

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Maidstone Economic Development Group

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12th March 2013
The Gatehouse, Archbishops Palace, Mill Street, Maidstone, ME15 6YE

Present: John Taylor(JMT, Chair); Colin Davies(CD), Chris Blundell(CB), Rob Edwards(RE).

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Nick Rowell(NR), Heather Nowak(HN), Anna Bloomfield(AB), Bill Moss(BM), Steve Goulette(SG), Victoria Wallace(VW), Allis Beasley(ABE), Jo James(JJ).	
2.	MINUTES OF LAST MEETING Approved.	
3.	MATTERS ARISING JMT raised the question of what actually is the MBC Housing target as figures were quoted on the Staplehurst Parish Council Website. As no representative of MBC was present it was not possible to obtain an answer. JMT also raised the question of the provision of Economic Development land as MBC only appeared to reference the KIMS site in this respect. CB said that information had been distributed to Parish Councils and he would forward the information to JMT. JMT raised the question of Parkwood. Should it now be used for housing as the value of commercial properties had halved. CD felt that this could be due to the lack of a Leeds-Langley bypass. JMT agreed that this was part of the issue, the other issue being that the Units were simply not required. This raised questions concerning future employment in Maidstone and highlighted that alternative employment sites were required. CB said that it would be interesting to know the total employee figure and floorspace for Parkwood and believed that MBC should be able to supply these. CD added that businesses were unhappy about the level of Business Rates and JMT commented that the Government had postponed the revaluation process. CB said that an invitation should be made to MBC Councillors and Officers to address the MEDG on the issues raised. JMT said that he would be happy to approach MBC over this.	
4.	MAIDSTONE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY JMT said that there appeared to have been no progress on this topic since the November MEDG Meeting. Now that Housing targets have been increased there is a major impact on Transport issues. The Transport Strategy cannot be resolved until Employment and Housing strategies have also been resolved.	
5.	LOCAL ECONOMY UPDATE JMT said that he had recently received details of an economic survey which he will circulate to MEDG Members. He will also circulate a recent survey of the Commercial Property Market. He would like to discuss the survey results at the next MEDG Meeting so that NR will be able to comment on differences when compared to the latest BCC Survey. RE said that the Market Indicator information from the most recent KCFG Breakfast showed 75% of businesses stating that the Construction Market was increasing, most notably in the Private Sector. JMT said that the MARKIT/CIPS survey was the most frequently quoted survey in the Press but it appears to be more negative than other surveys. Perhaps Kent is not typical of the rest of the Country?	

6.	ARMED FORCES COVENANT JMT said that there had been a meeting of the Working Group in an attempt to come up with some meaningful proposals. It is anticipated that there will be redundancies involving the Royal Engineers and there will be a special Event related to this which will be held at Invicta Barracks. The Chamber will be one of the participants at the Event, notably with regard to Business Startup Advice. JMT said that the biggest problem for Army families was schooling because of the frequency of moving at short notice and he will be raising this issue with KCC.	
7.	LEP UPDATE Nothing to report.	
8.	LOCALITY BOARD UPDATE A meeting is scheduled for later this month so there will be an update at the next MEDG Meeting.	
9.	BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRES Nothing to report.	
11.	CHAMBER UPDATE CD said that the second MBC Business Breakfast had taken place with around 40 Delegates. The event had been more business oriented than the inaugural Breakfast. He felt that many Chamber Members were still not aware of this Event. JMT said that one of the key speakers at the Breakfast had related his experience of an obstructive attitude within MBC that had ultimately result in a manufacturing facility being relocated to Bosnia. CD said that there was an increase in clients from West Kent seeking Business Advice. He said that the process of signing up new Chamber Members was slow as cashflow remained a problem for many businesses. Tomorrow evening he would be attending a Young Chamber event at Wrotham Academy at which 18 business were involved.	
12.	AOB Nil.	
	The meeting closed at 16:20.	

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 14th May 2013.