

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
Ashford Economic Development Group

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce on 20th February 2024 at 8.30am.

PRESENT	NAME	POSITION
	Susan Bonett (SB)	
	Maria Callow (MC)	
	Peter Heritage (PH)	
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Richard Lavender (RL)	
	Tudor Price (TP)	Chair
	Tom Shaw-Dunn (TS-D)	
	Tim Sheppard (TS)	
	Richard Stafford (RS)	
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM	Jo Brown (JB) Nettie Buss (AB) Steve Garnett SG Richard Lloyd (RLL) James McComas (JM) Andrew Osborne (AO) Rollo Parsons (RP) Jason Rainbird (JR) Dan Sherlock (DS) Pete Tomsett (PT)	

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 at 8.30am.

2. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MINUTES

Minutes of the board meeting held on 16th January 2024 had already been approved. The chair had been authorised to sign them as a complete record of the relevant meeting.

3. ANY MATTERS ARISING/PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arising.

4. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

TP asked for **AB** to check **RP** was added to the invite list.

DOVER INVESTMENTS LTD

TP shared that China Gateway at Thanet propose to buy land and convert it into a lorry park for 2,500 trucks. The ambition is to hold trucks when TAP and Brock is on. Dover Investments Ltd still need to engage with an operator.

They seek a letter of approval from KiCC. Toby Howe, Highways Manager at KCC has supported the potential development. The proposed lorry park is located in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. TS-D noted that there may be some implications for tourism.

The 24-hour M26 Kent HGV truck stop has been approved which should help ease Brock when in operation. It was agreed that in principle the AEDG was in favour the Dover Investments proposal subject to certain criteria. The KiCC will continue to work closely with the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF). **RS** mentioned the idea of a KiCC Board Member attending the KRF meetings. **TP** will explore further.

DEVOLUTION

TP updated on Kent not being in the first wave of establishing a 'strategic authority' (SA). Essex and Surrey gained approval. SA's will have a mandate to drive growth and reshape public services, so Kent and Medway will still work towards being a SA at some point.

LOCAL MP's

TP has been in touch with Katie Lam MP's office. He aims to set up a breakfast meeting with her. **TP** will check if Sojan Jospeh MP can attend the next AEDG meeting on 21st March at Ashford College.

BROCK UPDATE

No further update.

EUROSTAR UPDATE

TP shared that there are two groups running side by side to bring back Eurostar to Kent.

1. KCC and ABC whose focus is around the business and economic development impact
2. Cllr Diccon Spain's group who is lobbying for the consumer impact

AO met with the CEO of Eurostar, Gwendoline Cazenave. Eurostar's ambition is still to increase capacity at St. Pancras and won't look at Kent until 2026. Kent MP's recently had a meeting with the Transport Minister, there has been no formal update from this yet.

TP emphasised the importance of removing the barriers to entry so other providers like Virgin and Eveline might get involved. There is discussion around the Temple Mills International depot in East London not being able to hold additional trains from Virgin or Eveline.

HS1 Ltd has had a rebrand and is now known as London St. Pancras Highspeed. They are keen to support the campaign. **RS** mentioned the Bombardier site on Beaver Lane, Ashford could be alternative to Temple Mills. **TP** will explore this further.

NEWTOWN WORKS

No formal update.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RS asked about an update on small modular reactors (SMRs). **TP** will seek an update from David Godfrey and David Smith.

6. CLOSE

TP thanked AEDG members for their continued support.

Date of next meeting - 8.30pm, 21st March at Ashford College.

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 9.35am.

.....Acting Chair – Tudor Price - Date