MINUTES OF THE ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

HELD ON THURSDAY 10 MAY 2016

AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

Present: Richard Lavender (Chair), Andrew Osborne, Julie Anderson, Annette Bunn, Heather Grigson, Hugh Summerfield, Malcolm Vint, Jo Fowler, Bryan Hall

Apologies: Graham Galpin, Mandy Bearne, Peter Corr

RL explained the meeting agenda had been slightly changed to facilitate a pre- arranged presentation by JF on Apprenticeships who had to leave the meeting early.
Before the presentation RL explained that Terry Botfield had resigned from the AEDG and the Board of Directors due to a conflict of interest and RL wanted the minutes to reflect the appreciation of Terry's hard work in chairing the AEDG over the past two years. RL has been asked by the CEO to Chair the group in place of TB.

1. **Presentation by Jo Fowler**
   JF presented the current up-date of the apprenticeship scheme to the group and took many questions and comments at the end. RL said that due to complexity of the current scheme he would request JF forward an edited copy of the presentation to LH for distribution to the group. RL thanked JF for the presentation and hoped that after a re-read it would become a little clearer.

   Action – JF to email edited copy of presentation to LH

2. **Minutes of the last meeting**
   These were agreed as being a true record and were signed by RL

3. **Actions from Minutes**
   RL to organise a date with RS to give an update on the EPC as reflected in previous minutes.
   RL asked what was the current state of the signalling upgrade at Ashford Station as passed minutes did not reflect the importance of these works. AO said that he intended to cover this issue during his briefing.

4. **Chairman's Report**
   RL said he had been requested by the CEO to take over the AEDG for the foreseeable future and again thanked TB for his work with the Group.
   He would like to see the remaining portfolios filled and was pleased to see the HS was intending to stay on the group although retired. RL said that he considered HS contribution from the accountancy world be much appreciated.
   AB said that she was happy to remain as the SME portfolio holder and RL thanked her.
   Environment was a position that would hopefully be filled in due course after RL had spoken to Richard Lloyd
   RL hoped that all members would be happy to remain on the group under his chairmanship. He said that the next meeting would be used to bring everyone up to speed with responsibilities and portfolio coverage. He considered that the EDGs are the 'Engine Rooms' of the Chamber and as such should be representing the future direction of the

local business community and we all need to contribute our speciality to this cause.

5. **Group Reports**

Local Authority AO

AO confirmed that the Sevington Development had gone to Planning yesterday and should be complete by 2019, however this was subject to completion of J10a

Elwick Place is moving forward with discussions ongoing with the developer.

The "Light Railway Museum" which expects to attract up to half a million visitors per year has received a resolution to raise funds for the project.

The Commercial Quarter development has now submitted a Planning Application for the Station Road area.

Cobbs Wood, Gallagher development is progressing with new industrial units being built.

There are now a four party partnership with Dover, Shepway, Canterbury and Ashford receiving Growth Hub funding of £35k to give short term specialist support to town centre retailers. This is a short term project expected to last for the next six months.

The Ashford Draft Local Plan to 2030 is in its final stages and AO suggested that Simon Cole should present this to the AEDG at the earliest possibility. AO to discuss with SC and RL to decide date.

AO said that the delivery of the new signalling required for Eurostar to access platform 3 will be completed by 2018. Until the signalling has been completed Eurostar have promised to maintain a good service.

RL said that he was still concerned regarding promises and would maintain pressure on the Rail Minister to ensure there is no slippage.

AO was asked about Park Mall and responded that it was owned and being managed by ABC and units were slowly filling.

RL apologised for not having time for other Portfolio holders to present, but considered it worth getting an update from ABC. The next meeting will be free of presentation and we can hopefully get around the table and update the group regarding the activities of the business community.

HG apologised in advance for her absence from the June meeting.

Date of next meeting Wednesday 15 June at 4pm Please email Lynda@kentinvictachamber.co.uk if you are unable to attend