

# Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Maidstone Economic Development Group

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011

The Gatehouse, Archbishops Palace  
Mill Street  
Maidstone  
ME15 6YE

**Present:** John Taylor(JT) (Chair); John Foster(JF), Keith Grimley(KG), Rob Edwards(RE), Cllr Malcolm Greer(MG), Anna Bloomfield(AB), Nick Rowell(NR), Colin Davies(CD).

1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Jo James(JJ), Allis Beasley(AB), Bill Moss(BM), Dave Powling(DP), Victoria Wallace(VW), Chris Blundell(CB).</p>	
2.	<p><b>2012 OLYMPICS – Cllr John Wilson(MBC) &amp; Ian Parkes(SEEDA)</b></p> <p>Cllr Wilson said that the Olympic Torch would be arriving in the Maidstone area on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July. It will arrive from the Canterbury direction and make an overnight stop at Leeds Castle where there will be an evening event for 8,000 people. On the following day the Torch will depart from Mote park at 6.30am, be paraded through the Town and will depart along the river towards Medway. The BBC are planning full coverage of the occasion.</p> <p>It is planned to involve local schoolchildren on Thursday afternoon and local Composers are being commissioned to write music for the event. In addition to the Leeds Castle event, there will be a parallel event in Mote Park; the refurbishment of the Park will be completed by this time. It is planned to stream the Leeds Castle event to Mote Park.</p> <p>Other related events are the Maidstone Mile Run and Mile Swim, the Maidstone triathlon on June 24<sup>th</sup> in aid of leukemia research and the Maidstone 10K in May.</p> <p>MG asked if businesses would be informed. JT said that teasers would appear in the Chamber Newsletter and that emails would be issued to Chamber Members. CD asked about opportunities for local businesses, JT said that the Mote Park event was probably the best opportunity as the Leeds Castle Event is controlled by LOCOG. JF added that businesses needed to be careful because of LOCOG and Sponsors who had paid money. The Town will be dressed for the occasion and there will be opportunities for businesses situated along the Torch route.</p> <p>Ian Parkes introduced himself. He is a consultant contracted by SEEDA to be involved with the Olympics with particular emphasis on small businesses. He stresses that Traders &amp; Businesses cannot display the “5-Rings” or any other Olympic insignia. The Olympics are the most heavily protected brand in the world and offending companies can be subject to large fines. He hopes to be able to supply guidance on what businesses can and cannot do. Businesses need to keep just on the right side of the guidelines but the guidelines are not yet</p>	

	<p>available.</p> <p>RE asked about road closures during the Torch events. There will be rolling road closures and the Torch cavalcade consists of 25 vehicles with a changeover of Torch Bearers. It is anticipated that disruption to businesses should be minimal.</p> <p>Ian stressed that businesses needed to be sure that they were prepared for the Olympics and that there would be supply chain and hospitality opportunities. Business opportunities can be found at <a href="http://www.competefor.com">www.competefor.com</a> and he emphasised that deadlines were short. He said that 60% of businesses doubted that they would be affected by the Olympics and that this figure should be much lower. Links to Olympic websites can also be found on the MBC Website.</p> <p>The overall Olympic opportunity starts on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and lasts for 14 weeks. The Olympics themselves require 50,000 extra staff and he wanted to ensure that businesses were well informed regarding ticketing and staff attendance/holiday issues. Travel will certainly be affected during the Olympics, hotel rooms will be in short supply and deliveries could be impacted. There will be an impact on HS1 Services.</p> <p>This will be the first Olympics where mobile and social networks will be heavily used so there may be concerns about broadband and mobile capacities and increased call-centre volumes. Ian said that he would provide a document for the Chamber to disseminate. It was noted that all roadworks will be suspended in the Ebbsfleet area and it is possible that parking may only be available to holders of Olympic tickets.</p> <p>CD asked if speakers were available for Chamber events related to the Olympics. Ian said that it would be himself and that he simply needed to be invited.</p>	
3.	<p><b>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING</b></p> <p>Approved.</p>	
4.	<p><b>MAIDSTONE CORE STRATEGY</b></p> <p>JT said that representations had been made with regard to two particular aspects.</p> <p>Support had been given to the Economic Development section.</p> <p>Concern had been raised regarding housing strategy and dispersion, especially the proposed developments in the southern part of the area as this would most likely be of benefit to commuters and would not have an economic benefit for the town. Development needs to be closer to the urban areas of Maidstone.</p>	
5.	<p><b>LEP UPDATE</b></p> <p>JT said that he would be circulating a copy of an LEP Update from JJ.</p> <p>JT said that the LEP had created Task Groups including:-</p> <p>Skills Task Group – this seemed to be aimed at higher level apprenticeships.</p> <p>Thames Gateway Task Group</p> <p>Coast Communities Group</p>	

	<p>Rural Economy - a response to the NPF had not yet been seen.</p> <p>Strategic – not yet set up</p> <p>Broadband – working with BDUK.</p> <p>JT noted that Regional Growth Fund money had been allocated to East Kent and that Channel Chamber were involved in the decision making process. The area concerned is partly covered by KICC but KICC were not involved. JT would be circulating a relevant document to Group Members.</p>	
6.	<p><b>LSP UPDATE</b></p> <p>JT said that this is now known as the Locality Board. The Chamber has a seat on this Board as a representative of business and that JT holds the position at present. The Board will take on the matters covered by the LSP but will be more focused on specific projects.</p>	
7.	<p><b>CHAMBER UPDATE</b></p> <p>CD said that Business Support continued to be very active with regard to both Startup and ongoing advice. Banks still appeared to be unhelpful although they were now attending more Chamber Events and he highlighted that Santander had now joined the Chamber.</p> <p>Signing up new Chamber Members was taking longer and required greater involvement on his part. This was undoubtedly due to the current economic climate. He was trying to spend more time focusing on potential Members in the centre of Maidstone. He noted that Kent Scouts had now become Chamber Members.</p> <p>AB said that she had recently attended the Social Networking courses run by the Chamber, the courses being run by a Chamber Member. These were excellent and a good example of what the Chamber is able to provide.</p> <p>JT said that the view of the Chamber Board was that there was more to do in terms of communication to Members what the Chamber has to offer and what it is doing.</p> <p>NR said that he felt that things would become more difficult over the next few months and asked what the Chamber Strategy should be?</p> <p>JT said that with regard to the former Thames Gateway Chamber area that KICC had been “holding the baby” for the last twelve months. The franchise for the area has to be offered on a broad basis and that KICC has made a submission for the area. A decision was expected in November/December and he noted that neighbouring Chambers had stood aside with the exception of London Chamber. Whoever takes on the area will need to work closely with Essex Chamber.</p>	
8.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>MG said the High Street upgrade was going very well and a monthly leaflet was being produced covering progress to date and forthcoming work. Work in the Bank Street area will take place after Christmas in order to avoid any impact on Christmas trade. He commented on the benefit of having employed an independent Project Manger to oversee the Project and contrasted this with problems experienced with the Museum project. With regard to the Museum, help was being offered</p>	

	<p>by London Galleries and it was anticipated that travelling exhibitions would feature at the Museum in future.</p> <p>MG said that work on the new Clinic at Junction 7 would start on 5<sup>th</sup> December. This is a £78M development and will result in 600 jobs with an average salary of £40k. This will become the Maidstone Medical Quarter.</p> <p>MG said that his belief is that Maidstone needs the Hazlitt Theatre and that he would be doing all he could to make it work.</p> <p>RE noted that the first Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG) Breakfast to be held away from the regular Ashford venue took place on 18<sup>th</sup> October at the Village Hotel and that this had been highly successful with over seventy attendees. The main speaker at the event had been Chris Garland.</p> <p>JT said that he had attended the recent lunch hosted by the Chief Executive of RBS Corporate Banking along with a small group of selected Chamber Members. They had been informed that “the shackles have been removed” although he had subsequent examples of where this had not been the case and that he would feed this back the Chief Executive.</p>	
	<p>The meeting closed at 16:35.</p>	
	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012.</b></p> <p><b>JF proposed that the Meeting be held in the new Museum Wing and that he would confirm details.</b></p>	