

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MINUTES OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

HELD AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

ON
THURSDAY 17th January 2013

Present:

Richard Lavender (Chairman)	Graham Galpin (GG)
Terry Botfield (TB)	Hugh Summerfield (HS)
Heather Grigson (HG)	Viv Kenny (VK)
Geoffrey Hilton (GH)	

Apologies:

Christopher Calcutt (CC)	Paul Rickards (PR)
Sezen Zeki (SZ)	Andrew Osborne (AO)
Jo James (JJ)	Richard Lloyd (RLI)
Richard Stafford (RS)	Heather Grigson (HG)
Nick Dowling (ND)	David Maddison (DM)

- 1.1 Minutes of last meeting:-
The minutes of the 15th November 2012 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 the following information on general Chamber matters
- The KICC board will be having an informal meeting with Channel Chamber Board members at Ashford Headquarters on the 25th January 2013. This will focus around common business needs in the South East and future joint activities.
 - Membership was up by 12% in 2012. HS asked what percentage losses were we still having.
 - There were more events lined up on the International exporting side with Trade missions, Road show and training projects all in hand.
 - The Chamber have recruited a new in-house Events Coordinator, Sharon Petley, BBE will only focus on B2B's 1 x Ashford, 1 x Canterbury, 1 x North Kent, plus Manufacturing/Engineering Expo. (GH commented that he was very pleased with this Chamber Initiative.)

RL continued by asking members what they considered we should concentrate our efforts on during the coming year.

HG thought that the Town Centre should be our priority for the immediate future. At present it appeared to be dying on its feet with more shops closing and footfall reducing.

VK said that every effort and many initiative were being used to revive the Town centre but felt that any help to resolve the current state would be welcomed.

GG outlined the new Town Team which has been set up to see through many of the Portas projects. This group is sponsored by ABC and are directly accountable to the Council. They do not replace the Town Centre Management Group and will hopefully work alongside them for the better of Ashford.

VK commented on needing improved Police presence in the Town Centre.

RL said that although he frequented an Italian Restaurant in Bank Street, he felt that the town centre was closed of an evening and quite scary.

HS said that his Company was sponsoring a meeting to be held at the Chamber on the 15th February chaired by Damien Green, MP and including members of the LEP, KCC, ABC, and ex SEEDA members. This group would be given presentations by the members on the future of Ashford followed by a Q & A. RL asked who from the business community had been invited to this gathering apart from HS's company. RL and GH expressed an interest to attend and HS thought that maybe arranged. It was decided that any initiative to be taken by the AEDG would be discussed after the outcomes of the February meeting.

A quick comment was made regarding the Sevington Development and HS suggested we look at the web site "Village Alliance" set up by Mersham and Sevington Villages. There appear to be some very interesting comments enclosed.

RL did suggest that from the workshop he attended in December regarding this Development there were funds to be made available by the developers that could be used for the benefit of the local community and if full planning consent is given then it would be better to on side pulling the strings than sitting on the sidelines protesting. However this was stated as a personal view only, as RL does reside close to the site. GG did comment that there have been many rumours concerning this development and not all he had heard and seen were very near reality. So watch this space.

HS brought up the subject regarding Rural Crime and said there had been a significant rise in Agricultural Implements thefts including commercial fuel oil. RL agreed with the oil thefts as Aldington as well as other local Village Halls had suffered from central heating oil being stolen.

HS said that the NFU had now recruited County Officers who were looking into Rural Crime with the local Police Forces.

TB mentioned that he with RL and Philip Carter from Towers School were looking into carrying out joint Business presentations with other schools in the Ashford area. A formal meeting is being arranged to get this started, and businesses will hopefully support the initiative. It will mean time with students but this should be minimal shared around the business community.

It was felt by all members that this open and frank discussion by a small group was very beneficial with all contributing their own thoughts.

We hope to invite Shepway Council, Planning Department to our March meeting to present and discuss their future initiatives that could affect or impact our area of business.

4. Actions:-
 RL to present percentage of members still leaving the Chamber.
5. AOB
 HS reminded us that we as a group we must not forget our members and their interests. RL commented that he hoped we represented the members and the AEDG was open for members to attend and place comments and propositions at any meeting.
6. Meeting closed at 5:30 pm
7. Next meeting 21st February 2013