

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EAST KENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (EKEDG)
WEDNESDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2016 – 10.00am – 11:30am

Economic Development Group Meeting

Innovation House, Discovery Park, Ramsgate Road, Sandwich CT13 9ND

The Boardroom

1. Welcome and Apologies

Members Present:

Ray Johnson – Independent Insurance Services - chair

Kimberley Anderson – Discovery Park

Daniel Sangiuseppe – Castlewood Hotels

Ella Brocklebank - Woodley Coles

Andrew Cruttenden – Martello Building Consultancy

Lee May – Brachers LLP

Karen Dean – Brachers LLP

Apologies:

Katharine Harvey

David Ilsley

Richard Christian

Jo James

Linda Marsh

Phillip Clapham

Jonathan Clarke

Tim Ingleton

Also present:

Paul Barber – MD of Discovery Park

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Agreed

3. Outstanding Action

In relation to our future meeting, this shall be held at the Port of Dover board room and we are hopeful to have a meeting thereafter at the East Kent College Yarrow Hotel.

4. Chairman's Comments and Report

RJ reported his attendance and involvement in the follows groups and activities on behalf of the Chamber:

- Low Carbon Kent.
- Centre of European Studies.
- Better Business for All Initiative – Kent & Medway Authorities engaging with business.
- Innovation Sector Exchange Meeting
- Dover Business Forum
- Thanet District Council – Education & Skills Fair

RJ reported that letters of support had been submitted on behalf of the Chambers for:

- Thanet Parkway Station
- The Port of Dover's proposals regarding the Goodwin Sands
- Kent Transport Plan

The Chamber also supports the Otterpool Garden Town Development near Folkestone. RJ attended a Shepway District Council site meeting at Shorncliffe for new housing. RJ attended a tour of Shepway Garden Town – chamber supports and RJ had been to look at Kings Hill as part of this.

RJ said about the concerns of how people are going to afford new properties and that maybe more apartments than houses will be built.

RJ reported the lasts results of the British Board of Chambers Economic Summary. Within Kent confidence had fallen but there was still a degree of optimism for the future. RJ encouraged all members to complete the survey.

5. Discovery Park Update

PB confirmed the change of ownership on 14th November 2016 when Discovery Park was sold to a consortium Discovery Park Estates Limited. This company is made up of a group of property investors. This was the first park they had taken over, normally taking over hotels, golf courses etc. The existing senior management team were still the same. PB confirmed that he would be working for them until March next year.

PB confirmed the new company were pushing more towards the science side of the park. PB mentioned that he had met with representatives of the Crick Institute in London (who was a former senior official at Pfizer) now runs the same. He has agreed to help PB get into networking.

PB said that awareness of what has happened at DP has now opened doors and with the collaboration of businesses there was becoming a change of attitude in London.

LM asked of any impediments to pharmaceutical business locating at DP. PB said that in the past it was felt that the site was isolated and that it was 2 ½ hours from London but there is now high speed and lots of very talented staff.

KA reported that a head scientist from southern Australia (cancer research) had come over and heard about Discovery Park and wanted to look around the site.

PB spoke about the negative impact of BREXIT and potentially reduced access to the single market in attracting investment to DP.

PB reported that current development on the site was Biomass Renewable Energy Plant and within to years will create enough energy for the whole site, the proposed housing development and the national grid.

Significant new tenants coming to the site include a timber manufacturer and also Instro Precision which will shortly be moving to DP.

PB also reported that they were looking to build a 3* hotel on the site and housing was to begin next year. RJ asked whether the hotel should maybe be 3 ½ * to attract people. PB confirmed that Pfizer/Mylan were looking for 4* but other tenants felt that 3* was enough.

DS said that Hilton were now building 3 and 4* hotels on the same complex to accommodate different needs and that 3* was dying because there was not enough demand. Budget hotels like Holiday Inn and Premier Inn were doing well or then it was upgrading to 4*. He said that IBIS were also mid market budget and PB confirmed they were talking with a hotel chain. DS asked about the hotel coming to site and whether DP are to own it or bring in an operator. PB confirmed that there was a 3.5* offer on the table at the moment and that it was being looked into.

RJ mentioned BREXIT – Article 50 and what will happen next. He spoke about putting pressure on the government to work in the right way. SME's need certainty and overseas investors still wanting to engage.

PB confirmed that Discovery Park has assisted status and that it is an enterprise zone. There is potentially £55,000 of rates relief available for five years from tenants coming on to the site. There is a caveat in that if they have had state aide of 200,000 euros it reduces the benefit. The rates relief ends in 2018 and if it is applied for by 31st March 2018 the will get 5 years relief but from 1st April 2018 there will be no new relief granted.

KA confirmed that 5 years is coming up for some tenants and that Discovery Park will assist them in the next steps.

RJ mentioned the government investing 2.2 billion into sciences. PB confirmed that Discovery Park have a good relationship with the Life Science Minister.

AC asked if Discovery Park had a strategy to introduce global companies to the site. KA said that in the beginning they had been a little be naïve but the potential now is massive with collaborations that have started to grow. PB confirmed Discovery Park is marketed overseas, mainly through Locate in Kent.

Stonehill Park – PB confirmed that planning application was now in. Survey of works being finished and there was further archaeological digging. He said they were hoping Thanet District Council would take to planning in February/March next year.

RJ confirmed that the chamber supported Thanet Pathway and also that he was part of a post referendum study that had produced a paper as to what Kent needs. Incentive of innovation, funding for start ups, looking at international trade. He confirmed the next meeting would be at Dover Port and this would be spoken about.

RJ then asked Kimberly to pass on the groups congratulations to what has been achieved at Discovery Park.

6. Sector Update

EB reported that there had been no change and that Kent construction was very busy but still tough on pricing.. EB reported that they were still struggling to find middle people for employment within the construction industry.

AC reported that there was a lot of work but having to work longer hours as struggling to find new staff.

DS reported that nothing had changed and it was still very positive in hospitality. He said that since the Autumn Statement and the rise of the living wage would have an impact on the industry. He had thought there may be a reduction in VAT in the sector but this had not happened. He said that he had two projects in Folkestone and Canterbury – refitting of kitchens and was struggling to get anyone to do the work as everyone was too busy.

RJ reported that a lot of Kent expertise had been sucked into London but London development was slowing down which would hopefully make more people available.

7. AOB

Philip Clapham had not attended last four meetings and he had someone from Caxtons interested. RJ suggested that we invite Kris to come in Philip's absence in the first instance.

RJ asked if there was anything that you would like covered to let him know. RJ will get updates from Local Authorities. Next meeting Tudor Price will talk on Better Business Kent & Medway Growth Hub

DS asked about East Kent B2B. It had been a good turn out and good profile of speakers with very good networking. Approximately 4000 visitors attended.

Date of next meeting

25th January 2017 – Port of Dover Boardroom 10.00am.