

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MINUTES OF THE ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP
HELD ON
THURSDAY 16 OCTOBER 2014
AT
ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

Present: Terry Botfield (Chair), Geoff Hilton, David Maddison, Paul Newman, Malcolm Vint, Mandy Bearne

Apologies: Andrew Osbourne, Paul Rickards, Hugh Summerfield, Richard Stafford, Heather Grigson, Kate North

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| 1. | <p>Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as being a true record and signed by the Chairman</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising and no action points</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>Sevington – TB responded back reference the planning for Sevington with no comment from the Chamber at the present time. Various businesses wanted more time so there has been an extension granted. TB asked the committee their views on whether we should support the plans bearing in mind it could potentially offer up to 2000 new jobs. The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to Ashford.</p> <p>Heathrow – TB attended a breakfast meeting yesterday with representatives from Heathrow Airport. Heathrow has 2 options – to build a third runway or extend the 2 runways already there. It was felt that it must be done sooner rather than later or we will never catch up globally. 2025 is the earliest date it could be ready as it will take approx. 5 years for the planning process and 5 years to build.</p> <p>The Chamber needs to finalise its position with regard to this but the committee felt they needed some information from Gatwick Airport before coming to a decision. TB to try and arrange for Gatwick to give their presentation before making a final decision one way or another.</p> <p>TB meeting with Richard Alderton reference the long term view of what is happening in Ashford.</p> <p>TB asked 'what is the vision for town and district?' It was felt there was a multiple focus but to maintain the manufacturing. The skills agenda is to be addressed</p> <p>DM gave an outline of what the outlet centre was doing with the John Wallis Academy.</p> | TB |

TB attended the 'Vision of growth of Ashford' – an event put on by Wilkins Kennedy and chaired by Damian Green. Richard Alderton spoke about 'what is going on in Ashford'

Commercial Quarter – the local authority now owns International House. There is to be 60,000 ft of new high quality office space available in future. There are to be improvements made to the public realm.

Elwick Place – there are proposals for restaurants, cinema, hotel etc in this area.

Outlet Centre expansion– hopes that this will help regeneration of town centre

College – the funding is almost in place for the new college in Elwick Road. Demolition is due to start at the end of the year and building is to start late spring 2015.

Dance Company – this is going ahead.

Chilmington Green – this was approved last night and could potentially provide 1000 new jobs. There is to be 5 new schools, 5,700 homes and a parade of shops. A minimum quality standard has been put in.

High speed station – the finances for the 1st stage is in place but we are still waiting for funding for the 2nd stage.

Conningbrook – 300 plus 'up-market' homes are to be built at Conningbrook.

Model Railway Centre – it looks as if this is going ahead.

TB is to ask Paul Nixon of Wilkins Kennedy if there are any more of the books available either as hard copies or electronically.

TB feels we need to raise the awareness of that the AEDG does. It could be that there is a 'core group' and an outside group.

4. Outlet Centre – DM said that from a tourism point of view there is a lot happening and it may be that a package can be put together to allow tourists to visit the outlet centre, Leeds Castle and other places of interest. It would be helpful if tourists could get this information from the outlet centre. Visit Kent is targeting London and the outlet centre is starting a campaign 'Linked to London'. From a retail point of view things are varied.

Education – PN reported that the vision for Ashford College is for the local community. There is protected funding for 2 years. There is a potential buyer for the Jemmett Road site and the council has promised some money for the new building. Education is going through some huge changes and apprenticeships are still being pushed hard.

GH reported that feelings are positive and that construction companies are doing well at the moment.

MB said the Kent Property Market report came out yesterday. There is a Locate in Kent event on the 18 November at the International Hotel.

Date of next meeting Thursday 20 November 2014

