

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce – Ashford Economic Development Group

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Ashford on 19th October 2023 at 8.30am.

PRESENT:	NAME	POSITION
	Nettie Buss	Chair
	Richard Stafford	
	Dan Sherlock	
	Peter Heritage	
	Jason Rainbird	
	Sharon Norman	
	Richard Lavender	
	Tim Sheppard	
	Tom Jenkins	In place of AO
[APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM:]	Maria Callow Susan Bonett	

1. NOTICE AND QUORUM

The chair reported that enough notice of the meeting had been duly given and that a quorum was present. The chair declared that the meeting was open.

2. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MINUTES

A draft of the minutes of the board meeting held on 29th September 2023 was sent prior to the meeting. It was agreed to approve this draft without amendment and the chair was authorised to sign them as a complete record of the relevant meeting.

3. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

Potential new members.

AB suggested that we invite Steve Garnett from Utilitas Solutions Ltd who has shown interest in attending the AEDG – he works in green energy sector. This was agreed and he will be asked to attend in January.

Another suggestion is Steven Ottewill a veteran of the Chamber who is heavily involved in manufacturing and upskilling young people. AB will discuss with SO

TS suggested that Nick Shaw who looks after The Stour Centre would make a good guest speaker – he will ask him and come back to us.

AB advised that a new version of the Charing Retirement Village application had been sent across for comment which had been circulated before the meeting. The room agreed that they

still were not in favour of the plan although not against any development. An email will be sent as a reply – AB will ask DS to assist in creating – a copy will be sent with the minutes.

AB updated the board by mentioning that the bio's were now live for the AEDG on the Chamber website and that they had been put in a prominent position.

A letter of support had been endorsed which was sent by Jo James for a planning application for Woodpeckers of Kent Ltd.

Tudor Price who is the incoming CEO for the chamber in 2024 will be attending our November meeting and explaining the new structure.

Round Table updates

AB thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting with Damian Green MP last month and advised that an email of thanks for his attendance had been sent and acknowledged.

TJ encouraged all to sign up for the Eurostar petition to get it to stop again at Ashford and advised he would share the links – AB to send with minutes. also advised that there are some rural area grants available and that a new local plan is being planned.

PH advised that this is of course a busy time of year for the outlet as they are getting ready for Christmas. There are 5 new brands either already open or about to be open in time for the festive season, leaving them with 5% free space.

SN advised that there was nothing new to report, and that the biggest problem remained recruitment and training.

DS continued the theme saying some aspects of law are now in a 'recruitment crisis'. He also endorsed the need to bring back Eurostar as a public asset. He also commented that there are constraints around lending which are affecting business.

JR advised that the business is busy and that they had a successful time at the KCFG event at Detling earlier in the month. Like others recruitment remains an issue.

RL continued updating us from previous meetings with regards to employing ex service people and that the chamber had signed up to the military covenant and RL is a member of the Kent & Medway Civilian/Military Partnership board and chairs the skills sub-group.

TS also commented regarding companies making charitable donations and the value corporates can get back for doing so. Also that procurement bidding often requires a % of social value.

RS advised that the town centre has approx.. a 15% void. However enquiries have gone up for renting shops, he is also recruiting at present.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was suggested that the team had a Christmas Meal Out – may be a traditional curry! AB will suggest some dates.

Date of next meeting – 16th November 2023 at 8.30am @ KiCC

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 10am

.....Chair – Nettie Buss - Date