

**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EAST KENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (EKEDG)
Wednesday 27th March 2025**

Venue: The Yarrow Hotel, Ramsgate Rd, Broadstairs CT10 1PN

1. Welcome and Apologies

Members Present:

Ray Johnson (RJ) – Chair
Daniel Sangiuseppe (DS) – Castlewood Hotels
Tudor Price (TP) – CEO KICC
Jayne Miles (JM) – Dover District Council (*Minutes*)
Lindsey Biggs (LB) – EKC Group
Richard Christian (RC) – Port of Dover
Natalie Glover (NG) - Thanet District Council

Apologies:

Ella Brocklebank (EB) – Jenner
Andrew Cruttenden (AC) – Martello Building Consultancy
Philip Clapham (PC) – Smith Woolley
Jason Lewis (JL) – Stantech
Gavin Coleman (GC) – Handelsbanken
Steve Wisbey (SW) – NIC Instruments Ltd
Joel Mitchell (JM) – Stagecoach
Paul Roberts (PR) – Metroline Security
Craig Styles (CS) – McIntyre Hudson
Andrew Pledger (AP) – Barclays Bank

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Agreed.

3. Outstanding Actions

None.

4. Chairman's Comments and Report

- RJ thanked LB and the Yarrow Hotel for their hospitality and welcomed Natalie Glover, Regeneration Programme Manager at Thanet District Council.
- RJ reported that Matthew Arnold has left Stagecoach and has been replaced by Joel Mitchell.
- RJ attended a BCC meeting and for sure all the continuing issues relating to the business communities are well represented.

5. Sector Updates

Local Government - Thanet District Council (TDC) - NG

- NG gave a presentation on TDC's comprehensive regeneration programme which will bring £53m of investment to Thanet. A copy of the presentation is attached.

- Colin Carmichael will be staying in post as Chief Executive to see TDC through the Local Government Reorganisation process.

Port of Dover (PoD) - RC

- The PoD now have permission to use Western Docks for the EU Entry/Exit System which will enable them to process up to 800 vehicles per hour and keep the port moving as it needs to. Kiosks will be used for processing and phased roll out is expected to start in October/November 2025.
- The PoD are organising a summit on 6 May in London.
- DfT have provided funding to create a Short Straights Maritime Cluster to develop future skills and a stronger maritime network within the region. Work will start with an audit, and it is hoped that the Cluster will include French businesses.
- The PoD are hosting the Maritime UK awards on 26 June which will showcase the whole of UK maritime and will feature several days of activities.
- The PoD have submitted a planning application to convert their buildings in Waterloo Crescent to residential. The Yacht club has been relocated closer to the Marina.

Education - East Kent College (EKC) - LB

- Lucy McCloud will replace Graham Razey as the Chief Executive and interviews are also taking place for other members of the leadership team.
- EKC are concentrating on working with businesses as partners to innovate with and have just completed a trial with Brompton. They will shortly be launching a new kitchen facility where people can test new concepts.
- **LB will present EKC's Strategic Plan to the next meeting.**
- TP confirmed that Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce has received funding for LSIP3 for 2025/26 and will produce a progress report in the next month.

Local Government - Dover District Council (DDC) - JM

- DDC will be working with Willmott Dixon and Milligan to assess Council owned sites in Dover town centre for both regeneration and viability purposes. The 6-month project will produce a 'masterplan' and potential roadmap to delivery.
- The 'Dover Beacon' (Levelling Up project) is progressing well and is on time and on budget. Dover's Maison Dieu is currently going through snagging and rehangng of historic artefacts.
- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund ends on Monday and then restarts on Tuesday 1 April for another year. DDC are currently drawing up an investment plan.
- DDC has been awarded a grant from Arts Council England to carry out a project around engaging with cultural businesses and assisting with volunteering.
- Last week DDC hosted a tourism business networking event in Sandwich with a sustainability theme.

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC) - TP

- Government has confirmed that the Lower Thames crossing will go ahead. Contractors will be Skanska for the roads and Bouygues-Murphy for the tunnel and approaches.

- A joint 'interim Local Government Reorganisation' proposal from Kent Councils was submitted to MHCLG on 21 March.
- KICC were joint sponsors of the MegaGrowth 50 awards, the majority of winners were in the construction industry.
- KICC hosted a 'Skills 25' conference last week conference. 300 people attended and the seminars went really well.
- Kent and Medway business summit is a ticketed event that will be held on 13 May at The University of Kent.
- KICC is launching a new product offer – new packages will be 'Networking', 'Grow' and 'Engage' (public sector only). TP will circulate more information.
- Global tariffs to the USA will now see a 27.5% tariff on vehicle exports.

Hospitality - Burlington Hotel - DS

- Folkestone and Hythe DC's Levelling up £20m project now has an appointed contractor who will start work on 7 April. The project is due for completion next summer.
- The Leas lift restoration has started.
- For hospitality businesses the last quarter has been flat, spend is low. Many bars and restaurants are struggling, some are reducing hours, some have closed but a couple have opened in Hythe. The Hide and Fox in Hythe now has 2 Michelin stars.

Construction - Jenner - EB (by email)

- Construction generally remains buoyant and busy with increased confidence but still with its many challenges such as navigating regulation changes, the barriers to bringing sites to fruition and getting projects started and the constant rising demands of performance bonds as the surety market tightens. There is a lot of talk in the media about the need to deliver more new homes and funding being allocated specifically to build more affordable housing but the constraints of delivering this are still evident, as above, and there are always concerns about the future skills gap as part of this. Despite so many efforts, construction still has a negative (mis)perception but as an industry we are working hard to reverse this.
- At Jenner we are incredibly proud that this year we celebrate our 150th year in business which is a monumental milestone that we are very proud to have reached particularly given the arduous few years we have faced. Care Homes and Affordable Housing along with two exciting projects for EKC Group are keeping us busy and the pipeline ahead looks positive. At the end of last year, we launched Park Farm Civils to strengthen and diversify our group of companies and which is doing very well serving our own Jenner projects as well as securing external clients. A strong focus for us at present (and for the past year really) is on Social Value and giving back to the communities we serve as a business and surrounding our projects. This focuses on wider community engagement initiatives and predominantly a huge drive to encourage future generations to consider a career in construction through careers talks and fairs.

6. Any other business & topics

None.

Meeting closed at 11.59. RJ thanked all for their attendance and for LB and the Yarrow Hotel for hosting.

7. Date of next meeting: 10am, Wednesday 21 May 2025, Burlington Hotel, 3-5 Earls Ave, Folkestone CT20 2HR. Please note earlier than normal to avoid half-term.

Future meeting dates:

- 30/07/2025 Wednesday
- 24/09/2025 Wednesday
- 26/11/2025 Wednesday