

West Kent Partnership Meeting – 19 April 2013, Mercure Hotel, Tunbridge Wells

Minutes

Present

Nicolas Heslop, TMBC (Chairman)
Roddy Hogarth, SDC
David Candlin, TWBC
David Godfrey, KCC
Steve Hyland, K College
Iain McNab, BIS Local
Jane March (part)
John Marshall, Skills Funding Agency
Julie Beilby, TMBC
Lesley Bowles, SDC
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Paul Temple, Age Concern
Jon Weller, VAWK
Paul Lulham, KCC
Wendy Wood, WKP

Guests

Jane Ollis, Business support Kent
Ross Gill, KCC
Caroline Lingham, West Kent Leader

Apologies

Peter Fleming, SDC
Robin Hales, SDC
Jonathan MacDonald, TWBC
Daniel Lazenby, BIS Local
Paul Bentley, TW NHS Trust
Jo James, KICC
Angela Newey, CAB
Caroline Shaw, VAWK
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Roger House, FSB
Andrew Rabey, Kent Police

1. Minutes 27 July Meeting

July 12 was the last formal meeting as there was a West Kent Leader tour in October and the conference in January.

There were no relevant matters arising from the minutes but items relating to progressing the Partnership's 5 main priorities were covered in the Agenda.

Working as appropriate with East Sussex as part of LEP sub group seek funding, lobby and deliver initiatives to

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

The Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Presentation – Business Support Kent – Jane Ollis

Jane Ollis, Chief Executive presented on the work BSK is undertaking with West Kent

companies.

Engagement with West Kent businesses as part of the High Growth programme is low – in the last 2 years BSK have worked with 230 out of a Kent Customer base of 1900 businesses – only 12% of the Kent marketplace. BIS have quantitative research demonstrating that the sort of support provided by the High Growth team around coaching and access to finance makes a real difference to companies who want to grow. Access to finance via TIGER and Expansion East Kent may be an incentive for businesses in those areas to work with a high growth coach.

It was agreed that the WKP would promote business support services to ambitious companies which are scalable, possibly via an article similar to an inward investment article produced for Medway.

WW

BSK work mainly on referrals from professional services and this is the most effective way to targeting the right calibre of business.

Business Growth/External Funding

3. Bid to Regional Growth Fund 4 – Ross Gill

- 3.1 The Chairman commented that as a result of closer working with East Sussex, driven by the WKP and particularly the efforts of Mark Worrall, the WKP conference in January acted as a catalyst to develop this bid.

The bid is based on the strengths of the West Kent/East Sussex economy, not on disadvantage. The bid process will be very competitive with 309 bids totalling £2Bn chasing only £350M available. Partners agreed to start publicising the KCC Vanguard initiative immediately after the local elections.

Partners agreed that if the bid is unsuccessful, the WKP would need to identify ways to add value to HGK clients, particularly in respect of facilitating access to finance, perhaps through Funding Circle and others. Jane to supply contact details of businesses in West Kent working with BSK.

WW

Bid to KCC Regeneration Fund – Mark Raymond

- 3.2 The West Kent Investment Strategy identifies a need for West Kent delivery of business support services. Several district/borough level workshops were run last year open to businesses across West Kent and the model was deemed successful. Business support delivery will be on a West Kent basis from this financial year. The WKP has been invited to bid to the Kent Regeneration Fund for financial support to deliver a programme to help more businesses and create more jobs.

JO

The programme is complementary to the RGF 4 bid and is split into 3 main areas

- 1:1 Enhanced 1-2-1 business advice
- Business workshop programme
- Specialist business support programme to target
 - Home-based businesses
 - Rural/land based businesses

- Entrepreneurs from deprived communities to support people out of worklessness

Post meeting – the bid was successful. The KCC Regeneration fund will provide £52,500 towards the year one programme costs of £61,500. Subsequent years funding will be subject to satisfactory progress against year 1 targets and a minimum of an additional 50% match funding. A working group including KCC are now working to commission services.

4. **Presentation – West Kent Leader – Caroline Lingham**

The Chairman introduced Programme Manager, Caroline Lingham who last updated the Partnership a year ago. The Leader programme is now fully spent and Caroline addressed the meeting on planning for the next programme.

Partners endorsed the bid for interim funding to DEFRA to develop a new Leader Programme and a letter of support will be submitted at an appropriate time, copied to our MPs and highlighting the success of WK Leader. A future Leader programme may be for a wider geographic area and could cover similar areas to the RGF bid with Maidstone and parts of Wealden and Rother.

5. **LEP Update – Ross Gill**

In the absence of Peter Fleming and Jo James, Ross Gill updated Partners on LEP activity.

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Of the 98 recommendations in the Heseltine Review, the SELEP has endorsed 84. All LEPs are producing a growth plan to incorporate a strategy for growth funds and more guidance is being developed on this. LEPs are now maturing and the strategy will clarify areas of work. SELEP is challenged in that it covers such a broad area and is not bound by a county or city. Partners endorsed the Chairman's suggestion that the WKP be actively involved in LEP consultations around the LEP Growth Strategy and European Investment Prospectus.

Growing Places Fund is finance to unlock sites with £50M available in SELEP at the moment. Potentially further funds may become available.

The Public Works Loan Board offers access to funding to local authorities but the preferential loan rate is quite high and in practice it has limited potential.

WW

The Government has recently created a new Single Local Growth Fund from 2015 which will include the key funding levers of skills, housing and transport and funding will be allocated to every LEP through a Local Growth Deal. Discussion of West Kent priorities for this Fund for a future meeting.

6. **Transport Group – Paul Lulham**

The LEP strategic infrastructure group -Local Transport Body (LTB) This brings together the 6 local transport authorities in the SELEP and has received confirmation of the formula based allocation of £98M over 4 years. A prioritisation exercise is now underway looking at schemes Kent wants to prioritise. Schemes need to be over £5M and be delivered from April 15. Potential West Kent schemes include widening of over bridge at Junction 4 of M20 to unlock housing growth.

WW

Lower Thames crossing – Consultation expected in May/June by Department for Transport on the 3 options. KCC are aware that the change in travel patterns for each of the options could impact in West Kent and this will be represented in the consultation.

A21 - Public Inquiry will be on 14 May and all 3 authorities and WKP have expressed support for scheme. The LEP has also been requested to record their support. The ambition is that the Public Inquiry should result in the scheme being 'shovel ready' for the new funding round. The KCC offer to deliver a lower cost option has not yet been taken up by Government.

PL

Pinch point Funding - KCC have submitted 3 bids, 10 bids have been fast tracked. North Farm has been successful - dualling of Longfield Road and roundabouts either end - to be completed by March 2015. It will be important to co-ordinate timings with A21 improvements to maximise benefits and to retain the goodwill of businesses during the construction stage. Outcome of bid for M20 J4 scheme is still awaited.

WKP conference – The transport group have discussed the action identified at conference around student/apprenticeship travel options

Arriva have a student scheme in conjunction with individual colleges. £37 cheaper than KCC 16+ scheme and administratively much easier. KCC 16+ scheme is available to both students and apprentices. Colleges now receive old EMA direct and this should be being used to subsidise student travel as appropriate - facility to do this through the 16+ scheme. There are no real opportunities to include subsidised rail travel during peak hours because of capacity. 16-25 young person rail card can be used after 9.30am.

Rail – Southeastern franchise has been extended for a further 4 years. The London Bridge rebuild will cause disruption for West Kent travellers and will not be completed until 2018. The Kent Rail Summit takes place on 20 May and the Southeastern Franchise Manager at Department for Transport will be there.

The Mayor of London has proposed delivering a stopping service for suburban services and is meeting the Secretary of State to discuss. Paul Carter has stated that there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate capacity on the line and that more independent analysis is required.

Bus – The South East's first Statutory Quality Bus Partnership for the A20 between Maidstone and West Malling is evolving. Grant available to fit particulate traps to Arriva double decks remaining on that corridor to achieve Euro 5 emissions standard. Consultation will be in May.

7. **Co-ordinator Report – Wendy Wood**

Conference

Thanks were expressed to Wendy for the organisation of the event. There was a good turn out despite snow and the conference provided an excellent opportunity to work with East Sussex and engage with LEP, Michael Fallon and business. The main outcomes are listed in the report, most important of which is the Escalate bid to RGF4 for a £5.5m funding programme across West Kent, including Maidstone, Wealden Rother and Hastings. KCC are also funding a £150,000 vanguard scheme

Identified actions are also listed in the report. Some of these issues are at district level around revitalisation of Town Centres and parking charges but others can be addressed at a West Kent level, for example co-ordinating the provision of business support across West Kent which has been committed to for the coming year whatever the outcome of the bid to the KCC Regeneration Fund. Supporting the rural economy continues to be a priority and the West Kent Leader Executive Local Action Group remains in place to support the development of a successor bid. It's proposed that the next WKP meeting has a focus on supporting young people into work.

Budget - Year end report 2012/13

2012/13 was the final year of the 3 year planned budget which included use of reserves. The last of these reserves have been moved forward into 2013/14 budget. The officer group is starting to plan ahead for supporting a future WKL programme and support for WKP from 2014/15 when all reserves will be exhausted.

8. AOB

K College

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) confirmed that they will be holding a competition between May and November to determine a new corporation or corporations to take over the delivery of provision currently managed by K College. Events will be running in May for interested parties to express their interest and a full tendering exercise will follow.

The College remains open for business, and is not closing. The SFA continues to support K College in its current form, and will continue to do so until handover to a new corporation in August 2014. K College is therefore actively securing, placing, and training apprentices, working with businesses regarding their training and recruitment needs, and recruiting young people to commence courses in September. The change that is coming is a change in governance and senior management, but West Kent is not losing the region's FE provision.

9. Date of Next Meetings

19 July, K College – Theme – Support Young People into Work

This is one of the Partnership's top priorities. July's meeting will bring together various speakers to explore how the partnership might be able to bring forward opportunities for young people, particularly those with low skills and those interested in studying for a degree through a higher level apprenticeship. The focus would be on developing schemes to meet the sector skills shortages in West Kent such as around IT and engineering.

18 October – Provisional date for an autumn business engagement conference