

Minutes

West Kent Partnership Meeting – 19 July 2013, K College

Present

Peter Fleming, SDC
Roddy Hogarth, SDC
Damian Lazenby, BIS
David Candlin
David Godfrey, KCC
Jane March, TWBC
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Julie Beilby, TMBC
Lesley Bowles, SDC
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Nicolas Heslop, TMBC
Paul Lulham, KCC
Paul Temple, Age Concern

Apologies

Paul Sayers, Skills Funding Agency
Caroline Shaw, VAWK
Iain McNab, BIS
Paul Bentley, MTW Trust
Robin Hales, SDC
Jo James, KICC
John Marshall, Skills Funding Agency
Jonathan Macdonald, TWBC

New Members

Pav Ramewal, SDC
John Balcombe, TMBC

Guests

Robert Lewtas, UK Trade & Investment
Wayne Peet, BIS
Simon Alexander, SDC
Simon Harris, CXK
Paul Andrews, Jobs in Kent
Jane Burtenshaw, K College
Paul Barron, Kent Foundation
Jon Weller, VAWK
Penny Denne, KCC
John Turner, KCC

1 Minutes and matters arising 19 April meeting

Matters arising are covered in Agenda except

- Item 2 – Promoting Business support – double page feature in KICC Thinking Business magazine, June/July issue focussing on business support activity and plans in WK
- 3.1 – Business engagement event was held on 6 June to launch Accelerator + working closing with BSK to reach potential high growth businesses in WK
- 4 – West Kent Leader – bid for interim funding has been submitted with a large number of letters of support including one from WKP.

2 Exporting for Growth presentation – Robert Lewtas, Strategic Partner Manager, UK Trade & Investment

Rationale for the organisation is to support 'UK PLC'. International trade advisors work across a portfolio of topics mostly with larger SMEs.

An event will be held, probably in North West Kent in export week in November for 150/200 to develop top 100 Kent exporting businesses. Event will be opened by a Minister and have a prominent business speaker. UKT&I have a database of 900 businesses with a TN postcode. WKP to support event

Emerging markets are Columbia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkey and Africa. China is difficult to do business in although a huge market and Brazil is expensive, however Rio 2016 will be good for trade, using London 2012 credentials.

3 Focus on Supporting Young People into Work

This is one of the Partnership's top 5 priorities. The Panel was assembled to identify barriers and opportunities with a focus on either end of the spectrum – work ready skills - pre-apprenticeship and higher apprenticeships leading to a degree level qualification.

CXK, Simon Harris – Problems and Aspirations

- Young people who don't do well academically often don't receive the support at school to follow vocational pathways.
- If 6th form academic studies not working out, the correct intervention can make change of direction positive
- Raising of participation age means a young person has to be in education or training and not widely appreciated that this includes apprenticeships
- Cost of travel to work on an apprenticeship wage can be a barrier to taking up.

JobsinKent Paul Andrews – What Employers are seeking

- Runs largest recruitment portal in Kent
- Job market in West Kent very buoyant and has been for 3 years, particularly in engineering, manufacturing, healthcare, IT and digital and sales and marketing
- Barriers to young people getting into work is not lack of available jobs but lack of ability of the young person to get one
 - Attitude – lack of work ethic
 - Awareness – employers know that experience has to be gained but young people often have unrealistic expectations of world of work. Need to shown enthusiasm, willingness to learn and gain experience through temp work. Young people need to adjust their expectations.
 - Application – process is too easy on line and young people fail to put the effort into applications by researching and customising. Personal profile on CVs too general and not liked by employers. Employers receive many applications as process so easy so effort must be made by applicant to stand out.

K College, Jane Burtenshaw – Demand for courses and vacancies placed

- K Recruit provides a service to local employers and only submits applicants to employers after support from K College and a mentor to ensure work ready and have work ethic and values. It also supports employers in managing young workers or apprentices. Statistically young people only last 12 weeks in work without the support. Not all employers are suitable to place young people with.

- Apprenticeship opportunities are available year round but demand from young people peaks in the summer.
- Business Administration biggest area in apprenticeship demand as has widest application with generic office practice. However, it can lead to industry specialism through the original placement.

Kent Foundation, Paul Barron – Supporting young entrepreneurs

- Support and train young people into self employment – the 4th option alongside university, job or dole.
- Barrier is mindset of parents and educational establishments who don't see as a viable option and can be detrimental to school league tables
- Deliver soft skills such as creative thinking, networking skills
- Flagship mentoring programme – careful selection of appropriate mentors
- Local programme for West Kent being developed

VAWK, Jon Weller, Volunteering and social enterprise opportunities

- Encourage young people into employment through volunteering to build confidence and experience
- Developing opportunities for apprenticeships in voluntary sector
- SDC Springboard to Success programme matches graduates with local employers to gain work experience through volunteering
- Always explore opportunities for internships when working with organisations
- 28 businesses in West Kent are part of the Business in the Community network and provide mentoring, work experience, mock interviews
- Deliver Kent Young Carers programme to support and befriend young carers to explore career options. John Lewis have just signed up 30 mentors to work with young carers. Intervening with young people who may be at a disadvantage before issues come up.

KCC, Penny Denne and John Turner – Funding to Support Apprenticeships

- Working with young people in a similar way to K College to ensure work ready before placing with employers
- Kent Employment grant available through Jobcentre Plus as an incentive for employer to be matched with an aspiring apprentice
- Any employer wishing to employ a graduate for 9 months can now access a grant

Discussion then followed

- Rotherham Ready scheme works with teachers to help them teach entrepreneurial skills from primary age upwards and broaden knowledge of routes into the world of work. Information attached
- Some work would be beneficial with schools to broaden horizons for young people beyond entry into university.
- There is a need to teach IT in depth and not just office applications. Creative Industries large sector in West Kent
- Best way to give young people a broad spectrum of opportunities is for them to gain experience of work, understand what their options are and manage their expectations
- Potential Studio School in Sevenoaks around manufacturing and engineering
- Scope to develop project to support young people into work to be considered as part of review of West Kent Investment Strategy

4. K College Consultation – West Kent Perspective

This item links to the discussion above. Consultations have taken part across the area covered by the College and in each council area in West Kent to help focus priorities for the College going forward based on what local employers want from their college.

It was felt that the consultation process could have been started significantly earlier to properly take account of employers' views. Consultation was also lacking on the overall packaging of the commissioning model for K College going forward and local views are that sites in Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Ashford should not have been packaged together.

This lack of engagement has been recognised by the Skills Funding Agency who have led on the work and better engagement will take place as plans for the college develop. The local councils will have an observing role in the tendering procedure.

Partners fully recognise that the college needs to be offering courses that address skills shortages which is not necessarily the same as the courses young people might want to take. This links to working with young people on realistic aspirations in the working world and this work starting early on in their school careers.

5. Transport Group Update

- Spending review announcement that A21 dualling scheduled for 2015. Public Inquiry is underway and Inspectors report awaited. Budget announced of 92M but KCC not commissioned to date to do work
- Davis Commission study is underway on airport capacity. KCC support for 2nd runway in future and increased capacity at Gatwick is not necessarily an attractive option for West Kent where residents will suffer from the increased air traffic. KCC oppose hub airport on North Kent marshes and Thames Estuary but that might be a better option for West Kent.
- Lower Thames Crossing – KCC are supporting C and C Variant which are the East of Gravesend options and would involve improvements on A229 Bluebell Hill and utilisation of A2 corridor. DfT preferred option is A which is East of Dartford option and would need money set aside for local road infrastructure to deal with the higher volume of traffic on M25 and surrounding roads in Sevenoaks District.
- Local Pinch Point Funding - Successful with bid for North Farm. North farm scheme and A21 need to be integrated and North Farm built before March 2015 so that A21 works can commence. Negotiations now ongoing with only one landowner. Managing disruption will be important. KCC also heard in last few weeks successful with bid for Westwood in Thanet which means have been unsuccessful with the bid to widen the M20 J4 overbridge. This scheme however is still on the list for potential funding through the Local Transport Body. Two busy retail parks got pinchpoint funding rather than bridge over motorway.
- London Bridge Improvements - a Travel Demand Management Board has been established by Network Rail to ensure passengers are kept advised of the best journey options. The TDM Board includes representatives from Transport for London and all train operators (including Southeastern) who serve London Bridge. London TravelWatch, will also have input into the board. Some mitigation measures are in place and users can travel on any reasonable route between London termini to get back on line. Slightly longer trains will also be operated.

Works affect WK from next year when Charing Cross services won't be able to stop at London Bridge. After that completed it will be Cannon Street services unable to stop at London Bridge. Currently often delays at London Bridge so increased capacity will benefit commuters. Longer term benefits for West Kent are retained Thameslink services on Maidstone line and Cannon Street services from Tunbridge Wells when works completed. The project will be completed in 2018. Partners' views were that West Kent commuters will face 4 years of substandard service with no reduction in fares and no real benefit at end.

- Extension of Southeastern franchise to June 18 - in recognition of work at London Bridge and Thameslink. Long term franchise from 18/19. Discussed at rail summit in May at County Hall. James Conway, DfT attended for first time. Focussed on London Bridge as big issue for Kent commuters for coming years.
- Transport for London proposed service. Sevenoaks services proposal is not going forward. TfL have obtained permission to run services North of London. For Sevenoaks commuters the TfL proposal would have given them more choice and offered potential travel savings by extending zone 6 into Sevenoaks District on the stopping service.

6. Business Support

Escalate and Accelerator +

Partners welcomed the news that the Regional Growth Fund 4 (RGF4) Escalate bid has been successful and that a £5.5M loan scheme will be available to local businesses including Maidstone and Wealden and Rother from November. 1000 jobs will be created and significant private sector investment levered into the local economy. The focus on working with Growth Accelerator and High Growth Kent businesses should help to bring businesses forward for not just funding but other support through those schemes.

Concern was expressed that the application process and criteria should not be too onerous for business as this would be a disincentive to apply. This will be considered as programme is scoped.

Accelerator + - the KCC Vanguard scheme for Escalate was launched to invited High Growth Businesses at a business breakfast on 6 June. Registrations of interest for the £150,000 fund are required by end of July and applications are facilitated through a High Growth Kent or Growth Accelerator coach.

West Kent Business Support programme

This is Complementary to RGF 4. Following the successful bid to Kent Regeneration Fund to enhance business support services across WK and move to a WK, rather than local authority delivery, £52,500 has been granted from KCC towards a 61,500 one year pilot programme..There are 3 groups of services – programme 1 is for enhanced one to one support and programme 2 for business workshops. Competitive quotes were received for this and KICC were successful based on cost, quality, data monitoring processes and experience.

The third programme covers specialist support for rural and landbased businesses, for entrepreneurship in deprived communities and for homebased businesses. The bids received in the first round didn't adequately cover all the specialisms and so rural and landbased support has now been split out as a separate programme. Quotes have been sought and these 2 programmes alongside 1 and 2 will commence in September.

ERDF bid for sustainable Business Growth

SDC on behalf of WKP are the lead partner in a bid with BSK for a sustainable business growth programme. An outline bid was submitted to DCLG for ERDF round 6. It links to the business support programme and is for a grant scheme for small businesses for improving energy efficiency through non structural, relatively low cost interventions. Post meeting – the bid has passed the first stage and a full bid has to be submitted by 2 August.

7. West Kent Investment Strategy (WKIS)

The annual priorities for 2012/13 all made good progress

SME business support - funding secured for 1.2 from KCC for the business support package which will impact positively on other areas of the WKIS and facilitate their delivery such as supporting entrepreneurship in deprived communities (1.3) and supporting the rural economy.(7.2)

Support Young People into Work – actions to be developed from discussions today by economy group.

Transport - subgroup keeps a watching brief and identifies action for the partnership on key transport issues and links to the regional LEP context

Support Rural Economy - an annual update on WK Leader to the last meeting. A bid has been submitted to DEFRA for interim funding to keep the programme in place to work up a bid for a new programme to commence in 2015. The Partnership submitted a letter of support as did 20 other organisations the bid to Defra for Transitional funding was sent off last Friday with over 20 letters of support. Decision expected August. Other options for support are also being explored.

Broadband provision - worked closely with KCC on the Make Kent Quicker campaign and will support them in the delivery of the BDUK contract to deliver 2mb/s to all properties and 24mb/s to 91% of properties in Kent.

WKIS is an aspirational document to take us through to 2015 to stretch what we are doing and to highlight the need for investment in WK. A great deal has been achieved with 100% of the short term actions on target or delivered against a target of 75%.

Many of the longer term targets required investment for delivery hence the target of 75% of actions to be amber or green – that is investment and other progression opportunities being identified, pursued and for green being delivered. We have again exceeded the target with 100% of the targets either amber or green.

The quest for investment has made excellent progress and all of the 6 funding milestones at the top of the action plan could not have been anticipated when the action plan was drawn up. In the last month or 2 WK has secured 3 funding programmes all around business support and access to funding. This puts the action plan in an excellent position to be able to deliver some actions thought unachievable. However, there are other actions that need refocusing, particularly in the light of identifying areas to concentrate on for Unlocking Kent's Potential.

It was proposed and agreed that the actions in the action plan are reviewed with the various working groups with a report to the October meeting

Unlocking Kent's Potential – West Kent Priorities

Work will be taking place to ensure that West Kent priorities are clearly represented in Unlocking Kent's Potential. This strategy is part of the process of determining a way forward for the LEP along the lines of county level working – a federal model. The Chair made it clear that district views must be represented both at County and at LEP level.

8. AOB

Pav Ramewal was welcomed to the Partnership and thanks recorded to Robin Hales for his involvement since the Partnership's inception and best wishes extended to him for his retirement.

9. Dates of next meeting

- 10am, Friday 18 October, venue tba

DRAFT