

West Kent Partnership Meeting

Kings Hill Conference Centre, 10am, Thursday 26 April, 2007

NOTES

It was agreed that David Aikman should take the Chair for this meeting as Melvyn Howell will no longer attend. The new leader for Tunbridge Wells, Roy Bullock, will be confirmed after May 23.

Present:

David Aikman; Tony Bartlett; Merle Bigden; Nick Chard; Penny Chatfield; Michael Cooke; Peter Fleming; Bill Fearon; Clair Fisher; Anne-Marie Hannam; Brendan O'Connor; Tom Phillips; Mark Raymond; Jon Rosser; Mark Salisbury; Rosie Serpis; Malcolm Staunton; Barbara Thorndick; Sheila Wheeler; Simon Wilshaw; Wendy Wilton; Peter York; Wendy Wood

Apologies

Nazeya Hussain; Caroline Shaw; Mandy Wynne; Alan McKendrick; Robin Hales; Mark Worrall; Niki Luscombe; Keith Austin; David Coleman; Roger House; David Hughes; Stephen Leidecker; Melvyn Howell

Chairman's Opening Remarks

The Chairman welcomed guest presenters and other attendees:

- Liz Sanderson, Community Planning Officer, Kent Partnership, presenting item 3
- Richard Spoerry, Kent Agreement Manager, also for item 3.
- Jon Rosser, Chief Executive of Town & Country Housing Group who has taken over the Chairmanship of the housing sub group from Barbara
- Clair Fisher, the new representative from GOSE
- Anne-Marie Hannam, new Chair of Transport Sub group
- Charlie Fox, VAWK, representing Caroline Shaw
- Estelle Grant, Tunbridge Wells, representing Nazeya Hussain
- Linda Davis, Director of Environment and Waste, KCC, attending for Stephen Leidecker
- Angela Painter, Public Health Specialist who will regularly attend these meetings

1. Minutes/Matters Arising

Partnership Analyst Funding (item 1)

Mark Salisbury explained that events have moved on and that he is withdrawing the application. A hub for analytical resources is now in place in partnership with Kent Police and KCC.

Brendan O'Connor said that there is a proposal for East Kent and West Kent to establish a public health observatory and he will liaise with KCC to make any linkages to the analytical resources already in place.

Potential merger – Sevenoaks Volunteer Agency and VAWK (item 1)

Charlie Fox from VAWK explained that the Boards of both Trusts have agreed in principle to merge and the due diligence process is now ongoing.

Letter re PCSO funding (item 7)

The WKP took advice from KCC that rather than write to Government on funding cuts as minuted we should offer support to Kent Police on any lobbying they undertake. This was done and a letter of thanks received.

Mark Salisbury confirmed that the letter had been favourably received and reminded the meeting that an implication of the reduced government funding for the posts was that partners may have to be prepared to meet some of the shortfall. The government has, however, confirmed that funding won't be withdrawn for posts already funded or committed to until after 2008.

KCC to nominate Chair for Transport Sub Group (item 9)

Anne-Marie Hannam has been nominated and was present at the meeting.

2. Presentation – Kent Agreement 2 and activity based mapping V4K - Richard Spoerry and Elizabeth Sanderson

The powerpoint presentation is attached to the email of these minutes. Following the presentation several questions were addressed:

In answer to a question as to how the WKP priorities can be included in Kent Agreement 2, Richard explained that the Kent Agreement 2 team need district councils, LSPs and other partners to feed into the process of developing the agreement and suggested that the one route for this is through the Kent Policy Officers Group. Other partners were also very welcome to contribute and providing the opportunity to raise awareness at meetings such as the WKP was very important. The existing working groups that support the Kent Partnership will discuss how issues raised are included.

There was discussion surrounding the necessity to recognise district level involvement and for the Kent Agreement not to be seen just as a county level document. Richard confirmed that it is likely to contain district chapters within the main Agreement. This is an improvement from the first Agreement and is part of the thrust to obtain more local engagement.

Mark Salisbury raised the issue that areas that have performed well, for example, our West Kent CDRP's could potentially be financially penalised for their success if the funding levels were assessed on a countywide needs basis. Richard explained that the funding for CDRPs comes from Government via KCC and is currently redistributed in the same proportions in which it is received. However, it is not possible to second guess what the Home Office priorities will be in the future until the Corporate Spending Review

is completed. Money will follow those identified priorities when they are set. More will be known at the end of the year. The Home Office originally decided that distribution would be on the basis of population and levels of crime but the details of the formula are not known. The Safer and Stronger Communities working group will need to look at how the funding will be distributed within Kent once the parameters are known and there will be the opportunity for every partner to input into this process. The group may consider top slicing the funding to address issues which would be of benefit across the county but Richard confirmed that a decision to proceed with this approach had not yet been made. There is an example of this in Devon which will be investigated . However, there is no discussion of top slicing across the board. This will be relevant to crime only. Peter Fleming emphasised the need for adequate funding at operational level as this specifically enabled the desired outcomes.

The point was made that pockets of deprivation can be more difficult to address than whole areas of deprivation and this should be considered when determining funding distribution. Teenage pregnancy was discussed as an example of this and Richard confirmed that this will be addressed in an even handed manner across the county although on the face of it the problem was biggest in certain areas. Decisions on health funding will be made by health colleagues.

3. Presentation – Final Report of I&GP funded project on ‘Getting Employers involved in essential worker housing’ – Barbara Thorndick

The powerpoint presentation is attached to the email of these minutes and the published report was distributed at the meeting. The report’s main recommendations are:

1. West Kent partners should recognise the importance of housing for essential workers in supporting the local economy, improving sustainability and providing cohesive communities.
2. The Government should widen the current, limited definition applied to ‘key’ workers to embrace the concept of workers, particularly from the private sector, who are ‘essential’ to the local economy. This would improve the range of subsidised housing options open to such workers and would remove the current limitation whereby certain tightly-defined groups of public sector workers are given housing priority over other workers
3. Housing providers should seek to provide a range of housing tenures within affordable housing schemes to cater for the specific needs of essential workers, including shared-ownership housing for those who can afford it and sub-market rented housing for those who can not.
4. Housing providers, in partnership with local authorities, should continue to test and implement grant-free models in West Kent.
5. Housing providers, in partnership with local authorities, should continue to engage the larger businesses within their area to persuade them of the longer-term benefits of investing in affordable housing schemes and thereby securing nomination rights for their own employees.

The Chairman thanked Barbara for chairing the sub group since its inception and the Partnership's congratulations are recorded. Jon Rosser, Chief Executive of Town & Country Housing Group will now Chair the sub group and will move forward with the recommendations from this report.

There was discussion surrounding the lack of engagement of employers in housing schemes but a recognition that with their own competitiveness at risk from cheap labour in India, China and elsewhere, long term investment of this nature is a big step to take.

Sheila Wheeler commented that in 2002 when she was working at ODPM a task force looked at public sector land in relation to releasing land at best price and the social and economic implications of this. The recommendations of that report appear to have not been implemented as nothing has changed. Value for money imperatives are possibly impacting on decisions but the competitiveness of South East England is at stake. Particularly for the West Kent economy there are very real ramifications if ordinary workers cannot afford to live locally.

The WKP to lobby the regional assembly on this issue.

Jon Rosser

There was discussion about whether the local authorities and other public sector organisations around the table could begin to lead the way on how their own development land is sold and with the use of Section 106 Agreements. This would send a message to local employers and over time, through demonstrating public sector commitment to and investment in affordable housing for essential workers, help to engage the private sector as well.

The allocation of police housing was discontinued in 1994. West Kent Police are lobbying currently for a West Kent allowance to be paid to both officers and civilian staff to enable them to live in the area. The issue is about wages as well as the affordability of housing.

AXA-PPP face issues around recruitment and retention of staff linked to salary levels that are lower than London and other high cost areas and the affordability of housing. There are problems with retaining staff who travel from East Kent because the east-west public transport links are poor. Long term financial investment leading to nomination rights on a few homes is not a route for employers to help more than a handful of staff. Thought needs to be given to a scheme which would enable employees to help all their staff facing issues over housing affordability. It was suggested that such a scheme might be linked to how employers allocate benefits packages to their staff – for example giving younger staff the option to invest less in a pension and receive some help with housing costs.

West Kent College will shortly be selling a plot of land for up to 50 dwellings at Brook Street with a requirement for 40% to be affordable housing.

Bill Fearon made the offer to work with partners creatively on this project.

It was suggested that the Partnership looks at other European high cost business centres and establish if there is good practice on affordable housing from which we could learn. Barbara confirmed that the European market has a wide range of private

sector rented accommodation and that in certain countries employers do provide housing.

Nick Chard commented that any model leading to nomination rights in housing needs to be part of transparent and easily justifiable system. A system which preserved the dwellings as affordable housing for future applicants would be more attractive to public sector employers.

The provision of hostels along the lines of police and nurses houses was discussed but this is not a long term solution for West Kent where it is not just very young adults but people in their thirties who cannot afford to buy locally. Affordable, long term stable housing is what is required.

Jon Rosser commented on the task ahead for him summarising that as most of the land that might be available for development is public sector or utilities owned this is very much a public sector issue.

The WKP endorsed the report's recommendations.

4. Co-ordinator's report

End of Year Financial Report (Paper A)

2006/07 saw a substantial spend on projects – some £48,880. This was possible because of the carry forward funding from the early years of the partnership. About £35,000 is available for project funding for the current year 2007/08. All funding partners have been invoiced for 2007/08.

The second page of the report shows an overview of projects sponsored since 2003. A total of 9 projects were appraised as suitable for funding. All had to demonstrate match funding and this was attracted at a ratio of over 3:1 – ie – for £115K investment from the WKP, an additional £372K has been invested in those West Kent projects from match funding.

WKP Priorities for Action – for endorsement

The Partnership endorsed the priorities for action for the WKP for the coming year.

These are grouped together under 3 headings:

- Contributing to building a stronger economy
- Providing a voice for the people and businesses of West Kent and promoting West Kent to a wider audience
- Supporting the development of vibrant, caring and thriving communities and adding value to the services provided.

Monitoring Report on Ssky Project – Paper C

This has been a very successful project for West Kent and provided help in a key area. This one-off financial investment of £10,000 has purchased over 300 sessions to deliver

counselling for young people and the backlog has been cleared in just 3 months. This has enabled counselling to now be delivered in a timely way as the need is identified.

Tom Phillips to take back the thanks from the WKP to Karen Coffey on the excellent outcome and clear report summary.

Tom Phillips

5. Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plans

Sevenoaks District Sustainable Community Action Plan – for Endorsement

All partners to the plan are signed up and are committed to delivery. This action plan for 2007-2010 takes forward the overall vision from the Sustainable Community Plan. Considerable consultation has confirmed the overall themes in the original vision under the key headings of a safe and caring communities; a green and healthy environment, and a dynamic and sustainable economy. Links have also been identified to other plans and where the Sustainable Community Action Plan helps to deliver V4K, and Towards 2010 these have been highlighted with a logo. The plan also links very closely to the LDF so that people issues are closely linked to spatial issues. The concept of Balanced Communities is a key priority for the council. Both of these links are also identified with a logo.

The WKP endorsed the Sevenoaks District Sustainable Community Action Plan.

Sustainable Community Plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough – for endorsement

Copies of The new Sustainable Community Plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough were distributed. This has been put together by the community planning partnership. It is the result of a substantial review of the first community plan and involved considerable consultation with the community and stakeholders. The emphasis is on delivery with a robust action plan including performance monitoring built in. There are 9 themes which have been informed by V4K and are linked to various other strategies. The LDF team have also been involved.

The WKP endorsed the Sustainable Community Plan for Tunbridge Wells Borough

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council have already adopted their Sustainable Community Plan for 2006-2009.

6. Sub Group Updates

AIF Progression/Economy (including monitoring Report) – PAPER D

The AIF Progression Group reported a satisfactory first 6 months of the AIF Action Plan. Thanks were recorded to the sub group chairs who have been excellent at reporting back on activity using the monitoring forms. The analysis of these reports has been very useful in identifying cross cutting issues.

Out of a total of 52 Priorities for Action, only 6 were amber and there were no reds. Three of these are within the economy sub group (SO3) and remedial action is being taken on all ambers where appropriate. There will be a full annual report to the October

meeting. In the meantime if any partner would like access to the monitoring sheets these are available from Wendy.

The Marketing Task Group has met and the main route to marketing West Kent is to be the website being developed by students at West Kent College. This website is intended to build an awareness of the vibrancy and strength of West Kent within the business community. Once up and running the content will be managed and updated by the Voice for Business group.

The Landbased Task Group has plans underway for an autumn conference tackling sustainability and diversification opportunities for farmers.

The WKP agreed that the conference would be adopted as the WKP annual conference for 2007.

Learning and Skills

The Partnership congratulated the sub group on the successful bid for £240,000 of ESF money for Kent and Medway.

Housing

Barbara thanked the partnership for their support and having enjoyed her time as Chair of the sub group officially handed over to Jon Rosser. The WKP's appreciation of Barbara's contribution was recorded.

Transport

Anne-Marie Hannam was welcomed to the Partnership. A correction to the tabled paper under major schemes where it should read 'east facing slips' not 'M25 slips.'

There was some further discussion on the Partnership's position on the Colts Hill Link. Nick Chard confirmed that as part of the WKP, he is happy to lend his and KCC's support to further lobbying for the link to go ahead.

It was agreed that drawing the links to Pembury Hospital redevelopment was important and that other funding avenues should be explored other than the funding which flows from the regional assembly.

Anne-Marie Hannam

Health

The Health Policy Board are due to meet tomorrow and representatives from Dartford and Gravesham have been invited to attend to provide an integrated approach across the whole West Kent PCT area.

There was some discussion around the community hospital review and the impact on local communities. There have been a series of public meetings over the last 10 days between directors of the PCT and health related groups. The Board on 24 May is due to receive a formal report with recommendations. There are likely to be no closures but a need for reconfiguration across these hospitals.

7. Any Other Business

The draft paper circulated with the Agenda on LAA and LDP Alignment across the NHS South East Coast was noted.

8. Dates of next meetings

- Thursday 19 July, 10am, Kings Hill Conference Centre
- Thursday 25 October, 10am, Kings Hill Conference Centre
- Thursday 24 January 2008
- Thursday 24 April 2008
- Thursday 17 July 2008
- Thursday 16 October 2008