**Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**

**North Kent Economic Development Group Meeting**

**16th December 2014**

**Medway Innovation Centre**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Richard Lavender (RLC) Chair- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Jo James (JJ) - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Louisa Felstead (LF) - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Steve Boxall (SB) - Regeneration X

Deborah Shell (DS) - Hatten Wyatt

Richard Longman (RL) – Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

Rosemary Williams (RW) - RW Coaching

Janet Robinson (JR) - SET Training

Chris Inwood (CI) - Gravesham BC

Stuart Haddow (SH) – Xperisoft Ltd

Phil Taylor (PT) - ArcelorMittal Kent Wire

Gavin Coleman (GC) - Handelsbanken

Terry Botfield (TB) – Botfield Associates

Suzanne Wood (SW) – Medway Fibreglass Ltd

Wayne Saunders (WS) – Medway Council

Peter Cooper (PC) – Penshurst Planning Ltd

David Testa (DT) – London Resort Company Holdings

George Parkinson (GP) – PPS Group

In attendance, Paula Weeks (PW) - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

**Apologies:**

Linda Marsh – Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Wendy Brazil - Hannam - Ramada Encore, Chatham

Debbie Townrow – Swale BC

Charlotte Bland - Caxtons

Robert Goodman - Bluewater/Lendlease

David Liston-Jones – Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

**Minutes**  
**1.1 Minutes of previous meeting**

Approved

* 1. **Matters Arising**
     1. Lower Thames Crossing, - Kent Invicta Chamber is meeting with the Department of Transport on the 6th January 2015 to discuss the project and next steps.
     2. Gatwick Expansion plan - Kent Invicta Chamber is hosting a breakfast on 23.1.15 at Tudor Park, Maidstone, with Gatwick Airport to explore the issues. For further details please see the Chambers website.

**2. Action List Review**

**2.2.1** What would the effect be if the total amount taken from Business Rates wasn’t capped? Has any research been done on this? Outstanding, RLC To report back  
  
**2.2.2** Ebbsfleet Garden City, representative for the UDC. Not been decided yet who will be able to be on the UDC, so unable to consider a representative until this decision has been made.

**2.2.3** Saga Fashions of Hoo – a letter was sent to the Local Authority and no further action is required at this stage. RLC happy to provide further details at the next NK EDG meeting if required.

**3. Presentation by David Testa, London Resort Company Holdings (Paramount)**

A copy of the presentation will be forwarded to those who attended the NK EDG meeting.

There was an opportunity for questions and discussion following the presentation.  
SB – What checks have been done to ensure the local labour market meets Paramount’s needs? DT This is being investigated by Pricewaterhouse Coopers and a skills audit is being done next January/February.   
RLC – There are concerns about infrastructure works being carried out at the same time as other major developments including Ebbsfleet Garden City, Castle Hill Development and the possible Third Thames Crossing. DT The all the projects should work together.  
SH – How many visitors a day are expected at the park? DT The average for Sept to March is expected circa 10k to 20k per day, increasing to 50k 60k per day with 4 peak days at circa 90k.  
PC – Any further details on the ‘Creative Industry Hub’? DT No decisions have been made, research is still ongoing. The aim is for it to open at the same time as the rest of the resort but it will continue to grow in the first 5 years.  
RL – How is the dialogue being managed for the masterplan? DT all are working closely together and making good progress on the land purchase.  
GC – Businesses will be looking for funding to invest and loans from the bank will be looked at on an individual basis. However, will there be any other sources available for local businesses, such as a regional growth fund? Jo James will take this up with the LEP.  
SW – Understand that the Thames will be used to transport raw materials, but how else is it envisaged as being part of the resort? There is already a skills shortage in this area. DT Swanscombe High St will be extended down to the river, and aim to use the river to transport visitors in as well.  
RW – Is there a provision for water recycling on site? DT Southern water is concerned about the removal of waste water; the water in is ok.  
SB – The Europa, Germany has a charitable trust, is there anything planned for Paramount? DT not as yet.

RLC thanked David for his presentation and hoped that Kent Invicta Chamber can work closely with London Paramount throughout the development. DL hoped for a close relationship with the Chamber.

**4. Jo James, CEO Briefing**

The LEP met last week and Baroness Kramer, Minister for Transport attended. JJ took the opportunity to start a discussion whether a Kent & Medway LEP would be more productive and move things forward quicker than a SELEP which has been running for 4 years. If to continue as a SELEP then needs to be more flexible and have more powers. The delivery method and accountability framework is in place and more projects to be devolved down.  
Considerable time has been spent putting together projects for the regional growth fund for 2016/17, but in fact it will be the latter part of 2017 before it comes through.   
European Structural funds: sub committees being set up for each LEP, a business representative and a Chamber representative have been asked to be put forward. Tudor Price & Chris Hare (Chamber Director) have been nominated and both are from Kent. The type of projects the committees will consider will include Labour Market, Skills, Young People and Research & Development.  
Growth Vouchers: Ongoing discussion regarding the ‘Business Is Great’ website and if the local area sites should be stand alone.  
In summary, it has been frustrating with the goal posts moving, but beginning to look more positive. However, more powers do need to be devolved down to local level.

Kent Invicta Chamber office moves. The N Kent office will be moving to the Medway Innovation Centre at the start of January 2015. The Maidstone office will be closing with the Export team also moving into the Medway Innovation Centre.

Kent Invicta Chamber was shortlisted for two British Chamber awards this year:  
- Excellence in Membership Services and Chamber of the Year.  
The awards evening was at the Tower of London with representatives from the Chamber attending. Although the Chamber didn’t win in either category it was a great achievement to be shortlisted.

Kent Channel Chamber ; covers the Folkestone & Thanet areas of Kent, will cease trading wef 31.12.14 due to financial reasons. Kent Invicta Chamber has been awarded the area by the BCC and will honour their existing paid up members until their membership renewal date. Therefore, with effect from 1.1.15 there will be one single accredited Chamber for Kent.

Jo James will be meeting with one of the local councils in January to discuss ‘What do businesses want from their local authority?’ Please could everyone consider this and email any responses directly to Jo.

RLC – Thanks to Jo James for all her hard work this year. Also, to Louisa & Paula who support the Chamber and NK EDG.

**Report from Terry Botfield, Chair of Ashford EDG.**

Ashford International Station – should attract more passengers once Paramount is built as it is only 20 minutes journey time to Ebbsfleet Station.  
The Outlet centre in Ashford is expanding and will double in size over the next 2 to 3 years. When finished there will be over 200 shops, many visitors to the centre are from overseas. SB – what about retailers in the town centre? TB – In the future there will be smaller retailers in the town centre, with mixed use of high quality office space.  
5750 houses are being built on the outskirts of Ashford, which is a stretch on construction capacity. The expansion of junction 10A on the M20 has been approved and will support this construction.  
A new college is being built. Although a new build it is replacing an existing college and will be located in the Town Centre.

**4a Group Reports**

**Environment (SB)**Department of Transport Highways Agency recommend to use an integrated landscape approach. SB to email JJ so she can take forward

**Education & Training (JR)**  
Funding for apprenticeships is changing; employers will claim the funding back directly.   
A new website is being launched for employers to find training providers. It searches by industry category and will recommend training providers within that area.

**Transport & Infrastructure (PC)**No further update as yet on the decision of the Lower Thames Crossing.  
Consultation carried out by TFL is closed but the option of the construction of a new East Thames Crossing at Gallions Reach or Belvedere, would have an impact locally.  
Changes to the Dartford Crossing toll payments came into effect at the end of November, and work is continuing to remove the toll barriers. Many local businesses are still reporting major hold ups and delays on local roads with no improvement to traffic flow in the direction Kent to Essex via the tunnel.

**Business Legal (DS)**A study commissioned by Specsavers showed that only 47% of employers fully understand the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations. Employers must pay (not just contribute) towards glasses if the employee can prove that they require glasses as a result of the work they do.  
DS to forward detail to Jo James for inclusion in Chamber bulletin.

**Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership (RL)**Circulated copies of slides from the TGKP Business Breakfast .  
Message needs to get across to Government that contact needs to be made with people not just via websites.

**KCFG (SW)**Would like to engage with Paramount re construction opportunities.  
Monthly research report to be circulated by RLC.  
RLC – Many thanks to KCFG for sponsoring Invicta Grammar School for Girls.

**Local Authority Update**

**Medway (WS)**A Regeneration Officer has been appointed, role will include the Strood Riverside site.  
The Rochester Airfield development is ongoing.  
Will be working with Mid Kent College in March 2015 for Enterprise Week.

**Gravesham (CI)**Update on Heritage Quarter expected in February 2015.  
Gravesham November 2014 unemployment figure stands at 2.1%  
5 more units have been let in the town centre, resulting in a 10.6% vacancy rate.  
Gravesham’s ‘Towncentric’ won the Golden Award for Tourism.  
Holding a Gravesham Networking Business Breakfast on 21st January at The Woodville, Gravesend. Paramount London Resort Company Holdings will be delivering a presentation on the progress of the development and business supply chain opportunities.

**AOB**None

Date of Next Meeting : Tuesday 24th February 2015, Medway Innovation Centre.