

**Notes of the meeting of the DOVER WEST Neighbourhood Forum held on 2 April 2009 at Lydden Village Hall, Lydden at 6.30pm**

**Present:**

Parish Councillors	Jeff Goodsell	Chairman
	Jenny Miles	Vice-Chairman
Kent County Councillor	Bryan Cope	

Other councillors, officers and members of the public.

**Apologies:** Cllr Peter Woodsford, Capel-le-Ferne Parish Council

1. Chairman's welcome  
The Chairman welcomed representatives and facilitators to the meeting.
2. Notes of the previous meeting  
Notes of the Forum meeting held on 19 January 2009 had been circulated and there were no matters arising.
3. Kent Association of Rural Retailers (KARR)  
Sean Carter, Rural Retail Adviser gave a presentation on the role of KARR, which was set up 5 years ago to support the village shops, pubs, garages and post offices which provided a service to rural Kent:
  - The average profile of a rural retail shop: open 77 hours a week, 6 hours are spent on paperwork and 2 visits to the cash & carry a week. Therefore the shop owner works around a 90 hour week. It is a hard life but a way of life.
  - KARR establishes support groups where influential people can focus on what is happening within rural Kent. The groups consist of retailers and ACRK, Business Link Kent, KCC, Medway Council and SEEDA. The group meets quarterly and brings people together to make decisions on what needs to be done. Kent is the first in the country to have such groups.
  - KARR are holding a competition 'Rural Community Retailer of the Year' which aims to get Parish Councils involved by inviting them to enter their local retailers into the competition. The retail outlet doesn't have to be the biggest or best but instead has to be seen as getting involved within the community. KARR found that Parish Councils were not getting involved with their local shops and felt that they had a larger part to play. The deadline for entries is 3 weeks away. Anyone who required a form was encouraged to contact Sean Carter at ACRK.
  - This competition is in addition to another competition: Village of the Year for which there is a cash prize. This competition is publicised more widely as Radio Kent and the Kent on Sunday are involved. Would like more entries.

- The Rural Access Services Programme (RASP) runs a Community Shop Scheme which encourages villages without shops to set one up such as in Littlebourne and Cliffsend. To promote this there would be an open day on April 22 in Lenham between 6pm - 8pm. Officers from ACRK can come along and talk to Parish Councils about how to open up a shop if a community is interested.
- Have set up three trade associations in the county. This is easier if in a village with several shops – getting retailers to sit around the table. Sean Carter will attend the first meeting and help them elect a chair and will then take a step back, this is an opportunity for retailers to share ideas and experiences.

In response to questions Sean Carter advised:

- Posts offices are included in their remit. KCC/SEEDA have wanted to focus on rural communities because Post Offices are going. Working with DHL to provide services for villages. There will be no more post offices coming to Kent but there will also be no more closures. Looking at outreach services.
- Currency Scheme – some villages have provided their own currency that could only be spent in local retailers – could this work? – KARR had found that this doesn't work. Looking at the possible introduction of loyalty schemes within rural locations.
- At present there is no retail outlet in Lydden – how could one be set up? If there was sufficient interest amongst the local population of Lydden, Sean Carter would walk through the village looking at possible locations/what is already there/would a retail outlet be viable/examine the make-up of the local community/would it be economical/staffing needs/would it need a paid manager etc. If viable a planning meeting would be set up to explore the legalities and things would move on from there.
- Are there grants available for this? – There are Community Shop Grants.

4. Aylesham & District Community Workshop Trust (ADCWT)

4.1 Derek Garrity shared information about the work of ADCWT in the Aylesham area:

- Aylesham (population approx 5,000) has experienced great change. It was once an affluent working class village which centred around the coal mines. It also had a secondary school. Within the space of 2/3 years both the mine and school had been closed down. The mines closed for economic reasons and the school closed because a large proportion were sending their children to schools outside of the area.
- Villages don't die but they change, often to a degree that the local community are uncomfortable with. The local community needs to support their community and take responsibility.
- The ADCWT attracts grants from numerous places. In 1993 it received grants towards training people in order that they could secure employment. They set up in the school and provided a computer suite, facilities to train people and a social area. They also now have a crèche and a community café. There are 130 jobs provided on this school site.

- There is a need to encourage children and young people to be more employable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ADCWT encourage and trains people for education, social and vocational jobs.
- Villages also need to work together. 'Market Town Exercise' – concept where villages interact with each other e.g. Aylesham with Nonington and Wingham. Some villages will never get particular services but may be able to work with neighbouring villages to get things done.

In response to questions Derek Garrity advised:

- Other initiatives? – New housing in the area is bringing both problems and opportunities. £6million development coming to the Trust, enabling them to create 300 jobs and the capacity to train more people. English Partnerships 'Homes and Communities' – building a workshop, which will be focussed on construction training.
- Is the training just in construction? – There is also IT training available in the computer suites.
- Are there computers in the library? – Yes there are computers. The KCC Library service was providing a very good service with free internet access.

5. Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)

Victoria Lawson, Rural Officer discussed the work that ACRK is

undertaking with specific reference to their grants:

- ACRK is a registered charity, funded to help the rural communities in Kent and Medway. They can assist in the production of a Parish Plan (such as in Temple Ewell), help village halls, rural retail, community transport and housing.
- They can also help with funding. In partnership with the Colyer Fergusson Trust there are two main grants:
  - (a) Parish Plan Grants – only applicable for East Kent
  - (b) Small Projects Funding
- Parish Plan Grant – the funding is targeted at rural communities undertaking a parish plan (a statement of how the Community sees itself developing over a 3-5 year period) for the first time. The grants cannot fund salaries and retrospective costs.
- Small Project Grants – a grant for existing Community Groups with projects that have a clear evidence of a need and can make a significant and lasting difference to rural life. It is available for charities and other properly constituted organisations (excluding Parish Councils) working in East Kent. If someone has an idea for a project contact Trevor Skelton, Rural Officer

([Trevor.skelton@ruralkent.org.uk](mailto:Trevor.skelton@ruralkent.org.uk)). The maximum grant is £15,000 or 75% of the total cost of your project, whichever is the lower. It cannot be used to fund salary or retrospective costs.

- Would like greater involvement at District Level with helping communities with their Parish Plans.

In response to questions Victoria Lawson advised:

- Small Projects grants can be applied for if there is no parish plan.
- A Parish Council cannot apply for this grant in their own name but can apply through another group.
- Would match funding have to be in place before applying for funding? – Unable to answer, this is something to be directed to Trevor Skelton.
- Could a Parish Council give the other 25% - yes.

#### Summary of Meeting – Jeff Goodsell (Chair)

- It is clear that it is up to the residents of a village to keep it going.
- Developing a Parish Plan can be daunting and time consuming, e.g. Temple Ewell took 18 months to get their plan completed.
- Question – Can getting a doctor established in a village (Capel) be put on the parish plan? A: It would be quicker to direct this to the PCT. In the case of Capel, the surgery was closed as the premises were not deemed as satisfactory. At a meeting with the PCT last week, community in Elvington wanted a doctor's surgery in the area. There has to be enough demand for this within the immediate locality. A surgery was trialled in this area but there wasn't enough take up. The PCT will not listen if the demand isn't there and if there isn't a decent premises within which to have a surgery.
- Grants for doctors? – The PCT will pay for everything if the demand is there, there has to be a business need.

#### 6. Future Discussion Topics

No topics suggested.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.