

Community Magazine: Malling Action Partnership

Malling Action Partnership is a partnership brought together to apply for SEEDA grant to support the business and community life of the market town of West Malling and the nine surrounding parishes for which it is the market and service centre. The partnership comprises representatives of parish, borough and county councils, meeting together with a number of voluntary bodies who have an interest in the programme of work for which MAP applied for grant aid.

Having completed the Healthcheck as required by the scheme, a number of business and community needs were identified, and these were developed into a programme of work which was costed at a total of £150,000. The SEEDA Rural Towns Grant Scheme provides match funding to successful bids and so a total of £75,000 has been raised to provide MAP's contribution to the scheme. At the end of the summer SEEDA advised MAP that its application had been approved and the two year programme of work will start in October 2009. We are committed to spending as much as possible of the funds available to us in businesses within the 10 parishes. An underlying aim of all the work in the programme is that at the end of the two year project the work programme should be sustainable on a self financing basis.

The major community need identified was for improved communication on local news, events and the activities of the 500 local businesses, in order to improve the amount of income spent in the local economy. (FSB study "Shop Local" suggests that of £10 spent in a national store, £1 remains in the local economy. Of £10 spent in a local business, £8 remains in the local economy. Programmes to increase the amount of local income spent in local businesses will therefore contribute directly and rapidly to the economic viability and sustainability of the area) MAP has therefore developed proposals for a free bi monthly community magazine delivered to the doorstep of the 12,500 homes in the ten parishes. The magazine will be complemented by a website which will report on items of news and public interest.

As part of the process of costing the work MAP members have contacted a number of businesses, including County Print, who are willing to produce such a magazine, and some who are already doing so. The options range from a simple, new publication which would need to be developed from scratch, to additional pages in an already circulating magazine. A new publication would require a great deal of organisational input from the part time paid coordinator of the programme, whilst working with an existing publication would be initially more expensive but would bring professional expertise, and a distribution network.

The content of the magazine and the website will include contributions written and paid for by the statutory and voluntary bodies, but must be directly relevant to the 10

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MAP parishes eg articles giving details of impending roadworks, school activities, GP services, Larkfield Fire Station activities, local Crime figures and clear up rates, dates of Farmers Markets, community events and so on.

Jane Clarke has kindly agreed to advise MAP through the process of getting this magazine into production, including the preparation of a business plan, and the work will begin shortly.