

From: Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,
Corporate and Traded Services

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee - 3 March 2021

Subject: Kent Estates Partnership and the One Public Estate Programme

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All electoral divisions

Summary: Kent County Council (KCC) has been a part of One Public Estate (OPE) since the beginning of the initiative in 2013. From September 2014, KCC have been working closely with a range of Kent partners across the public sector, to ensure that opportunities are identified and that benefits are maximised. This paper provides a progress report on the Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) and partnership working.

Recommendation(s):

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked **to note** progress to date and the development of the partnership.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The One Public Estate Programme (OPE) is an established national programme delivered in partnership with the Cabinet Office Government Property Unit (GPU) and the Local Government Association (LGA). It provides practical and technical support and funding to local authorities to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners.
- 1.2 The core objectives of OPE are local growth (homes and jobs), integrated services and efficiencies. The programme acts as a catalyst for driving forward better asset management to support the provision of local services and save taxpayer money. The Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) was formed to support the delivery of the OPE programme in Kent.
- 1.3 In addition to funding for projects, KEP receives support from the OPE Regional Programme Teams to unblock barriers, access to central government departments and agencies and identify opportunities to influence the development of government policy to assist local delivery. The OPE representatives also provide links to senior

central and local government experts and to wider MHCLG and Homes England housing initiatives and funding.

2. Recent activities and bid success

- 2.1 KCC has been a part of the One Public Estate (OPE) programme since the beginning of the initiative in 2013. The Kent Estates Partnership Board was formed in 2016 for the Phase 4 bid. The Partnership has 26 partners with representatives from local authorities (including KCC as a partner), KALC, Health partners with a link to the STP, Kent Universities, Blue Light Services and Central Government. We also work very closely with the Medway OPE partnership, and a representative from each partnership is part of the other's board. This supports cross partnership working between the KEP and Medway.
- 2.2 As a partnership we have updated the e-PIMs system with property data and provided information on land disposals as part of the OPE criteria. We have developed a forum for sharing good practice, through presentations at KEP board meetings and online sharing through the KEP website and Teams collaboration space. We have regular updates from the Kent Environment strategy team which allows the board to support environment strategies as a partnership as well as individually within their own organisations.
- 2.3 KEP has submitted three successful funding bids and received £843,000 in OPE funding for 8 projects plus funding for the creation of a Programme Management Office (PMO) to support the development of the partnership. There has been one round of Land Release Funding (LRF) and KEP was awarded £658,000.
- 2.4 There have been eight successful projects to receive OPE funding:
 - 2.4.1 Dover Discovery Centre – KCC is working with Dover District Council to progress concept designs and feasibility options for an integrated masterplan for the town centre and the transport interchange/cultural hub, which will open the key arterial route between the Market Place/High Street and the proposed transport interchange hub, both key areas of major regeneration in Dover. Potential benefits include capital receipts, creation of jobs and reduced running costs to local authority homes on local authority land released for housing.
 - 2.4.2 Ebbsfleet Grove Road – Ebbsfleet Development Corporation are working with Gravesham Borough Council and KCC to create a new, regenerated, high quality residential quarter, offering a range of tenures and an enhanced, safe and accessible environment, by assembling and consolidating several sites in public and private ownership.
 - 2.4.3 Maidstone Civic Quarter – KCC is working with Maidstone Borough Council to create a new urban quarter including retail, residential and commercial uses in a high-quality setting. KCC, in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council, strategically acquired the former Royal Mail Sorting Office located in Maidstone Town Centre. The vision for this site is for redevelopment into a high-quality mixed-use scheme over approximately 8 acres of public sector

land.

- 2.4.4 Dartford Town Centre – Dartford Borough Council is working with KCC and Health partners to enhance, integrate and complement the public realm improvements planned for the town centre. It is proposed that this development will include the provision of new healthcare facilities to support the growing town centre population and to respond to new models of care.
- 2.4.5 Sittingbourne Civic Quarter – Swale Borough Council led on the project with KCC, Kent Police and NHS Swale CCG to build on the district council's town centre regeneration programme, by taking advantage of an opportunity to combine public and voluntary services in to a 'Civic Quarter'. The aim is to bring together public services to deliver integrated, customer centric services for residents whilst reducing public sector running costs and freeing up land for mixed use development.
- 2.4.6 West Kent Partnership – Sevenoaks District Council is the project lead for three projects in Swanley, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks, working with KCC, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, and Health Partners of KEP. The project is to enable the creation of Community integrated hubs which enable the release of land, co-location, service integration and improved service delivery.
- 2.4.7 Paddock Wood Community Hub – Paddock Wood Town Council is working with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and KCC to replace a small community hall with a larger community facility that will provide increased community space, offices, pre-school, car parking and outside space. The project will also deliver additional homes in the community.
- 2.4.8 West Kent Blue Light Hub – Kent Police are working with Kent Fire and Rescue and SECAMB to create a shared space for training, vehicle maintenance, custody facility and operations base in the west of the county.
- 2.5 The PMO has received funding in two rounds which has supported one FTE with the other resources provided by KCC.
- 2.6 There has been one round of LRF funding, this was awarded to Maidstone Borough Council for Housing projects in Union Street and Brunswick Street, Maidstone. The two sites are expected to yield 94 homes in total and the work is due to be complete in 2021.
- 2.7 KEP has submitted a bid for funding in Phase 8 of the OPE programme, with a request for £403,000 for 5 OPE bids and £558,000 for 4 LRF projects. The OPE bid includes projects from Ashford Borough Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Dover District Council and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation. Successful OPE funding could support the delivery of £6.4 million in capital receipts, £3.2 million in reduced running costs, land release for 120 homes and 200 new jobs. Maidstone Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council have submitted bids for LRF funding, and this could support the delivery of 51 new homes. The decision on successful projects is due to be announced in February 2021.

2.8 Phase 8 includes a county wide project to investigate opportunities for shared workspaces. This will bring together local authorities, blue light services, health and universities, to explore their future requirements for office estate. The project will seek ways to rationalise the office estate and reduce environmental impact by reducing commuter journeys and allowing staff to work locally. The options range from hot desking spaces to partners renting space from other partners or offering space for rental. The OPE funding will provide a project management resource to work with all partners to develop options to take forward. This resource may also be able to help identify and take forward future OPE projects for this programme of work. There has been an initial workshop to discuss the idea with the partnership and an initial survey sent to all KEP partners shows a strong interest in moving forward with the project.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 KCC is the lead authority for the Kent Estates Partnership, working with the OPE team to track benefits, provide regular reports and manage distribution of funding awards.
- 3.2 Successful OPE funding is received by KCC and managed by the PMO who check that spending matches the activities on the project award, prior to releasing funds to the project lead.
- 3.3 KCC is the lead partner on the Shared Workspace Project and subject to a successful outcome from the bid for funding, a project management resource will be provided to support the KEP Working Group to take this forward.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 All partners who receive funding through OPE must sign a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with KCC confirming they will meet all OPE criteria. LRF funding is paid directly to the successful project lead.

5. Equalities implications

- 5.1 None

6. Other corporate implications

- 6.1 The KEP PMO are managed within KCC's infrastructure division and work closely with the Property Team.

7. Governance

- 7.1 KCC is the lead authority for the partnership and the S.151 officer is responsible for the sign-off of each funding bid.

7.2 As the lead authority, KCC is responsible for transferring funding to projects on submission of the appropriate invoices. KCC through the PMO is also responsible for providing regular monitoring reports to OPE.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The KEP Partnership has made three successful bids for OPE funding and submitted a fourth bid. Working together as a partnership has strengthened links between public sector organisations in Kent. This partnership working has led from collaborations between small groups of partners to the countywide Shared Workspace Project, which has strong support from the whole partnership.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked to **note** progress to date and the development of the partnership.

10. Background Documents

10.1 None

11. Contact Details

Report Author: Julie Johnson
Partnerships and Programme
Development Manager

Telephone number: 03000 410497
Email address: julie.johnson@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director: Rebecca Spore
Director of Infrastructure

Telephone number: 03000 416716
Email address: rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk