

West Kent Partnership Meeting – Friday 27 April, 2012, Chiddingstone Castle

MINUTES

Apologies

William Benson, Tunbridge Wells BC - Jonathan MacDonald attends
John Cunningham, West Kent Civic Society
Brett Maclean, Chair East Sussex Economic Advisory Board and SELEP Board Member
Matthew Nix, Kent Police
Robert Atwood, Tunbridge Wells BC
Caroline Shaw, VAWK
Mandy Wynne, VAWK – Jon Weller attends
Ross Gill, Kent CC
Paul Bentley, Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

Present

Peter Fleming, Sevenoaks DC
David Candlin, Tunbridge Wells BC
Jonathan Macdonald, Tunbridge Wells BC
Jan van der Velde, Kit for Kids
Jo James, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Julie Beilby, TMBC
Jon Weller, VAWK
Lesley Bowles, Sevenoaks DC
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Owen Baldock, TMBC
Julie Askew, K College
Paul Lulham, Kent CC
Philip Griffin, Skills Funding Agency
Robin Hales, Sevenoaks DC
Roger House, Federation Small Businesses
Tony Bartlett, Omega

New members

Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms and lead Rural Group SELEP
Angela Newey, Citizens Advice

Presenters

Wayne Gough, Kent Employment Programme
Iain McNab, BIS Local
Damien Lazenby, BIS Local
Susan Priest, Director, SELEP
Caroline Lingham, Leader programme Manager
John Marshall, Skills Funding Agency

Peter Fleming took the Chair and a brief silence was held in respect for Mark Worrall who had sadly died the day before. Partners remembered Mark as an inspiring and talented Chairman and a tireless advocate for West Kent whose guidance and leadership will be greatly missed.

<p>1.</p>	<p>Minutes/Matters arising from 20 October</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>Letter to WK MPs re Fair Funding for SE – Paper A</p> <p>Following Lee Colyer’s attendance at the last WKP meeting this letter has been sent to local MPs appending a data sheet produced by the South East Council’s on current grant settlements to inform them in discussion on Local Government Finance Bill</p> <p>Sir John Stanley has confirmed that he is taking up with Secretary of State for Communities, CLG and Michael Fallon has forwarded a response he received from Bob Neill, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, CLG. Bob Neill points out that the overall spending power for 2012-13 is -4.3% for T&M and -4.9% for Tunbridge Wells which compares well with the England average of -3.3%. He didn’t mention Sevenoaks. He notes the concerns in regard to the Local Finance Bill and the formula for LA retention of a proportion of their business rates and is working with the sector through a local government finance working group before deciding if any technical changes to the formula should be included in the consultation this summer.</p> <p>Paul Carter who is chair of the South East England Councils is leading on this and their website contains a wealth of information which they have collected and presented on the unfairness of the current system and their response to consultations on the Local Government Finance Bill. http://www.secouncils.gov.uk/.</p> <p>As chair of Kent Finance Officers Lee now ensures that Finance Directors from Health and other public bodies are represented at Kent Finance Officers meetings and they continue to evaluate the impact of proposed legislation across the public sector.</p> <p>Action: The Local Government Finance Bill is still working its way through Parliament and much of the detail needed to calculate what this will mean in terms of funding is unclear. When sufficient clarity has been established Lee will return to a future meeting which is likely to be in the Autumn of 2012.</p>	<p>WW</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>LEP</p> <p>Letter to Greg Clark, MP re LEP – paper B Response from John Spence – paper C Susan Priest – SELEP Director Jon Regan – Chairman, SELEP rural group LEP sub group</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Susan Priest the new Director of SELEP to the meeting and Jon Regan, the SELEP rural group lead who joins the Partnership.</p> <p>Susan Priest - Having worked previously at SEEDA, and in particular a period as Area Director for Kent, Susan commented that she was familiar with the issues and challenges facing Kent. The LEP has made good progress and has been designed with a light secretariat structure. Susan will be continuing with the work ethos of delivery through local authorities and other partners where these organisations are best placed to do so. The LEP is business led with a number of business board members. The Board numbers 45 and the executive group is 24 supported by a senior officers group. The Kent Vice Chairman is Geoff Miles,</p>	

<p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>	<p>KEB Chairman and Managing Director of the Maidstone Studios. The Business Advisory Board, linked to KEB has a key role in feeding in intelligence to the LEP for Kent and is a model which would benefit East Sussex.. The LEP area contains 2 recently awarded Enterprise zones and the LEP has secured two tranches of growing places funding totalling £50M which is Government funding to bring forward homes and jobs,£33M of which has been allocated across 12 projects. Ross Gill is the key contact for Kent. A list of projects supported is to be supplied.</p> <p>There are plans to develop a local transport board for the LEP area to address key infrastructure needs. The new Transport Strategy Manager at KCC, Ann Carruthers, is working with the Strategic planners and the LEP.</p> <p>For SELEP, the A21 improvements has been identified as an infrastructure priority along with Thurrock, the third Thames crossing and airport development.</p> <p>Jon Regan - Jon explained that the Rural workstream has identified priorities and these include food security and good economic growth. A powerpoint will be delivered to the next meeting.</p> <p>Papers B and C - following discussion at last WKP meeting The Chairman wrote to Greg Clark expressing commitment to SELEP, raising concerns over direct engagement with SMEs and issuing an early invitation to an autumn conference on shared East Sussex/West Kent issues, especially the A21. Greg Clark has accepted the invitation and a provisional date of the morning of Friday 26 October has been agreed. Availability of John Spence and East Sussex and other colleagues to be obtained</p> <p>LEP sub group – proposed prospectus on shared issues was discussed at January WKP meeting and some revisions suggested. William Benson has been leading on liaising with East Sussex colleagues on shared issues.</p> <p>Business Support</p> <p>BIS – Iain McNab</p> <p>Iain McNab and Damien Lazenby from BIS Local were welcomed to the meeting. Powerpoint presentation attached.</p> <p>Funding opportunities – Paper D</p> <p>This arose out of the discussion in January on the LEP/WKP and support for businesses. Ross Gill has produced an excellent overview of what is available and this has been uploaded to the WKP website.</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Kent Employment Programme – Wayne Gough, KCC</p> <p>The Kent Employment Programme was launched at Kent 2020 which provides subsidy to employers to take on an apprentice. Presentation attached.</p> <p>West Kent businesses have demonstrated a strong desire to offer opportunities to young people. The West Kent 100 in 100 Campaign has now closed having received 150 pledges of apprenticeship places by 101 employers. Placements have not yet been made at all these employers and they may well be early adopters of Kent Employment Programme.</p>	<p>WW</p>
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Skills Funding Agency – John Marshall, Skills Funding Agency

The presentation from John Marshall of The Skills Funding Agency is attached

5. West Kent Leader – visit from DEFRA and CLG – Paper E

The WKP in conjunction with the West Kent Leader Executive Local Action Group hosted a hugely successful visit by CLG and DEFRA representatives on Tuesday 24 April. WK Leader was chosen as an exemplar of how the Leader programme should be delivered. Key points were made on the success of the programme and the substantial impact it has been able to deliver to particularly farming and forestry businesses locally. During the programme £1.2M has been grant funded to local businesses. The programme spend is now fully committed 18 months ahead of the end date and more than a dozen live applications are still on the table. Representations were made to DEFRA to access funding to allow WKL to continue to operate until the bidding process for the successor programme. Excellent feedback has been received from visitors. The Chairman commented that it was WKP who bid for WKL and the Partnership should be extremely proud of the success of the programme and difference it has made to the local economy.

6. Volunteer driver transport provision to Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Trust sites

Mark Worrall had been instrumental in bringing together volunteer driver providers and the NHS Trust to explore how service provision could be streamlined and supported financially. Three very constructive meetings had been held over the last few months and the scheme has now gone live on MTW NHS Trust website, inviting bids from providers. £60,000 is available for the community sector to bid for. Partners agreed that this was a fantastic testament to Mark's vision and drive.

7. Transport sub group – verbal update – Paul Lulham

A21 – An announcement is expected in the next few months. The scheme is likely to be delivered by the Highways Agency, despite the costings produced by KCC to deliver at a greatly reduced cost.

Rail – Kent Rail summit was held at County Hall. It is almost certain that the Canon Street to Tunbridge Wells services will be retained and that the Maidstone East line will continue to deliver Thameslink services direct to City. The new Thameslink franchise will include the current Southern services, so important for West Kent in respect of services to Gatwick airport.

Strategic Infrastructure – Prioritization work is underway on major schemes. For WK these are

- A21
- Colts Hill Bypass
- J4 of M20

Also relevant to WK is the Lower Thames Crossing. Three routes are to be consulted on but if the favoured route is east of Dartford then the 227, 228 and 229 will be impacted and WKP will need to lobby for improvements on these cross country networks.

Buses – The highly successful Kent Freedom Pass is to be extended to 16-18 years olds. It will be more expensive for this age range but still heavily subsidised and a significant saving on weekly bus passes. Local authorities will soon be able to designate how to allocate bus operators fuel duty rebates in better bus route designated areas.

Planning Policy – There has been a significant shift in the last months in this area with S106 arrangements to be replaced by Community Infrastructure Levy. As the 3 WK boroughs have adopted LDF strategies they are well placed to benefit from opportunities to provide for targeted infrastructure improvements through the planning process.

The Highways Agency are often a barrier to development as require huge payments from developers to unlock sites and often impose holding directions Susan was able to confirm that the LEP are engaged with the HA on this issue and that the HA have agreed to release information on where holding directions are in place and why.

Dartford Crossing – Free Flow Tolling – SELEP has invited the senior project manager to June Board meeting to identify clear milestones in this project which has now slipped to June 14.

8. West Kent Investment Strategy – Tony Bartlett – Paper F

Tony Bartlett gave a brief overview of the Action Plan and emphasised the importance of supporting small businesses. The economy group have agreed 5 priorities for the current year.

**9. Co-ordinator Report – verbal update – Wendy Wood
Paper G – Budget**

A three year budget was prepared starting last year and includes ongoing support from reserves for Leader. All WKP reserves will be exhausted during 13/14 and the loss of KCC funding support has necessitated cutting back on much of the marketing activity. Greg Clark has accepted an invitation to attend a West Kent/East Sussex business engagement conference with a suggested date of Friday 26 Oct. Sponsorship will be required to stage this event. Links are to be maintained with WK Business Awards as an Ambassador but unlikely to be able to sponsor a category for 2012

Pathways to Employment Interreg bid

A letter of support from WKP was included in the application pack. The bid was submitted mid February with a decision expected in late June. The overall project is to develop an operational cross channel employability framework which focuses on the transition from education to employment. A successful bid will enable WKP to deliver on many of the more aspirational priorities in the WKIS and focus marketing activity on youth employment initiatives

5 Partnership Objectives for 2011/12

The Partnership has made good progress on the 5 priorities agreed at the beginning of 2011.

- Focus on business – WK 100 in 100, WK Business Awards sponsorship
- Deliver WKIS - Action plan on target and cuts across all 5 objectives
- Access external funding, particularly European - P2E bid submitted, awaiting outcome. Good contacts made for future bids. Positioning for successor Leader programme has begun
- A21 Task and Finish Group – project has moved forward
- Develop Relationships with East Sussex - WK has led on promotion of joint working with E Sussex and on identifying shared issues for action
 - A21 and freedom to deliver local road schemes
 - Rail links
 - Rural Broadband enablement

- Rural Business support

The Chairman suggested that the WKIS priorities and the Partnership's priorities could now be aligned.

Working as appropriate with East Sussex as part of LEP sub group

Seek funding, lobby and deliver initiatives to

- *Focus on business, particularly SME business support*
- *support young people into work*
- *Improve key transport infrastructure and services*
- *Support rural economy*
- *Progress broadband provision*

10.

Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11.

Dates of next meetings

- Friday 27 July - K College
- Thursday 25 October, Chartwell (this may be replaced by conference 26 October venue tba)