

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 16th October 2025 at 8.30am.

PRESENT	NAME	POSITION
	Nettie Buss (AB)	Chair
	Maria Callow (MC)	
	Steve Garnett (SG)	
	Peter Heritage (PH)	
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Andrew Osborne (AO)	
	James McComas (JM)	
	Jason Rainbird (JR)	
	Tim Sheppard (TS)	
	Richard Stafford (RS)	
	Natalie Ward (NW)	
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM	Jo Brown (JB) Lucy Clark (LAC) Tom Jenkins (TJ) Tudor Price (TP) Tom Shaw-Dunn (TS-D) Dan Sherlock (DS)	

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 18th September 2025 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

AB welcomed Natalie Ward (NW) Corporate Banking Manager at Handelsbanken.

BRAND KENT

JM updated on the news that Kent County Council and Medway Council are planning to join forces to continue the work of Visit Kent and Locate in Kent after both organisations went into liquidation. KCC are in the early stages of creating an in-house team to support inward investment and tourism.

JM had met with KCC with the Kent Hospitality Forum on 15th October to discuss short and medium term proposals. KCC and Medway Council have pooled funding and are in talks with the administrators. **AO** commented that the planning is likely to be aligned with the timings of the Local Government Reorganisation and devolution.

EUROSTAR UPDATE

AO shared that the Eurostar event 'Grow in Kent' on 26th September at Ashford International and Ebbsfleet International was a success. To follow, **RS** shared there had been recent press coverage that Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (FS) has become the first would-be Eurostar rival to make a concrete pledge to reopen Ashford International.

AO added they are still awaiting the decision from Office for Road and Rail (ORR) to consider if a potential operator could share access at Temple Mill with Eurostar and who that operator might be. **AO** is also lobbying the Department for Transport to set up a 'working group'.

AEDG LINKEDIN GROUP

JR will consider creating a plan to set up an AEDG LinkedIn Group. The broad aim will be to share the meeting minutes, local stories, member profiles and key economic development issues for Ashford.

AGRICULTURAL REPRESENTATIVE

NW recommended approaching Century Group (Andrew Martin) who have a base in Mersham. **KH** recommended approaching the Rural Policy Group (Katie Tucker). **NW** and **KH** will reach out to their respective contacts.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB mentioned GSE will attend the next meeting to discuss plans for a new truck stop at the Roundhill Tunnel, Folkestone. **AB** also mentioned she would like all members to consider key topic items for 2026.

JR shared concerns about local business rates. **RS** mentioned concerns footpath access being cut off to the high street from the planned new 200 space Edinburgh Road car park. **PH** mentioned that the Ashford Designer Outlet Christmas market will open on 3rd November. **TS** asked about an update on nutrient neutrality.

6. CLOSE

AB thanked AEDG members for their continued support.

Date of next meeting - 8.30am, 20th November 2025.

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 9.50am.

.....Chair – Nettie Buss - Date