

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MINUTES OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

HELD AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

ON
THURSDAY 21st February 2013

Present:

Richard Lavender (Chairman)	Graham Galpin (GG)
Andrew Osborne (AO)	Viv Kenny (VK)
David Maddison (DM)	Richard Lloyd (RLL)

Apologies:

Christopher Calcutt (CC)	Paul Rickards (PR)
Sezen Zeki (SZ)	Jo James (JJ)
Richard Stafford (RS)	Heather Grigson (HG)

- 1.1 Minutes of last meeting:-
The minutes of the 17th January 2013 were passed.
- 1.2 Matters Arising:-
There were no matters arising from previous minutes
2. Actions:-
There were no outstanding Actions
3. Chairman's Report:-
RL gave apologies from John Bunnett, but unfortunately he could not attend this meeting due to Council Business
There was no other matters to report to the group
4. Actions:-
No Actions
5. As John Bunning CEO ABC could not attend it was decided that AO and GG would give us an update on the current developments in and around Ashford.
Charter House:- it is hoped that work will commence on Charter House during March, hoardings will be placed around the building, but members expressed concern that hoardings will be placed around the building and no further development. We need this development to proceed as fast as possible to get Ashford moving.
Chilmington:- This development is still with the Inspector and we are awaiting the report.
Sevington:- There is a published master plan of the site and as we all know this is a very large shed development, there was much speculation on the eventual occupier, but nothing was confirmed. The group discussed the effects on the local community and although some areas will be badly effected we would encourage all local residents to get on board and use funding from this development to increase and improve the local amenities. The attached 106 will include improved access from the M20 via a possible J10a.
Conningbrook:- Quarry operations will continue until full planning has been achieved and the development commences. Bretts will be then operating fully out of Sevington Railhead.
Commercial Quarter:- Designs have been submitted for flexible office accommodation in the 1st phase.
New Town:- This development has stalled due to commitment to retain the Railway Long Sheds, we can all see that that have deteriorated over the years and a great deal of money will be required to bring them back into public/private use. However they are part of Ashford's heritage and should be preserved for the future. So any start of development which would link the Town Centre with the International Station and the Designer Outlet Centre will not be completed until these works are started.

Town Centre:- AO gave an update of the Town Team which will be used to drive forward the Councils/Portas ideas to put life back into the Town Centre. This group is not involved with the Town Centre Partnership and has a much different remit. The Town Team Manager will be employed by ABC with a direct reporting line back to ABC.

Viv Kenny informed the group that the Town Centre Partnership will be dissolved and from the end of March she will no longer be in a position to represent the Town Centre on the AEDG.

RL firstly thanked Viv for the tremendous work she had done for the Town Centre and especially keeping open the links with AEDG. We have enjoyed several fruitful years with her attendance of the group.

RL asked if the Town Team were or should be represented on the AEDG in the future. After much discussion it was decided that as JJ, AO, and GG were part of the Town Team we have sufficient representation and therefore no further members were necessary.

RL lastly mentioned the terrible site of boarded up windows in place of the Pizza Hut on the corner of the lower High street and Station Road. This gave a very bad window of Ashford to passing motorists with a clear signal ASHFORD IS CLOSED. RL suggested that the Council should discuss with the Landlord a method of disguising this corner by asking Local School Students to design pictorial views that they considered would give a much better picture of Ashford. This idea should possibly be used in the windows of other empty shops in the town and would give the youth of Ashford an opportunity to contribute to making the Town a better place to live and shop.

6 AOB

There was no further business, but to wish Viv a very successful future and many thanks.

7. Meeting closed at 5:40 pm

8. Next meeting 21st March 2013