

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
North Kent Economic Development Group Meeting
February 2014
Medway Innovation Centre

Minutes

Attendees:

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

Jo James (JJ)- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Emma Harraden (EH)- Hatten Wyatt

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

Janet Robinson (JR)- SET Training

Leslie Fernandez (LF)- North West Kent College

Guest- David Box , on behalf of his son, Tim Box of Headway Hypnotherapy

In attendance, Louisa Felstead (LAF)- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Apologies:

Steve Gerring – UKHSE

Peter Cooper- Penshurst Planning

Suzanne Wood- Medway Fibreglass

Chris Inwood- Gravesham Borough Council

Fran Toomey- Medway Borough Council

Lewis Kirnon- Dartford Borough Council

Carlo Gargiulo- Swale Borough Council

David Liston-Jones- Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

Martin Garside- Port of London Authority

Alastair Gale- Port of London Authority

Stephen Parker- Willmott Dixon

Robert Goodman-Bluewater/Lendlease

Stacey Driver- Stickleback Manufacturing

Wendy Brazil Hannam- Ramada Encore Chatham

Clare Clark- Facts & Figures

1. Minutes

1.1 Minutes of previous meeting approved

2. Action List Review

2.1 Chatham Waters- RLC- Group being formed to take this forward headed up by John Taylor of the Maidstone EDG. LAF- PC to keep a watching brief on this

JJ- new N.Kent Chair needed for EDG

EH- legal updates sent to all group members

RLC- KCC unable to present this time but will be invited again. Tudor Price, the Chamber BDM will present next time on TIGER and Growth Accelerator

3. CEO KICC Update

JJ- TIGER Fund- concerned that all available cash will be distributed in time and not returned to central government. Mixed messages re applications – this also applies to other funds in Kent. Chamber is responsible for pre- application advice and support. RL- EDO's to meet later that day; concern has been re marketing and will be looking to find a better strategy.

Action- RLC to e mail information to all group members to help promote and distribute detail

EH and JR- suggested better use of social media to promote. JJ- message should get to all.

JJ- Chamber membership- N.Kent is now the fastest growing area within KICC. Plan had been to achieve 200 members within the first two years of accreditation of the area and the actual figure was 300. Figure now stands at 316. Thames Gateway is still seen as a key area of development for the Chamber and allocation of resources reflects this.

The Chamber board will be holding a strategy day in March where a draft business plan will be drawn up. This will include examining current client trends geographically and will probably lead to a larger physical Chamber presence in N. Kent. JR- this is a key area with

current developments. KICC is now the fastest growing Chamber in the UK with 11% growth and 5% growth over the past two years respectively. A new Membership Development Manager is to be appointed soon. The Chamber hopes to have a small surplus at year end, despite a tough year with unexpected expenditure.

RLC- stressed the importance of the EDGs for local business in their role as a feeder into both the LEP and BCC

Good take up of initiatives such as 2 Seas Trade events by North Kent companies. It is likely that the Chamber will now look to non EU funding for further such opportunities

N.Kent B2b will be held in Gravesham for the year running on October. The manufacturing and construction exhibitions will be held simultaneously on October at the County showground. Both Medway Council and KCC are sponsors.

BCC have been working on how the recent floods have affected business. Any information or case studies would be welcomed.

SE LEP-JJ was to attend a Kent and Medway LEP meeting the following day on business support, as was RL. £15 million in funding is to be allocated in the next 3 years with the suggestion that some is to contribute to a growth hub. JR- pleased to hear some good news.

4. Group Reports

Environment

No portfolio holder. RLC re-ran through detail transport of nuclear waste to and from Dungeness and Sizewell

Education and Training

JR- Apprenticeship reform is still in progress. - March is national apprenticeship week. There will be a change forthcoming as regards several qualifications and government is looking for specialist providers. SET are currently making a big push for promises of apprenticeship places. Significant funding is available via schemes for up to 10 apprentices per qualifying employer- £2275 voucher from the jobcentre and up to £5,700 plus £4,300 costs in some cases.

Action: JJ requested that JR send detail onto the Chamber for publicising via Paul Brooks- [@kentinvictachamber.co](mailto:Paul.Brooks@kentinvictachamber.co).

RLC asked LF how N.West Kent College are communicating this to employers. LF responded that they have concentrated on the maritime sector especially river traineeships which allow for a three

month “test- drive” RLC- in Ashford, the demand is in sectors such electronics and retail. LF commented that the college has had useful assistance from lightermen and boatmen and are developing new trainee models

Planning

Presentation by David Box on behalf of his son, Tim Box of Headway Hypnotherapy re Chamber support for a planning proposal for Lower Halstow Working Mens Club ,Sittingbourne. RL abstained. The group agreed in principal to support the submission and RLC agreed to write to Swale on behalf of the Chamber in this regard

Business Legal

EH sent updates to the group by e mail that day

KCFG

RLC- per the previously sent on market indicators, there has been a huge increase in confidence in this sector- good news for construction industries.

Membership

LAF- covered in CEO update

Local Authority Update

Sent on by Chris Inwood, GBC

Costa Coffee opened in the town centre.

- £19 million pound redevelopment of Gravesend Town Station completed.- to accommodate HS12 carriage trains.
- Town Centre vacancy rates 11.3% lowest in 18 months (December 13 & January 14)
- Gravesend – Tilbury Ferry is currently out for re-tender with KCC
- Dartford and Gravesham Business Awards to be launched in April.
- I will be working on producing the Boroughs new Business Guide and Business Directory with Burrows from next month which will provide advertising opportunities for local businesses.
- The council has received a number of permitted development notifications from B1 office use to Residential use in **occupied** office units in recent months. Potential issues in finding alternative office accommodation in the Borough for those businesses forced to leave by landlords.
- Lidl’s Northfleet Depot are recruiting. £40 million new distribution centre.
- The council celebrated Chinese New Year for the first time with both residents and the business community with VIP guests the Chinese Consulates Second Secretary and Cllr Councillor Thomas Chan from the London Borough of Redbridge.

Update from the Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

- **RL- Assisted Areas Map.** Consultation has now closed on the draft Assisted Areas Map 2014-20. This includes the Medway-Swale Arc. TGKP wrote to BIS reiterating its support for inclusion of the Arc. BIS will be submitting final proposals to the European Commission in the Spring; subject to confirmation by the Commission (which cannot be taken for granted), the new map will be operative from July 2014, setting the framework for EU regional funding.
- **Lower Thames Crossing.** David had attended DfT's Stakeholder Panel recently. DfT are commissioning further studies in relation to options A and C, but do not appear to be inviting external submissions or evidence. Their declared intention is for as early a decision as possible on the preferred location.
- **Airports Commission.** TGKP will be responding to the Davies Commission before its deadline of 23rd May. It would be helpful to know whether the Chamber intended to respond.
- **Growth Plans.** The South East LEP will be making its final Strategic Economic Plan submission to government by 31 March, but effective date for draft is more like 7 March. "Unlocking the Potential of Kent & Medway" is being revised in parallel. TGKP is working with colleagues in South Essex to ensure the Thames Gateway content reflects our priorities. TGKP's own Growth Plan has been agreed as a near-final draft by the TGKP Board, subject to any final adjustments needed to reflect the iterations at LEP and Kent & Medway levels.
- **TGKP (with Thanet Council) is sponsoring a Transitional Support Project for the Kent & Medway CORE (Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering), to build up the CORE's capacity and visibility, undertake feasibility work on the long-term prospects for an industry-led, self-sustaining organisation to champion the CORE (possibly a trade association), develop the supply chain and strengthen communications and networks relating to offshore renewables opportunities in the CORE area. In the medium term it is hoped we can secure EU funding, via the LEP, to support the CORE en route to self-sustaining arrangements. The contract is led by Locate in Kent, with input from Business Support Kent CIC and BVG Associates.**

5. Actions from meeting

JJ- Action for all- advise on suitable new Chair for NK EDG

6. AOB