

Minutes - West Kent Partnership Meeting

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

27 April 2018

<p>Present</p> <p>Nicolas Heslop, TMBC (Chair) Jane March, TWBC David Candlin, TWBC Beth Parsons, TWBC William Benson, TWBC Andrew Metcalf, Kent Invicta Chamber Nigel Smith, KCC Peter Fleming, SDC Sean Holden, KCC Mark Raymond, TMBC Brian Luker, TMBC David Joyner, KCC Wendy Wood, WKP Kevin Maskell (for Roddy Hogarth) SDC Emily Haswell for Andrew Stirling, SDC Inspector Mark Hedges for Chief Superintendent Julia Chapman, Kent Police</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Adam Bryan Sarah Nurden – both Sarah and Adam required at SELEP Accountability Board Henry Warde Jeanette Barlow Paul Hannan/Tracy Anne Barker Pav Ramewal Lesley Bowles Iain McNab/Esme Clifford-Astbury Catherine Brunger</p> <p>Guests</p> <p>Peter Tweddell, Bertie’s Woodfuel Jacqui Elliott, Total Transport Manager, KCC and Zoe Galvin, graduate placement</p>
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<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>2. The Chairman welcomed guest presenters Peter Tweddell and Jacqui Elliott and round table introductions took place.</p> <p>Business Case Study – Bertie’s Woodfuel – Peter Tweddell</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Peter, whose business is based in Hadlow. Peter is a recipient of both LEADER and Escalate funding and won Young Entrepreneur of the Year at the West Kent Business Awards in 2011.</p> <p>Peter gave an overview of his business and some insight into the difference having access to the funding has made to realising growth opportunities.</p> <p>Peter started his kiln dried log business in 2010 with all woodfuels locally produced and</p>	
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delivered to retail locally. The South East is the most heavily wooded part of the country so there is no shortage in supply although most is sourced in the immediate vicinity. Peter had seen a gap in the traditional wood fuel market and his business is built around on line ordering with a delivery slot and card payment for a top end product. Demand quickly grew and a LEADER grant matched with his own resources and commercial borrowing facilitated investment in machines and infrastructure. Further investment followed with Escalate borrowing and the business has now grown from just Peter to a team of 6 with a substantial local customer base. One mail shot and one leaflet drop a year continues to expand the reach of the business. The investments allowed the business to grow to that size some 3-5 years earlier than would have been possible without it.

The Escalate loan of 60K came at a time when banks were wary of lending so it made big difference. The public sector support has now created a business which is considered a good risk by the banks and commercial unsecured loans are now available.

The business is highly sustainable. The kiln dried process needs to raise heat at front end so anything unusable goes into the kiln.

Lessons have been learned along the way. With hindsight it's important to focus on all the things around running a successful business as well as the core business activity. A warehouse fire may have been avoided if an electrical issue had been picked up earlier.

Peter is currently renegotiating his lease to stay in Hadlow and is rebuilding space lost in the fire. However, after 5 years a second site might be required as the capacity at Hadlow is limited.

Action – Bertie's Woodfuel would make an excellent case study clearly demonstrating how public sector investment has delivered jobs and growth and enabled a business to go on to access commercial investment. Peter was also encouraged to feed into the Local Plan process regarding grow on space.

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Minutes and Matters Arising

3. Item 3 – Case studies of LEADER success stories are being worked on. This to include Bertie's Woodfuel.

Item 4 – Kent & Medway Business Fund closes to applications on 30 April. However, round 3 of the Innovation and Investment Loan scheme supported by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund will open to pre applications on 1 June with £2M of 0% finance available to Kent businesses

Item 5 – Gatwick airport – A number of further meetings have taken place with Gatwick Airport as a result of which

- A Big Breakfast event featuring speed networking and sponsored by Gatwick Airport will take place in June in the Artisan Restaurant at West Kent College.

- A meeting is to take place with Gatwick Diamond to explore delivery of workshops in West Kent helping to prepare local businesses for active participation in their annual Meet the Buyer event in the autumn.
- Richard Higgins, Head of Surface Access Strategy at Gatwick Airport attended the recent Infrastructure and Transport Group meeting and useful lessons can be learned from such a large organisation operating so close to West Kent. The dialogue will be ongoing.
 - 45M passengers pa, 23,800 staff, 19M rail trips
 - 37% sustainable mode share for staff, 44% Public Transport mode share for passengers
 - Gatwick is the busiest station in the SE outside London and operates for 18 hours a day
 - £120m new station submitted for planning
 - Public Transport access to the airport for the peak early morning flights for both staff and passengers is currently very limited but Gatwick are in discussions with bus and coach operators to explore services which could address this.
 - Smart motorway scheme for M23 from June to March 2020 will cause disruption during construction
 - Planning is also underway for some public transport service disruption this summer with improvements being undertaken on the rail station concourse
 - Communicating travel disruption information effectively so that people allow sufficient extra time for their journeys will be essential
 - working on launching an App to assist in navigating around the airport
 - use of data to drive travel initiatives eg: home postcodes of employees to develop public transport initiatives.
 - They want to work with us to develop better access from the east including for rail and bus and other journeys.
- A pilot One Destination Gatwick Employability scheme is to be delivered in West Kent in partnership with West Kent College to recruit West Kent staff to work airside for Gatwick and partner businesses.
- A number of initiatives are being explored with Gatwick working with young people through the West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network and Simon Harris will update Partners at a future meeting on progress with these.

Item 7 – Growth & Infrastructure Framework – this has now been published <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/growth-and-infrastructure-framework-gif>

Item 13 - AOB

Apprenticeships – A promotional campaign encouraging employers to provide more apprenticeship opportunities locally is being planned for the autumn

Tunbridge Wells Civic Development – William Benson, TWBC

4. <http://www.twciviccentre.co.uk/who--tunbridge-wells-civic-centre.html>

William explained that as the Cultural capital of Kent and Sussex Weald, Tunbridge Wells is looking to be nationally recognised through eight big civic development projects. Businesses are very supportive of the proposals which will help the local economy and deliver office space as well as some residential. Planning consent will be sought in the coming months and the bigger picture embracing the cultural and economic benefits will be part of the application.

Total Transport Project – Jacqui Elliott, KCC

5. [Kent Connected DRT pilot WK Partnership Board 27 April FINAL](#)

Jacqui introduced the Pilot which is proposed for the whole of Tunbridge Wells borough in 2020 to mix paying customers with KCC clients using new technology. This is a new concept for Kent but not new elsewhere in country or world and is at draft outline business case stage working to gain strategic and political support and identify funding streams. Consultation on it is now part of a wider rural transport Big Conversation engagement being led by Paul Carter. It is proposed that if the Tunbridge Wells Pilot is successful it will be rolled out first to adjoining rural parts of Maidstone, Ashford and Tonbridge & Malling and then across the rest of Kent.

The Project will use Mini buses and cars, including electric vehicles and volunteer drivers for shared journeys for KCC clients and paying customers. It will be flexibly routed and can be booked in advance or just in time via an app and will use the Kent connected brand including smart card. A social enterprise transport provider will deliver the booking service. It will be designed to connect to mainstream services and can be utilised if the journey is shared. There are real advantages to pulling together all current services onto a single database to streamline services available to NHS clients, KCC clients and paying customers living in rural areas.

Partners raised the following concerns

- Once a service is operating it will be relied upon by people and so important that not then withdrawn
- Potential issues around use of voluntary drivers and insurance implications if they take payment for service
- Cannot rely on all bookings via app as many vulnerable people will want to phone
- Hours of operation will need to be carefully considered if wanting to provide a true community service that for example, young people will use.
- Where areas are outside of the pilot area existing good services could be impacted as contracts changed with existing providers

- Real time booking may not be viable in more rural areas – what should be customer expectation of the service?
- A proportion of KCC clients will always require sole occupancy transport due to their needs
- Is there a sufficient pool of volunteer drivers to deliver the service?

It was acknowledged that an enormous amount of detail and work has been put in so far and that the project is still at a planning stage. Paul Carter is fully behind the initiative as it addresses disjointed rural transport services and can be considered as part of a large rural transport concept.

The next stage of consultation is to engage with District Joint Transport Boards and Parish Councils and the WKP offered help to facilitate this. The Rural Transport Big Conversation will start in June and consultation on this proposal will be part of that consultation.

SELEP and KMPEP

Both Adam and Sarah unavoidably involved in SELEP Accountability Board meeting.

6.

Sarah's paper covers both SELEP and KMPEP topics and was noted. In particular

- Item 2 HS4Air – 2.4 potential implications for West Kent in upgrading route to accommodate high speed trains and the need for stopping trains to interact with it.
- 4.4 – local growth fund projects – partners were asked to consider if there are any alternative projects in the area to be proposed. No suggestions were forthcoming.

Additionally Sarah has asked if Partners have any themes/specific projects asks for the second MP's summit likely to take place on a Friday afternoon in July. The themes for the last MP's meeting in 2017 were Rail, Road and Skills. Notes from that summit will be circulated with the Minutes.

The Chief Executives of Southern and Network Rail will be attending the next Kent Leaders' Meeting and the Chairman is asking Tom Tugenhat if the 3 West Kent Leaders can meet with the Rail minister to discuss concerns about the quality of service to London.

West Kent Priorities – Paper B

7.

Partners noted that there were two parts to West Kent Priorities for Growth report – the first a concept paper for a possible approach to an update and secondly the usual progress report against our five key strategic objectives.

WKP 2 was endorsed by Partners in October 2015 and we have successfully delivered on a number of those priorities against a changing economic landscape. It is suggested that it would be useful to approach an update by aligning to the Government's Industrial Strategy – in particular, the 5 foundations of Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business

environment and Place.

We would also wish to align with the KCC Enterprise and Productivity Strategy, the SEP and local ED Strategies. Engagement will take place with BEIS and colleagues at KCC over the coming months to develop the concept further.

The Chairman commented on the West Kent Conference yesterday which was staged by Grow Kent in association with the WKP and recorded thanks to the organisers for the opportunity to co-host and co-chair.

The Panel session on the Enterprise Adviser Network was well received. This was followed by a fascinating update from the Bank of England highlighting the gap between productivity and expenditure, an insightful presentation from Jonathan Neame, a session on funding opportunities for businesses in West Kent and a further panel session featuring entrepreneurs from West Kent. The afternoon sessions were lively and informative on marketing techniques and highlighting the need to treat existing customers as potential prospects.

Enterprise adviser network

8. The Chairman commented that very good progress is being made towards recruiting a full complement of Enterprise Advisers and matching these with appropriate schools. He also congratulated Simon on being invited to present to Careers and Enterprise Company head office on his best practice and fast progress in establishing the West Kent Network. The West Kent model, led by districts, closely integrated with economic development and supported by an FE college is unique.

At the conference delegates had heard that Careers & Enterprise Company's objective is for all schools to have the opportunity to access an Enterprise Adviser by 2020 so although Simon is currently at capacity, finding a way to extend the network to include all West Kent schools including SEND schools is part of our work going forward

AOB

9. Business Rates Retention – this item will come to next WKP meeting. In meantime if discussed at a Kent Leaders Meeting then it was suggested that Paul Carter also be involved.

Dates of Next Meetings – outlook invitations have been sent

- 10
- 20 July 2018
 - 19 October 2018