

**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
MINUTES OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

**HELD AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT ON THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Present:**

Richard Lavender (RL)	Terry Botfield (TB)
Graham Galpin	Viv Kenny (VK)
Andrew Osborne (AO)	Paul Rickards (PR)
Christopher Calcutt (CC)	Hugh Summerfield (HS)
Geoffrey Hilton (GH)	Bill Fox (BF)
Linda Marsh (LM)	Heather Grigson

**Apologies:**

David Maddison (DM)
Richard Stafford (RS)

**Guests:**

Linda Marsh	Heather Grigson
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1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011 were accepted after one change was made.

- Last paragraph [the meeting closed at 17:45]

1.2 **Matters arising:** RL said that he thought the process of commenting on the ABC amendments to the Urban Plan was rather long winded as there were some forty amendments and these had to be approved or rejected individually, plus the amendment would not close unless a comment was added to each item.

2. **Action List Review:** There were no amendments to the Action List.

3. **Chairman's Report:**

**3.1:** RL welcomed three visitors to the meeting who had responded to the Groups letter to all members. They were:-

- Bill Fox now as a full member of the AEDG
- Linda Marsh from Park Leisure
- Heather Grigson from Peter Brett Associates

RL said that the signs of KICC taking on Thames Gateway were looking quite positive and the Chamber should be notified on the 12<sup>th</sup> December.

4. **Updates from Groups:-**

4.1 **Education and Training (TB)**

Employment

- Unemployment in the last quarter grew substantially to the highest levels in 17 years
- Almost half of the increase is in the 16-24 age group
- It has been reported that up to half of last years graduates (2010) are still to find jobs
- Ashford district July 2011 – 3283 (16-18) 151 recorded as NEET – 5.1% compared to 5.7% in Kent

**Focus on Apprenticeships and Young People**

- Government main response on training terms is to continue focus on apprenticeships and young people
- Vince Cable has announced a further £30m (recycled money) to support the uptake of apprenticeships by SME's
- From 2012 an incentive of £1500 will be made available for businesses with less than 50 employees to take on an apprentice
- Tight H&S rules for employment of those below the age of 18 will be relaxed
- Red tape that slows down the appointment of an apprentice will be reduced

- Renewed focus on targeting the programme at young adults, new employees, higher level qualifications and sectors where greatest impact can be made

**A Dynamic Nucleus – Colleges at the heart of the Local Community**

- Commission set up to look at the role of FE colleges in the local community

**Headline Recommendations**

- Key is the formation of effective partnerships
- A new generation of entrepreneurial college leaders is needed – set up a dedicated leadership centre
- Develop partnerships with local employers to upgrade skills and create jobs
- More needs to be done to engage with SME's using new funding flexibilities
- Partnership with public sector essential – helping to make joined up government work at a local level
- Colleges need to be heard on local economic and social planning partnerships and heavily involved in development of skills strategies
- Should be represented on LEP's
- More funding flexibility needed to enable providers to supply what business and organisations want.

5        **The Chairman wishes to apologies that due to a technical error with the electronic recording machine no further reports can be accurately reported in the minutes. It is hoped this will not be repeated at the next meeting.**

6        Meeting closed at 16:45  
Date of next meeting 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011 @ 4 pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_