

**West Kent Partnership  
Notes of the meeting 20 October 2006  
Kings Hill Conference Centre**

**Present:**

David Aikman; Nick Chard; Penny Chatfield; David Coleman; Michael Cooke; Bill Fearon; Robin Hales; David Hughes; Nazeya Hussain; Niki Luscombe; Alan McKendrick; Brendan O'Connor; Tom Phillips; Mark Raymond; Mark Salisbury; Caroline Shaw; Malcolm Staunton; Barbara Thorndick; Sheila Wheeler; Wendy Wilton; Mark Worrall; Mandy Wynne; Wendy Wood

**Apologies:**

Keith Austin; Peter Fleming; Kate Greenaway; Roger House; Melvyn Howell; Steve Leidecker; Derek Mckenzie; Maureen Pullen; Tim Read; Rosie Serpis; Simon Wilshaw;

**Chairman's Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed guest presenters and other attendees:

- Peter York, West Kent Civic Trust
- Vanessa Walker, Director of Provider Services at West Kent PCT
- Malti Varshney, West Kent PCT
- Malcolm Staunton from the LSC, who joins the partnership
- Nazeya Hussain, Head of Community and Corporate Planning, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

**1. Minutes/Matters Arising**

- **Revised Appraisal guidelines** – item 3 in the minutes – appraisal group have reworked the guidelines (paper A, Agenda) so that a clear line is given on bids for core funding. The AIF strategic objectives have been brought in line with the revised AIF.

**Action: Partners endorsed the new guidelines.**

- **Kent Agreement – West Kent Position** – item 5 in the minutes. A pack of papers provided a comprehensive picture of West Kent's position and a commentary paper from Richard Spoerry highlighted areas that need more attention as well as pointing up some successes. The Kent Agreement targets will be achieved through local delivery of countywide priorities and it is important that we in the partnership understand the issues locally and support our local agencies in the delivery of targets. The two main areas where district level data is available are crime and health.

Education related targets (outcomes 1 to 6) are reported annually and the finalised summer 2006 GCSE, SATs and GNVQ results will be published shortly.

The most useful way of receiving this sort of data at Partnership level in the future will be for it to be sent first to the appropriate partner

agency/sub group so that they can draw out and highlight relevance for their sectors.

**Crime** Mark Salisbury commented on the Block 2 information supplied in the pack and explained that the data interpretation can be misleading:

- The West Kent Policing area has only recently been restructured reducing from 9 to 6 policing areas which are wholly co-terminus with district and borough boundaries. From Monday all of Sevenoaks District and all of Tonbridge & Malling Borough fall into the West Kent policing area. This is a positive move and good practice but does create some ambiguity when analysing performance figures
- West Kent is the best performing area in the whole County and largely in the south East. It is the safest place to live but when broken down into CDRP areas different data sets can give a different, misleading picture. The CDRPs in each district are very productive with Tonbridge & Malling trailblazing and the others in mid-table positions.
- Although on the face of it vehicle crime is a problem, this is not the case, in fact there has been a 14% decrease on last year but the statistics used show an increase against 03/04.
- The statistics on violent crime show a marked increase again on the period 03/04. However, our streets have never been safer. The reason for this apparent rise is
  1. Kent Police are now required to record every 'violent' case reported, even if it is trivial and not prosecuted.
  2. New crimes have been brought under the 'violent crimes' umbrella such as indecent exposure, thus swelling the figures
  3. Zero tolerance on domestic violence crimes now means that all reports are prosecuted even if the victim doesn't wish to pursue it.

West Kent is doing particularly well at present and has unequivocally made progress.

The perception analysis for West Kent is good – generally people do feel safe. Statistically young people are more likely to be the victims of crime than other age groups.

The WKP formally recorded its thanks to West Kent Police. Our area is extraordinarily well served and the personnel involved are key in this.

**Health:** Malti Varshney commented on the LAA targets which are linked to the PCT's own targets.

A detailed picture is being obtained on which areas need particular intervention to support people in giving up smoking and discourage smoking during pregnancy.

Various programmes are being implemented to address obesity, including prescribing pedometers to the obese.

The PCT is working closely with the Kent Teenage Pregnancy partnership in addressing the background factors leading to teenage pregnancies.

A number of health indicators can be addressed in a multi sectoral way. It is essential that the data produced is robust.

**Action: The WKP offered to produce a press release to put forward a balanced view if this would be useful to WK Police. Mark Salisbury to prepare release and circulate to 3 district and borough CEOs and Mark Worrall for comment.**

Mark Salisbury

**Action: the same offer was made to the PCT.**

B O'Connor

**Action: A dedicated analyst to analyse data produced across West Kent for all agencies, not just police, would be a very useful resource. Mark Salisbury to consider preparing a joint bid to the West Kent Partnership for funding support.**

Mark Salisbury

- **Union House** – item 6 in the minutes – Bill Fearon explained that following the closure of the 4 very successful IT high street venues, West Kent College is now hoping to develop Union House in Tunbridge Wells as a business services centre.

**Action: Bill requested views/advice from partners on what services would be useful – for example, drop in facility, use of office equipment, training needs assessments. Another option would be to sublet offices within the unit.**

All partners

- **Letter re withdrawal of supporting people funding** – A letter has been sent.
- **Letter re Colts Hill** – a letter was sent at end of July in support of letter from Keith Ferrin at KCC and endorsing a request for a meeting. There has been no response to our letter. Wendy has made enquiries at the Department of Transport and been asked to send a copy letter. Hopefully, progress will now be made on the meeting. We have received a note of support from Michael Fallon, MP.

**Action: pressure to be maintained. The absence of a link is damaging to the community.**

Tim Read

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. Presentation – Peter York, West Kent Civic Trust

Peter addressed the meeting about the issues that concern the Civic Trust, how they are working to address them and how positive links could be forged between the Trust and ourselves.

The Chairman commented that the Civic Trusts are essential partners in the community and contribute greatly to community life. The Chairman had been impressed by the quality and integrity of requests received from the Tonbridge & Malling Civic Trust which is chaired by Peter.

Bill Fearon requested input – contacts/links/liaison from the Civic Trusts on the new £60M development of West Kent College at Brook Street.

Peter York

**Action: Peter York be invited to join the WKP representing not only the West Kent Civic Trusts but also those communities in West Kent not covered by a Civic Trust.**

## 3. Co-ordinators Report

The Chairman recorded thanks for Wendy's work on the conference, commenting that business engagement is an extremely welcome new avenue for the partnership and one to build on in the future. For future events it would be useful to broaden the sectors/businesses exhibiting.

**Action: The proposal that Tony Bartlett, Enterprise Development Manager at Business Link Kent be invited to sit on the West Kent Partnership as Chair of the Economic and AIF groups, was endorsed.**

Wendy Wood

## 4. Sub Group Updates

Following the recent pattern, sub group chairs were asked to simply highlight a couple of headlines from their reports and then take questions.

There was no report from housing as the sub group hasn't met recently. However, the Chairman congratulated Barbara Thorndick on an outstanding audit with West Kent Housing Association coming out the best in the country – the only housing association which received 3 stars with excellent prospects for improvement.

The Health Policy Board will report to the next meeting once the new PCT structure has bedded in. Brendan advised the meeting that across Kent and Medway 3 new CEOs have been appointed with Directors being appointed within the next 2 weeks. The Director of Public Health will be announced at the end of November. West Kent PCT is now formally in financial turnaround with a focus on financial stringency and this will impact on how the PCT is able to work with partners. The Chairman extended the Partnership's sympathy to all PCT staff who has suffered continual reorganisation and uncertainty.

The Business Development sub group has been replaced with the Economic Group under Tony Bartlett's chairmanship and will report to the next meeting.

## **Learning and Skills**

Wendy Wilton commented that both the adult and 14-19 groups have been focused on developing their remits and both have provided action plans which show progress.

The 14-19 group has been focussed on the development of the 14-19 vocational diplomas and working on a detailed bid. There is an option for a limited number of consortiums nationally to bid to be gateways to deliver the 14 specialised diplomas. This is increasingly contentious as there are differing views on the worth of the new diplomas. The Government view is for a greater emphasis on vocational training at all levels. The debate is around whether the diplomas will actually do what is intended in providing level 3 and 4 craftsmen and women and technicians. There are some concerns that the diplomas are more akin to A levels. The West Kent Learning Federation is putting in a bid for a Gateway. Kent has secured only 2 Gateways. The application will go to KCC to review and will then be sent on to a regional panel.

The 19+ Forum will hold a half day planning session when it next meets to align planning and funding so resources are best used to support the least advantaged areas. The group particularly want to align services to ensure agencies are not competing but working co-operatively.

Train to Gain provides free training to employees without a level 2 qualification.

Enrolments at both Hadlow and West Kent College are over target. The new West Kent College campus will be developed as a Centre of Excellence for people with special needs and physical disabilities – both youth and adults. West Kent College is already partnered with Dorton College and 30-40 sight impaired students come to West Kent College and are integrated in a variety of courses. Dorton College and Valence School will be consulted early on the development plans and work with architects.

The Chairman welcomed Malcolm Staunton to the partnership. Malcolm commented that considerable progress has been made on outreach facilities in more deprived areas and an outreach centre is now situated at the Sports Centre in Edenbridge in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and West Kent College. Conversations are ongoing with Wildernesse and Tunbridge Wells High School.

## **Transport**

The sub group was asked to investigate what transport hub proposals for Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling will mean if approved.

Tim Read

The sub group was asked to report to next meeting on how their work sits alongside the transport plans of other public bodies.

Tim Read

## 5. Community Hospital Review

The Chairman welcomed Vanessa Walker from West Kent PCT to talk to the Partnership about the Community Hospital review.

Following Vanessa's presentation the Chairman acknowledged on behalf of the Partnership that it was recognised that there is a duty on the PCT to explore all the options available. Concern was expressed that there was considerable community investment in community hospitals; both in financial and practical terms and that this must be considered as part of any assessment.

Vanessa emphasised that no decisions had been taken so far and that an external consultancy was managing the whole process. The social investment in community hospitals was recognised and everyone sitting on the steering group is a local resident.

In the future, GPs will hold funding to buy services from community hospitals and a possible scenario would be for them to be run by alternative providers.

A new website is under development for West Kent PCT and this will be one means of informing the general public on community hospitals. A press release is sent out following each steering group meeting. A series of public meetings are taking place and the review will go to formal consultation from January. It was suggested that more could be done, perhaps advertising, to ensure that the public receive an informed view of the situation.

It is unfortunate that alongside the community hospital review there have been bed closures as part of the necessary financial stringency for the 2 former PCTs and now West Kent PCT. This has possibly created a connection in the minds of the public on the view held over community hospitals. The two issues are unrelated. A change in Government policy on how health care was paid for meant that all the funds for hospitalisation were paid to the acute hospital and none followed the patient to the community hospital for a period of recuperation. The early closure of beds has in fact kept all four community hospitals open and created a breathing space to consider business plans for each of them.

The consultants will produce a range of options taking account of clinical need and the effective use of resources. A review was essential as patient care is paramount and currently NHS systems are not sufficiently joined up. The community hospital review will be conducted completely independently of any PCT review.

To be viable for the future hospitals will need to be *Fit for Future*. A definition of this is available on the Department of Health website but essentially it means taking into account future demographic trends. Sevenoaks Hospital has already been deemed fit for future.

**Action: Partners to feed through comments to Vanessa in the next few months, so that these can be considered for the consultation document released in January. It will also provide a second opportunity to contribute during the formal consultation period. Any comments to be copied to Wendy, so that if appropriate a joint WKP response drawing on common themes can be produced.**

All partners

## 8. Any Other Business

### New Financial Round for Local Government

1. The Local Government White Paper produced by Ruth Kelly on Strong and Prosperous Communities is about to be released.
2. Sir Michael Lyon's report will be released at the end of the year and will cover such issues as how Local Authorities are funded including a possible return of the business rate to local authorities.
3. There will be a comprehensive spending review in 07 which will have an impact on Local Authority budgets from 08/09. Kent has put together a submission on behalf of the whole of the Kent Public Sector which will be taken to a summit at Westminster. Broadly the proposition is that the overall pot of money that funds the public sector in Kent is inadequate and the distribution unfair. Kent is complex because of the two growth areas and rapidly changing demographics. An announcement will be made by Government in June. Briefing notes for the Westminster summit can be obtained from [nick.chard@kent.gov.uk](mailto:nick.chard@kent.gov.uk).

### Merger - Sevenoaks Volunteer Agency and VAWK

For over 3 years Sevenoaks Volunteer Agency and VAWK have been working together to strengthen support to the voluntary sector and have collaborated on many joint projects. Both sets of Trustees have been exploring whether a merger of Sevenoaks Volunteer Agency and VAWK could offer a more efficient and sustainable service. In the UK 50% of Volunteer Agencies are combined with the Council for Voluntary Service. Now the two agencies, both of whom are strong in their own right, are commissioning an independent study to consider this for West Kent. **A draft proposal will be brought to the 18 January WKP meeting.**

C Shaw/  
M Wynne

**Action: The WKP were asked to support the proposal and to engage in the consultation.**

All partners

### Tourism Economy

The Chairman highlighted the strong contribution of tourism to the West Kent economy and asked the meeting to agree a proposal for him to invite Brent Pollard, representing the Kent Tourism Alliance to join the partnership. Brent is the former sole proprietor of The Hop Farm and very supportive of West Kent issues.

### Change of Chairman

The first main item on the January 18 Agenda will be the formal handing over of the Chairmanship.

## **School Bus Journeys**

The Chairman proposed that the West Kent Partnership should champion to KCC the adoption of a US style yellow school bus system in West Kent. It was commented that Vision for Kent recognises the need to review the nature of the school run. Representations to KCC are very timely and should be addressed direct to Paul Carter.

**Action: Chairman to write to Paul Carter suggesting yellow bus pilot**

Chairman

Mark Salisbury commented that a deal has just been signed with Arriva which gives free bus transport to all police officers and whether on or off duty officers will be interventionist towards problems on the buses.

## **Presentation next Meeting**

Keith Austin of Age Concern will make a presentation to the January meeting.

## **8. Dates of Next Meetings**

- Thursday 18 January 2007, 10am, Kings Hill Conference Centre
- Thursday 26 April 2007, 10am
- Thursday 19 July, 2007, 10am
- Thursday 25 October 2007 10am