

West Kent Partnership – 5 July 2019 – MINUTES

Present

Cllr Nicolas Heslop, TMBC
 Cllr Brian Luker, TMBC
 Cllr Peter Fleming, SDC
 Cllr Lesley Dyball, SDC
 Cllr Jane March, TWBC
 Cllr David Scott, TWBC
 William Benson, TWBC
 David Candlin, TWBC
 Hilary Smith, TWBC
 Mark Raymond, TMBC
 Iain McNab, BEIS
 Sarah Nurden, KMEP
 Alison Parmar, FSB
 Simon Harris, WK Enterprise Adviser Network
 Henry Warde, Squerryes
 Wendy Wood, WKP

Apologies

Catherine Brunger, AXA PPP
 Pav Ramewal, SDC
 Andrew Stirling, SDC
 David Joyner, KCC,
 Nigel Smith, KCC
 Tudor Price, KICC

Guests

Sam Duong, Ming Foods
 Damien Tree, Scale Up Coach
 David Smith, KCC
 Johanna Howarth, KCC

The Chairman welcomed new Partners, Cllrs Lesley Dyball and David Scott, and guests and expressed thanks to Partners who have stepped down, notably Cllrs Roddy Hogarth and Tracy Moore and Jacqui Ward who has retired from KCC.

1. Minutes & Matters Arising – actions covered in Agenda with exception of

Page 1 – Rural Support

Potential project to support farmers in light of Brexit and gradual scaling back and eventual loss of subsidies was discussed at the May West Kent Executive Leader Action Group meeting. The session was facilitated by Stuart Gibbons. It was agreed to use the £25K budget from Business Rates Retention funds to promote all support available to rural businesses including a new round of EAFRD funding. Also to deliver a programme of 1:1 support to drive change in businesses and to bring forward a pipeline of projects for any forthcoming programme under UK Shared Prosperity Fund. There was an aspiration to use funds to lever in additional funding if possible. Group to review proposals and agree timings at a future meeting once further details are known of EAFRD programme and consultation timings for UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Page 4 – Possible sources of seed funding - this is still being explored

2. West Kent Scale Up – Sam Duong, Ming Foods

Sam's business, based in Swanley is one of 12 in West Kent participating in the Scale Up programme providing 36 hours of coaching support. The programme is now half way through

the 12 month period and is delivered by Kent Invicta Chamber with support from West Kent Partnership, Growth Hub and South East Business Boost.

Ming Foods manufacture Chinese pancakes and export all over the world. Growth has been 15% on last year with predictions of 10% growth for next 2 years. Currently a £2M turnover business but with the capacity to grow to £10M with the right investment in skills and infrastructure. Business curtailed by facilities of trading estate where based and reliant on a generator which needs replacing.

Sam outlined the benefits that access to the Scale Up Programme has brought to his business which include:

- Mechanism by which team can share in the smooth running of a business
- External coach can bring a different dimension to the same information that could be provided from within the business but received in a different way
- On line framework has goals and metrics developed from within the business and staff are accountable for their own goals – providing a common strand in a busy environment
- Monthly email reminder to all involved to update against monthly goals – continuing monitoring of progress is valuable to the business
- Feedback through the monitoring process is anonymous from members of the team and is a useful barometer on staff morale and motivation
- Overall annual goal set from within the team helping to steer the business with its scale up ambitions
- Supported frameworks for different types of challenges business may face such as skills, resources and infrastructure
- Uncertainty in market place makes it difficult to both run and grow a business but Scale Up promotes and supports entrepreneurial mindset

Sevenoaks Economic Development Team providing good support to the business and adding value to the Scale Up offer. Partners offered help to mitigate risk and capitalise on opportunities by identifying external advisers to bring additional skills and motivate staff. Sam welcomed all opportunities to share ideas and network. He is investing in staff, one example of which is a supervisor within the business who is now undertaking a higher level apprenticeship in Leadership and Management. Sam is an innovator and has a belief in collaboration and learning from best practice and is fully involved in the Kent manufacturing programme.

There was some discussion around Kent & Medway Business Fund and the value it can add to a business such as Ming Foods in helping to finance replacement of vital machinery which helps the business to operate more effectively.

Action: Partners to liaise through Wendy on any introductions that may be helpful to Sam or any other of the Scale Up Businesses

all

West Kent Scale Up – Damien Tree, Coach

Damien is working with a number of the Scale Up businesses, although not with Ming Foods. He identified areas where as a Coach he can add value beyond Scale Up coaching such as

- Helping to create a business plan

- Signposting to support for niche specialisms
- Making link to district economic development teams for support on premises, funding applications and all regulatory services
- Linking to funding and other support available through Growth Hub and managing expectations around application processes

Action – mechanism to be agreed with KICC to ensure that Coaches are aware of all potential areas of support outside of Chamber offer

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Action: Scale Up progress to be included in KICC update Paper to next Partnership Meeting and full evaluation report to Partners at end of the 12 month programme.

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3.

Government Priorities – Iain McNab, BEIS

A paper powerpoint was circulated and is attached to these Minutes. Iain highlighted key areas for WKP to consider

- SELEP's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) is to be submitted by end of the year, informed by KMEP Enterprise & Productivity Strategy and by work at District Level. Task for SELEP due to its size and complexity is to produce a Strategy which speaks at County level within SELEP but is also coherent with National priorities and identifies common issues and challenges across the SELEP area
- LEPs need to focus their LIS on the 5 foundations of productivity – Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Places.
- Whilst LIS's are not bidding documents it is expected that UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will reference LIS priorities in allocating funding
- SELEP to remain

Partners made the following points on Government Priorities

- Disappointment on outcome of Stronger Towns Fund bids and point made that if Funds had been split proportionately across LEP populations there would have been a significant opportunity across the LEP to enhance our retail centres.
- Metrics for delivering growth with a focus on jobs and houses, doesn't provide a mechanism to support growth in West Kent where the focus is more on rural economy and high tech growth such as at NIAB EMR.
- Suggestion that going forward rather than bidding pots it makes sense to focus on the 5 Foundations and allocate money on a per capita basis to LEPs to ensure delivery against the 5 foundations of productivity
- Concern that outcome of LEP review will see Districts and their important functions including housing and planning, completely unrepresented on SELEP
- Difficulty understanding BEIS view that Federated parts of SELEP happy with status quo

4.

Kent & Medway Enterprise & Productivity Strategy (EPS) – Johanna Howarth, KCC

Johanna updated Partners on the rationale behind the Strategy and timeframe for delivery

- Strategy will inform SELEP LIS which is to be produced in the next 6 months but will also provide a story for a 2050 vision for Kent & Medway which recognises local distinctiveness, tells a strong story and is action based

- Strategy will provide a sense of where Kent & Medway can add value at SELEP level and what focus needs to be at federated level
- Evidence base now being finalised by Arup, supported by a Kent & Medway Steering Group and informed by stakeholder engagement
- Strategy will link to funding landscape and set out clear strategic cases for investment across Kent & Medway including the need for investment in NIAB EMR
- Early draft will be shared with Partners including Leaders, Chief Executives and district officers

Partners' observations on Kent & Medway included the following

- Brand consultancy could be beneficial to identify a strong message
- Relationship with London – pros and cons – an integral part of story with West Kent residents contributing intellectual capital to London economy.
- Diverse area with different stories, innovation key theme, need to develop cohesive story
- Need to balance prosperity with identifying opportunities and the need for investment
- Don't lose sight that there are areas in West Kent that are far from prosperous
- Message on area is for those outside looking in
- Delivering value in West Kent but not in terms of jobs or housing growth – therefore difficult to access Government funding
- Need for infrastructure investment is a national issue

5. Kent Commercial Land Assessment – David Smith, KCC

The first stage of the work from Cushing & Wakefield was effectively a desk exercise but failed to address availability of appropriate buildings as well as commercial land. Concluded that there was a technical land oversupply of 3 times the market demand. Next stage of work now being commissioned which will link to the EPS and provide an in depth review of commercial property market including industrial, flexible, storage and office space. The consultants will liaise closely with economic development officers and planners so that the work reflects the diversity of actual business requirements.

Partners commented on the pressing need for appropriate premises, citing Ming Foods as an example of a business operating from an industrial park but having to rely on a generator.

6. West Kent Priorities for Economic Growth – Wendy Wood

- New Strategy and flyer now available as pdfs
[West Kent Economic Priorities for Growth V3](#)
[WKP leaflet 2019](#)
- Strategy organised around 5 themes of productivity – Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place to provide a clear link to National and Local Industrial Strategies
- First quarterly update reporting progress on action plan supplied with Agenda
- Observation made around importance of Skills to local economy and the need to retain FE provision.
- **Action: Hadlow Group Principal to be invited to update Partners at October meeting**

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7. West Kent Enterprise Adviser Network – Simon Harris

The Chairman welcomed Jason Akintoye to the team (in his absence) who joined in April as the second Enterprise Coordinator expanding the capacity of the Network in West Kent to include all Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools and alternative provision.

Current work programme includes

- Promoting apprenticeships and working towards a West Kent programme for apprentices that caters for career pathways from level 3 to graduate in generic skills such as project management
- 30 schools now in Network, 24 of which are matched with an Enterprise Adviser (EA). Good supply of business volunteer EAs but care needs to be taken in making an appropriate match to a school. All mainstream schools in West Kent have now been offered the opportunity to be matched with an EA.
- Schools now have to identify a link Governor for Careers and work is underway to link Governors more closely with Schools Career's Lead and EA
- Case studies are being developed and will be used as the basis of stories for the local press
- Strategy for next year is to keep process focused and simple and achieve Government targets for the Network

Partners commented on the impact the Network is having in West Kent and the huge value in developing relationships with both schools and businesses. Credit also given to the Economic Development Officers who support Network colleagues

8. FSB – Alison Parmar

- Over 30 events bringing 600 businesses together have been facilitated across Kent in the last 6 months. These included
 - Be the Business round table event to provide training to increase productivity and digital capability
- Autumn/winter calendar of events will include around 5 events per month – including networking and events based around skills agenda and women in enterprise. Specific events include
 - 3 October – Mental Health and Finance Conference
 - 4 October – first Kent & Medway Graduation Ceremony for Kent apprentices at Rochester Cathedral
- *Small Business, Big Heart* report focuses on what SMEs bring to their communities, measured in terms of contribution to GVA, employing a diverse and flexible workforce and undertaking charity and volunteering work locally
- *A Force for Business* – event in Tunbridge Wells for Armed Forces Day to facilitate practical ways for businesses to find staff
- Skills 30/30 has been a huge success in Kent with over 1000 participants to date – the businesses that engage with the initiative generally go on to develop ongoing relationships with the school and other participating businesses
- Quarterly survey – *Small Business Index* - shows confidence is on the slide with 72% of respondents not planning on increasing investment. Operating costs, including business rates and labour costs are high and Government legislation burdensome for small businesses

- FSB has produced a Welsh Towns Report which looks at whole High Street picture – including cohesion, civic, infrastructure, colleges, schools and skills. A potential good model for looking at South East. FSB also running 2 High Street campaigns to support small retailers

Discussion followed on how business rates may be retained in future for local government to deliver core services such as health and social care. This will tie hands of local government in how flexible they can be around business rates locally.

9. KMEP – Sarah Nurden

- SELEP Governance – 2 working groups are looking at composition – real concern that review proposals will mean that SELEP Board will have no District representation.
- Funding – investment panel met recently, J5 M2 received funding. Bad round for West Kent
- Growing Places Fund has up to £220m of loan funding for reinvestment so another round to be announced.
- SELEP AGM 17 July

10. AOB - None

11. Next Meetings – all 10-12, outlook invitations to be sent

- 4 October 2019
- 17 January 2020
- 17 April 2020
- 10 July 2020
- 9 October 2020