**Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**

**North Kent Economic Development Group Meeting**

**21st October 2014**

**Medway Innovation Centre**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

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

Steve Boxall (SB) - Regeneration X

Deborah Shell (DS) - Hatten Wyatt

Wendy Brazil- Hannam (WBH) - Ramada Encore, Chatham

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

Debbie Townrow (DT) - Swale BC

Rosemary Williams (RW) - RW Coaching

Charlotte Bland (CB)- Caxtons

Linda Marsh (LM) Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

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

**Apologies:**

Jo James- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Steve Gerring- UK HSE

David Liston-Jones – Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

Clare Clark- Facts & Figures

Lewis Kirnon- Dartford BC

Clare Creighton- Dartford BC

Janet Robinson- SET Training

Chris Inwood- Gravesham BC

Martin Garside- Port of London Authority

Alastair Gale- Port of London Authority

Stephen Parker- Willmott Dixon

Robert Goodman- Bluewater/Lendlease

**Minutes**
**1.1 Minutes of previous meeting**One amendment to be made on Focus Points for Discussion / Business Rates: SB Question should read:
What would the effect be if the total amount taken from Business Rates wasn’t capped? Has any research been done on this?

RLC To report back

**1.2 Matters arising**Ebbsfleet Garden City

RLC circulated a copy of the minutes from the Ebbsfleet Garden City, Steering Group meeting on 23rd July. KICC had been invited to attend, the next meeting is in November, but ideally the representative should be someone from the N Kent area. The UDC will be a large corporation when set up and KICC need to be involved. Land Securities will not be on the UDC as they own the land (Land owners are not to be included due to a conflict of interest as UDC will have planning powers). RLC Feels that they should because as land owners they could have influence. RLC asked all to have a think about someone who could be the rep. SB said at the moment he has no conflict of interest but in the long run does want to get paid work out of it so then it will become an issue.
All to consider a representative for the Corporation.

Lodge Hill. Planning permission granted by Medway Council following the submission of the revised plans. It’s a significant part of Medway’s core strategy. Local authorities produce a plan assessing how many new homes are needed, after considering factors such as migration, and find sites for development. In the instance of Lodge Hill the inspector found that the plan was unsound and so had to be re submitted.

**2. Action List Review**

Jo James to feed back on the SE LEP at the next meeting.

**3. Presentation by SE Trains re: The Future**

Unfortunately, this presentation is postponed. SE Trains are unable to attend due to the amount of other commitments they have since the renewal of the franchise to 2018.

**4. Group Reports**

**Membership (LM):**
A new marketing strategy is underway with a more targeted approach, members now receive different marketing campaigns to prospects.
A new membership benefit has recently been launched via BCC from Utilitywise (Chamber Energy Solutions).
The ‘clean up’ of the membership website download continues with the opt in/ opt out, please encourage any member to respond who has not already done so.
The Chamber is looking to re-introduce their diary for 2016 which will include advertising opportunities, further information to follow.
The Chamber has been short listed for two BCC awards – ‘Excellence in Membership’ and ‘Chamber of The Year’. Results’ should be known in November.
The B2Bs this year were successful with positive feedback received; although the overall the footfall was down, good quality contacts were made. If anyone has any feedback on the B2Bs please contact Linda so that these can be taken into consideration for next year’s organisation.
September 2014 was a good month with 31 new membership sign ups across the Chamber,, and so far there are 24 for October. The N Kent area is up by 39 new members on last year and it is still the fastest growing area for the Chamber.
A ‘recommend a new member’ incentive was run for a couple of weeks last month, with 6 new members taking up the offer of a free Christmas Lunch with the Chamber at Chilston Park Hotel.
A trial procedure is underway aimed at debt management. Invoices are now being sent out in the post rather than via email.
The Chamber will soon be launching a Patrons scheme. This is an enhanced level of Chamber membership where members can buy different levels of sponsorship packages. These can include their logo permanently on our main marketing campaigns, board advertising at the Chambers head office, events hosted by the Chamber and the opportunity to sponsor a Chamber award. RW Would national companies be interested? LM worth thinking about especially if members, however many don’t having marketing budgets at local level.

**Environment (SB**)
Tesco’s development in Dartford. Tesco’s have been pulling out of other developments that they had previously committed to. Dartford council have said that Tesco’s must start work soon.

**Business Legal (DS)
A new ruling effective from 1 October 2014, gives employees entitlement** to unpaid leave to accompany their pregnant partner to ante natal appointments.

Also from the 1 October 2014 the minimum wage has increased as follows:
6.31 to 6.50 per hour for adults
5.03 to 5.13 per hour for 18-20 yr old
3.72 to 3.79 per hour for 16-17 yr olds
2.68 to 2.73 per hour for apprentices

Last month Acas issued a good practice guide for ‘Managing Bereavement in the Workplace.’
PW links to these will accompany this meetings minutes.

**Commercial Property (CB)**The market has picked up in the last year and remains quite strong with values improving, especially in London which is attracting buyers from overseas. The residential market is quite strong but has cooled a bit over the last year as mortgage lending rules have tightened. RLC As more business is being done on-line businesses are moving out of shops and into Industrial Units for storage. CB Seen a large growth in ‘Trade Counter’ over the last 12 months.

**Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership (RL)**The revised Plan for Growth has been issued with more focus on Human Skills and Employment. The business breakfast event being held on 10th December will focus on this in particular.
Still awaiting decision from Government regarding TIGR & Escalate funding top up.
Ebbsfleet Garden City consultation is an opportunity to re-iterate expectations, especially quality.
At the ‘Construction & Manufacturing’ exhibition held at Detling on 8th October; the Construction area of the exhibition seemed busier than the Manufacturing area ? LM Perhaps this was due to the coffee area and the workshops being held on the Construction’s side, therefore, taking a while for visitors to get through to the Manufacturing side. RL Agreed but some good conversations nonetheless. SB there is a diverse range of manufacturing companies in Kent that nobody knows about. DS concerns over the event management and local advertising of the NK B2B last week at The Woodville. LM asked for the feedback to be emailed to her. RW Perhaps there were too many exhibitions in a short space of time ? WBH at the B2B in Ashford the key note speakers were too successful as the exhibitors were quiet when these were on so timing of these speakers is key. LM KICC has held 5 exhibitions across the regions this year; this will be reviewed for next year so any comments or feedback please let her know.

**5.. Aviation Debate**RLC The Davis Commission has rejected plans for the Thames Estuary Airport and no appeals have been made as yet. Heathrow airport would like the support of KICC for their application to the Davis Commission for a third runway. Businesses want a hub and not different airports scattered over the south east. New European flight routes favour Heathrow and the extra runway will give Heathrow the capacity to keep going for 35 years. RLC asked for the views of the group. RW another new airport is not needed and concerned about security if the M25 is going to run under the third runway as part of the new infrastructure. WBH From the hotel’s point of view being based in Chatham, they would’ve preferred a new airport in the Thames Estuary. However, as this is now not an option they would support the Chamber’s decision. DS Happy with the Heathrow decision. RL TGKP had opposed the Thames Estuary option as it is undeliverable and question why additional capacity at Stansted could not be revisited. DT Heathrow is the most viable. CB Thanet and East Kent travel a long way to get to an international airport, it was a shame about Manston. LM Businesses need an extra runway to become a global force and a decision needs to be made. SB It is important for the Chamber to have a view, should Gatwick be given the same opportunity as Heathrow to present details to the Chamber before we go public with support for Heathrow?

**AOB**
RLC had received a letter from Saga Fashions of Hoo, Rochester, asking for the Chamber’s help with planning regulations imposed by Medway council. They employ 25 people and have moved in to new premises but not complied with the planning regulations and are now being threatened with closure by the council. The situation has ground to a halt. RLC asked if we should act as mediators in this instance. EDG gave consent although hesitant as Saga Fashions are not Chamber members. WBH as non members could a fee be charged for RLC’s time? DS Perhaps give an initial view first.
RLC to speak to Medway Council to get their side of the story first.

WBH a new Premier Inn has opened on Gillingham Business Park that they had been unaware of, had anyone else known that this was opening? Nobody else on the EDG had been aware. RLC will the Paramount development affect the Ramada Encore? WBH unlikely as not all families will be able to afford to stay on site so will look to stay elsewhere and include other local attractions within their visit.

**Date of Next Meeting**
Tuesday 16th December 10am at Medway Innovation Centre.