

# MINUTES OF THE ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP

HELD ON THURSDAY 18 MAY 2017

## AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

**Present:** Richard Lavender (Chair), Heather Grigson, Graham Galpin, Richard Stafford, Hugh Summerfield, Paul Nixon, David Jackson, Kate North, Richard Lloyd, Catherine Igoe, Annette Bunn.

**Apologies:** Andrew Osborne, Julie Anderson, Malcolm Vint.

		Actions
1.	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b> The minutes of the last meeting (March 2017) were agreed as being a true record and signed by RL	
1.1	<b>Matters Arising</b> There were no matters arising	
2.	<b>Chairman's Report</b> RL said that the BCC had issued Brexit and Beyond report that was available on the BCC website. A HMG Green Paper on Building our Industrial Strategy has been responded to by KICC The proposed amendment to Parking Controls from ABC would be supported by the AEDG This was Kate North's last meeting with the group as she was leaving Ashford Borough Council to join Virgin Media. RL thanked her for all the many contribution she made to the group and wished her good luck in her future venture. All members of the group responded like wise.	
3.	<b>Briefing on BBfa</b> RL gave a very quick briefing on the BBfa and distributed a poster depicting the service provided by the regulatory bodies of Kent & Medway. RL said that only the police were absent from the table at the moment, but hoped they would shortly be represented. RL has accepted and taken up the Chairmanship of the group. GG asked if he could discuss with the Kent Crime Commissioner, who he knew quite well, to see if there was a reason for the Police not joining. RL accepted the offer.	
4.	<b>Round Table</b> <b>Business Finance - Paul Nixon</b> , PN said that it had been a very interesting couple of months especially with a surge in US investment to UK.	

Peer funding was still going strongly and Banks were working on affordability regarding lending.  
There was a lot of movement on Asset buy-outs and all round very positive.

**Legal Business – Gareth Scott** said that employment of full time contracts was not happening, one of the reasons for this awaiting the court outcome of the Uber dispute regarding self- employed staff. Employment Rights needs to be sorted before there will be a turn round  
AB said that her Company has an In-house HR Department, which had been dealing with this issue and would be happy to share expertise with GS.

**Environment – Richard Lloyd**, RLI said that there was extreme concern regarding the new regulations relating to the LEZ, (Low Emission Zone), as there is now a £200 per day charge for goods vehicles that do not come within the Euro 5 emission limits. This will shortly rise to Euro 6 level. Vehicles entering the London area are captured on the AMPR, the above limits are shortly to be introduced into Manchester and Birmingham.

Another area of concern is the need for all HGV's to come under the low cab rules. Understood to mean that there should be no more blind spots and vehicles and cyclists should avoid collisions. RLI feels that it is cyclists that need to change and not the HGVs

**SME Annette Bunn:** - Skills is still at the top of the agenda, with an added question of where are the young people to fill the Apprentice vacancies. There was still the need to explain the Apprentice Levy to Employers, who tell us they still do not fully understand the levy and procedure for taking on apprentices.  
Generally within the business there is a positive feeling.

**Retail/Business David Jackson:-** In the Designer Outlet Centre there is double digit growth at the moment with a 14% rise from the same period last Easter. Monday to Friday trade is very slow after 5pm  
Advertising is bringing customers in from further afield, however there is a slow-down from continental tourists  
Phase Two is still on schedule with completion in 2019, a further 500/600 jobs will then be available. There will be contractors in during the next few weeks with start hopefully on 1<sup>st</sup> September.  
A deal is being done with Eurostar concerning the multi-story car park. Concern still exists around the underpass, which the Centre are OK to bring up to date but Network Rail appear to be dragging their feet.  
There will be contingency plans in place for traffic and parking during the construction phase. There will be more parking allocated behind the Asda Super store but the land needs to be drained first.

**ABC Kate North/Graham Galpin**, KN said that the council were talking with all the Ashford Developers and the signs are good with progress continuing on all fronts.

PN suggested that the Outlet Centre and Town Centre should be linked with a good and safe walkway, which included the rail underpass.

KN said the two were talking and progress is being made

**Business Strategy, Hugh Summerfield**. HS presented a paper regarding several issues that he wished to bring to the table. RL had a brief look and concluded that although there was an item regarding the AEDG, the remainder could be construed as Chamber Operations and not open for discussion until reviewed by CEO. HS said he had tried to present to CEO but time had beaten him.

**ACTION RL will discuss with CEO**

GG suggested that perhaps to ensure members were understanding what the AEDG was doing we could utilise joint publicity and PR with ABC.

**ACTION RL to discuss with CEO**

**Transport & Infrastructure Heather Grigson**. HG reported that business had increased considerable with BREXIT not slowing down things at all. Peter Brett Associates have taken on two Apprentices, one in their Civils team and one in their transportation team.

No Change on Victoria Way outside the school, quite unsafe during term time, at school open and close parents parking everywhere, on the road, on the pavement, three point turns in the middle of the road on the corner etc.

Ecologia have now completed their works on Victoria Way in readiness for the homes to be built alongside the river opposite Victoria Park. The A28 roadworks are under way for the Chilmington Green Development, however there has been a delay caused by the water board. The new Ashford College is open for VIP viewing in June.

PN said there is concern regarding the College parking and what impact it will have on local parking issues.

GG said that ABC were putting temporary parking on the Elwick Road Railway car park.

**Locate in Kent; Catherine Igoe** KI reported that the LiK team were now up to twelve members. They are working with existing customers and reporting to ABC on a quarterly basis.

Since August 2016, 2121 fulltime jobs have been imported to Kent this is 28% of the 3-year total.

**Commercial Property, Richard Stafford**. RS said it was still the same old story - he was very short on commercial stock and even shorter on sheds.

Due to the shortage of time, KN and GG suggested that the Rail Franchise should be reviewed on the ABC web-site. RL said that he would review, and was hoping that we had similar aspirations, but would speak with GG if there were any glaring differences.

**Meeting Closed at 17:40**

**Next Meeting Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017**