

**West Kent Partnership
DRAFT Notes of the Meeting 21 October 2005
Held at Kings Hill Conference Centre**

Present: Alan McKendrick, Barbara Thorndick, Bill Fearon, Brendan O'Connor, Caroline Shaw, Cllr Peter Fleming, David Coleman, Robin Hughes, Janet Hughes, Keith Austin, Mandy Wynne, Mark Raymond, Cllr Mark Worrall, Michael Cooke, Cllr Nick Chard, Penny Chatfield, Tom Phillips, Tony Fullwood, Wendy Wilton, Wendy Wood, Peter Davies (for Melvyn Hughes)

Guests: Malcolm Staunton

Apologies: Merle Bigden, Cllr David Aikman, Declan O'Neill, Jeremy Price, Kate Greenaway, Maureen Pullen, Mellvyn Howell, Roger House, Rosie Serpis, Sheila Wheeler, Simon Wilshaw

Action

Chairman's opening remarks

1. Minutes/Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. Matters arising were all covered by the Agenda.

The Chairman confirmed that he had written to:

- Jean Morgan thanking her for her contribution to the partnership
- Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, thanking him for his support of the partnership
- Paul Carter, to welcome him to his new role as Leader of KCC

A presentation from KCC on the opportunities for West Kent resulting from the successful London 2012 olympic bid had been requested and this will be forthcoming once the Olympics Manager is in post.

W Wood

2. Presentation

Malcolm Staunton, Director of Learning, Learning and Skills Council, who has responsibility for the Strategic Area Reviews in West Kent, gave a presentation on the strategy developing for West Kent as a result of the review. Handouts are attached to these Minutes. Subsequent to the meeting the West Kent StAR activity plan and a draft table indicating the measures of success were also supplied and are attached. These documents are under development and the Action Plan is not yet published. Malcolm Staunton invited WKP members to contact him direct with any further queries.

14-19 Agenda Malcolm highlighted the key issues for West Kent and requested assistance from the WKP in taking some of the issues forward. A key issue for the 14-19 Agenda is the insufficient provision for the less academically able with 30% of those who reach the end of year 11 failing to achieve 5 A*-C grades. Partnership working is essential to address this issue and the West Kent Learning Federation is addressing this. The motivation of young people is as important as there being appropriate learning provision and it is important to get

careers advice to young people long before year 11. **Appropriate representatives from the LSC will meet with Tom Phillips and others from KCC to discuss standards in the delivery of careers education in schools and colleges**

T Phillips

Provision for young people with disabilities is the subject of a separate review and a forum of specialist schools is working with the WKLF.

The less academically able at 14+ need broader curriculum choices including vocational training. This is provided by the colleges and there are issues surrounding the outreach provision of vocational learning at 14+ within schools by colleges and the attitude of the school head is very influential. **The influence that the LSC can have on schools in this area is limited and the assistance of the WKP in influencing schools regarding the benefits of this type of educational provision would be useful. This will be taken up by the business development sub group and learning and skills subgroup.** It was agreed that vocational training at 14+ is a good route into apprenticeships at 16+ to the benefit of the West Kent economy.

R House
W Wilton

Adult The focus is on literacy and numeracy for those who don't have level 2 qualifications. There is also a focus on trades training at level 3. Providers need to plan together strategically and a planning forum will carry this forward. It is essential that employers needs are met and the vast majority of WK employers are small businesses. The WKP can assist by being involved with the planning forum and helping to open dialogue with local employers. The LSC needs to focus on where future employers see their needs. This is a complex area as larger employers are more likely than smaller employers to have adequate training budgets. There is also an issue for the voluntary sector who like smaller employers often cannot afford to pay for training. All 19+ training above level 2 now has an associated cost. This has resulted in fewer courses being available and training subsidies are few and far between.

The Chairman of the WKP will write to relevant parties to address the lack of funding for training at level 2+ and how this affects small employers and the voluntary sector in their ability to train their workforce and volunteers.

M Worrall

The health sub group to explore how

- **the workforce development strategy within the NHS can link to the LSC objective of working closely with employers on meeting training needs**
- **The difficulties in recruiting staff for care homes might be addressed by the planning forum**

D Hughes

Scheduling appropriate courses is difficult for the colleges due to late planning rounds. The problem stems from the late budget allocations to the LSC, which mean that the LSC is then late in making allocations to colleges.

The Chairman will write to the DfES on behalf of the WKP to request greater security in whole pot funding for the LSC to enable appropriate courses to be run to train the West Kent workforce.

M Worrall

The Chairman will write to the LSC on behalf of the WKP to request that decisions on how to divide up the whole pot funding are made at the earliest opportunity.

M Worrall

3. Co-ordinator's Report (Paper A)

Wendy Wood reported on the 3 papers attached to the Agenda.

Priorities for Action

The priorities for action for 2005/6 illustrates that many of the priorities for the WKP are ongoing for both this financial year and subsequent years

The main headings focus on the three elements of the partnership's activity:

- Promoting West Kent
- Representing West Kent
- Supporting projects to develop wellbeing and prosperity in West Kent

This final area of project support is largely carried out by the sub-groups. This links directly to the aims and objectives of the AIF and the work undertaken so far on the review of the AIF has identified some new themes which will need to be addressed in the Priorities for Action for the forthcoming year.

Financial Report

The financial report provides headline figures only. The partnership is jointly funded by SDC, TMBC and TWBC at £15K each per annum and KCC, who support the AIF related aspects of our work at £10K per annum. As demonstrated in the figures, there is some unallocated funding which is likely to carry forward to the next financial year. The co-ordinator's two-year post is until end February 2006. However, the co-ordinating group have approved an extension of the post until end of May 2006 pending a decision by the partnership on a permanent way forward for the Partnership. **A paper on this is being prepared for the January meeting** and will take into account the work underway on the AIF review.

W Wood

Project Funding – Advice Note

This advice note has been updated to ensure that the application procedure gives applicants clear guidelines on the material that needs to be supplied and clearer guidelines on the appraisal process.

The key additions to application procedures are:

- Projects are brought to the attention of WKP by one of the partners
- Each project is considered on its own merits and in the context of available funding
- Breakdown of costs should include competitive quotes
- Evidence that other funding possibilities have been considered is required

- Other beneficial outcomes wider than immediate project should be defined
- Specifies that appraisal will be by the appraisal group

The key additions to the appraisal criteria are:

- 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

The Partnership approved these new guidelines.

4. Project Funding – Voluntary Action West Kent – update Report – Paper B

Caroline Shaw reported that the funding for the development officer post had levered in significant funding to West Kent and strengthened the voluntary sector infrastructure. A bid will be forthcoming to the January meeting to meet the ongoing funding of this post.

- £300K ESF learning money
- Institute of Fundraising have asked Voluntary Action West Kent to pilot codes of self regulation for small charities – a £40K post. This request was forthcoming because VAWK has the correct infrastructure to deliver this project
- Invest to Save Budget – helped a group in Tunbridge Wells to form a bid and they have been granted £120K over 3 years
- Bid into ISF pot for a project around partnership agreement. KCC liked the work and KCC are now funding directly themselves out of their training budget
- True community groups are very hard to reach. At an event a High Weald 9 separate groups are being given specialist advice, learning opportunities and being afforded the opportunity to share good practice.

5. AIF Position Statement (Paper C)

Wendy Wood reported that since funding was approved for the AIF review in July the following has taken place under the chairmanship of Tony Bartlett from Business Link Kent:

- Desktop research identifying what has changed in relation to the West Kent economy has been commissioned and completed. This was distributed as a separate attachment with the Agenda.
- Workshop organised and taken place
- Desktop research and workshop findings combined in the Position Statement circulated.

The workshop was well attended by a broad spectrum of stakeholders and was invaluable in confirming the key themes for the revised AIF and identifying potential projects.

Having identified the key themes to be taken forward as part of the West Kent AIF review, the executive group would now like to move forward to develop detailed action plans and funding proposals in conjunction with the sub groups and be in a position to bid informally to SEEDA and other agencies for project funding.

Over the following months the AIF executive group plans to work closely with the sub group chairs to develop a revised AIF which sets out clear aims and objectives with measurable outcomes and timescales.

This will be drawn together in a document for the Spring which will be taken in draft to the April WKP meeting. As flagged in July, this final stage may require some additional funding but is not requested at this time. This timing allows the opportunity to link to the Regional Economic Strategy review timeframe and to provide an opportunity to feed into and influence it. Throughout this review process the AIF will continue to deliver existing actions which remain relevant whilst developing new actions that address emerging key issues and bidding as appropriate for funding.

W Wood

The position statement submitted identifies where we are and where we want to get to. **The partnership agreed to:**

- **endorse the identified themes and**
- **authorise the executive and sub groups to prioritise the themes and develop detailed action plans and funding proposals.**

6. Briefing – Voluntary Infrastructure Consortium Kent and the Infrastructure Development Plan for the County – what will it mean for West Kent (Paper D)

Caroline Shaw explained that the background to VICK is the Change Up Agenda. The consortium has broad representation including statutory, voluntary and front line partners. Liz Haggart is working with the group to develop a local infrastructure plan which will be in place by March 2006. The plan is now at the consultation stage researching how infrastructure services should be delivered in Kent. The generic aspects of the plan will be delivered by Voluntary Action West Kent and there will also be specialist delivery to specific groups. The Government has asked VICK groups to look radically at how voluntary services can be delivered which is a challenge given that voluntary organisations are all independent organisations. Once the plan is written there will be money available over 2 years to implement the plan nationally.

The plan will explore the following:

- improving services and supporting them
- ICT support

- Quality HR support
- Community accountancy
- Health and social care network – specialist support

Work is taking place on the final draft of the VICK plan and there is a consultation period through to February. Organisations can opt to sit outside the plan but it is important to encourage their involvement in collaboration within the voluntary sector. A robust infrastructure is key to moving the volunteer sector forward.

Mandy Wynne reported that funding from GOSE under the ChangeUp programme has been made available to try to develop a business plan to improve the current arrangements for volunteering in West Kent.

There are currently 5 VCs in West Kent and an earlier project, also funded by GOSE through ChangeUp, looked at the possibility of creating a West Kent Volunteer Development Agency (i.e. a single body).

The rationale being that certain activities, such as funding bids, contracting, marketing and representation might be best carried out by just one organisation, whilst keeping in place current VC access points which provide services for local residents and often run specific local volunteer transport schemes.

By freeing up the local VCs they should be able to provide better local services for individuals and organisations. This radical approach was perhaps seen as threatening by some trustees and managers of VCs which are all independent organisations in their own right.

Funding has been secured to develop a business case to be shared amongst West Kent VCs and the statutory sector (KCC and District Councils) including the WKP. The process allows time for trustees of individual centres to appreciate the rationale and a range of possible options and for the statutory sector to be consulted for the first time. If an agreed way forward can be reached there is the potential to seek funding from Capacity Builders and the Big Lottery to manage the change process or a pilot scheme.

The funding also allows for the West Kent work to be shared with other interested parties across Kent through the VICK process.

7. Sub Group Updates

Business Development (Paper E)

Mark Raymond reported that the group has been involved in the progression of the AIF review and has also progressed the Home-based businesses project. The report is now finalised and an executive summary was circulated at the meeting. The work has been useful in identifying the split between home based businesses actually working at home, who tend to be quite dependent on IT, and those based from home but working outside of the home, which are somewhat less reliant on IT. 600 such businesses were surveyed so the work is robust. The report established that home based businesses have the following IT needs:

- those looking to actively develop their IT capability
- those requiring help with hardware/software
- those using IT, but who need to do so more effectively to develop

The report is intended to lead to action to establish a programme to support home-based businesses in their use of IT. The project group is now in the process of engaging with potential delivery partners with a view to establishing a consortia of providers to roll out a programme in the New Year.

It is hoped that the WKC high street sites could be utilised for this purpose as the funding they have had for the last 4 years has now been removed. ICT support for charities is also an issue as they can now no longer be signposted to free training. **The business development sub group will look at how this might be addressed** and it was suggested that there may be scope to involve young people in sharing their IT skills with the voluntary sector using the high street venues.

R House

Learning and Skills (Paper F)

Wendy Wilton explained that the current sub group has an extensive membership with varying attendance at meetings resulting in difficulty in progressing actions. As a result a small executive group of more constant and strategic members has been formed and it was proposed that this become the sub group of the WKP with responsibility for both the 14-19 and adult agendas. The executive group will link to the wider group. **The meeting endorsed this change which will facilitate a focus on the skills and learning issues for West Kent for both young people and adults whilst continuing to link to the wider providers group to incorporate their expertise.**

The West Kent Adult Learning and Skills Priority Statement was discussed. This identifies the issues for West Kent which the LSC will use to establish priorities for funding for West Kent. This doesn't take into account the training organised by Union Learning reps although WKC does deliver a significant number of these training courses.

Housing (Paper G)

Barbara Thorndick highlighted the need for West Kent to work collaboratively to lobby for resources through the South East Regional housing strategy. Strategic sites have been identified in TMBC area only (those with a capacity for 500 homes or more) but West Kent is classified as a low priority investment area.

Increasingly housing services can attract funding more easily if cross boundary working is in place and for the reasons set out in the sub group report, West Kent is in a good position to exploit this.

There was a recent visit from 27 members of the Kent and Medway GOSE team and the opportunity was taken to lobby for affordable housing as this has a direct influence on the West Kent economy.

BO'Connor

Brendan O'Connor to provide Barbara with a recent survey on the health needs of gypsies and travellers.

Transport (Paper H)

Tony Fullwood reported that the lobbying to improve the A21 has been fruitful and this project has now moved from rank 3 or 2 with work scheduled to start in 2010/11. The partnership has written to SEERA and the letter is attached to these Minutes.

The transport sub group also continues to lobby for improvements on the A228 through the local transport plan bid and to ensure that West Kent get a fair share of the budget for the local transport plan once it is allocated to Kent from Government.

It was agreed to refer to the M25/M26 interchange as being at Sevenoaks and nothing more specific.

Health (verbal)

Brendan O'Connor updated the meeting on PCT changes. In June South West Kent and Maidstone Weald PCTs agreed to develop a joint management structure. A chief executive was appointed and started on 5 September. Three weeks after the appointment, the Strategic Health Authority announced proposals for changes to the PCT structure in Kent. Either 3 PCTs – Medway, East Kent and West Kent, including Ashford, or just 2 – Medway and Kent. A decision will be made by April at which point there will be substantial top level restructuring. It is further proposed that:

- GPs take on a bigger role in buying services – practice based commissioning with groups forming loose coalitions.
- From 2008 all commissioning services, eg, occupational therapy, will be outsourced and no longer part of the NHS
- Strategic Health Authority (Kent) should merge with Surrey and Sussex.

The Health Policy Board (WKP health sub group) will input on all these proposals.

The Health Policy Board last met in July and spent time discussing the Choosing Health Paper. A draft report discussing the implications of the paper was circulated at the meeting and is attached to these minutes. Main points to note are that £1.2M will be available for each of 3 years and that the Health Policy Board through a sub group will oversee the allocation of funding at community level with the proposal that some central funding will be held and the remainder allocated at local authority level for local projects.

8. Any Other Business

- Caroline Shaw reported that the ISB programme has been very successful for West Kent. Nine submissions were made in total and the 3 successful bids were all in West Kent.

- Niall Willis of the Bridge Trust who presented to the Partnership in July last year on the issues of homelessness in West Kent is retiring. **The meeting agreed that the Chairman will write to thank him for his contribution to West Kent.** M Worrall
- The County, Districts and Police in Kent all came together at a fair funding summit recently organised by Nick Chard out of concern that the proposed level of government funding for Kent would damage service delivery. The Chairman thanked Nick for all his work on the summit and the partnership registered its strong support for a fair funding deal for Kent. Nick to draft letter for the Chairman to send on behalf of the WKP to government and other parties in support of fair funding for Kent. N Chard
- Brendan O'Connor reported that plans are being formulated to deal with a possible flu epidemic and these will be shared with local authorities.
- Further to the consultation on the South East Plan the 3 West Kent authorities have come to a joint view on 3 key points on which to lobby for West Kent:
 - recognition of economic importance of West Kent, especially our town centres
 - housing numbers appropriate to meet local needs
 - adequate transport infrastructure

9. Dates Next Meetings

- Friday 20 January 2006
- Friday 28 April (Easter 14-17 April)
- Friday 16 June – conference
- Friday 14 July
- Friday 20 October