

**MINUTES OF THE ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
HELD ON 19 MARCH 2015  
AT  
ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT**

**Present:-** Terry Botfield (Chair), Andrew Osborne, Bryan Hall, Clare Clifford, Geoff Hilton, Hugh Summerfield, Paul Norman, Malcolm Vint, Linda Marsh

**Apologies:-** Paul Nixon, Mandy Bearne, Richard Lloyd, Heather Grigson

<b>1.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>	<b>Actions</b>
	<p>These were agreed as being a true record and were signed by TB</p> <p><b>Matters arising</b> With reference to the last paragraph of the minutes it was asked if we need to take a broader view. AO said he sits on a lot of committees that look at wider views not only in this area but also further afield.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Chairman's Comments and Report</b> Ashford Development Updates Local areas for development have been identified. The council are working through sites that have been submitted. There should be a draft of the local plan by the end of the year. TB has received a letter regarding minor changes around the original application for Chilmington Green. These are around the boundaries, cycle routes and green foot paths. It was agreed to give our support to these changes. Paramount is now on the next stage of consultation. They have been holding various workshops and reports on these will be out shortly. They are going ahead with further workshops later in the year and would be suppliers will be able to book places on these, It is anticipated that there will be:- 7000 jobs at the resort 4000 hotel jobs 16000 direct supply chain jobs There will be about 6000 construction workers employed at the peak of this project. It is estimated there will be 5000 hotel rooms. Creative Hub</p> <p>EDG's and Membership Update JJ had a meeting with 2 Company Directors about the EDG's structure and the outcome of this will be discussed at the board meeting next week. TB asked if the current committee wanted to continue with just Ashford or cover a slightly wider area. Those at the meeting were happy to continue with just Ashford. TB has a couple of new members lined up for the AEDG.</p> <p><b>Portfolio Presentations</b> TB asked if anyone would like to give an extended presentation as previously discussed.</p>	<b>TB</b>

Paul Norman is to give a presentation at the May meeting.  
Hugh Summerfield is to give a presentation.  
AO is to organise for the KCC to come in and talk about broadband

AO

### 3. **Portfolio Reports**

HS reported that the budget was pretty mild mainly due to the forthcoming election and then there was probably be another budget. He had recently had a meeting with NatWest and reported that NatWest are going to treat people more fairly. The banks seem more willing to lend at the moment.

LM reported that membership is going really well at the moment. The team are building on the Ashford area and focusing on customer service and retention of members.

PN said it is important that Ashford College is pushed forward.

GH said the quarterly economic survey showed that confidence is growing and 75% expect growth over the next 3 months. Many businesses are concerned with the election coming up in the next few weeks. Numbers for the Wealdon Business Group are going down at the moment which could be a good sign in that people are too busy to attend.

MV reported that domestic property is moving very quickly with the average time for a property to be on the market is about two and a half weeks. He reported that lending still seems to be an issue.

CC apologised for not having the business barometer but reported that the industry is doing well at the moment but there is a big skills gap. The 'Medway meet the buyer' was very well attended. CC said that the BIM is to be used in the public building industry.

AO reported that the first office building on Station Road will be looking for a developer over the coming weeks.

The Marsh Million project still has money in the pot.

BHS is up for sale.

The KCC are leading works to improve Bank Street. This will be starting late May going through until October.

A bid has now been submitted for the Ashford spur.

### 4. **Action Points**

To arrange for KCC to talk about broadband

Date of next meeting – Thursday 16 April 2015 at 4pm