#### Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

**Maidstone Economic Development Group**

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 14th July 2015

##### at Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent. ME14 1DB

**Present:** John Taylor (JMT, Chair), John Foster (JF), Nick Rowell (NR), Allis Beasley (AB), Mandy Bearne (MB), Colin Davies (CD), Chris Blundell (CB.

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| 1. | APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE David Ing (DI). |  |
| 2. | MINUTES OF LAST MEETING JMT reported that there were no minutes for May’s meeting as the presentation by GKA on behalf of Roxhill Developments took up most of this meeting.  An appropriate letter was sent to MBC supporting the principle of economic development at Junction 8. |  |
| 3. | MATTERS ARISING None. |  |
| 4. | **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT J8**  JF gave up-date –  Waterside Park – Inspector hoping to report back by the end of July. (Decision now issued – Appeal lost).  Woodcut Farm – Outline application in for different part of J8, being looked at by Richard Timms (Planning Officer).  The principle development for J8 has been reflected in the Economic Development Strategy, this has been referred up to full Council.  There is a query with a sentence – ‘on balance need the economic development and we will try to mitigate and protect site’ – This will be debated and a decision made whether to remove this.  Actual policy on J8 is planned to go to Strategic Planning and Sustainable Transport Committee in August.  Partial Reg 18 – September, Reg 19 – Feb/March 2016 then formal 6 weeks consultation period/respond to enquiry, then Inspector’s report. Outcome due February 2017. |  |
| 5. | NEWNHAM COURT REDEVELOPMENT UPDATE JF – no update.  It was agreed to remove this from the Agenda. |  |
| 6. | LOCAL PLAN – HOUSING ISSUES/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Discussed earlier in meeting.  CD commented that he has Chamber Members contacting him asking if we can find/recommend office/property in the Town Centre as much is being lost to change of use of offices to residential. |  |
| 7. | **TOWN CENTRE FUTURE – GABRIELS HILL UPGRADE**  JF reported on the appraisal after impact on -  Gabriels Hill, Earl Street and North end of Week Street.  The Interim Report was quite encouraging for Phase I and II, out of the 300 visitors surveyed, 85% of those liked the work which resulted in an increase in dwell time and expenditure. |  |
| 8. | LOCAL ECONOMY UPDATE – NICK ROWELL NR gave his report –  Exporters climbing back up.  Domestic sales position is largely flat.  General picture is one of consolidation.  Worrying aspects are – People expecting lower profits and more than half of the respondents are having problems hiring manual/technical and professional/managerial staff.  In general companies are expecting to recruit less in future and are cutting back on planned training and kit.  Next Chamber survey will be in September.  JF asked if we could invite someone from KCC and Tudor Price from the Chamber to attend next meeting to discuss the skills problem. **Action JMT/JF** |  |
| 9. | **ARMED FORCES COVENANT**  Nothing to report. Meeting was postponed until September. |  |
| 10. | **BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTRES**  JF reported that contractors are on site.  Due to open early September.  Will comprise of 6 offices, 15 desks that you can book on-line and a 42 seater seminar room for hire. |  |
| 11. | **CHAMBER UPDATE**  CD reported on B2B show in Ashford. 7 companies joined on the day and 3 since.  Operation Stack has affected attendees at our events.  Members do not seem keen to come into the centre of Maidstone for networking events, problems with parking.  JF to look into this and to see if Council have a car parks map that Chamber could use for future events. **Action JF**  Email has been sent out to MEDG Members inviting them to the Lower Thames Crossing breakfast event. MB and CB attending.  JT asked that they report back on this event. **Action MB/CB**  JT reported that Kent Invicta is one of the key thriving Chambers with a progressively growing membership.  Airports – Heathrow back in the limelight. Chamber pleased to see Commission went with the expansion. |  |
| 12 | **AOB**  JT reported on the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme that offers grants of up to 3k for the installation of better broadband. This is largely for urban areas with a limited pot available until April 2016. Further details on the KCC website. |  |
|  | The meeting closed at 4.40pm. |  |

**Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th September, 2015, 3pm at Maidstone Borough Council’s Offices – Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6JQ**