

APPENDIX 1

West Kent Partnership Meeting – 20 July 2018

Attending

Nicolas Heslop, TMBC, WKP Chair
Tracy-Anne Barker, Hadlow Group
David Smith, KCC (for Nigel Smith)
Tudor Price, Kent Invicta Chamber
David Candlin, TWBC
Cllr Peter Fleming, SDC
Sarah Nurden, KCC
Cllr Tracy Moore, TWBC
Cllr Jane March, TWBC
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Andrew Stirling, SDC (for Lesley Bowles)
Simon Harris, SDC
Cllr Brian Luker, TMBC
Hilary Smith, TWBC
Andrew Metcalf, Kent Invicta Chamber
Cllr Roddy Hogarth, SDC
Wendy Wood, WKP

Apologies

Jeanette Barlow, MTW NHS Trust
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms
Cllr Mark Dance/Cllr Sean Holden, KCC
Pav Ramewal, SDC
Cath Brunger, AXA PPP
Henry Warde, Squerryes
Adam Bryan, SELEP
Ian Jones, Kent Police
Julie Beilby, TMBC
William Benson, TWBC

Guests

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, CEO Visit Kent
Gavin Cleary, CEO Locate in Kent
Johanna Howarth, KCC
Rob Hancock, KCC
Amelia Atkins, work experience
Hayley Nixon, SDC

The Chairman welcomed guests and new partner Tracy Moore – new Economic Development and Communications Portfolio holder at TWBC - and thanked Jane March for her contribution to the Partnership. Condolences were recorded to Cllr Jukes for his recent bereavement.

Minutes & Matters Arising

- Page 2 – Peter Tweddell has confirmed he is happy to be featured as a case study
- Page 6 – Nicolas has not pursued a meeting with the Minister as senior representatives from Southeastern and Network Rail attended a recent Kent Leaders Meeting. Notes of that meeting will be requested.

Visit Kent – Sandra Matthews-Marsh

Sandra highlighted key facts about the West Kent tourism economy including

- Mark Dance and William Benson sit on Visit Kent Board and are strong advocates for West Kent
- Deirdre Wells is new CEO at Visit Kent and currently in cross-over period
- Strong product offer in West Kent
- Biggest issue is lack of bed stock – West Kent is not therefore seen as a short break destination
- Nested brand strategy – West Kent offer includes Maidstone and links to Weald and

some of East Sussex are recognised

Partners raised some points

- National Trust properties a significant element of West Kent offer but are not generating additional spend in the local economy – strategy needs to build visitor experience
- Opportunity in bidding process for new rail franchise to consider smaller stations being handed over to attractions to run special trains – eg, Darenth Valley could develop a brand around wine and lavender. Sandra responded that the visitor economy has been baked into the franchise brief so will be addressed. Halt and last mile concern is a particular issue in West Kent where there is very little infrastructure and where it is difficult to navigate to attractions without a car. A European project – last mile project – will address this

The Chairman thanked Sandra for all her achievements at Visit Kent and wished her well in future endeavours

Action

- Bid to drive high value, low volume visitor experience is being developed for Channel Interreg programme and there may be an opportunity for WKP to be involved – William and Sandra to bring application to next meeting
- Strategy around developing overnight stay offer required

Locate in Kent – Gavin Cleary

Gavin's presentation focussed on how to increase the attractiveness of West Kent to companies Locate in Kent is working with. The Kent offer to businesses is holistic but recognises the strengths in different areas. The Kent messaging is being delivered into Consulates around the world as well as within the UK and particularly into London

- Brexit uncertainty is going to present a challenge to attracting foreign investment and will be focussing on opportunities for relocating companies provided by Kent's unique proposition
- Business feedback is that retaining skilled staff is a key challenge
- LIK is moving towards evidence based focus on upcoming sectors – advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution and especially in West Kent – creative and digital, agri-tech and the knowledge economy
- 22% of active projects are interested in West Kent
- In West Kent demand for industrial space through Locate in Kent exceeds supply by 4-5 times
- Most demand for office space is for 1000-5000sq feet on flexible terms

Partners raised some points

- Town centre office space is being lost to residential under permitted development rights putting even more pressure on supply.
- Sector emphasis recognised but need to attract practical businesses too to support the high tech businesses
- Creative sector in West Kent has pull of London creative agencies to contend with on the one hand and a significant element of lifestyle businesses which are unlikely to grow

- Productivity of inward investors is key – good adoption of technology
- Broadband infrastructure has to be comparable with London
- Closer working with developers required to create best type of premises

Action

West Kent Economic Development Officers and LIK to work closely together so that LIK can understand the assets in West Kent to promote

Kent Commercial Land Assessment – Rob Hancock, KCC

Rob Hancock and David Smith explained that KCC are consulting with partners before commissioning this piece of work in order to help gauge the value of the work, contributors and beneficiaries. KCC are acting as an initiator and coordinator to pull together a market assessment of the requirements for commercial space in the future for Kent. The work will dovetail with local plans and evidence bases and consultants will visit planning teams across the county. An invitation was issued for a West Kent representative to join the project team. The consultants, when appointed, are expected to undertake the work during the second half of September.

A county-wide report is to be commissioned to provide a strategic needs assessment of commercial space across Kent (office, industrial and warehousing/logistics), mapping the demand side against the commercial use types across the three Kent geographies (North, East and West Kent) and to influence the identification and zoning of commercial sites across the county.

The assessment will help to inform KCC investments going forward, support and inform infrastructure bids, provide advice for investors, strengthen the Kent economy and possibly influence policy.

In response to Partners' observations around added value and value for money, David responded that the consultants will draw exclusively on the data already generated at District level to create a Kent-wide picture to prove there is a need for land to be retained for businesses use to deliver local jobs.

Action

Local authorities to assist with supplying data for the assessment. West Kent assessment to be reported to October WKP.

Developing a Kent and Medway Enterprise and Productivity Strategy – Johanna Howarth, KCC

Johanna has been seconded from Cities and Local Growth Unit of Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) having spent the last 5 years working with LEPS in the North on long term economic plans.

The strategy is to be developed by KCC in partnership with local authorities, business and wider public sector partners as a local Kent and Medway response to the national productivity challenge. It is an opportunity to make Kent more competitive nationally and domestically and for people to feel the benefits with an increased standard of living.

The Strategy will explore how value can be added pan Kent and Medway and will be used to make a better case for investment from government and to input into the consultation on the Shared Prosperity Fund. SELEP and Kent have not had a proportionate share of government funding. The Strategy will provide a framework to highlight the delivery that will take place through bids to SELEP. An action plan will be developed in parallel with the strategy

Now at the beginning of a year-long process, KCC are about to start commencing consultation on how to develop the strategy based on 3 principles of a bottom up approach, strong evidence base and to be ambitious and aspirational.

West Kent Chief Executives have expressed an interest in working as a forum to develop and build on work in West Kent in recent years.

Partners supported the development of the Strategy as a vehicle to make a case to Government for funding

Business Rates Retention Pilot

Partners discussed Paper B and County colleagues indicated that the way in which it is framed is helpful, sets West Kent priorities in a strategic context and is complementary to county work around the business support landscape. There are excellent opportunities to work collaboratively.

Action

The terms of reference for the Pilot agreed a year ago name WKP as the determining body for the funding, with the 4 local government representatives as the endorsing bodies. The proposal was endorsed by the 3 West Kent authorities. No KCC Member was present at the meeting and David Smith will liaise with Mark Dance for sign off.

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Economic Survey

Tudor reported that the survey found there is limited growth but not across the board. Brexit uncertainties mean Investment and confidence are down and businesses are facing major recruitment issues.

Other Brexit concerns for business are importing/exporting to EU, supply chain to London if London severely impacted, volatile exchange rates and competition.

The message from business is that they need certainty and predictions are that things will get worse before they get better

Business Support

Headline points are

- South East Business Boost can now fund revenue as well as capital grants
- LOCASE grant maximum has just been increased to £20,000 – 80 businesses are in receipt of a grant offer but do not have confidence to invest the remaining 60%

- themselves (borne out by survey above)
- Scale Up Programme will be delivered in West Kent

KMEP

- LEP Review (post meeting – published Monday 23) It is evident that this will necessitate changes to the current operation of SELEP
- LGF call for projects – local stakeholders to be invited to submit expressions of interest by 31 August

West Kent Priorities 2018-21 Action Plan

Partners noted the Action Plan which builds on the context paper taken to the April WKP meeting.

West Kent Priorities update

Partners noted the Paper.

Enterprise Adviser Network

- 22 schools and colleges in the Network
- 24 advisers recruited and matched from diverse sectors
- Innovative projects have started to be delivered, eg Dragon's Den
- LinkedIn training delivered to schools to help with their business engagement and to pass techniques onto students – initiative attracted national interest
- Regular networking/training events for Enterprise Advisers being delivered across Kent
- Workshop being planned for teachers to help embed careers into curriculum
- Starting to influence businesses about higher and degree level apprenticeships
- Messaging began around need for meaningful, project based work experience
- Network at capacity but aspiration for complete coverage of all West Kent schools including SEND by end of next school year, funding permitting

The Chairman congratulated Simon on all his achievements from a standing start and pointed towards the development of the Network as an example of West Kent getting on with delivery.

AOB

Gully emptying is impacting businesses and households as they are no longer emptied as regularly and are now cemented and need to be replaced. KCC colleagues to take up with Kent Highways.

Dates of next meeting

Friday 19 October 2018, 10am-noon, Tonbridge & Malling BC offices (TBC)