

**West Kent Partnership  
Notes of the Meeting 16 July 2004  
Held at HRI East Malling**

**Present:** Merle Bigden, Cllr Alison Cook, Bill Fearon, Tony Fullwood, Robin Hales, John Hopkinson (WKCVS guest) Roger House, Cllr Melvyn Howell, Janet Hughes, David Hughes, Anne Knight, Jean Morgan, Brendan O'Connor, Tom Philiips, Mark Raymond, Lynne Selman, Rosie Serpis, Caroline Shaw, Rodney Stone, Vic Webb, Cllr Grahame Weston, Rob White, Niall Willis (The Bridge Trust guest), Simon Wilshaw, Wendy Wilton, Cllr Mark Worrall, Wendy Wood

**Apologies:** Cllr David Aikman, David Coleman, Angela Hammond, Alan McKendrick, Barbara Thorndick

### **Chairman's opening remarks**

Cllr Mark Worrall welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that neither the Chief Constable or Leader of KCC were available to join the meeting as both are involved in the Kent Show. Both have expressed a desire to attend a future meeting.

### **1. Minutes/Matters Arising**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. The presentation on education will be considered at the October 22 meeting.

The meeting acknowledged the responses (papers A and B) made on behalf of the partnership on The Regional Spatial Strategy and The Regional Housing Strategy.

Wendy Wood updated the meeting on profile raising initiatives:

- Final draft of letterhead circulated, partners comments to be considered
- Website now up and running in a basic format which is intended to evolve. Wendy Wood trained to take over management of site and updates and amendments can now be posted to website very quickly. [www.westkentpartnership.org.uk](http://www.westkentpartnership.org.uk)
- Annual conference will provide opportunity to attract high profile speakers, integrate people working in sub groups and bring a focus to West Kent issues. Provisional date to be set for late May/June 2005 to avoid bank holiday and County Council elections.

Cllr Mark Worrall commented that the two responses on regional issues highlights that the partnership is beginning to demonstrate a lobbying presence Continued lobbying on WK issues alongside a high profile annual conference will enhance our positioning.

## 2. Project Funding

### **Paper C – Criteria for appraising bids**

Wendy Wood explained the process for appraising bids to the partnership for funding. An appraisal group has been set up comprising Tony Fullwood, Merle Bigden, Mark Raymond and Wendy Wood. Bids are required a month in advance of partnership meetings to allow the group time to go back to applicants with subsidiary questions so that any bid recommended to the partnership has already undergone a robust analysis.

Cllr Mark Worrall commented that the relative simplicity of the document was a strength. Janet Hughes expressed a concern that social care wasn't specifically included and it was agreed that this would be added.

### **Paper D – Funding Bid for Development at CVS**

Caroline Shaw introduced her paper emphasising that the appointment of a funding development officer would significantly enhance the number of groups the CVS are able to help. Last year without an officer in post, this had fallen by two thirds. With the development of a social enterprise toolkit and practical help and guidance, voluntary groups could also be empowered to move towards a more sustainable future.

There was some discussion regarding limiting the post to two year funding but this had to be viewed in the context of the partnership's remit which currently is into the second year of a three year funding period. On this basis, it would be inappropriate to commit funds for a longer period. Caroline will be required to update the partnership quarterly on the post and it was agreed that in a year's time, the partnership would consider ongoing funding for year 3 to facilitate forward planning at CVS. The post has some match funding from a health related project and Caroline was confident that this funding would continue even if from a different source.

Cllr Alison Cook raised the importance of joined up working across groups to avoid duplication and increase efficiency. Caroline responded that this is very much an objective of CVS and also to encourage groups to become self-sustaining with commercial enterprises. Vic Webb expressed a concern that with favourable rate and taxation breaks such enterprises could have a commercial advantage over small traders.

**The meeting approved the funding bid with the proviso that there is quarterly reporting at partnership meetings and an assessment of ongoing funding for year 3 and beyond in 12 months time.**

### **Volunteering England Pilot Project**

A recent project, led by Sevenoaks Volunteer Bureau and CVS has brought together the work of the 5 volunteer bureaux in West Kent recognising that often the impetus to volunteering is to do so on local basis. As a result of this, Volunteer England has just selected West Kent as one of two national pilot areas

for a rural volunteering project. There is government funding of £250,000 to provide information points in rural areas to encourage people into volunteering but specifically in their local community. Kent Adult Education is likely to be a partner. There will be a high profile event on 6<sup>th</sup> December after Volunteering Sunday with a Government Minister in attendance. The concept fits alongside AIF priorities on affluence and deprivation and objectives from the three community plans. There will be a need for investment to support sustainability. **It was agreed that Merle Bigden would produce a paper for the October Agenda.**

### **Paper E – Funding Bid for Dynamo Regions representation, Brussels**

Jean Morgan introduced her paper and explained that the bid was in support of two projects, the first and most important being the commissioning of research into deprivation across West Kent using the recent multiple index of deprivation. This research would highlight the disparities between affluence and deprivation and inform ongoing practical work in areas of deprivation. It will also provide the framework on which to build West Kent projects and draw in funding.

The second element of the bid is to present the research at the Kent Brussels office during a series of open days in September. This would be part of the Dynamo Regions seminars (Kent being one of six in Europe).

The most important part of the bid is the consultant's report which could then be used to produce an executive summary and presentation. This would not only highlight the issue of deprivation within an affluent area at European level but has the prospect of levering in European money to West Kent. This issue is a strategic objective of the AIF and the consultant's report would be a valuable resource for taking forward some objectives identified in the community plans.

There were some reservations expressed that the presentation element of the bid may not be the best use of the partnership's funding resources. It was felt that there needed to be a clear demonstration that the Brussels presentation would yield results, that a clear definition of the relationship between this project and Interreg funding was required, that SEEDA support needed to be established and that the tight time frame for a September presentation may compromise the potential scope of the research. **KCC are hosting one day in Brussels – Janet Hughes to send information direct to Jean Morgan.**

**The meeting agreed that the bid should be supported in principle. However, further research was required addressing the questions raised. Jean Morgan will address these issues and circulate a paper to partners within a month, giving them a brief period to respond before going ahead and commissioning the consultancy work.** This will allow time for a late September presentation to be made in Brussels if a case is made out for it.

Chairman Mark Worrall stated the project funding element of the partnership's work was very positive and encouraged members to submit further bids for funding to Wendy Wood, one month ahead of each partnership meeting.

### **3. Additional Voluntary/Community Engagement**

Caroline Shaw presented a verbal assessment and made four recommendations.

Government and DEFRA guidance states the need for an appropriate balance of representation on LSPs and currently CVS is the only representative from the community and voluntary sector. The Faith sector is also not represented and Caroline felt it was not appropriate for her to make recommendations in this area other than to recommend that the Faith sector should have one seat on the partnership in their own right and not under the community/voluntary umbrella. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit has found that the Faith sector is under represented on LSPs and that this sector has a significant role to play in delivering partnership outcomes.

It was decided that Faith representation needed to be further researched and that Caroline Shaw and Wendy Wood should establish a formula which they felt might ensure that the faith sector was fairly represented and then discuss with the faith community. **A recommendation for a Faith representative to be an item on the next Agenda**

Caroline recommended that four further voluntary/community sector members be appointed:

1. Sevenoaks Volunteer Bureau – as the driving force behind establishing a West Kent Volunteer bureau, Sevenoaks can speak for West Kent. **This was agreed.**
2. Homestart – work with families and children. **This was agreed.**
3. Tunbridge Wells Mental Health Resource – represent users. **This was agreed.**
4. Age Concern – there are 4 or 5 branches operating in West Kent but do have a network, although possibly a little weak. **It was agreed to approach the Chief Executive of Age Concern Malling initially.**

Caroline also felt it important to recognise that volunteers would be out of pocket on attending meetings and it would be good practice to acknowledge this. **It was agreed that travel expenses (to be paid at local authority rate) would be met by the Partnership if applied for.**

**Caroline Shaw and Wendy Wood to liaise and issue invitations to join the partnership and attend October meeting.**

#### **4. Sub Groups Feedback**

##### **Housing – Paper F**

Mark Raymond introduced the paper which gave an update on the Essential Worker Housing Project.

Rosie Serpis requested to be involved in the work being undertaken with employers on affordable housing. This is a key issue for AXA PPP.

Anne Knight will arrange for Pat Tempaney, Head of Housing at SEEDA to be involved in the work of the sub-group.

Vic Webb was concerned regarding the procurement regime and implications for housing. Mark Raymond will take this issue back to the sub-group.

### **Transport – Paper G**

The additional transport paper headed *LTP Consultation Themes* (attached) was presented which identified the key consultation themes for The Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006/11. **Tony Fullwood invited members to submit comments by 6<sup>th</sup> August that would then be considered by the sub-group for inclusion in a West Kent response. A draft response will be circulated for comment prior to submission to KCC. If there is sufficient time before a response is required, this will be circulated as an Agenda item for October.** Cllr Grahame Weston will act as the contact between WKP and the Kent Plan work on which he is involved. KCC are also active participants in the West Kent transport sub-group. This consultation is an opportunity, as with the Structure Plan for stakeholders to give constructive comment to the County – through the subgroup we are able to give a sound West Kent perspective.

Roger House raised an issue from a recent KMEB meeting highlighting that increasingly people are being attracted to work in the growth areas outside of West Kent and this is putting a pressure on transport links. The meeting also discussed the sudden demise of SRA and a government proposal for a new very powerful national rail body. **It was agreed that West Kent will need to take a lobbying stance on these issues.**

### **Regeneration – Paper H**

Jean Morgan updated the meeting on a very useful presentation given to the sub-group earlier in the week by Tony Atkinson of the KCC Rural Regeneration team. This covered three areas – the overall work of the team, the SEEDA small rural towns programme and the Strategic Policy and Investment Framework for Rural Kent which is to the subject of a presentation to the partnership in October.

Subsequent to the circulation of this paper, the partnership had been asked by KCC to endorse their proposals in setting up an administration framework to carry forward the SEEDA small rural towns programme. A further paper (attached) was circulated outlining the programme and KCC's request.

**The partnership agreed to endorse:**

- a) **The role of the Kent Rural Towns co-ordinator to work on behalf of the AIF Board on matters relating to the SEEDA small rural towns programme**
- b) **KCC Rural Regeneration taking on the employment of the Kent Rural Towns Co-ordinator**

c) **KCC Rural Regeneration taking on the Accountable Body role on behalf of the 4 AIF partnerships and the decision-making body**

**Business Development – Paper I**

Roger House outlined progress towards the development of a project aimed at assisting homeworkers. It was agreed that **Roger House should bring a paper to the next meeting building on the project outlined to obtain the partnership's view on the terms of reference of the project and its viability.** This paper will need to provide a wider analysis of the needs of homeworkers and micro-businesses and suggest a framework for delivery of the project. Anne Knight and Tony Bartlett of Business Link Kent to be consulted by Roger. There were observations that the micro and small business sectors are notoriously difficult to engage in Government sponsored initiatives probably due to a concern that there will be considerable bureaucracy and paperwork involved in such schemes. The meeting recognised that communicating successfully to these sectors is a key issue. The FSB publication *Lifting Barriers* which identifies ways to engage small businesses in training was commended.

**Health – Paper J**

A further paper was distributed (attached). Some discussion ensued on whether user groups should be represented on the Board. It was felt that the Board's terms of reference were to co-ordinate the work of PCTs and other agencies and not as a forum for addressing patient concerns which is covered by a different process.

**Learning and Skills – Paper K**

Caroline Shaw was invited to join the sub-group. The meeting was asked to consider broadening membership further to include schools such as Swanley, Dorton House and possibly also private schools. **Wendy Wilton felt the membership list (which was extensive) needed to be generally reviewed and will be doing this.**

In addition to the paper, Bill Fearon updated the meeting on progress around the Land Based Review and the future of Hadlow College. Four colleges have been invited to bid to partner the college– North West Kent College, University of Greenwich, Capel Manor (North London) and West Kent College. Full applications are to be received by end August. Bill Fearon strongly recommended that the best solution for West Kent would be a local partnership between West Kent College and Hadlow which might also include University of Greenwich who already partner West Kent College on a substantial proportion of their Higher Education courses. Bill strongly believed that supported by West Kent College, Hadlow could become a centre of excellence for land based courses. A merger with an institution outside of West Kent could further weaken the Higher Education perspective in West Kent. **Bill requested letters of support for the West Kent College application from organisations**

**represented on the partnership as well as the partnership itself so he can build a strong evidence file of feeling in West Kent.**

**The partnership agreed to write to West Kent College supporting their application.**

**5. Community Plans – update**

**Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

An annual update has now been published and circulated.

**Sevenoaks District Council**

A community plan partnership has been set up and quarterly monitoring will take place. A successful launch was held at New Ash Green with a whole day of socially inclusive activities.

**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

The plan has been in place for 6 months. The partners involved in actions and targets will all be contacted within the next few weeks as part of the monitoring process.

**6. STAR Adult Education Review**

A draft response to the review was tabled. Comments were made that the level of educational attainment achieved by an individual is a life-long issue in relation to personal health and that this is a strong issue to bring out. Further, that in order to support basic skills provision it is important to have sufficient budget. Also if an annual employer skills conference for West Kent is decided upon then this might usefully tie in with the FSB conference being held at the Riverside Centre. **Further comments on the document must be received by Wendy Wilton prior to 23 July when the document has to be submitted.**

**7. The Bridge Trust**

Niall Willis provided an insight into the issue of homelessness, highlighting in particular that homelessness is really not so much about the stereotype of a rough sleeper. This sector accounts for only 3-5% of homeless people. The issue, particularly, in West Kent, is more about the numbers of people who do not have a permanent address or are about to lose one in the next 28 days.. This more often than not prevents these people obtaining employment as they are caught in a vicious circle of no address/no bank account/no job. There are 380,000 hidden homeless in the country. 57% of all homelessness is caused by a breakdown of domestic relationships – 30% are young people where the adult(s) in the family are unwilling to keep them at home.

At a recent conference the Bridge Trust committed to providing special support of the young homeless aged 16 and 17. At the Bridge Trust 33% of all homeless are in this age group. The Bridge Trust is particularly keen to focus on

prevention rather than cure and intervene with these youngsters to prevent them actually becoming homeless – by virtue of their age they are vulnerable. The Trust seeks to offer an option other than homelessness to this group. To this end, supported accommodation is provided in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells in partnership with the local authorities. A three tiered level of support is provided ranging from emergency short stay accommodation, through shared supported accommodation much like a student house with individual bedrooms but shared facilities and finally people move onto a one bedroom flat at subsidised rates with a registered social landlord. There is a very real shortage of suitable properties.

The Bridge Trust see partnership working as an essential way of addressing the needs of the young homeless in West Kent.

## **8. Any Other Business**

Simon Willshaw asked the partnership to consider the use of community safety leaflets as a way of raising its profile. **This issue will be considered as part of the community safety annual reports at the October meeting.**

Cllr Grahame Weston emphasised the importance of receiving the Agenda early when considerable material is distributed to be read beforehand. **It was agreed that the agenda will be circulated at least ten days in advance of a meeting and that members would be invited to comment on any material in the package to Wendy Wood ahead of the partnership meeting itself.** It is important that all members come to a meeting having read all the papers attached to the agenda so that the meeting can proceed efficiently without reiterating that material.

Cllr Alison Cook flagged that the Education Business Partnership will be submitting a funding bid for consideration at the October meeting and asked the meeting to endorse her view that it supported the aims of the Safety in Action project but would need to look at the detail before committing to any expenditure.

## **9. Dates of Next Meetings**

All Fridays, 10am, venues to be advised.

22 October

21 January

late May/June – annual conference, date to be advised.

15 July

21 October