**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**EAST KENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (EKEDG)**

**Wednesday 29th January 2020**

**East Kent College, Folkestone Campus, Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone, CT20 2TZ.**

1. Welcome and Apologies

**Members Present:**

Ray Johnson - Chair

Karen Dean – Brachers LLP

Lee May – Brachers LLP

Jonathan Smith – East Kent College

Mike Marsh - Barclays Bank

Tarih Bolton – Martello

Steve Wisbey – NIC Instruments Ltd

Jonathan Clarke – Morgan Jones

**Apologies:**

Daniel Sangiuseppe – Castlewood Hotels

Jo Rossi – Locate in Kent

Ella Brocklebank – Jenner Construction

Matthew Arnold – East Kent Buses

Richard Lavender – Chamber of Commerce

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

Agreed. RJ confirmed everyone should now being using his new email address - [rdjohnson2020@outlook.com](mailto:rdjohnson2020@outlook.com).

1. **Outstanding Action**

EKEDG has now been running for 4 years. RJ is looking to review next month. RJ invited members to email him of any changes they would like. RJ said the groups look at a 3 year seat for members but he is not looking at any changes for the next year.

1. **Chairman’s Comments and Report**

RJ reported as follows:

* RJ is retiring at the end of January.
  + Still involved in Chamber
  + Chairing Town Team
  + Signpost people for insurance
  + Running his 20th London Marathon for KAB who are 100 years old this year.
* RJ said that the view from the chamber was that people were still holding back for BREXIT. They Banks have money to lend and things are generally upbeat. MM said that in Barclays last year deposits raised 11%. In January alone this year deposits are down 4% and lending is up 4%.
* RJ confirmed that Neil Vanstone was a new chamber member.
* RJ confirmed he was part of the Kent Environmental Strategy Group, raising environmental awareness. LOCASE help businesses get funding for environmental changes. JS said that at EKC the students were looking at a strategy for reducing their carbon footprint. MM confirmed that Barclays have green loans for environmental aspects.
* RJ attended a Police/Border Force meeting and they would like to give a talk to the group
* RJ said the British Chamber of Commerce Conference was being held on 5th March and anyone from the group were welcome as members.
* RJ had received an email from Louise at Thanet Council and they were looking for a chair for Margate Town Deal Board. JC said the Council had applied for funding for town rejuvenation and Margate had made lots of changes over the last 10 years.
* RJ passed on John Orchard’s thanks for attending the meeting at Fort Burgoyne.
* RJ mentioned the delays with Manston.
* RJ said there was now a Young Chamber group.
* RJ has given a talk at Kent University on entrepreneurship.
* RJ mentioned Techfort in Dover. It is on the old prison site which was left unoccupied for some considerable time. As it is government owned it has been maintained. They are hopeful of big companies coming in to use the site.

1. **Sector Updates**

LM reported – Brachers will be opening an office in Canterbury in early Spring but unfortunately would be closing the Discovery Park Office. He said that there had been an upturn in new instructions in recent weeks/months.

TB reported – a positive start to the year. Things were moving on.

RJ reported – insurance rates are hardening, commercial rates are increasing – construction/motor. Professional Indemnity/Aviation have also taken a pounding. Brokers are carrying on BREXIT has not really had an impact and the company is growing.

MM Barclays reported – Nothing to report.

JC reported – recruitment has been a turbulent and the last six months have all been bout temporary contracts but it’s turned around now and permanent contracts are being offered. JC said they had done a lot of prep work for the golf. And will be running contracts for the catering/cleaning. Technical sector recruitment was quite challenging as hard to get talent. All in all business was pretty good.

SW reported – They had been awarded a LOCASE grant of £7,500.00 towards an electric car. They are on the brink of winning a couple of contracts which will double the work force, generating 20/30 jobs. DIP have been very supportive. SW said that the apprenticeship system has added to wage bill as having to pay whilst at College which means he will probably step away from the scheme.

PC reported – There is a lack of supply in the commercial sector. Town centres have to change. Telling clients in the town centre not to sell and be part of the exciting change. It has taken 40% of the value and landlords have had to reduce rates to secure tenants. Business rates haven’t been readjusted and a realignment of rents and rates across commercial and industrial is needed. PC said they were also have problems with delays in planning.

GH reported – There has been an issue with planning over the last couple of years. They had 4 new appointments in planning with 3 coming from Ashford and hopefully they would see some progress. GH said that within Tourism they had some funding to support activities/events. The High Street Fund has seen 24 formal applications and if all are approved half of the funds will be used. Folkestone Community Works – New Call Business Support. They have had minor restructuring in the Council and Otterpool now has a dedicated team. There is an appeal against Judicial Review decision on Princes Parade. The Debenhams building – commissioning a couple of schemes.

1. **Update/Discussion**

JS gave a slide presentation to the group. EKC merged with Canterbury College 18 months ago making it the 5th or 6th largest in the UK with campuses at Folkestone, Broadstairs, Canterbury, Dover and Sheppey and also the EKC Work Higher. They have 12,000 students and 1,300 staff. As of September 2020 a junior college for 14 years old that have become disconnected with school will commence. Victoria Copp-Crawley then gave the group a tour of the Folkestone campus.

1. **Any other business & topics**

Nothing to report.

**Date of next meeting**

25/03/2020 – Westernhanger Castle