

Notes to West Kent Partnership

Notes to meeting - 16 October 2008, Kings Hill Conference Centre

Present:

Tony Bartlett - Business Link Kent
Charles Willsher – Kent Association of Local Councils
Cllr Peter Fleming – Sevenoaks District Council (Chair)
Bill Fearon – West Kent College
Simon Richardson - SEEDA
Robin Hales - Sevenoaks District Council
Roger House – Federation of Small Businesses
Margaret Howard – Kent County Council
David Hughes – Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Rob Cottrill – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Alan McKendrick – Aylesford Newsprint
Tom Phillips – Kent County Council
Mark Raymond – Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Mark Salisbury – West Kent Police
Rosie Serpis – AXA PPP
Ahmad Eslami – Local Skills Council
Cllr Mark Worrall – Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
John Cunningham – West Kent Civic Trust
David Candlin – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Wendy Wood – WKP Co-ordinator

Welcome to:

Cllr Catherine Mayhew, Representing Cllr Roy Bullock, Tunbridge Wells BC
William Benson, representing Sheila Wheeler, Tunbridge Wells BC
Simon Richardson, Kent Area Manager, SEEDA, who joins the Partnership
Kate Wilson, Kent 14-19 Strategy Manager, Kent County Council
Roger Gabriel, Manager, Kent & Medway Local Skills for Productivity Alliance
Caroline Lingham, Programme Manager for WK Leader

Apologies:

Merle Bigden; Keith Austin; Cllr Roy Bullock, Cllr Nick Chard; Penny Chatfield;
Michael Cooke; Di Woolloff; Andy Corcoran; Cllr Nicolas Heslop; Brendan O'Connor;
Linda Prickett; Jon Rosser; Caroline Shaw; Sheila Wheeler; Mandy Wynne

Goodbye to:

Alan McKendrick who retires from Aylesford Newsprint in November. Alan has been involved with the partnership since its inception and the Chairman extended many thanks for all his considerable support.

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

- Dualling A21 – Pressure from the A21 Reference Group has resulted in the A21 dualling being reprofiled to 2011/12 as originally proposed.

- Consultation – Kent Regeneration Board – WKP response at Paper A on Agenda. There is some re-organisation underway at KCC and the responsibility for the regeneration strategy is moving to Peter Gilroy.
- Letter sent from Chair of WKP to Paul Hannan congratulating Hadlow on achieving Best Large Company of the Year at Kent Business Awards.
- Prosperous Places consultation -district/borough level responses made

2. **West Kent Partnership – Discussion paper – Future Priorities and Investment Strategy – Paper B (Tony Bartlett)**

The powerpoint presentation is attached. Key points were:

- Important to move quickly to seize opportunities to draw in funding for West Kent and take action to minimise potential threats
- Two phase approach with an immediate shift in priorities while Investment Strategy is developed on a timeline that will allow it to link closely to emerging Kent Regeneration Strategy, demonstrates that the WKP is flexible enough to be proactive in challenging times across the sub-region
- AIF action plan due for review in April 09 – important that we recognise the considerable benefits for West Kent that the AIF has brought
 - Final outcome report will be produced during 2009
 - successful in raising profile of economic issues in WK and promoting joint working across district and borough boundaries through the work of the subgroups.
 - Huge success has been winning the Leader bid, which was based on the WKAIF.

The next West Kent investment Strategy follows on from the success of the AIF and will:

- Capitalise on the restructuring and refocusing at national, sub regional and county level. This provides the ideal platform to review the role of an investment strategy for West Kent and how the partnership can contribute to its delivery.
- Highlight WKP role to work flexibly across the sub region. The vehicle for delivery will be the new Investment Strategy.
- Clearly identify what can be delivered through District LSPs alone and what KA2 indicators can be delivered in partnership with the WKP.

Action: Partners agreed the recommendations

1. Endorse the importance of delivering relevant KA2 indicators sub-regionally as appropriate
2. Continue to prioritise delivery of Leader
3. Complete delivery on AIF action plan and produce a final outcome report.
4. Approve the commissioning of a consultant to develop a new West Kent Investment Strategy

**3. Presentation - KA2 Themes - Economic Success Indicators/Learning for All – presentation
(Roger Gabriel, Manager, Kent and Medway Local Skills for Productivity Alliance,
Bill Fearon, Principal and Chief Executive, West Kent College and Kate Wilson, Kent 14-19 Strategy Manager, KCC)**

Powerpoint presentations attached.

The combined presentations were the first of a series of themed presentations to the Partnership on KA2 indicators identifying how the WKP may be able to contribute to delivery sub regionally

The team presenting linked together the proposed employer-led West Kent sub group of the emerging Employment Skills Board for Kent, 14-19 issues and vocational training provision to bring an overview to the Partnership on skills, learning and training issues in West Kent.

The Kent & Medway Employment and Skills Board will have a West Kent sub group which will effectively take over from the current West Kent adult skills and learning subgroup. This group will be addressing the following issues (among others) raised in discussion following the presentations.

- Consider adding the Care sector to the 7 initial skills sectors to be supported by the Kent & Medway Employment and Skills Board.
- Consider ways in which it can engage with Jonathan Shaw, Minister for the South East who is committed to improving skills in the region.
- It was noted that WKC now delivers Higher Education courses but the innovation opportunities that result from Research and Development elements of Higher Education are missing in West Kent. Future investment strategy will explore lack of HE provision and implications
- Employer engagement and professional delivery of training, with appropriate equipment and staff, including assessors for Train to Gain is key to raising skills levels in WK.
- Variance in pathways to post 16 courses across West Kent. Almost all schools have 6th forms and strive to retain their students in them even if the courses on offer may not be the most appropriate for the student. Schools delivering vocational courses through new Diplomas

will address this to a certain extent. Whilst Diplomas are designed to enable students to be work ready they are not truly vocational in the same way as vocational courses at college.

- Pro-active work is required with children aged 10 plus to identify those at risk of entering the youth justice system. Offering vocational education at an earlier age could be one way of addressing this. Childrens Trusts and childrens service partnerships are engaged with this problem and flexible curriculum packages are on offer in some instances in Year 9.
- Good work underway on raising aspirations and matching these with opportunities. Some further work required on gender stereotyping.

The Chair thanked the speakers for highlighting the connections between economic prosperity, employer engagement, and skills and looked forward to the new sub group identifying and delivering on specific actions that would be relevant at a West Kent level.

4. Presentation - West Kent Leader (Caroline Lingham)

The Chair commented that it had been a long road to get to this presentation with officers and other partners working on drawing in this funding from May 07. The partnership can now begin the process of delivering on a programme worth £2M through to 2013 and which will stimulate a further investment in the rural economy to the tune of a further £2M-£4M by businesses and organisations match funding their applications for grant funding. Powerpoint presentation attached.

5. Co-ordinator Report – Paper C (Wendy Wood)

- **West Kent Annual Conference Putting the Business in Tourism – 22 October 2008, Brands Hatch Thistle**

The tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors make a major contribution to the West Kent economy. The conference this year is aimed at local accommodation providers, leisure attractions and hospitality businesses such as pubs and restaurants. The message will be that encouraging visitors to West Kent who will stay over in Bed and Breakfasts or hotels brings greater spend to leisure and hospitality businesses. Encouraging all sectors to network and have an awareness of the benefits each can bring the other will stimulate business growth across all these sectors. Over 100 delegates have registered.

Businesses offering services to those sectors such as local produce suppliers, business support services, tourist information centres and visitor attractions will be exhibiting.

- **Financial Report** – as tabled.
- **West Kent Business Awards**

The West Kent Partnership sponsored the Best Growing Business Category in these new awards. The investment of £2,000 has been recouped in editorial exposure in excess of that investment in Courier Group Newspapers and more will be received in the week after the Awards Ceremony which takes place on 23 October at the Spa Hotel, Tunbridge Wells. This level of press exposure underlines the WKPs commitment to supporting the growth of West Kent businesses.

Tony Bartlett and Wendy Wood judged the entries and were enormously impressed by the quality of entries and enterprise and entrepreneurship evident within West Kent.

Relationships with proactive West Kent businesses have been established through regular sponsor meetings with other sponsors and as part of the judging process.

6. Hot issues

No additional topics were raised.

7. Dates of Next Meetings – all 10am, Kings Hill Conference Centre

- Thursday 22 January 2009
- Thursday 23 April 2009
- Thursday 16 July 2009
- Thursday 15 October 2009