

**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EAST KENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (EKEDG)
Wednesday 30 July 2025**

Venue: Maison Dieu, Biggin Street, Dover

1. Welcome and Apologies

Members Present:

Ray Johnson (RJ) – Chair

Daniel Sangiuseppe (DS) – Castlewood Hotels, Chair of Folkestone & Hythe Tourism Board Association

Nicola Wood (NW) - Thanet District Council

Matthew Arnold (MA) - Bayliss Transport

Jayne Miles (JM) – Dover District Council

Craig Styles (CS) – MHA

Apologies:

Lindsey Biggs (LB) – EKC Group

Tudor Price (TP) – KICC

Richard Christian (RC) – Port of Dover

Guy Vine (GV) – MHA Accountants

Joel Mitchell (JM) – Stagecoach

Steve Wisbey (SW) – NIC Instruments Ltd

Not present:

Ella Sandall (ES) – Jenner

Andrew Cruttenden (AC) – Martello Building Consultancy

Philip Clapham (PC) – Smith Woolley

Jason Lewis (JL) – Stantech

Gavin Coleman (GC) – Handelsbanken

Paul Roberts (PR) – Metroline Security

Andrew Pledger (AP) – Barclays Bank

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Agreed.

3. Outstanding actions

None.

4. Chairman's comments and report

- RJ introduced and welcomed NW to the group. Nicola is the Community Development Manager for Thanet District Council (TDC).
- He had attended a few meetings including Kent University & Inside Kent.
- The chamber website has been updated for our group with minutes.
- RJ offered a Bucks Fizz to the group to celebrate the group's 10-year anniversary (thank you Ray). Looking at minutes from 2015 issues were housing, employment, wage

impacts, KCC's use of contractors from outside Kent, lack of commercial space and apprenticeship opportunities.

- RJ thanked the JM and the Maison Dieu for hosting the meeting and providing a tour.
- RJ asked members to complete the Chamber's quarterly survey, interesting feedback and reports from Tudor & BCC which are shared.
- RJ is working on new members and will report findings.
- NW suggested that TDC's networking event with the Chamber on 12 November could be a good opportunity to find a group member from Thanet. RJ to contact Hornby & Vattenfall.

5. Update/discussion, any other business & topics & other project updates

a. Hospitality - Burlington Hotel - DS

- Being summer business is strong at the moment. Accommodation is busy but food & beverage is not so strong. In Folkestone the Harbour Arm is pulling people away from the town centre. The Triennial has just been launched and is bringing people to the town. The industry is now three months in from the increase in minimum wage, employment thresholds and the rent relief reduction and the impact has been far greater than expected. Turnover is around the same as previous years, but costs have significantly increased – up by 15%. DS has been contacted by a journalist from the UK Hospitality Southeast Board who wants to talk about how the costs have impacted businesses. Nationally hospitality jobs are down by 84,000 compared to last year as businesses try to cut their costs. At least three businesses in Folkestone have closed since April but two have opened in Sandgate and a some on the Harbour Arm. The sector is worried for the winter when businesses will see the real effects.

b. Accountancy – MHA Accountants (MHA) - CS

- AI is the biggest threat to the accountancy sector at the moment but it is also an opportunity. Available recruitment is improving from two years ago but wages are a pressure.

c. Local Government - Thanet District Council (TDC) - NW

- TDC has been awarded a £20million 'Plan for Neighbourhoods' grant for a 10 year project. Decisions to be made at community level.
- TDC's Levelling Up funding has been extending for a year and the projects are going well - skate has park gone out for tender.
- TDC's main focus for their UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is young people and skills and their NEETS figures have dropped following the interventions they have introduced.
- TDC held a hospitality workshop with UK Hospitality which went very well and they are now doing the same with the creative industries.

d. Local Government - Dover District Council (DDC) - JM

- 'Dover Beacon' (DDC's Levelling Up project) is going up quickly and is still on time and on budget.
- A tender exercise has taken place for the operator of the new leisure centre in Deal.
- Dinosaur Day is next Wednesday (6 August), it aims to bring people to the town in order to support the local businesses.

e. Transport – Bayliss Executive Travel (BET) - MA

- MA has moved from Stagecoach and is now the Managing Director at Bayliss Executive Travel.

- MA is still a member of the trade association who have created a working group with representatives from the highway authorities and utility companies aiming to improve the organisation of roadworks.
- Coach traffic has seen a good season - incoming tourism, cruise traffic, American golfers (who stay in Canterbury due to lack of quality hotels in the area) and the return of language groups are keeping coach businesses busy. Rates are holding up but staff costs are an issue.
- Bayliss have recently taken on 2 workshop apprentices.

f. RJ

- A British Chamber of Commerce survey found that 79% of businesses don't feel that the impact of new government policies is being properly assessed and 77% think policy change is not moving at the right pace.

- 6. Meeting closed at 11.15am.** RJ thanked all for their attendance and the Maison Dieu team for hosting and providing the tour.
- 7. Date of next meeting:** 24/09/2025 10am Wednesday at The Yarrow, Ramsgate Road, Broadstairs CT10 1PN (with tour of the Innovation Kitchen).
- 8. Future meeting dates:** 26/11/2025 Wednesday.