

**West Kent Partnership
Notes of the Meeting 15 July 2005
Held at Kings Hill Conference Centre**

Present: Cllr David Aikman, Merle Bigden, Nick Chard, Michael Cooke, Bill Fearon, Tony Fullwood, Robin Hales, Roger House, Cllr Melvyn Howell, David Hughes, Janet Hughes, Alan McKendrick, Declan O'Neill, Tom Phillips, Maureen Pullen, Mark Raymond, Caroline Shaw, Barbara Thorndick, Simon Wilshaw, Wendy Wilton, Wendy Wood

Guests: Jane Grogan, Sarah Whittaker

Apologies: Penny Chatfield, David Coleman, Peter Fleming, Jean Morgan, Brendan O'Connor, Jeremy Price, Philip Thomas, Mark Worrall, Mandy Wynne,

Chairman's opening remarks

Mark Worrall was unavoidably detained. The meeting agreed that David Aikman should take the chair.

Nick Chard was welcomed to the meeting as the new member from KCC. Maureen Pullen was welcomed to the meeting as the new observer from GOSE.

It was agreed that the Chairman would write to Jean Morgan thanking her for her contribution to the WKP and wishing her success in her new role as Chief Executive of South Northants Council.

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1. Minutes/Matters Arising

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

2. Presentation – Childrens Consortia, West Kent

Jane Grogan and Sarah Whittaker, District Managers Children's Services, WK, KCC gave a presentation on the work of the Children's Consortia in West Kent, with particular emphasis on Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling. The emphasis of the work of the Consortia is to help families to help themselves. Powerpoint presentation attached and Tunbridge Wells newsletter attached.

A common theme across the three consortia are the small pockets of deprivation in broadly affluent areas – the consortia will work alongside the Priority Communities Strategy Group to attract funding to address this issue. The Priority Communities research provides useful evidence of need and although the levels of deprivation in each individual district is low, a stronger case can be presented by treating the priority communities together. The consortia had already identified the emotional support needs of children as one common issue affecting each of the priority communities in West Kent that needed to be addressed.

The Consortia were invited to give further consideration to any West Kent issues and to feed these into the Priority Communities Strategy Group.

Update – Priority Communities Strategy Group

It was reported that the Priority Communities Strategy Group had met on 8 July and had agreed its terms of reference and clear objectives for further work. Two further meetings had been arranged for October and December at which time the work of the group would be re-assessed.

The Group is reviewing the issues raised in the Priority Communities report in relation to children, young people and related community issues in the first instance. Much work is already being undertaken by a variety of agencies, the Consortia, CDRPs, KCC Youth & Community and the voluntary and community sector.

It was agreed that the Priority Communities group should add value to existing service provision and be complementary to the work of consortia and other providers in areas where gaps in provision can be identified. Mapping of services has already been undertaken by a variety of means. This will be drawn together and members of the group are now identifying if and where there are gaps in delivery or other identified needs. Where gaps are found the Group will identify how this can be addressed and if necessary external funding bids will be made if appropriate funders can be identified.

Reports will be made regularly on progress to the Partnership.

3. Conference Outcomes – Paper A

The meeting agreed that the conference was a success and had raised the profile of the West Kent Partnership within West Kent. A Kent Messenger journalist was present throughout and some good editorial coverage was achieved. KMFM were also present throughout and recorded and used interviews with all speakers. The meeting recorded its thanks to Wendy Wood for the organisation of the event.

The conference has highlighted the key issues for the partnership to address. **It was agreed that the West Kent economy should be at the forefront of the work of the WKP and that we should prepare ahead for changes**, especially in view of the impact of the South East Plan, the continuing regeneration and growth in East Kent and Thames Gateway and the 2012 Olympics. A matching exercise also needs to be undertaken in skills being attained in our schools and the needs of local employers. The implications of a later retirement age particularly in manual jobs is also an issue as is the ageing population in West Kent and predicted reduced population numbers. Total GVA and per capita GVA is predicted to fall by 2021.

It was suggested that a business theme be followed for a conference next year with major local employers invited to address the conference with the objective of engaging more fully with major employers. Such businesses should be from various sectors and be prepared to represent such sectors. Specific themes for the conference to be considered and presented to a future WKP meeting.

4. Project Funding

- **Bid – AIF Review – Paper B – for decision**

Mark Raymond presented the paper, prepared by Tony Bartlett of Business Link Kent who chairs the AIF review group. The paper sought funding support of up to £5K to assist with the review process. The WKAIF is owned by the WKP. The original AIF was produced in 2002 and the priorities identified in it have been taken forward by the WKP sub groups. It is now necessary to review the AIF to keep pace with the changing economy and ensure that the right issues are clearly identified for West Kent to put us in the best position for funding bids to SEEDA and other bodies. SEEDA base decisions on AIF objectives. The review will produce an economic action plan for West Kent and is drawing together a lot of the issues in which the WKP is already involved. The first stage is initial research on key issues leading to a professionally facilitated workshop with a report to the next WKP meeting in October. The appraisal group indicated strong support of the bid.

Funding of up to £5K was agreed.

- **Safety in Action – full report to note following funding – Paper C**

A full report was attached to the Agenda papers. The funding was one-off and alternative funding will be found by the Education Business Partnership for this initiative in 2006.

- **Volunteering England – report to note following funding – Paper D**

The meeting noted the report attached to the Agenda papers. A full verbal update had been received at the April meeting.

5. Community Plan updates

- **Sevenoaks District Council**

The Sevenoaks community plan is now at the end of its first year. A consultation draft of the first annual progress report was circulated. This includes outputs and identifies successes and challenges for the next year. Some theme specific consultation is already planned, for example with young people on the 'safe and caring' theme. Underpinning the Community Plan is a detailed action plan, monitored and reported on a quarterly basis to the Sevenoaks District Community Planning Partnership.

- **Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

A full review of the Tonbridge & Malling community plan is underway. A dual purpose document has been produced to provide both an update on the first two years of the plan and facilitate early consultation with

partners and the community. A draft revised strategy will be produced for the autumn and the final revised strategy published in March 2006. The WKP will be involved in the consultation process and the document will be forwarded to partners formally asking for comments.

- **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

A full update was provided to the April WKP meeting. Tunbridge Wells are involved in a full review of the current community plan. This is being undertaken alongside a major review of corporate processes and will link closely to the work of the WKP subgroups. There is now a greater emphasis on engagement and a local Community Planning Partnership has been established to review, deliver and monitor the plan. A draft revised plan will be available in September with final approval and publication in Spring 2006.

It was commented that the LAA has 18 targets and each community plan will need to reflect these. The Chairman commented that it was useful for the Partnership to receive regular updates on the progress of each of the strategies.

6. Sub Group Updates

Regeneration – Paper G

The meeting recognised the significant contribution made by Jean Morgan as Chair of the sub-group. The work of the sub group will now be put on hold whilst the Priority Communities Strategy Group work takes place.

Business Development – verbal report

Roger House reported that the main emphasis of the sub group has been on the homeworker IT support project. This is nearing completion and an executive summary is to be produced. A presentation will be made to the October meeting of the WKP. Roger House as Chair of the sub group will be working with Wendy Wood on a re-focus for the sub group and maybe a review of membership now this work is nearing completion. With the emphasis of the next conference agreed as economic the business development sub group will be involved with this. There are also strong links to the AIF review group. It is recognised that there is a need for close communication between the business development sub group and the learning and skills sub group.

Learning and Skills – Paper H

Wendy Wilton urged members to complete and return by the 30 July deadline, the on-line questionnaire informing the sub-regional statements of learning and skills priorities for Kent and Medway 2006. The need to link closely to the business development sub group was reinforced, particularly as the main learning and skills sub group is being steered towards looking at adult provision.

The outcome of the StAR reviews was reported to a conference in February and the LSC annual plan on their website also carries this information.

http://www.starkentandmedway.co.uk/km/publish/article_81.shtml However, it was generally felt that there had not been much publicity from the LSC on the outcome of the local StAR reviews **and it was agreed that Malcolm Staunton would be invited to present to the next WKP on the issues and implications specifically for West Kent from both the adult and young persons reviews.**

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In addition to Paper H, Bill Fearon reported verbally and emphasised that much of the skills training identified as a priority for the South East is now being provided in West Kent. This includes health and social care, science and technology, hospitality, catering and leisure and construction crafts. Both West Kent College and Hadlow College are working with Tunbridge Wells High School and Wildernesse to meet this provision. Tunbridge Wells High School is looking to achieve specialist school status in performing arts and performing technology and West Kent College are developing a sports academy and will work with a range of partners on this. KCC have invested £6.5M into new vocational initiatives across Kent with much of the money going to East Kent. The construction crafts and motor engineering unit at North Farm also benefited from this and thanks were recorded to KCC. West Kent need to develop more programmes to attract this sort of investment.

West Kent College is being proactive in promoting higher education provision within West Kent will deliver its first independent degree next year. This is in Fine Art. Hadlow College will not be merging. However, there are existing strong links between West Kent College and Hadlow and both are keen to co-operate on a range of specific initiatives.

There is an opportunity for the West Kent Partnership to promote closer working between skills providers in West Kent and the PCTs in the light of the new hospital. It is important that the health and social care training being undertaken links directly to the skills which will be needed by the new hospital.

Transport – Paper J

SEERA are in the process of prioritising all the transport schemes in the South East. A draft priority ranking paper will be taken to a meeting on 8 August. So far nothing has been agreed and final decisions on ranking will be taken in October. The transport sub group requested support from the Partnership to meet with the Highways Agency to run through the scoring and take up further lobbying to get a higher ranking for West Kent schemes. **The meeting endorsed this request.** Also an issue is which of the key principal settlements in West Kent are to be named as a transport hub. The sub group will look at investment/growth on this issue. Tonbridge has already been named and linked to Tunbridge Wells. **The Partnership endorsed the sub group to lobby on this issue.**

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The lobbying undertaken by the sub group in respect of the local transport bid has been significant and the Kent Settlement is due to be announced in September. The letter to the Strategic Rail Authority/Department for Transport setting out the Partnership's priorities for the new Kent Rail Franchise is to be sent shortly.

Health

The sub group has not met during the last quarter but has its first meeting under the new Chair, David Hughes on 29 July. The key agenda item will be to see what work needs to be done on delivering the White Paper – *Choosing Health*.

Housing – Paper K

The sub group has scoped a number of new West Kent housing initiatives following completion of the work on essential worker housing. The three districts are considering the development of a West Kent Housing Strategy and this will be reported to the WKP when endorsed. Each district will be required to set up a Choice Based Lettings system by 2010 and West Kent could bid for funding to support the development of this. The Sub group are also investigating joint working on homelessness, sheltered housing and the housing needs of Gypsies/Travellers

7. Any Other Business

The impact of the successful London Olympic bid needs to be considered both positive and negative. **Chris Hespe of the Sports Development Unit at KCC to be invited to give a presentation to the next WKP meeting in October.**

JH

8. Next Meeting

- 10am, 21 October 2005, venue to be advised.