

**Notes to West Kent Partnership Meeting
Friday 25 July, Hadlow Rural Regeneration Centre**

Present

Peter Fleming, SDC (Chair)	Lesley Game, K College
Roddy Hogarth, SDC	Mark Dance, KCC
David Candlin, TWBC	Roger House, CMB
David Godfrey, SELEP	Wendy Wood, WKP
Jane March, TWBC	Jacqui Ward, KCC
John Balcombe, TMBC	Ross Gill, KCC
Jon Regan, Hugh Lowe Farms	Liz Harrison, KCC
Julie Beilby, TMBC	Jon Weller, VAWK
Lesley Bowles, SDC	Paul Hannan, Hadlow College

Apologies

Damien Lazenby/Wayne Peet, BIS
Paul Bentley, MTW NHS Trust
Caroline Shaw, VAWK,
John Marshall, SFA
Mark Raymond, TMBC
Pav Ramewal, SDC
Jo James, KICC
Iain McNab, BIS

1. Minutes and Matters Arising

Item 2, page 3 -Powerpoint on Educational Governance – Essex business model was attached to Agenda

2. Hadlow College Group – Paul Hannan, Principal

Paul welcomed Partners to Hadlow and extended thanks to all the local authorities for their support in the K College transition plans. Powerpoint outlining Hadlow’s position and the transition processes for K College is attached.

From 1 August Hadlow College Group will take over the K College sites in Ashford, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells with the latter two being re-branded as West Kent College. A financial plan has been negotiated meaning that West Kent College will be solvent and have a 2 year window before any Ofsted inspection. West Kent College and Ashford College will operate as separate colleges to Hadlow but will have the same senior management team. East Kent College is taking over the rest of the K College interests in the east of the county.

Business Advisory Councils will be set up for West Kent and Ashford building on the good employer engagement relationships that K College had established. Funding is also being sought to upgrade and refurbish the Ashford site.

The Chairman extended an invitation to Paul or a nominee to join the Partnership and Paul accepted the invitation for himself.

3. KCC Vision for West Kent – Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, KCC

The Chairman welcomed Mark as a new and permanent Partner.

Mark outlined his involvement in West Kent and particularly, Hadlow College since 2007 when he was Cabinet Member for Education. He congratulated Paul and his senior management team on their transformation of the fortunes of Hadlow and thoroughly endorsed Hadlow Group as the best result for K College and to ensure the provision of high quality FE in this area.

Mark said how pleased he is to participate as a Partner and with his officer team, bring a County perspective to the table.

Mark identified Kings Hill as an excellent example of West Kent as the powerhouse of the county and highlighted the opportunities that the construction for Paramount Park will bring to West Kent with new supply chain development and infrastructure investment to accommodate the 40% of visitors who will travel by public transport. 27,000 jobs will be created in construction and hospitality. To prepare for the tourism boost the Park will bring, the County has a new initiative to pump prime a hospitality guild which will be chaired by business and deliver vocational training into schools.

Partners welcomed the enhanced level of support being demonstrated by KCC and can see that support for West Kent projects is now more on a parity with support shown elsewhere in the County.

Mark elucidated on the role he sees for West Kent going forward. West Kent could learn from a model Mark has seen in France where businesses are heavily involved in education around engineering. West Kent as the powerhouse of Kent could be well positioned to deliver a world class facility, the transport links to which could be facilitated through the infrastructure investment required for Paramount.

The Chairman asked Mark to ensure West Kent commuters receive better support. Having seen fares go up to subsidise the HS1 from which they will not benefit they are now enduring disruption at London Bridge, again for the benefits to be gained elsewhere in Kent. The recent decision for Ashford to Canon Street fast service to be introduced is a further example of not recognising the worth of the commuters who bring their salaries back into Kent for the benefit of local businesses. If commuting becomes more difficult and costly from West Kent, commuters will move and the powerhouse will be undermined.

The Partnership agreed that West Kent Priorities for Growth has created a base and policy vision for West Kent which is much more positive than articulated in the past – West Kent is a powerhouse and there are opportunities which can be exploited. West Kent is working hard alongside county colleagues on the Growth Strategy which is feeding into the LEP to ensure that the opportunities identified in West Kent achieve recognition and investment at LEP level.

The backbone of the West Kent economy is SMEs and rural enterprises and their appetite for growth has been demonstrated by the take up of both West Kent Leader and Escalate. It was suggested that in the medium term future funding programmes delivering not just funding but also business support in West Kent would be a sensible addition to the identified West Kent Priorities. In the short term, West Kent consistently delivers and any underspend elsewhere on funding schemes could be deployed and reliably delivered in West Kent.

4. LEP Update – Ross Gill, KCC/David Godfrey, SELEP

A full analysis of the Growth Deal announcement was circulated ahead of the meeting and is attached to these notes. A broad discussion took place with involvement from many Partners. The SELEP allocation is £442M out of a £2B pot nationally which represents a proportionate pro-rata share. However, KMEP are disappointed with the allocation which they feel doesn't reflect the scale of the growth agenda in the south east.

Some of the anticipated flexibilities have not been extended and the initial commitments from

2016 will be for a future Government to confirm allocations. There is still £4-5B unallocated through to 2020 and Government has indicated that there will be further scope to bid. Feedback is needed from Government on why some projects were not successful and efforts are being made to obtain this. Such feedback is essential to inform the development of new bids. Government have indicated that there should be some flexibility locally on re-allocating funds around local priorities if an agreed scheme is for example, delayed. This needs to be tested. It was noted that it is important to be able to distil the deal into clear and concise information for local business once clarity is achieved.

Projects that could be delivered before May 15 also seem to have been prioritised by government in this initial phase. The vast majority of schemes approved are for transport, reflecting that much of the money available is from the DfT and this was recognised in the bid.

West Kent allocation

£133 is for specific named schemes in Kent and Medway. Some of the large allocations of funding have gone elsewhere in Kent which was expected and reflects the bid. It should be noted that there will be other infrastructure investments in West Kent during this period, notably the A21 which is already agreed. The West Kent allocations are

- M20 – Junction 4 eastern overbridge - £2.19M
- Tonbridge town centre regeneration scheme - £2.37M – Outline design approved, detailed design in progress and Amey anticipate work starting Spring 2015.
- A26 London Road, Speldhurst Road, Yew Tree Road - £1.75M
- West Kent Local Sustainable Transport Fund programme - £4.89M

SEFUND

The proposed SEFUND investment fund was unsuccessful in receiving LGF funding, primarily because Government preferred to allocate funds to specific capital projects rather than investing in a global fund with uncertain outcomes. However government have said that it will work with the LEP over the next few months to consider whether there is scope to identify another route by which to deliver a fund.

It was suggested that an analysis could be undertaken of projected homes and jobs delivered for money allocated across different growth deals to obtain an intended value for money analysis. The hypothesis being that West Kent would demonstrate a quicker return for money invested.

West Kent Sustainable Transport Fund

£4.89M has been announced for the West Kent Sustainable Transport Fund. Maidstone had been included with the three West Kent Districts in the bid, although the feeling at the meeting was that the standard definition of West Kent should have been used, as it is for economic development purposes. Maidstone has also received direct funding from the LEP for sustainable access and that should be considered in the context of the award for the West Kent Fund. Disquiet was expressed at how the various schemes had been identified so far, and the meeting felt that the principles of subsidiarity should apply so that a strategic view from West Kent Leaders determines the allocation of funding to local priority schemes. A collaborative approach will ensure schemes are adding best value to businesses and residents. Post meeting – West Kent Chief Executives and Chief Economic Development Officers are meeting with a KCC team on 9 September and the West Kent view is that no commitments to proposed schemes should

be given ahead of that time.

Further Education Capital Investment

Potential projects were identified in SELEP submission which included a new college campus at Ashford and provision at North Farm, Tunbridge Wells. £22M has been allocated as a global sum across the SELEP area - £11M pa for 2 years – allocation is not project specific. There will be a competitive process to bid for the funds so the specifications which SFA will manage is critical to the process. Partners were asked to lobby for the two proposed Kent projects, both of which fall under the Hadlow College Group.

Kent & Medway Growth Hub

This was a specific request in the submission and has been successful. £6M awarded. Growth hubs are being established across the country to signpost to finance, coaching etc. To maximise these funds and lever in European and other funding a **Kent and Medway Innovation and Growth Strategy Statement** is to be developed by KCC and consulting with local partners over the course of August and September, for discussion at Kent and Medway Economic Partnership on 7 October. This seeks to scope out what is currently being provided, where the gaps are and where there are areas of duplication, with a view to developing a shared approach to future bidding and project development.

Unlocking Kent's Potential

This document has not yet been finalised. The draft served a purpose in informing the development of the SEP. Further feedback from Government on the SEP is anticipated over the next few weeks and this will be incorporated in a revised version of UTP which makes the right case. This will be taken to KMEP and WK Partners will also have the opportunity to input into the draft.

West Kent Priorities

There was some discussion around West Kent being perhaps more aligned with East Sussex and that might be a better model within the LEP than the current Federated one. Landscape, business constituency and the A21 are strong common denominators. If the LEP Federated structure is revisited going forward then this allegiance should be given due consideration. It was confirmed that the LEP is committed to the development of local strategies and priorities.

Escalate, Jacqui Ward, KCC

5.

The Escalate pipeline is very healthy and the Board meetings are reviewing 6 applications each time. A review meeting is taking place with BIS on 9 September where substantial funds committed will be critical to making the case to draw back down the remitted £5.5M so that Both Escalate and Tiger can deliver to original profile. Funds defrayed will also be an important consideration. £1.9 is currently committed and the target for September is £4M so pushing through the pipeline is key objective. With a strong pipeline adequately demonstrated it may be possible to draw down even more funds from underspend elsewhere. Partners expressed pride in West Kent businesses delivering and thanks for the excellent programme management and delivery. A West Kent event is taking place on 3 October in partnership with FSB and BSK. This is from 8-11am at The Brands Hatch Thistle and Michael Fallon will speak.

Broadband Rollout – Liz Harrison, KCC

- Poor connectivity particularly in rural areas was raised as a concern at the last meeting and Liz attended to update Partners on the position. Powerpoint presentation is attached to these Notes. Key points include
6.
 - KCC postcode checker is most reliable means for businesses and homeholders to check their upgrade status as unfortunately BT are not advising customers and the speed stays the same until customer upgrades with ISP.
 - BT are sensitive about publishing Cabinet locations but potential blackspots could be better identified with this information. Partners were keen to see pressure put on BT to work collaboratively on facilitating 100% fast broadband coverage. KCC undertook to provide regular updates on cabinet upgrades as the information becomes available to them.
 - Additional funding has been secured from DEFRA with the help of SDC and TWBC to service over 3,000 premises.
 - Community broadband projects continue to be delivered – Goudhurst has just gone live and Stansted in Sevenoaks District going to delivery. Issue is that all have to subscribe to same ISP.
 - Funding has been secured for a Kent pilot for the hard to reach 5% with a wireless provider and BDUK. KCC have no influence over where this will be sited.

West Kent Leader – Programme Priorities

7. The West Kent Leader group are moving forward now on developing a strategy to bid for a new programme. The first part of that exercise has been to identify a list of local priorities and align these with the National Leader Priorities. Partners endorsed Paper A which will serve as the basis of a consultation process for stakeholder engagement. The Local Development Strategy (bid) will be submitted in early September.

Co-ordinator's Report

8.
 - A newsletter promoting the activities of Centre for Microbusiness as part of the West Kent Business Programme was circulated and is attached to these notes.
 - Partners were unhappy with the decision not to put in a rail service from West Kent to Gatwick and argued that the decision on viability should be taken after the service is in place and marketed.