

Notes of the meeting of the **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday 27 April 2005 at 4.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor A F Richardson

Councillors: S F Bannister
Mrs J M Munt
Mrs A C Willshaw

Also Present: Mr R Haines – LSP Dover District Chamber of Commerce
Town Councillor M B Trussler
Parish Councillor B A C Curtis

Officers: Strategic Director (Community and Regeneration)
Chief Planning and Building Control Officer
Forward Planning Manager
Senior Planning Officer (Forward Planning)
Economic Development Officer
Committees and Member Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Christian and Councillors N S Kenton and S G Leith.

59 NOTES

The Notes of the meeting of the Group held on 7 March 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60 PRESENTATION BY SEAN CARTER ON THE DOVER DISTRICT RURAL RETAIL STUDY

The Group received a presentation by Mr Sean Carter of the Kent Association of Rural Retailers, which included statistics on communities within Dover District which had facilities such as a public house, shop and a Post Office. The rate at which rural Post Offices were closing had reduced dramatically in the last 12 months and instances of satellite Post Offices, such as at Romney Marsh, were given. The effect of the closure of small shops on wholesalers such as Bookers could impact on employment. The standard of small village shops was, typically, not good but the EPOS (scanning goods at point of sale) system generated much useful information and control over stock. This system should be encouraged and the East Kent partnership had provided funding for four more village shops to use EPOS. Action points included: encouraging retailers to attend free training courses; one-to-one retail advice; more time spent in the hubs of Ash, Aylesham, Eastry, St Margaret's and Wingham; a more detailed survey of public houses; housing growth. If the villages of Preston and Eythorne were to have an extra 100-200 houses, the viability of their local businesses could be improved. Sandwich, as a major hub, should be more vibrant.

Mr Haines asked how the Group would deal with the information provided and was advised that it would support the development of policies for rural retail. This in turn would assist the Local Planning Authority when dealing with specific applications and information should be shared with Local Strategic Partnerships. Mr Carter referred to community shops in Surrey and Sussex which were staffed by

volunteers. A 50% rate rebate was offered to single small shops in villages with DDC providing the other 50%. Internet shopping and delivery services also affected shopping patterns and the Group was advised that Parish plans and village appraisals should make use of this information.

It was agreed:

That the report be received and it be noted that its findings will be used to assist the drafting of the Local Development Framework Group's rural policies.

(Prior to the discussion of local businesses and Post Offices, Councillors A F Richardson and Mrs A C Willshaw declared a personal and prejudicial interest for the reason that they were, or a close member of their family was, involved in a local business or Post Office. They withdrew from the meeting and the Chair was taken for the remainder of the item by Councillor S F Bannister.)

61 SOUTH EAST PLAN

The Forward Planning Manager advised that the response to the South East Plan had been approved by Council, sent to SEERA and receipt acknowledged. The timetable had altered in that it was intended to submit the Plan to Government on 1 March 2006. The key stage of public consultation on the Sub-Regional Policy and Housing would occur in September/October. In mid-July general policies and housing growth for each Sub-Region would be agreed. It was not anticipated that the re-timetabling would affect this Council.

The onus for consultation had been placed on the County Council and it was understood that meetings with Parish Councils and the public would be held in September. The Chief Planning and Building Control Officer reported that SEERA had, to date, received over 50,000 responses and the Chairman stressed the importance of Cabinet and Council unity in conveying the correct message at Sub-Regional level.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

62 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – UPDATE

(1) Local Development Scheme

The Local Development Scheme had been approved by GOSE and copies were handed to members of the Group. Cabinet had given effect to the Scheme and the Planning Inspectorate had sent the Council a Service Level Agreement.

(2) Statement of Community Involvement

The Statement of Community Involvement had recently been agreed by the Council for submission. Tests for soundness had been carried out, an audit trail provided and the Statement of Community Involvement had been sent to GOSE prior to submission in order to deal with any queries. The public consultation period would be six weeks and an Inspector would be appointed to look at all representations and objections and to issue the final, binding report.

(3) Sustainability Appraisal

A helpful meeting had been held with the consultants after the Council had agreed the issues and options report. The next step would be to develop objectives for LDF and members of the Group were given copies of the draft District Portrait and Objectives. The consultant had advised an investigation of the consequences of growth options, with or without CTRL and this issue would be considered at the next meeting.

The Strategic Director (Community and Regeneration) reported that all objectives need to be SMART with timescales detailed. The Chairman stated that the relevant portfolio holders should be invited to debate the issues so that recommendations could be taken to Cabinet. Skill levels in the population required improvement toward the County average but Mr Haines contended that skill levels, according to the Learning Skills Council, were already above the County average. The Forward Planning Manager clarified that the new system involved spatial planning which was a wider remit than land use as it included social and economic issues. While space should be given to an educational facility or improvements to transport/access, there was a need to prioritise the various issues. The Chairman reiterated the need for Cabinet involvement in addition to developing land in conjunction with the aims and needs of communities, which would result in a clear statement of intent and guiding principles. The Forward Planning Manager advised that the consultant shared this view of sustainability and had referred to health problems being masked by deprivation. Affordable housing needed adding to the list.

63 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that he would be stepping down from the Cabinet at the forthcoming Annual meeting of the Council and advised that the new Portfolio Holder for Environment would take over the Chairmanship of the Group. Members of the Group expressed their appreciation of the work undertaken by the Chairman during his term of office.

64 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be advised.

The meeting ended at 6.07 pm.