

West Kent Partnership

10am, Friday 15 July 2005, Kings Hill Conference Centre

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes and Matters Arising
3. Presentation – Childrens Consortia West Kent
Jane Grogan and Sarah Whittaker, District Managers Children's Services WK, KCC
4. Conference outcomes – Paper A
5. Project Funding
 - Bid – AIF Review – Paper B - for decision
 - Safety in Action – full report to note following funding – Paper C
 - Volunteering England – report to note following funding - Paper D
6. Community Plan updates
 - Sevenoaks District Council – Paper E
 - Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council – Paper F
 - Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – verbal update
7. Sub group updates
 - Regeneration – Paper G
 - Business Development – verbal update
 - Learning and Skills – Paper H (to follow)
 - Transport – Paper I
 - Health – verbal update
 - Housing – Paper J
8. AOB
9. Date of next meeting
 - 21 October 2005

PAPER A

Report to West Kent Partnership Meeting 15 July 2005 The Way Forward for West Kent – conference 21 June 2005

Several major themes emerged from the various sessions and feedback which highlight the priorities for the partnership to promote

- Affordable housing
- Our local economy
 - Implications for West Kent:
 - growth areas, particularly Thames Gateway and Ashford
 - levels of out commuting
 - need to retain graduates
 - Develop skills and training
 - Support our own businesses
 - Importance of our rural economy
 - Potential to develop tourism and leisure
- Local infrastructure, particularly trunk roads and commuter rail links
- Closer joint working including the community and voluntary sectors
- The importance of lobbying from within West Kent on our major issues
- Importance of a high profile for the Partnership

Delegates were asked to rate various aspects of the conference. Good or excellent ratings were as follows for the overall event

89% *impression of the event*
74% *the event met its objectives*
86% *networking*
63% *content*
96% *overall organisation*
93% *refreshments*
85% *suitability/accessibility of venue*

The conference sessions were rated as either good or excellent as follows:

81% *Kent – A Time of Change*
52% *Regionalism*
48% *A Local Business Perspective*
61% *Transport Issues*
62% *West Kent Issues*
64% *Regeneration*
68% *Faith in the Community*

PAPER B

WKAIF Working Group

Bid for Funding

Background

A paper was submitted to the April meeting of the WKP and the following is extracted from the minutes of that meeting

Members were asked to endorse a process for a review of the AIF with the objective of producing a current statement of investment sought for West Kent with a clear demonstration of need

The proposals outlined for this review process:

- link to the Regional Economic Strategy review timeframe to provide an opportunity to feed into and influence it
- identify an action plan for specific projects which are underway or can be initiated quickly for the financial year 2005/6
- recommend broadly retaining the existing strategic objectives and linking in new considerations, such as the incorporation of the Rural AIF and other issues which were not covered in the original AIF.
- Recommend a workshop for all stakeholders.

A temporary working group, comprising the chairs of regeneration, business development, skills and learning sub groups and some members of the business development sub group are to project manage the review process.

The updated AIF will focus on the delivery of existing actions which remain relevant and the development of new actions that address emerging key issues.

Whilst the review gets underway, as a non-priority AIF, we are continuing to liaise with SEEDA over funding this year for the ongoing work identified in the action plan.

Application for Funding

The working group postponed a workshop until after the conference so that themes which emerged from that could be incorporated into any such session and time was required to generate feedback from each of the sub groups on progress with the AIF to date including reviewing the action plan and identifying new actions and potential links to other sub groups.

The next stage is to commission a desktop study which will link to the many other studies which have been produced since work on the original AIF commenced. A statement will be produced, positioning the AIF in the current environment in terms of the sub region, Kent and West Kent. It will also draw on research available on best practice in AIFs elsewhere in the region including the MA research of Anne Knight at SEEDA and the recently published SEERA report. It will also take into account the strong themes which emerged from the conference and identify issues that may not have been picked up through the sub groups. This is likely to include:

- town centre changes
- loss of employers and floorspace
- the opportunities and challenges facing the rural sector

A workshop is to be convened for late September to include the chairs of all sub groups and other relevant stakeholders to include appropriate representation from sectors which are identified through the consultancy work on positioning. The workshop will:

- identify key themes for reviewed WKAIF
- identify barrier to growth next 3-5 years
- identify potential projects, large and small scale, matched to need

The format of the workshop will be a half day session and a facilitator will be appointed:

- overview from each of the sub group chairs
- summary of position from consultant
- break out groups to discuss specific topics
- plenary session

The consultant will then draw together the findings of the workshop and produce a draft Strategy which will be presented to the October WKP meeting.

SEEDA budgeting takes place in October/November and it is essential that the WKP are in an informed position at that stage to make substantiated bids for funding. The SEEDA process requires that funding will only be forthcoming for those issues highlighted as priorities in the AIF. It is anticipated that a review of the AIF will lever in significant additional funding for West Kent projects.

Match funding will be provided by the input of the AIF working group, particularly the WKP co-ordinator who will be working closely on the project. An element of the funding provided to the WKP is specifically for the support of the West Kent AIF.

By the WKP meeting on 21 October 2005 the following outcomes will have been achieved:

- desktop research completed
- workshop taken place
- draft Strategy produced for WKP and others to comment on
- West Kent AIF will be in a position to informally bid to SEEDA for funding

The timeline is as follows:

- Now - bid to WKP – Will be considered at Co-ordinating group meeting – 7 July and then included in WKP papers for 15 July meeting. Further bid may be required for work October onwards.
- July - draft consultant's brief for circulation and approval
- mid-late July – Select and appoint consultant
- July – appoint workshop facilitator
- August - Workshop planning
- End August - Consultant's report
- Early September – working group meeting
- Mid September - Workshop
- End September – Consultant's updated report and working group meeting
- October – consultation period

- 21 October – Draft Strategy presented to WKP
- October/November – bids to SEEDA for next year's funding
- Spring 2006 – full AIF review completed and report to WKP

The AIF working group request funding of £5,000 for the consultancy work and all aspects of staging the workshop. Costs breakdown as follows

• desktop research, up to 4 days @ approx £600 a day	£2,400
• workshop venue	£ 500
• workshop facilitator	£ 600
• consultant – produce draft AIF Strategy 2.5 days @£600 a day	£1,500
TOTAL	£5,000

Business Link Kent will be the accountable body for the funding and contract with the consultant. The delivery body will be the AIF working group.

In order to tie in with the Regional Economic Strategy review timeframe and not only influence it but have the opportunity to build in any relevant themes emerging from that into our AIF, it is anticipated that the revised AIF will be published in Spring 2006. Further funding may be necessary for this final stage.

Tony Bartlett
 Business Link Kent
 Chair WKAIF working group

PAPER D

West Kent Volunteer Centres Rural Volunteer Points Project

Volunteering England

In early 2004 the Home Office awarded a grant of £1,000,000 to Volunteering England to make it easier for people in rural communities to access information about volunteering in their local areas through the better use of ICT.

In the autumn of 2004 Volunteering England commissioned a computer company in Birmingham to build approx 170 free standing computer terminals designed to provide access to a web based portal containing information about how to volunteer and how to find volunteers with links through to the local Volunteer Centres in the locality. The easy to use interface also enabled other partners to link their own websites to the site.



West Kent Volunteer Centres

The Volunteer Centres in West Kent were chosen by Volunteering England as one of two areas in the country to pilot this national project. The other area was Dorchester. Whilst the Centres were very keen to bring this project into West Kent, funding was not available from Volunteering England to help the VCs to collectively deliver and capacity was a problem for the Centres.

We were therefore thrilled when the West Kent Partnership agreed to an injection of seed funding which enabled the Volunteer Centres in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Malling, Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Swanley to increase staff resource to participate in this project during the important first few months of the implementation.

With increased capacity, the Centres began to identify potential sites within the three local authority areas and negotiations began with those host venues who expressed an interest in securing a Volunteer Point from Volunteering England. As this pilot would inform the main roll out to the rest of the country the aim was

to seek a diverse range of sites in rural areas to enable the impact to be measured in a wide range of settings.

Sites in pubs, village shops, village post offices, information centres, tourist centres, National Trust properties, libraries, colleges and medical centres were all explored.

The following sites have been installed and will be part of the initial monitoring and evaluation programme conducted by the Institute of Volunteering Research which begins on 1 July 2005.

1. West Kingsdown Medical Practice
2. Hartley Public Library
3. Eynsford Village Hall
4. Westerham Public Library
5. Otford Public Library
6. Sevenoaks Volunteer Centre (demo point)
7. Larkfield Leisure Centre
8. The Friars, Aylesford
9. West Malling Age Concern shop
10. Tonbridge Castle
11. Hadlow College
12. Showfields Library
13. Southborough Library
14. Museum of Kent Life

Rural Launch – 21st April 2005

Carole Kincaid of Kent Volunteers switched on the Rural Points at the official launch attend by over 60 people hosted by Volunteering England at Tonbridge Castle.



Additional funding

As a direct result of West Kent running this pilot project, DEFRA funded a further project earlier this year for the Centres to develop an easy access web based

directory of support services available to front line charities, particularly those operating in rural areas. This project which is being delivered by Sevenoaks Volunteer Development Agency will be completed in March 2006 and will be hosted on the Action for Communities in Rural Kent website.

West Kent Volunteer Centres have also been working closely with Kent Connects on the Community Information Project commissioned by Kent County Council.

Next Step

Whilst we will have to wait for the Institute of Volunteering Research to publish its report on the impact of the Volunteer Points, we have found that during the implementation stage when we were identifying potential sites, we were able to raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering to both the individual and the community itself and work more closely with other statutory and voluntary partners such as parish councils, village schools, libraries and hard to reach voluntary groups.

Over the next few months Volunteering England will be rolling out the remaining Volunteer Points across the country.

*Mandy Wynne
Sevenoaks Volunteer Development Agency
4 July 2005*

PAPER G

Regeneration Sub-Group - report to WKLSP 15 July, 2005

The Regeneration Sub-group met on 24 June to discuss the AIF review and progress on the Priority Communities initiative.

The Sub-Group also heard from Sue Beer, SEEDA Kent Rural Towns Coordinator, who gave details re the Market Towns Initiative. This dovetails with the Priority Communities report, and will be incorporated into the review of the AIF and the Action Plan.

As requested by the West Kent Partnership, I have been working with the Chairman of the Priority Communities Strategy Group on terms of reference, and these will be discussed at the first meeting of the Strategy Group on 8 July. The Group is reporting separately to the WKLSP on progress in following the consultant's recommendations in the original Priority communities report and is working on an action plan for projects in the identified priority communities, as well as looking as sources of funding.

The sub-group is at something of a watershed, and the following points have been flagged for discussion and resolution by the Officer Steering group:

- Chairmanship (as I leave SDC on 12 July) and continuing input into the AIF review process
- Inter-relationship and reporting arrangements Regeneration Sub-Group and Priority Communities Strategy Group as there is some overlap in terms of membership and terms of reference

Jean Morgan
5 July, 2005

PAPER I

TRANSPORT SUB-GROUP REPORT

Major Infrastructure

A21 and A228 (Colts Hill Strategic Link)

The focus has now shifted to SEERA who are prioritising all transport schemes for South East England.

Following an initial exercise, the Regional Transport Board is considering a draft priority list at the time of writing this report (8 July). Within this draft list, the following schemes are ranked 3 (out of 7):

A21 Tonbridge Bypass to Pembury Dualling;
A21 Kippings Cross to Lamberhurst Improvements;
A228 Colts Hill Strategic Link.

If approved, the draft list may be further refined with any new information. The Sub-Group requests supports from the Partnership to meet with the Highways Agency to run through the schemes' scoring and undertake further lobbying prior to the final Regional Transport Board meeting in early October.

Local Transport Plan Bid

Kent County Council will submit the bid to Government on 29 July. The Partnership has developed and supported the significantly endorsed bid for West Kent Schemes which are now included in the bid. The announcement of the Kent Settlement is due in September.

Kent Rail Franchise

A letter has been sent from the West Kent Partnership to the Strategic Rail Authority/Department for Transport that sets out the Partnership's priorities for the new Franchise. No ranking of bidders has been undertaken.

Sharing of Good Practice

Quality Bus Partnerships

Kent County Council/Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are pursuing a Quality Bus Partnership with Arriva (a Community Plan commitment) and Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling are following progress with interest.

Two 'Kickstart' scheme bids have been supported:

Route 203 Tonbridge to Pembury via hospital
Route 281 Barnetts Wood to Rusthall, Tunbridge Wells

These will be submitted by Kent County Council to Government for approval, improving access to sustainable transport in the area.

PAPER J

West Kent Partnership – Housing sub-group

The last meeting of the Housing sub-group was held on 14th June. At this meeting the following topics were discussed:

- Producing an over-arching housing strategy for the Partnership area, which all 3 Districts could append their individual strategies to.
- Producing a similar over-arching strategy on homelessness.
- To agree two additional housing targets for the AIF.
- A discussion took place regarding the housing targets in the LAA – but it was agreed that this was a matter for the Districts and the County not this group.

The next meeting has been booked for 25th August when the following items will be discussed:

- The over-arching housing strategy
- The Housing Corporation bidding round
- Reconfiguring and de-commissioning supported/sheltered housing schemes
- Gypsy/Traveller strategies.

Barbara Thorndick
West Kent Housing
Chair of Housing Sub-Group