high profile and lobbying for West Kent on major issues is vital as well as developing actions and accessing funding to address specific West Kent issues.

4. Themes for action

- 4.1 In order for the AIF to add value it is important to bear in mind the AIF's focus must be on activities that are not being carried out as part of organisations' mainstream activities. It is also important to focus on actions that make sense to be developed on a West Kent basis.
- 4.2 The West Kent AIF is different from those in other areas of Kent and Medway. It is not possible to access 'single pot' funding from SEEDA. Many of the

¹ West Kent AIF Review: Initial Report for the West Kent Partnership, Elizabeth Haggart Associates, September 2005 – (attached as separate file to Agenda)

themes identified will need to secure additional funding in order for specific actions to be implemented.

- 4.3 As a result of the review processes thus far, the following themes have been identified:

Marketing, promotion, lobbying

- Agree and promote an image of West Kent

Learning and skills

- Identify HE provision in West Kent and develop web based resource
- Develop activities for:
 - skills areas – land based studies, logistics, leadership and management
 - people with disabilities/learning difficulties
 - enterprise in education
 - English for speakers of other languages
- Secure funding for projects

Business

- Establish West Kent Enterprise Education Group
- Actions to support business in education (also raised in Priority Communities Report)
- Affordable workspace – identify/develop managed incubator and grow-on workspace (seek funding)
- Work up enterprise and innovation projects
- Rural businesses – help with planning issues
- Implement home based business IT support
- Encourage development of new work patterns to support returns to work and reduce travel congestion
- Support village retailers through
 - Promoting networking/partnerships
 - Providing 1:1 advice support
 - Exploiting funding opportunities
- Support W Kent town centres through
 - Cooperation in town management initiatives (safety, marketing)
 - Business initiatives to support vibrant town centre businesses

London 2012

- Maximise benefits to West Kent of London 2012
- Development of sports sector

Land based sector

- Co-ordinated initiatives to help develop the land based sector
 - Bespoke business support for farmers (+ fact find nature of difficulties faced)

- Local purchasing, supply chain development, producer groups, training, etc.
- sub group to develop funding bid
- Investigate West Kent potential for sustainable fuel technologies

Tourism

- Develop West Kent Projects

Transport

- Lobbying for A21, M25 junction 5 slips, A228
- Pursuing good working relationship with rail franchisee and DfT on strategic rail issues
- Informing the shape of Local Transport Plan investment for the area
- Developing Quality Bus Partnerships
- Air Quality Management
- Innovative solutions for rural transport options
- School transport initiatives to relieve congestion/access to centres of excellence

Housing

- Seek opportunities for essential worker housing schemes
- West Kent sub-regional housing statement
- Dealing with Gypsy and Traveller issues
- The Housing Corporation bidding round for 2006-2008
- Re-modelling sheltered housing.
- Set up a West Kent choice based lettings scheme and help reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation (bids to GOSE, ODPM, Homeless Innovation pot)
- West Kent Housing Register

Regeneration/Priority Communities

- Implement Priority Communities report - especially for maintaining Community Development Workers in 7 areas/basic skills/social enterprises
- Ensure other infrastructure in place to support communities e.g. volunteering
- Support development of small rural towns: Edenbridge, Kemsing, Longfield, New Ash Green, Otford, Westerham, Borough Green, W Malling, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Paddock Wood
- Secure external funding

5. Recommendation

The Partnership is asked to endorse these themes and authorise the Executive to work with the sub groups in prioritising themes and developing detailed action plans and funding proposals.

PAPER D

Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium Kent

Introduction

Government published a comprehensive review of the voluntary and community sector in September 2002. This review was aimed at strengthening the voluntary and community sector through some 43 major recommendations – of which ChangeUp was one.

The Government published its detailed ChangeUp Investment Programme in June 2004. The Government's vision for the outcome of ChangeUp is that *"by 2014 the needs of frontline organisations will be met by support which is available nationwide, structured for maximum efficiency, offering excellent provision which is accessible to all while reflecting and promoting diversity, and is sustainably funded"*.

A key element of ChangeUp is a partnership approach to plan and co-ordinate infrastructure support to frontline voluntary and community organisations (VCO's) combining generalist and specialist providers. Raising the standard of provision and sustainable funding for a cohesive and comprehensive package of support services are also key elements.

Government has backed its vision with a funding package of £93m in England to March 2006. This national programme was devolved to the English regions for delivery but with implementation taking place locally. Locally means in each unitary and in each shire county area in the South East.

The lead body for this programme within Government is the Active communities Unit within the Home Office but DEFRA (Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) is also involved as it wishes to ensure that the Government's ChangeUp vision applies equally in rural areas as in urban areas. To that end DEFRA ran a rural "early spend programme" through the national network of Rural Community Councils (RCCs).

What is happening in the region

In the South East a regional steering group, consisting of representatives of Government Office (GOSE), RAISE on behalf of the voluntary and community sector and a few others, commissioned some pilot "early spend" projects across the region to test the water and provide examples of good practice. This happened over the short period from January to July 2004. This "early spend" work also included regional research to guide future priorities and regional investment.

Since that time the regional steering group has become formalised into a Regional Consortium consisting of representatives from frontline VCOs, statutory authorities, funders, GOSE and others. This cross sector Regional Consortium delivers the programme in the region. RAISE provides the secretariat as well as being a Consortium member. The Regional Consortium has, on the basis of the early spend research, produced a "Regional Plan" and an investment programme for the £5.8m at its disposal to March 2006.

What is Happening Locally

Part of the regional debate on how to get maximum return from the government investment of £5.8m was about the most appropriate level of implementation. This was decided as unitary and shire county level – 20 implementation areas within the region.

A lead body was commissioned in each of the 20 areas to develop a consortium and for that consortium to prepare a “**Local Infrastructure Development Plan**” (LIDP) by March 2006. The bodies commissioned to lead the work were the Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs) in the unitary areas and the RCCs (Rural Community Councils) in the shires building upon their earlier work with DEFRA. Each local consortium was allocated £100k for the work by the Regional Consortium and provided with a set of detailed guidelines. In the case of shire consortia the money allocated was an additional sum to top up the remaining DEFRA funding to £100k – thus an equal sum across all consortia for each to develop a consortium and produce a LIDP.

Each lead body is developing its consortium differently to reflect local circumstances. Each developing consortium is approaching the preparation of its LIDP differently – again taking account of existing relevant work and existing relationships. ChangeUp is all about national parameters being interpreted to best effect locally.

In addition to the above work the early regional research identified major gaps across the whole region that needed to be filled by additional investment. Consequently there are additional specialist investment programmes agreed by the Regional Consortium. These are:

- Support for BME – delivered locally through the local consortia
- Support for Social Enterprise – delivered regionally
- Support for Sustainable Funding – remains under discussion
- Support for maximising use of ICT – remains under discussion
- Support for the capital projects included in LIDPs – delivered regionally

To assist implementation of ChangeUp in the region there is a very small team of “ChangeUp Co-ordinators”, seconded from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and attached to GOSE, to assist local consortia and partners.

Voluntary Sector Infrastructure

In Kent, the voluntary sector infrastructure consortium (VICK) has been structured using the guidelines issued by GOSE and consists of a wide consortium of organisations from both the voluntary and community and statutory sectors. Conscious of the time pressure on consortium members a smaller VICK Executive group has been established which will take responsibility for overseeing the detailed work programme in the first instance. The group is now meeting on a regular basis, and so far has commissioned work relating to protocols, web access to the sector, ICT support, and promotional material. A project consultant has been recruited to provide overall programme management, and key dates for the year ahead have been drawn up.

The issues so far

People and organisations are keen to become involved in the process, but do not always perceive the relevance of ChangeUp to them and their work.

A radical solution (to providing more efficient, sustainable infrastructure support) is often cited, but actual radical solutions have been less than forthcoming.

The process is an exceedingly complex one; the scale and make up of Kent (on the statutory side, 12 districts, one strategic LA, many PCT's, AIF's – on the VCS side, 4,900 registered charities and many more

un-registered groups, 5 CVSs, many volunteer centres) plus many other groups that consider themselves infrastructure organisations has historically meant Kent-wide cohesion has been a hard task to achieve.

The current provision of infrastructure support in the VCS is something of a patchwork quilt, with services being provided differing from one locality to another. Many organisations (CVS's and Volunteer Centres, for example) are geographically based, and consultation to date has illustrated that most people seem to wish to continue with a geographical, spatial relationship rather than, say, a thematic one (with the exception of the BME Network).

Engagement with statutory sector partners has revealed a great variation in terms of ethos, approaches, delivery models and funding levels towards infrastructure organisations. There is still an issue regarding the appreciation of the role of the VCS in underpinning the achievement of the Kent Local Area Agreement. Statutory engagement is crucial, not only because statutory sector organisations provide funding to many infrastructure organisations, but because they are also key to getting the right solution for Kent.

VCS infrastructure organisations are all independent VCS bodies within their own right; whole-scale change requires more than an intention to work more closely in collaboration – it would/will demand mergers, changes in organisational constitutions, changes in geographical “patch”, changes in services, perhaps shared trustee boards, management structures, staffing and funding, to name but a few. Each one of these is a huge issue in its own right, and some of these real time issues may get in the way of more lateral thinking towards a solution.

PAPER E

Report of WKP Business Development Sub Group

Although the main business development group has not met recently, several working groups have been active in developing and delivering projects.

AIF Review

All the members of the AIF executive group are also members of the business development sub group and have met frequently over the summer to progress the AIF review process. Many of the themes and issues identified in the review process will fall to the sub group and the larger main group will meet in November to build action plans and project groups around these themes. It is probable that this group will be widened to include representation from the skills sector.

At Home with ICT

This report on the use of ICT in home based businesses in West Kent has now been published and the executive summary will be distributed at the meeting.

The report has recommended ways in which this business sector can be supported by bringing together ICT support providers in a consortium. To this end a workshop for potential partners has been arranged for the end of November and invitations together with the executive summary are to be sent out. This workshop will enable ICT support providers to discuss if they wish to enter into joint working to progress this initiative.

The development of any consortium will be led by the business development sub group with a brief to promote further partnership working across relevant agencies from the public, educational and private sector to address the business support issues identified in the report. If necessary, the sub group will seek external funding to assist with the further development of the initiative. A presentation to the WKP might be appropriate once the work of the consortium has been identified – reporting actions rather than recommendations.

Roger House
Chair, Business Development Sub Group

PAPER F

West Kent Partnership Education and Skills Sub Group Update 13 10 2005

Arising from the July meeting of the WKP Education and Skills subgroup and the first meeting of the LSC's West Kent 14-19 Review and Planning Forum; a working group met on 9th September to explore the formation of a WK 19+ Review and Planning Forum. The current West Kent Learning and Skills group has an extensive membership with varying attendance at meetings resulting in difficulty in progressing actions. As a result it was suggested that a small group of more constant and strategic members should meet to discuss the way forward with the LSC.

As a result of this meeting it is proposed that:

1. The current West Kent Partnership Learning and Skills subgroup should be reformed into two groups: a small executive subgroup which will meet 5-6 times a year who will report to the wider WK Learning and Skills Group through 3 themed meetings a year.
2. The members of this executive group will be;
Bill Fearon, Paul Hannon, John Lister, Malcolm Staunton, Chrissie Upton and Wendy Wilton, Emily Haswell and Richard Green will also be invited to join the group.
3. The main functions of the executive group will be:
 - o Using existing research tools and commissioning research where needed identify the skills needs of West Kent
 - o Influence planning to meet identified demand
 - o Challenge the status quo if necessary to implement change
 - o Link to wider networks – see point 4 below
 - o Focus on 4/5 identified priority areas/key issues
4. The executive sub-group will link to;
 - a. The West Kent Partnership
 - b. The Local Skills for Productivity Alliance
 - c. The Rural Regeneration Unit at KCC
 - d. The Sector Skills Councils
 - e. The LSC Annual Plan
 - f. The LSC WK 14-19 Review and Planning Forum and through this the Federation
 - g. The LAA and Vision for Kent
 - h. Local Authority Plans
5. This Group will be renamed to be the **West Kent Skills Forum (19+)**
6. Key issues:
 - a. Increasing activity around all aspects of employer engagement in priority areas as identified by LSC, Local Skills Barometers, Adult Statements of Skills Priorities (attached)
 - b. Outreach activity in identified deprived communities.
 - c. Improved partnership working and information sharing between all agencies.
7. An Action Plan will be drawn up at the next meeting of the Executive Group in line with the key issues identified above and the findings of the AIF review, this will be circulated to the wider education and skills subgroup for comment and approval.
8. There will be meetings of both the Executive group and the Wider Education and Skills Group in November and December – dates to be circulated.

Wendy Wilton



Leading learning and skills

West Kent Adult Learning and Skills Priority Statement

Key Messages in West Kent

- Culture of strong educational aspiration with high proportion of young people going to university (particularly from Tunbridge Wells) but not necessarily returning to work in West Kent
- Small areas of deprivation linked to low educational attainment and skill levels
- Affluence leads to high participation in leisure related adult learning
- The LSC's forecasting model ² suggests there is still a shortfall in provision at Levels 1 and 2, and that current provision at Level 3 could lead to skills shortages in business, engineering, construction and retailing.
 - The London labour market exerts a strong pull factor on the local workforce with high levels of skilled and unskilled commuters attracted by higher wages. **Many learners from other countries as fill local jobs**

Skills Shortages (really a people shortage owing to housing cost, etc.):

- Care workers, cleaners, **hospitality**
- Skilled trades
- High level skills in public sector: teachers, FE staff, health workers, local government managers in IT, planning, building control
- High level skills in the private sector, e.g. solicitors, accountants, surveyors

Skills Demand:

- There are currently around 30,000 retail jobs; 22,000 jobs in business services; 15,000 in health, and 13,000 in manufacturing.
- Predicted demand for labour will see job vacancies in these areas, especially in business services across all three districts – 13-15% of demand for labour in West Kent.

² Learning and Skills Assessment 2005

- Also, there is more predicted demand for labour in construction, especially in Sevenoaks, than in other parts of West Kent and Kent and Medway.

Priorities to be addressed (One priority singled out by one group -in bold- not necessarily representative– all endorsed)

For individuals

- Focus on people in less affluent areas to raise aspirations
- Appropriate advice/guidance and support

For employers

- Develop customised training for employers: building qualifications through modular credit accumulation
- Foster Apprenticeships in key local sectors

For providers

- **Continue to develop Level 1/2 provision accessible to all priority communities**
- Development of progression routes linked to locally available employment at Level 3+
- Better promotion of local Level 4 provision to keep undergraduates in area
- Focus provision on identified skills shortage areas e.g. land based sector, sport and leisure, health and care, leadership and management, construction

For stakeholders

- Develop adult equivalent of the West Kent Learning Federation, to include Hadlow College and Adult Education
- Continue focus of work in identified Priority Communities

PAPER G

Report from Housing Sub-Group of the West Kent Partnership

The following items were considered by the Housing sub-group at our last meeting on 25th August with a view to taking a collaborative approach.

- **Dealing with the Housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers** – SDC has carried out a housing needs survey of the Gypsy/Traveller families in the District and T&MBC, TWBC, Maidstone and Ashford are now carrying out similar surveys. The plan is to bring back the results of the 3 relevant surveys and discuss how best to develop a joint approach.
- **The Housing Corporation bidding round** – The group discussed the increased requirements from the Housing Corporation for this years bidding round. They want early involvement in s.106 schemes that need grant to achieve affordability. They are requiring that all schemes with 200+ homes receive architectural advice from CABE or the Kent Regional Design Centre. They require schemes to have a building density of between 30 to 50 homes per hectare. They are requiring all new homes to achieve eco ratings of very good (raised from good) and they have said they will prioritise bids with planning. The deadline for bid submission is 21st October.
- **West Kent sub-regional housing statement**

SDC, T&MBC and TWBC have now produced a draft joint statement (subject to member approval), which looks at how the authorities can work together to increase the provision of affordable housing and improve services to those with a range of need. The position statement sets out common areas across the three local authority areas and looks at possible areas for joint working in the future. A common approach would benefit the communities we serve by:

- Highlighting common issues which can be tackled collectively;
- Identifying specific services that can be shared across all 3 councils;
- Aligning practices where these can produce operating efficiencies;
- Promoting best practice throughout the sub-region;
- Indicating research needs that can be carried out on a consistent basis;
- Offering a framework for developing new government policy initiatives;
- Raising West Kent's profile in the region and increasing lobbying capacity;
- Putting forward a sub-regional case for increased resources for housing; and
- Focusing on issues that should be priorities at the sub regional level.

This collaborative approach between the 3 authorities makes sense because:

- All have transferred their housing stock to housing associations and so face similar issues;
- There is a long history of joint working between them;

- The housing markets in the 3 local authority areas are comparable and together comprise a West Kent Housing Market Area identified by the South East Regional Housing Board;
- The whole area has seriously pressing needs for more affordable housing;
- The area is a coherent sub-region, mostly outside SEERA's growth areas.

The possibility of including Maidstone within a West Kent sub-region for housing strategy purposes has been closely examined, with the assistance of Maidstone BC. On balance it was agreed that Maidstone was insufficiently similar to the other 3 local authorities to warrant its inclusion.

- **Joint bids & Initiatives**

The benefits of working collaboratively in terms of attracting increased government funding can be seen in the following bids and initiatives all of which require partnership and cross boundary working.

- **Choice based lettings bid** – The 3 local authorities have put in a bid for just under £100,000 to assist in the implementation costs of a cross boundary choice based lettings scheme.
- **Homeless Innovation Fund bid** – The 3 local authorities have put in a bid for over £170,000 to fund a variety of approaches to achieve a new government target of reducing the number of homeless people in temporary accommodation by 50%.
- **West Kent Private Landlords Forum** – The 3 local authorities are looking to hold a joint forum for Private Landlords to run through with them the implications of the Housing Act 2004 on HMO licensing and Health & Safety.

The South East Regional Housing Strategy

The final draft of the SE Regional Housing Strategy has now been produced and sent to the Minister for approval. The strategy sets out the housing priorities for the region from 2006 and calls for significant investment to tackle the shortage of high quality affordable homes. The strategy proposes:

- An urgent need to build more affordable homes, with a shift in focus towards increased provision for social rented accommodation.
- Continued support, where there is evidence of need, for affordable housing for key workers as defined by the Government, but also aiming to meet the needs of other essential workers.
- A geographical focus based on housing need arising from affordability, homelessness and temporary accommodation criteria, and aligned where possible with strategic sites.
- To put 20% of the funding available into the SE's 3 designated growth areas. (Milton Keynes, Ashford and Thames Gateway).
- Support for the principle of meeting housing need across sub-regional housing markets.

- Maintain current levels of funding for new affordable homes in small villages with populations of less than 3,000, and support new provision in market towns in proportion to need, sustainability and capacity.
- Priority of funds to sites where densities can be achieved of at least 40 dwellings per hectare.
- Schemes of 200+ homes to be referred for design review.
- All homes must achieve 'very good' Eco-Homes
- Funding for councils who have retained their stock for Decent Homes.
- Funding for councils who support the renovation of unfit private sector housing.
- Commissioning of research on type, level and nature of unfitness to identify where private sector renewal need is greatest in the region.
- Looking at options to establish a portfolio of brown-field land to complement the work of local authorities and partner organisations to increase housing supply and affordability.

The strategy also outlines a number of strategic sites within the region, which have a capacity for 500 homes or more. The strategic sites in West Kent are all in T&MBC. However T&MBC along with SDC and TWBC is counted as low priority in terms of the distribution of funds compared to the Growth Areas and High Priority Investment Areas (these have been defined by creating an index based on numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation (35%), % of overcrowding and sharing households (40%) and housing affordability (25%). After top-slicing funds to support a programme of affordable housing for rural areas (around £40 million at current levels) the funds will be divided as follows: 50% to High Priority Investment Areas, 20% to growth areas and 30% to the remaining areas (which consists of 28 local authorities). In view of this there is clearly a very strong need to work together to make the case for West Kent Partnership Area.

Barbara Thorndick
Chair
West Kent Partnership sub-group

PAPER H

TRANSPORT SUB-GROUP REPORT – OCTOBER 2005

Major Infrastructure

Papers were presented to the meeting of the Regional Transport Board of 7 October 2005 setting out the process for submission of SEERA's investment priorities for transport for the period to 2010/11. The agenda included a draft of the proposed programme. This draft will be the subject of debate at a regional workshop in early December at which key stakeholders will be able to debate the overall balance of the region's advice. In discussion with Kent County Council, we will seek involvement in this process. A final version of the document will then be produced that will be considered by the Assembly's Executive Committee at its meeting on 20 January 2006 in time to meet the deadline for submission of the advice to Government. The agreed advice has to be submitted to Government by 31 January 2006.

For the investment period beyond 2010-11 the proposal is that the current list of potential transport proposals, i.e. those not included in the current list of priorities, are reviewed subsequent to the submission of the advice from SEERA's sub-regional groups.

West Kent is represented in the current draft priorities by the inclusion of two schemes for the A21. Both A21 Tonbridge Bypass to Pembury Dualling and A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvements are programmed for delivery within 2010/11.

This represents an improvement from earlier draft priorities through the promotion of these schemes from rank 3 to rank 2. The Local Strategic Partnership has sent a letter to SEERA expressing support for this reviewed position and to seek assurances that the necessary consultation and design processes will be commenced as soon as practicable to ensure both schemes are delivered to programme. The Sub-group, on behalf of the Partnership, will also lobby the Highways Agency on this matter.

The A228 (Colts Hill Strategic Link) continues to be ranked 3 (out of 7) within the prioritised list and would therefore be considered once SEERA's current investment advice has been submitted to Government. However, the scheme continues to be promoted through the County Council's Provisional Local Transport Plan, for which announcement of the level of settlement will be in December.

It is understood that promotion of the M25/M26 Interchange (Chevening Slips) is a matter for the Highways Agency as it is to be promoted at the national rather regional level. The Sub-group will therefore establish appropriate contact with the Highways Agency to seek the earliest possible delivery of this scheme. The scheme is not included in the current M25 rapid widening between junctions 1B to 3.

Local Transport Plan Bid

Kent County Council will know Government's settlement for the Provisional LTP in December although an outline of the level of funding for Integrated Transport Schemes has been provided that shows a substantial increase in funding levels for the final years of the Plan.

It has been reported that KCC will probably review the previously proposed programmes to reflect the level of settlement and any schemes that are carried over from earlier years. District representatives of the Sub-group have requested the opportunity to input into the review process reflecting their considerable involvement in the derivation of the programmes.

Integrated Kent Rail Franchise

The four bidders' submissions have been presented to the SRA/DfT following substantive consultation. It is anticipated that the franchise will be awarded later this year with the intention of having the company in place by January 2005. The programme has continually slipped and so it is likely that the timeframe will alter further.

West Kent AIF

Following representation at the West Kent AIF workshop three transport and travel priorities for WK were proposed. These were:

- Seeking better to cater for responsible travel to schools/education in the area, reflecting the emergence of the School Transport Act;
- To continue to lobby for the earliest delivery of improvements to the A21 within the area, reflecting SEERA's prioritisation; and
- To investigate innovative solutions to travel within the rural areas of West Kent Transport, reflecting the Accessibility Planning that KCC are undertaking.

These tasks could be informed through commissions to consultants and benchmarking against existing projects.