

Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership (SERP)
Board Meeting: Friday 1st May 2009
Held at Shepway Business Centre, Folkestone

Present: Philip Carter (Chairman): Terry Botfield: Ann Berry: Peter Hobbs: Stuart Brown: Jeremy Whittaker: Vic Peake: Daniel Sangiuseppe: Neville Pundole: Rachael James

Minutes:

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Kirkham: Peter Bettley: Ray Johnson: Malcolm Dyer: David Monk

1. Caroline Chambers gave an outline presentation of the new 'Digital Mentoring' project that Channel Chamber will be delivering locally during the year ahead. Funding for this project has been obtained from Awards for All (Lottery) and the Eastern & Coastal Kent PCT. Copies of the PowerPoint presentation will be emailed to board members.

2. Minutes of the last meeting dated 14th November were approved

3. **Matters arising:**

TB reported that the South Kent College merger WITH West Kent College is going ahead but it seems unlikely that this will be completed until 2010.

Basis 2 bid was not successful but SB reported that a new Channel Chamber Training operation had been launched and a Train to Gain contract was being delivered. A bid application for a new Training and Employment Support Centre in Ramsgate had also been submitted to Thanet Works and news should arrive on 6 May.

4. **Chairman's report**

The Chairman gave a brief update on SERP's activities since the last meeting and highlighted the regular meetings now been held with Robert Bliss (Leader of SDC) and Alistair Stewart (CEO of SDC)

5. **SDC Performance**

A recent Audit Commission report stated that SDC were the least improved of all 388 local authorities throughout the country. JW commented that whilst this result was disappointing, this did not reflect the broader picture of SDC's current performance.

The Chairman asked for a copy of SDC's response to this

It was also noted that public satisfaction of services rating in Shepway is falling too

6. **Economic Regeneration Strategy/Action Plans**

JW provided copies of the latest set of Action Plans (also circulated to the

Board in advance of the meeting). He took us through the various sections and invited board meeting to provide further updates as soon as possible.

NP – Expressed his regrets that the ‘Sea Change’ bid application had been unsuccessful

PH – Recommended that local partners should always be urged to share their reviews of unsuccessful bids so that we can all learn from this and, hopefully improve our capacity and resource to bid for further funding.

PC – Highlighted that SERP should endeavour to support and be involved in all bid applications that surround our local economy.

JW agreed to look into the bid making processes with reference to partners input in the making of bids but also the analyzing process for failed bids and report back at next meeting.

AB - Reported on establishment of East Folkestone Community Partnership – renamed Folkestone Together. AB and PH are board members.

PH – Agreed to circulate copies of SERP’s Terms of Reference to all board members

JW – Mentioned a new Community Gateway will be opened shortly in New Romney (adjacent to the Romney Resource Centre)

TB – Reported that the Library facilities in Folkestone had now been enhanced with a resource to assist residents with Internet access.

JW – Reported that Folkestone and Romney Marsh Academies are now working together and would likely benefit from SERP support.

TB - Also reported that a new Govt policy on empty shops has just been released.

PC - Lydd Airport had recently announced a new Enterprise Rent a car operation and plans for an Apprenticeship Academy are underway. Many engineering and aviation related enterprises and companies are willing to locate at LAA but until current planning applications are determined uncertainty prevents progress! Therefore employment opportunities are regrettably lost.

JW - Reminded everyone that SDC had provided the CAB in Folkestone with £20k to support its work locally

7. Sub-Group updates

a) Planning & Regeneration.

In order to keep everyone informed of progress, the Chairman confirmed that minutes of this sub-group would be circulated via SERP’s new Blog

b) STAG

AB gave an outline of this group's current priorities which includes road signage improvements across the District.

c) Employment & Skills

PH reported that Lee Stoddard (Saga) had resigned as chair of this group but that Damian Collins (DC) was being recruited as his successor. PH also reported that discussions were taking place with Job Centre Plus, and with active support of DC, regarding a new local Jobs Club

TB mentioned that KCC was currently involved in a funding bid for a pilot project in Canterbury.

SB reported that funding for Train to Gain and Apprenticeships from the LSC had been suspended for the year ahead and that many private sector training providers would soon be making their staff redundant.

e) Romney Marsh ERP – Peter Hobbs stated that Malcolm Dyer (Chair) had been invited to this meeting to report on progress. PH also explained that there had been some email correspondence recently surrounding the future of this group but that he would meet with MD shortly to review the situation.

PC reminded the board of the importance of the Marsh being part of SERP

Next Board meeting and venue is scheduled for Friday 12 June (1pm at Shepway Business Centre.