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## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT - THANET WORKS WORKING PARTY

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

Main Portfolio Area: **Finance and Corporate Services**

By: **Thanet Works Working Party**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **N/A**

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**Summary:** **The report sets out the key activities of Thanet Works Working Party, achievements to date and suggests recommendations for their future role.**

### For Decision

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#### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 Thanet Works Working Party was set-up to undertake a task as set out in their terms reference below:

1.1.1 To provide 'critical friend' challenge to the Chairman of the Thanet Works Board and Officers, reflecting the voice and concerns of the public and communities, in order to positively contribute to Thanet Works.

1.1.2 Challenge the alignment of priorities and optimal use of the Thanet Works resources to ensure value for money, including the attraction of any external funding, and that appropriate monitoring procedures are in place.

1.1.3 Review progress on contracted projects to ensure that Thanet Works is delivering added value/improvements that are making a difference for residents and employers.

1.1.4 Evaluate the Thanet Works 'governance model' to ensure appropriate inclusion of stakeholders.

1.1.5 To assess the opportunities to improve and enhance the outputs of Thanet Works.

#### **1.2 Working Neighbourhoods Fund**

1.2.1 The Government announced the introduction of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF). This fund is focussed on raising the aspirations of local communities and employers. Central government is expecting to see new and innovative approaches to tackling barriers to employment, and to get people off benefits and into training and work. Government focus is on the following outcomes:

- Reduction in working age people on out of work benefits.
- Proportion of population 19+ qualified to at least a Level 2.
- Reduction in the level of 16-18 year olds, those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).
- Adult learners achieving a National Qualification at Level 1 in Literacy.

1.2.2 The WNF is known locally as Thanet Works. Thanet Works was allocated a total of £4.225 million to tackle the complex issue of worklessness and the unique life

experiences that have placed individuals in a position of reliance on benefits. There are four major factors that have established this complex pattern of local need in Thanet, which are found to be higher in specific wards. These major factors are:

- Significant sections of the community are poorly placed to compete in the modern labour market because the skills and educational attainment of our workforce are amongst the lowest in Kent.
- The decline of traditional employment sectors has limited economic diversity in the area creating economic fragility.
- There are distortions within the local housing market, in particular in areas with high levels of private rented housing.
- Thanet's location limits residents' catchment area for jobs and extends the travel to work area.

1.2.3 Thanet Works centres on five main strategic themes. These strategic themes have been drawn from discussion between partners and employers, analysis of key data and learning from other programmes.

At the heart of all our strategic themes is a strong focus on creating long term sustainable changes to skills and employability within Thanet, in particular for:

- Young people at risk of not achieving at school age;
- Young people who are not in education, employment and/or training;
- Individuals out of work for long periods of time;
- Barriers which stop people getting into employment;
- Specific communities with greatest levels of need.

1.2.4 Achieving sustainable changes to service delivery will require new styles of working and approaches from the agencies involved. Leadership and detailed co-ordination will be required around a localised plan, with outcomes from approved proposals being monitored and evaluated to prove their effectiveness. This evidence can be utilised to secure further resources and thus ensure sustainability of initiatives developed.

## **2.0 The Current Situation**

2.1.1 The Working Party (We) have visited all the Thanet Works Phase 1 projects and have made a number of observations.

2.1.2 During the last year we have had meetings with the programme directors Colin Maclean and Jacqui Ward and one site visit with the latter. We had many informal discussions with Susan Adkins who has been an excellent support to us throughout the year. We have asked for a meeting with the Chairman Cllr Jo Gideon and we have yet to meet the board. Two final meetings have been held with Jacqui Ward (and one with Colin Maclean). The latest to look at the criteria for the latest bids . The facts and figures are available on all projects.

2.1.3 Our observations are based on brief visits and on speaking to users and in some cases workers. We feel we need to be more involved and would wish to continue as part of the working party with one additional member. In some case we were very impressed with the use of Thanet Works funding in others we felt a wider client group could be helped.

## **3.0 Observations – Relating to Terms of Reference**

3.1 Within our terms of reference we made the following observations.

### **3.1.1 Thanet Worx Project.**

3.1.2 Pipeline. Sport 4 NRG (TDC)- Partner

3.1.3 Michael Andrea was away when we visited but we were impressed by the enthusiasm of other project workers and their rapport with the people they were helping both at the Ursuline and with gardening and food preparation and presentation projects. Worthwhile and appearing to achieve objectives.

### **3.2 The Wide Open Door. 14-24**

3.2.1 Lead provider - Innovation Unit KCC

3.2.2 Partners are as follows: Kent Adult Education, Key Training services, Kent Safer Schools

3.2.3 Targeting Families and those young people at risk of becoming NEETS. We felt in our brief visit to Newlands School that many of the objectives were being met similarly elsewhere and had much in common with other after school projects. We did not see the wider project and feel unable to give a full assessment. The parent we spoke to was benefiting from meeting with others with her children.

### **3.3 Thanet Doorstep Learning**

3.3.1 Lead Provider - TDC

3.3.2 Partners are as follows: Amicus Horizons, Orbit Housing, KAES, Thanet College, Thanet Community Development Trust

3.3.3 We visited this project at Newington Community Centre twice. The second visit was an open day which confirmed the value of the project to the community and it was good to see the Project organiser Madeline Homer, Ward councillors, Community Portfolio holder and local workers with several outside bodies in attendance and sharing information. The best and most useful example of engaging the community.

### **3.4 Making your Way**

3.4.1 Lead Provider - Individual Learning Company

3.4.2 Partners are as follows: East Kent Coastal PCT

3.4.3 Nicholas Fox Project Manager. He was not available for our visit.

3.4.4 We visited this project at St John's Church Hall and although interesting we can understand the reasons for no further funding.

### **3.5 Youth Outreach and Engagement**

3.5.1 The Kent Refugee and Minority Group – Lead

3.5.2 Partners are Connexions

3.5.3 Although we were very impressed with the enthusiasm of Mrs Denning and her links with the community we were surprised to find very few of the known needy in the Quarterdeck Area availing of the project on the evening we visited. Mrs Swift from Connexions was present and her strong links with both Refugees groups and local

young people will be a great benefit. Obviously the Street Football, Street Dance, Market gardening, Youth Performance Theatre will bring the widely diverse community together and we would need to visit more frequently to see all of this come together.

- 3.5.4 We understand the £67,212 is matched by funding from other sources and we would like to have seen on the evening greater participation from the client group.

### **3.6 Family Fit**

- 3.6.1 Lead provider - Thanet College

- 3.6.2 Partners are as follows:  
Turner Contemporary  
Windmill Community Allotments  
Children's Centre  
Thanet Community Development Trust  
Kent Film Foundation

- 3.6.3 This is a generally very worthwhile project and we visited the Windmill Allotment and the Teaching Assistant course at the Six Bells Children's Centre both of which were strongly led and participants obviously benefitting.

- 3.6.4 We welcome the Boards decision to further fund and appreciated the enthusiasm of everyone involved.

### **3.7 All about You**

- 3.7.1 Project Lead TDC. Victoria May and Angela Irani.

- 3.7.2 This is a very important project to help 16 to 21 year olds who are registering as homeless and which we have yet to visit.

### **4.0 Implications**

#### **4.1 Financial**

- 4.1.1 We would like information on the projects that didn't succeed in getting funding and would welcome details of whether ALL projects gave value for money.
- 4.1.2 We would emphasise the need for high quality project co-ordinators and leaders and practicality and transparency of the projects.

### **5.0 Conclusions**

- 5.1 We understand some members of the Board are to visit all of the projects this month for the first time and we would suggest that this should happen on a more frequent monitoring basis. We would also have liked to have met all of them and we are promised minutes of their meetings for the last year.

- 5.2 We would like information on the projects that didn't succeed in getting funding and would welcome details of whether ALL projects gave value for money. We would emphasise the need for high quality project co-ordinators and leaders and practicality and transparency of the projects.

## 6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1.1 It was agreed at the sub working group to recommend the continuation of this group until end of March 2011 and that the membership of the group be increased to three.

Contact	Councillors Jo Robert and Iris Johnston
Reporting to:	The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel