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Date 26 July 2012

Dear Mr Paice

WEST KENT LEADER PROGRAMME – FUNDING ISSUES

The Borough Council is an active member of the Local Action Group which is delivering the above Leader programme. The Council's Communities Advisory Board, which met on the 23rd July 2012, resolved that I should write to you regarding the need for additional funding to the allocated to the West Kent Leader programme for 2013/14.

As you may be aware, of the 62 Leader groups operating nationally, the West Kent Leader Programme is one of the most successful. It has constantly performed to a high standard allocating grant to suitable projects with a particular focus on assisting farmers, foresters and other rural businesses.

The West Kent Programme has now allocated all of is available funding following the 20% cut imposed on the programme last year. This means that, without additional support, the programme will now have to close one year earlier than was originally set out in its Business Plan. The programme has outstanding bids for funding of a total value in excess of £350,000 which now cannot be supported.

Our success here in West Kent does not appear to be matched by other Leader programmes. It is understood that many Leader programmes have failed to allocate their grant funding in accordance with their business plans and that the average spend across all 64 Leader groups is only 54% against profile with some spending less than 20% of their allocation. Partners in West Kent are aware that there is over £3M of underspends across the programme as at March 2012.



The Borough Council believes that swift and positive action is now required by yourself to reallocate underspends from the poorer performing Leader groups to those more able to ensure that this funding is used to provide much needed support to the rural economy. The West Kent Leader Programme is ready to take up this challenge should you agree that such a review of distribution of programme funding is now both urgent and necessary.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Brian Luker
Cabinet Member for Communities