

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

**HELD AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT**

**ON**  
**THURSDAY 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

**Present:** Richard Lavender (Chairman) Christopher Calcutt (CC)  
Kate North (KN) Nick Dowling (ND)  
Paul Rickards (PR) Terry Botfield (TB)  
Heather Grigson (HG)

**Apologies:** David Maddison (DM) Viv Kenny (VK)  
Sezen Zeki (SZ) Andrew Osborne (AO)  
Jo James (JJ) Hugh Summerfield (HS)  
Graham Galpin (GG)

**Guests** Nil

- 1/ Minutes of last meetings held in August & September were passed with no amendments
- 2/ There were no matters arising from previous minutes
- 3/ Actions:- OS/RL to arrange ABC 2030 Plan Presentation. CLOSED
- 4/ Chairman's Report
  - Dungeness Stakeholders meeting
    - Framework Contracts and charity Applications RL to request further information from Dungeness Administration
    - CC What possibility of Station C, RL said that it had moved further backwards, but there is still lobbying being carried out.
    - Underground Nuclear Storage was rejected by Shepway Council after making the proposal. To gain further insight into the subject RL was asked to invite Shepway Council Team if they would present the NRDF to the group.
- 5/ Group Reports
- 5.1 Planning (CC)

With a KE front page story the Sevington Development appeared to come as a shock, but we were reminded that this was in the Core Strategy 2010. ABC will be holding a workshop involving this development and members stressed the need to have business representation at this workshop. KN will enquire what date and ensure we are represented. Would this assist the building of M20 J10a. ND gave a quick presentation on the possibility and proposed route of main routes that would link the new development.

Cheesemans Green development submitted under reserved matters recently is part of the Urban Plan Chilmington Green will now be on hold until the on-going enquiry has been completed.

Bethersden "back land fill" was not commented on.

Park Farm additional 220 houses was noted as part of the original development proposal.

It was agreed that the current developments going through the planning process should be good news regarding jobs.

CC mentioned the construction of the wheelchair friendly bridge to be built at Wye Station.

Conningbrook Lakes is waiting the final Urban Plan to be accepted before Planning Application is submitted.
- 5.2 Local Authority (KN)

Town Centre meeting last month had good feedback from businesses.

There will be a Road Show in County Square on 31<sup>st</sup> October. KN thanked the Chamber for advertising to all Local Businesses.

Portus Pilot meeting held with decision to improve the market and provide modern stands to make the market a more up-market to fit the area and future Ashford to draw in visitors. RL commented that the market stalls should be more up market than the usual bottom end markets.

It was also decided to improve the Apple web Application site for the Town Centre.

A Town Team Management team is being sought with Resource Manager and Town Team Manager.

Town Centre Business Forum which will possibly be integrated with Town Centre Partnership.

TB Asked if the 106 monies had been added to the fund. KN confirmed that this had been.

TB commented that in his opinion the Town Centre was dying with many empty shops, KN agreed there were empty shops but the percentage was much lower than the average. KN commented that Park Mall was dated and private rents were high which had a direct reflection on rates. KN said there was a possible scheme going forward to introduce entrepreneurs into multi use shops, this was being assisted by Kent Foundation who specialize in entrepreneurs though-out Kent.

KN pointed out that Ashford had a very good review in the Kent Property Market.

### 5.3 Construction

PR presented the Pi charts and showed that a certain amount of confidence is returning to the construction industry. However it should be noted that improvements are being seen in the private sector with a substantial decrease in the public sector.

Frameworks in general were discussed and RL said he would request more information regarding the Magnox Framework. All new framework contracts should be published on Web-site for local companies to be given the heads up.

TB informed the group that KCC were withdrawing from the South East Business Portal and opened their own Business Portal. TB will keep the group informed of progress.

PR said that there was still talk by some KCFG members regarding returning to localism and the meetings are now too large in numbers, with no opportunity to network, plus when was it returning to Ashford. The group will be updated if there is any future change of structure.

### 5.4 Education & Skills (TB)

TB said that he represented the KICC at Towers School Business Forum. Paul Carter ex KICC Director is the lead business teacher at the school and commented to TB that it was extremely difficult to get businesses into the school to help. RL said he found this difficult to understand as he has a network of businesses who are more than willing to help in schools and colleges.

TB said the school was looking specifically for businesses to help with speed networking, businesses giving information regarding reality working in short sharp presentations. Would the AEDG be willing to assist in this project. RL said he would discuss the objectives and possibilities After the meeting with TB.

### 5.5 Transport & Infrastructure

HG started by commenting on the Paramount, (Swanscombe) development for £2b and 27,000 jobs. A great opportunity but what will be the secondary effects to Ashford. Ebbs Fleet HS Station may get priority over Ashford for International customers. Will it be more difficult to get visitors to stop off Rail and Motorway at Ashford as well as Ebbs Fleet??

HG said also that there was no commencement of the Ashford Station works, what is happening here?

CC said that the new development could trigger the second Thames Crossing.

### 6 AOB

RL asked if the members thought the meeting was still "fit for purpose" and should any changes be made or are there any ideas for adding to the agenda. RL is always open to improvements.

KN said that for herself and AO they felt the group was a good forum for getting business buy-in and certainly have no reason to see changes.

KN announced that 1,800 additional jobs have been created this year in Ashford

### 7. Next meeting 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012 4pm at Chamber Offices.