

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL BOARDS

## Notes of Meeting

### TUNBRIDGE WELLS LOCAL BOARD

Date: Tuesday, 26 February 2008

Venue: Hawkhurst CE Primary School, Fowlers Park, Rye Road, Hawkhurst TN18 4JJ

Present: Local Board Members: John Davies (Chairman), Roy Bullock, MBE, Roger Manning and James Scholes

Apologies for absence: Alex King, MBE and Kevin Lynes

KCC Officers: Tom Phillips (Community Liaison Manager)

		Action
<b>A1.</b>	<b>Welcome to the meeting, and apologies for absence</b>	
	Local Board Chairman, John Davies, introduced the County Councillors present, welcomed visitors to the Local Board meeting, and outlined the purpose of KCC's Local Boards. He also thanked the Head Teacher and Governors of the Hawkhurst CE Primary School for allowing the meeting to be held on the school premises.	
<b>A2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting.</b>	
	No declarations were made.	
<b>A3.</b>	<b>Notes of Local Board meeting held on 7 January 2008 and progress on any actions agreed.</b>	
	The notes of the meeting held on 7 January 2008 in Tunbridge Wells were agreed.	
<b>A4.</b>	<b>The "Hawkhurst Healthcheck"</b>	
	<p>Bruce Cova, Sue Beer and Yolanda Leybourne spoke about the Hawkhurst Healthcheck, which had been under way for about eighteen months, and had just produced its initial Action Plan. The Healthcheck was a major community planning initiative for Hawkhurst. The Healthcheck group, formed by local people, had gathered a great deal of information about the town, and the thoughts and ambitions of local people. Hawkhurst was close to the boundary of two District Council areas, and two County Council boundaries, so inevitably, the area tended to feel somewhat "out on a limb".</p> <p>The Healthcheck had identified many potential opportunities for local development and regeneration. Key points identified to date included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficulties in communication and planning for future development as a result of the number of absentee landlords/landowners with interests in the area;</li> <li>• an acute need for more (and more accessible) childcare</li> </ul>	

	<p>for the area;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the tourism potential of Hawkhurst, which was not being exploited, even though about three-quarters of a million people a year visited attractions such as Bedgebury, Sissinghurst, Bodiam etc, which were less than six miles away;</li> </ul> <p>The Healthcheck's Action Plan followed various local consultation exercises, which had been well supported. Initially a web site had been created for the consultation work, but plans were now being made for a wider-ranging and more permanent local web presence. The Action Plan would raise local expectations, and access to grant support for many of the identified priorities would be very important. Identifying the potential sources of grant would be a key next stage in the process.</p> <p>Questions and discussion following the presentation about the Healthcheck covered a wide range of topics, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reinforcement of the view that the area had considerable, untapped tourist potential, but that meeting this would make demands on Hawkhurst, including the need for more car parking space.</li> <li>KCC's role, in supporting the Healthcheck process. This was something that was happening in a number of other parts of the County too, and compatible with KCC's economic development and rural regeneration roles.</li> <li>On-going ownership of the Healthcheck Action Plan. It was agreed locally that there was now a need for a body like a Town Partnership, involving representative stakeholders. It was crucial that some of the "quick wins" identified were delivered, while longer term planning continued to focus on the larger and more long-term projects, such as a "community hub". However, it was important that the relevant parts of the Action Plan were also agreed by KCC/TWBC etc, as they were unlikely to move forward if they remained outside recognised development and planning processes.</li> <li>The need to recognise that the Action Plan necessarily focused on the issues needing action and change, but not to overlook the advantages that Hawkhurst already had, with high quality schools, good local employment levels etc.</li> </ul> <p>In summing up, Bruce Cova emphasised that the current Action Plan should be seen as the initial plan, focusing on a 3-5 year timescale. There was much more to be done to gain an even fuller picture of the area, its people, needs and opportunities.</p>	
<b>A5.</b>	<b>Questions from the public</b>	
	Questions raised included:-	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current and protracted reorganisation process within Kent Highway Services. Mr Roger Manning as Chair of the Kent Highways Advisory Board, and David Hall as KCC's Head of Transport and Development responded. The reorganisation had taken longer to progress than had been anticipated. The length of time involved had been bad for staff and organisational morale with employees "at risk" for extended periods.</li> <li>• Economic development in Southborough. Plans to develop a "Southborough Hub" remained in place, and KCC and TWBC were continuing discussions with a significant local landowner, to seek to move these forward.</li> <li>• KCC's role in public transport planning. It was suggested that local communication and consultation had been poor in regard to the re-siting of local bus stops following the closure of the Hawkhurst bus station. Although at the meeting it was unclear what role KCC itself had played in this, David Hall agreed to respond to the Hawkhurst Parish Council on this issue outside of the Local Board meeting.</li> <li>• Funding for services for children and young people. Agreed that Tom Phillips would seek to ensure that a response was obtained to the question about this, from KCC's Children, Families and Education Directorate.</li> <li>• KCC's attitude to wind turbines. There was no single policy towards these, and any application to erect one would need to be considered on its individual merits and circumstances, and within the wider planning frameworks that affected all developments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>David Hall</b></p> <p><b>Tom Phillips</b></p>
<b>A6.</b>	<b>The Kent Freedom Pass</b>	
	<p>David Hall spoke about the Kent Freedom Pass, which provided free access to bus services for students aged 11-16 in return for a £50 initial charge. The scheme was a commitment within KCC's "Towards 2010" strategy, and was unique to Kent amongst shire county authorities.</p> <p>There had been a 90% take up of the Freedom Pass amongst pupils who did not qualify for assistance with the cost of home to school travel. The Freedom Pass had achieved effects in reducing traffic in the "school run" in parts of the pilot areas (West Kent and Canterbury). In the pilot areas, where the scheme had begun in 2007, a take up of around 3,000 passes had been anticipated. Actual take up was closer to 5,000, with a reported 27% of these pupils now using bus services to and from school, rather than being taken by car. The success of the pilot had provided the impetus for an early extension of the scheme to the rest of Kent by June 2009.</p> <p>The scheme cost about £8m a year, but the County Council</p>	

	<p>believed that this was money well spent. There were some clear operational implications for bus operators, but good liaison with the County Council. Discussions were still continuing about extending the freedom pass scheme to include rail travel, and developing smart-card facilities to help gather information on the usage of the scheme over time.</p> <p>Overall benefits included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced congestion on the roads at peak times;</li> <li>• Environmental benefits as a consequence;</li> <li>• Easier access to an extended school curriculum;</li> <li>• Freeing up parents from “school run” duties;</li> <li>• Changing attitudes towards public transport.</li> </ul> <p>The County Council and the bus operators were still learning from the pilot exercise, and discussing how to apply the lessons learned. There were clear cost implications if the scheme was to be extended to students aged up to 18, which was a common request. This had not been ruled out in the longer term but was beyond reach at present.</p>	
	<p><b>A7. KCC Local Schemes Grants</b></p>	
	<p>The Local Board had received ten applications for a share of the £30,900 it had available under KCC’s Local Schemes Grant, for moderate sized local projects that were able to demonstrate community benefit.</p> <p>The Local Board agreed to recommend to KCC’s Cabinet the following grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridgeway Football Club, Southborough – purchase of portable floodlights and replacement “mini goals” - £5,000</li> <li>• Pembury School – a contribution towards the cost of developing a multi-sport all weather pitch - £2,450</li> <li>• Speldhurst Parish Council – a contribution towards a local scheme to create a safer crossing point on Speldhurst Road, Langton Green - £5,100</li> <li>• The Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery – a contribution towards the cost of a conservation project - £2,500</li> <li>• St Mary’s PCC Goudhurst Playground Committee – support for the cost of replacing the fencing around the newly redeveloped Goudhurst Playground - £5,000</li> <li>• Pembury Athletic (Youth) Football Club – a contribution to the Pembury Pavilion Equipment Project - £2,000</li> <li>• Pembury Baptist Church – supporting costs for the Pembury “Celebrating Community” Fun Day - £1,500</li> <li>• Cranbrook Parish Council – assistance towards the cost of trackway resurfacing, Rectory Fields area - £2,279</li> <li>• Hawkenbury Nursery School – assistance with the cost of providing replacement flooring - £3,000</li> </ul>	

	<p>Also, subject to further research into the County Council's ability to support the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lamberhurst Parish Council – improvement work to the footway from Lamberhurst to St Mary's Church (the "Golf Course" pathway) - £2,000</li> </ul> <p>The grants recommended came to a total of £30,829.</p>	
<b>A8.</b>	<b>Future Local Board Meetings</b>	
	<p>Tom Phillips outlined a possible future itinerary for the Local Board:</p> <p>Meeting in May, Tunbridge Wells town area  Meeting in July or September, possibly in the Langton Green/Speldhurst area  Meeting in October or November, possible in Southborough  Meeting in February 2009, possibly in Cranbrook</p> <p>The Local Board agreed this in principle, subject to Members' availability and availability of appropriate venues.</p>	<b>Tom Phillips</b>
<b>A9.</b>	<b>Any Other Business notified to the Chairman prior to the meeting.</b>	
	None was raised.	