

Minutes – West Kent Partnership Meeting – Tonbridge & Malling BC – 19 January 2018

Present

Nicolas Heslop, TMBC (Chair)
Roddy Hogarth, SDC
Jane March, TWBC
Sean Holden, KCC
Paul Hannan, Hadlow Group
Henry Warde, Squerries
Brian Luker, TMBC
Andrew Metcalf, KICC
Jacqui Ward, KCC
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Hilary Smith, TWBC
Andrew Stirling, SDC
Simon Harris, WKP
Wendy Wood, WKP

Apologies

Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Nigel Smith, KCC – Jacqui Ward attends
Tracy-Ann Barker, Hadlow Group
Sarah Nurden, KMEP
Louise Aitken, SELEP – item 10
William Benson/David Candlin, TWBC
Peter Fleming, SDC
Pav Ramewal/Lesley Bowles, SDC
Adam Bryan, SELEP
Jeanette Barlow, MTWHT
Iain McNab, BEIS
David Joyner, KCC,
Julia Chapman/Anthony Dyer, Kent Police
Cath Brunger, AXA PPP
Roger House, NCMB

Guests

Will Edge, Greensand Ridge Distillery
Alison Addy, Gatwick Airport
Paula Aldridge, Gatwick Airport
Leonora Hayes, Hillview School

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Partners and guests.

Andrew Metcalf is now the nominated representative for KICC in his capacity as Chairman of the KICC West Kent Business Group and the Chairman welcomed the opportunity to develop close links between the groups. Thanks to be recorded to Tudor Price for his considerable contribution to the Partnership and an open invitation to attend future meetings

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes were agreed. All matters arising are covered in the Agenda

FUNDING

3. Greensand Ridge Distillery – Will Edge

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to LEADER grant recipient, Will, from the Shipbourne based distillery. Will explained his business model and that investment in a sophisticated still has enabled him to extend production to include not only gins but the more profitable and more

complicated to produce, fruit brandies and rums using surplus farm produce and to have a greater production capacity. It was the LEADER funding which enabled this investment in the Still. Will was supported by the LEADER team and free consultancy advice (provided through the West Kent Partnership) to bring forward the Final application.

Action: Paper case studies of LEADER success stories to be produced.

4. Kent & Medway Business Fund

Jacqui updated Partners on the next round for the Fund. West Kent is represented on the Investment Advisory Board by Peter Fleming. The Fund is the recycled funds from Escalate, Tiger and Expansion East Kent which have been coming in twice a year but is now a monthly stream as businesses are taking up the opportunity to pay by monthly direct debit. It is recognised that Escalate is showing a reasonably high level of bad debts, however over a longer repayment period this is anticipated to improve. Jobs have been created although the metric for Escalate was more around growth than job creation. The Escalate £5.5 Fund is ring-fenced for West Kent investment. The Kent & Medway Business Fund is currently open for applications but interest from West Kent businesses is low.

Round 3 will follow in March and link to the KCC Enterprise & Productivity Strategy.

Action: support promotion of Kent & Medway Business Fund Round 3 in West Kent, drawing on case studies available from Jacqui's team.

5. South East Business Boost (SEBB)

Wendy updated Partners on the business support offer currently being delivered in West Kent

- 2 hours free support through National Centre for Microbusiness who also provide up to a further 2 hours at no cost to the client
- 2 hours free support from an accountant to LEADER applicants invited to go to full application with main focus on financial aspects
- Signposting to support through Growth Hub
- District support through ED teams
- SEBB contract awarded to KICC across Kent. With WKP support the West Kent delivery will be through NCMB with the WKP funding a free one hour diagnostic which will count towards the 12 hours for each business

Jacqui outlined SEBB which comprises

- 12 hours support package per business
- Grants up to £10K

The ERDF funding is not intended to displace existing provision. Take up for the grant element is essential to the success of the programme as the private sector investment is generating the match for the business support delivery.

6. Gatwick Airport - Alison Addy and Paula Aldridge

Alison explained the role of the Community Engagement team and welcomed the opportunity to attend the meeting as Gatwick has identified a need to engage more with

Kent, especially West Kent and are looking for opportunities to build relationships where Gatwick can add value. Programmes/support that could be or are available to West Kent include:

- Safer Kent rugby skills programme
- Learn Live programme – monthly broadcast into schools
- Meet the Buyers event (have sponsored Gatwick Diamond event for 15 years)
- Big Breakfast networking working with local Chambers
- Bids to Gatwick Foundation Fund available to community projects
- Sponsorship of events such as forthcoming West Kent Conference
- Gatwick Growth Board – independent advisory board – series of roundtables with local stakeholders – currently looking at the visitor economy. Paula to provide further information

Discussion after the presentation focused on the opportunities for closer working between West Kent and Gatwick.

- Gatwick keen to support a BIG breakfast event in West Kent.
- Supply Chain – Rosemary French, Director of Gatwick Diamond Partnership to be invited to future WKP meeting
- Rail Links – Gatwick are supporting proposal for upgrade work on Brighton Line at Redhill to upgrade capacity which will bring a wider regional benefit to lines, including those from West Kent, that connect into that and could reduce waiting time when changing trains. Coast to Capital LEP are campaigning for this, however the project is now competing with all other potential mainline investment across the country.
- West Kent EA Network – Simon to Network to Gatwick opportunities
- Community Support – Wendy and Paula to keep collaborative opportunities under review
- Environmental considerations – relevant introductions to be made to colleagues in the 3 local authorities and facilitate Gatwick engagement with local residents
- Henry Warde is talking with Stuart Wingate about local businesses having an offering in Gatwick

7. GIF Update

Following the presentation to the last WKP meeting a draft GIF has been circulated with the Agenda. There are still some elements of the GIF not yet completed and Katie and Sarah are happy to return to update Partners at a future meeting. Sarah is happy to receive any questions or input on the draft from Partners and further, has accepted an invitation to join the WKP Infrastructure and Transport Group and attended her first meeting on Wednesday. The GIF is being presented to the Kent Leaders Group next month.

A West Kent overview is at pages 76-80. Partners were invited to satisfy themselves that specific West Kent issues have been reflected in it. At the last meeting partners were

concerned about proposed housing numbers, the infrastructure to support this and impact on quality of life

8. Kent & Medway Economic Partnership

Partners noted Sarah's report and that she was absent from the meeting as attending strategic Thameslink meeting on the delay on introduction of upgraded services

South Eastern Rail Franchise – KMEP would welcome the support of the local authorities and businesses in encouraging bidders to see the value in retaining the existing service of 3 trains per hour on the service through Snodland. TMBC will be responding

SELEP Strategic Economic Plan and Skills Strategy – Partners were invited to engage in any of the SEP refresh working groups or business discussions

9. West Kent Priorities Update

Partners were asked to note the Grow West Kent Conference on 28 February at Mercure, Tunbridge Wells with an opening session dedicated to West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network where businesses can hear how they can become involved with the Network and the benefits to their business.

10. KCC Enterprise & Productivity Strategy

Jacqui introduced the overview paper written by David Smith at KCC, leading on from Government Industrial Strategy and providing a view on what a KCC economic strategy could look like. The Strategy will look ahead 15 years and assess the technological advances which will need to be considered in Kent's future economy. Private sector investment, supported through loans via the Investment Advisory Board will be required to deliver increased GVA across the whole of Kent. Sean Holden is chairing a Leader's working group on the Strategy. A Strategist and bid writer is being seconded to KCC to deliver on the project and will be invited to a future WKP meeting.

11. SELEP Skills Strategy Update and West Kent Datasets

This was supplied with Agenda Papers. Louise is happy to be contacted with any questions.

Also supplied with the Agenda Papers were the datasets for the 3 West Kent Districts. This data should be able to be aggregated at a West Kent level.

12. West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network

Simon updated Partners on the rapid growth of the Network. Now having signed up a full complement of 20 schools, work is well underway on engaging with potential Enterprise Advisers and matching them appropriately with schools.

There are 35 schools in the West Kent area including special schools and all can be supported to some extent through the Network, although the Network is not resourced to have more than 20 Enterprise Advisers.

Simon introduced Leonora who in her role as Employability and Careers Leader at Hillview explained that finding suitable work experience placements for year 12 can be challenging so the opportunity to develop more relationships with local businesses through the Network was very welcome. Schools across the area co-ordinate their work experience weeks so that they are delivered at different times.

There was some discussion around the work placement challenges T Levels will bring with each student required to receive around 500 hours.

Paul offered support through Hadlow Group marketing team to link to local businesses.

The Chairman congratulated Simon on bringing a concept that came before the Partnership in October 2016 to life and making a difference in a short space of time.

13. AOB

Hadlow Group – Paul advised that after investment in Ashford and Betts Hangar the next stage of investment will be at Hadlow College itself, based on digitisation of the future.

Total Transport Project – combining services to provide demand response service using new technology. Presentation to April WKP meeting

WK analysis from Chamber Business Confidence – to a future meeting

Apprenticeships – Chairman to write invite Chairman of Institute of Apprentices to a West Kent event to meet employers. Partners to help with identifying possible businesses to be involved.

14. Dates of Next meetings – outlook invitations have been sent

- 27 April 2018 – Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells
- 20 July 2018
- 19 October 2018