

**Preliminary notes to support Meeting between Wealden District Council and Business/Policy Group of The Crowborough Partnership. Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2003 at Pine Grove Crowborough (Tel 01892 653311)**

**To attend:**

**WDC**            **Kieran McNamara** (Head of Regeneration and Community Development as well as Client Officer for Freedom Leisure) and **Sarah Pascoe** (Economic Development Manager)

**Business/Policy Group**        **Paul Mepham** (Director of Consortium Publishing), **Steve Horton** (Director of Spring Business Solutions), **Wally Lambert** (experiences include General Manager/Director with Lucas Engineering, significant contributions to training and industry, Board Member of Kent Investment Ltd., BusinessLink, Prince's Youth Business Trust and various business support agencies) and **TS**

**Progress is being made on two fronts in Crowborough**

- (1) a series and variety of networking events on offer to all businesses and
- (2) a group of 18 business people (Business/Policy Group) who are intent on taking action on agreed 'high value' and achievable priorities to enhance the local economy by working together as a group but also working in partnership with any agency and authority that can help their cause.

**The purpose** of the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December is for representatives of the main Business/Policy Group to have an exploratory meeting with Kieran and Sarah as it was seen that KM/SP may very well be the most important 'gateway' to funding /resource opportunities and information to enable the 3 main priorities identified by the Group to be successfully completed.

Minutes of the main group's meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> November were copied to KM. The highest priorities are agreed as:

1. Development and promotion of a database of local suppliers
2. Initiatives and incentives to encourage and support 'start ups' in local premises
3. Retention of existing businesses in Crowborough

There are also a number of ancillary issues over which we (the Group) would welcome some comments, ideas, discussions, direction, advice, information from WDC.

**Suggested draft agenda:**

1. Database of local suppliers (1200+; VAT regd; hard to reach businesses; potential; up dated; traders included; funding opportunities)
2. Start ups on local premises (plans; capacity/army camp; range of available options; use of 'closed' under utilised premises (community safety issues); matched funding; concessions)
3. Retention of local businesses (plans; threats; balance; growth businesses; planning applications; achieve potential; conservation area; Safeway/Lidl; shop fronts; early warning systems)
4. Ancillary issues:
  - 1) How does WDC support for the Crowborough Business Group manifest itself e.g. financially, politically, practically?

- 2) Are there some 'priority areas' for local action that WDC would be able to offer more support/funding than others (mentioned in notes of 19<sup>th</sup> November – not listed but worth pursuing)?
- 3) The group has identified 3 priority objectives for immediate action; of the other objectives/priorities noted in the 19<sup>th</sup> November notes – which ones could be the most easily achieved, what Agency/Authority is likely to be the most amenable in terms of offering support and who is the contact point/decision maker?
- 4) What is WDC's view on the unique proposition of Crowborough and the proposed priority actions from the Group?
- 5) Is there anything that WDC are doing as a whole that is complimentary or conflicts with our approach?
- 6) Would there be other Agencies/Authorities able to offer different or higher levels of funding/resource support than WDC? (Contact details of person/people to fulfil our requirements) To which Agency/Authority does the Business/Policy Group present our proposed activities (e.g. SEEDA, ESEP) or should all such proposals go via KM/SP in the first instance? What would be the most effective routes/direction to take to achieve the Group's goals?
- 7) What qualification status does Crowborough enjoy in terms of requesting support from SEEDA or ESEP or any other Agency (see attached letter from ESCC copied to KM)?
  - Details of funds available
  - Likelihood of success in requesting support for Crowborough
  - Timescales involved
  - Processes needed to be followed
  - Next steps
- 8) Is there anything we (Business/Policy Group) can do to accelerate the process?
- 9) Is there any funding/other resource available in the short term to develop proposals/presentations and submissions to SEEDA or ESEP
- 10) Can we / what benefits will there be if we replicate the Cranbrook Rural Partnership model and would WDC act as the 'accountable body' in those circumstances?
- 11) Do WDC know of any other towns in the District that are carrying out similar (or different and better) activities to the Group and are likely to request similar support? How will this affect Crowborough's plans?
- 12) To what extent is KM/SP supporting the Partnership's 'objection' for the Local Plan concerning the designation of the area near the Army Camp for business use, in particular for IT related start ups or small businesses with few staff and no HGV deliveries?