

**Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**  
**North Kent Economic Development Group Meeting**  
**25<sup>th</sup> August 2015**  
**Medway Innovation Centre**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Jo James (JJ) – Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce  
Phil Taylor (PT) – ArcelorMittal Kent Wire Ltd  
Charlotte Bland (CB) – Caxtons  
Carla Donohue (CD) - Caxtons  
Chris Inwood (CI) – Gravesham BC  
Shaun Whyman (SWN) – Harlequin Group  
Louisa Felstead (LF) - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce  
Wayne Saunders (WS) – Medway Council  
Celine McGeown (CM) – Mid Kent College  
Phillip Painter (PP)  
Rosemary Williams (RW) - RW Coaching  
Debbie Townrow (DT) – Swale BC  
Richard Longman (RL) – Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership  
In attendance, Paula Weeks (PW) - Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

**Apologies:**

Richard Lavender- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce  
Ann Komzolik – NWK College  
Suzanne Wood – Medway Fibreglass  
Pat Jackson – DMA Mechanical  
Steve Boxall - Regeneration X  
Stuart Haddow - Xperisoft Ltd  
Lisa Michalowicz – Ramada Encore Chatham  
Gavin Coleman – Handelsbanken  
Lisa Cranney – Hatten Wyatt  
Jake Gann – Hatten Wyatt  
Janet Robinson – Middleton Murray

**Minutes**

**1.1 Minutes of previous meeting**

Approved

**1.2 Matters Arising**

None

**2. Action List Review**

No outstanding actions.

**3. Chair's Report (Jo James CEO)**

N Kent continues to be the fastest growing area in the Chamber. The venue for this year's B2B has been moved to Brands Hatch Circuit, the exhibitors wanted more space and parking. The keynote speakers are booked and the VIP reception invitations will be sent out in due course.

The Construction Expo and the Manufacturing & Electronics Expo are being held on the 7<sup>th</sup> October at the Kent

Event Centre, Detling. The Manufacturing Focus Group (KMFG) will be launched at this event by Lord Digby-Jones.

SELEP: a proposal was put to government as to how the SELEP could be split up, ie in to a Kent & Medway LEP. Not all MP's were in agreement with this, in particular Greg Clark and he is the one who needs to be convinced. Now need to find ways of making it work to move forward.

Lower Thames Crossing : Following a meeting with Highways England more support is needed from business for Option C. Additionally, there needs to be a stronger business case all round. KICC are helping with case studies to support this.

Operation Stack : Pulled together a meeting with FSB, IOD and LA's in East Kent and KCC . All agreed a long term solution is needed. Looking at medium term solutions, possibly extending the lorry park in Ashford and using land in Folkestone. Concerned that the Governments' attention will be on the migrant problem and operation stack will remain unresolved until the next occasion. Is a nationwide problem not just Kent's, but there is the additional concern that in the longer term this may have a negative effect on Kent and inward investment as the County is not being portrayed in a positive light. The Chamber's role is to keep focus on the issue.

PP asked if there had been any meeting with Pas de Calais, JJ spoken with the Chambers and will continue to work to keep the spotlight on.

#### **4. Group Reports**

##### **Planning (SWN)**

SWN asked for input from the Local Authorities, CI suggested that SWN be added to the local authority planning distribution lists. **CI, DT, WS to add SWN details to their lists.**

The new Conservative government has been very busy over the past couple of months releasing a range of policy documents signalling the way forward in terms of planning. The planning regime is seen as a drag on productivity and the wider economy and productivity of the nation. So a raft of new policy intention documents have been released. Since the last NKEDG meeting there has been:

**July** - Fixing the Foundations: A Treasury Paper concerned with creating a more prosperous economy. This looked at tax, skills, transport, energy, digital infrastructure, Planning deregulation, higher pay, lower welfare, Financial and freer markets, cities and public sector productivity.

**August** - Towards a one nation economy: A 10 - point plan for boosting productivity in rural areas. This time from Defra and the chancellor. This looks at connecting infrastructure to rural areas, increasing skills, enterprise zoning and better regulation, proving homes and devolution.

The planning implications of these are:

**Local Plans** - Slow progress on local plans and wrangling over housing numbers has drawn the pointing fingers of those at the top, resulting in a "get your plan in place or we'll do it for you" approach from central government. In practice no idea how this would work but the consequences could be dire, with unplanned developments going up all over the place.

**Housing** - Automatic Permission for housing on Brownfield Land which is on council registers. This is a shift to a zonal system of planning with limited technical details in an attempt to reduce regulation, increase certainty and enable development..

Rural starter homes - The plan also includes amending planning rules to allow starter homes to be built on rural exception sites for the first time. Local areas will then be able to allocate more sites for starter homes specifically for people who live in the area, have existing family there or an employment connection to the area.

**Rural Infrastructure – mobile, fixed broadband, transport** - setting the right conditions for rural communities and businesses to thrive, investing in education and skills, improving rural infrastructure, and allowing rural villages to thrive and grow."

**Simpler Compulsory Purchase Powers** - Allowing simpler measures for councils to take over land and utilise for the community benefit.

**Renewable Energy** - Renewable Energy – Subsidies cut, onshore wind not viable, solar is near parity, government assistance is being pulled.

## **Local Focus News**

Teal Energy Proposal for a Pyrolysis Energy from waste plan, on the Swanscombe Manor Way Estate adjacent the London Paramount site was at Public Inquiry Scheduled for August. This had been recommended for approval by KCC, but then was called in for SoS decision after lobbying by LP. The Inquiry started but after the first day was called off as Teal Energy withdrew the application, which had been in the system for 5 years and included EIA development. Paul Sadler, chief executive of Teal Energy, said: "The Swanscombe Peninsula will be transformed as a result of London Paramount and the Ebbsfleet Garden City. Teal Energy is keen to find an alternative site in north Kent."

£6 million scheme for a new smaller Asda Supermarket opposite Sheppey Community Hospital, Plover Road, Minster has been submitted. 120 Jobs. Dalemarch (Sheppey) and property management firm Starnes about to submit application on site adjacent is earmarked for 100 homes.

PP – any update on Tesco in Dartford ? RW – should be a balance residential / business. CI – GBC losing employment space and are turning businesses away due to lack of space. CB – In Gravesham the recession provided old empty office space ie with no air con, parking but there is no growth of new. Need to encourage development of brownfield sites. Also a skills shortage with many being attracted to work in London. RW – planning needs to attract people to work in the area as well as live. **SWN to contact Dartford Council for update.** JJ asked CB when the change is legislation for EPC will be introduced? CB – The proposed changes take effect April 2018 and will make it unlawful to let a residential or commercial property with an EPC rating of F or G. There is not much guidance on this at the moment but it will more than likely need to be phased in as it will have a significant impact on landlords. **JJ asked CB to keep us updated.**

## **Commercial Property (CB)**

Demand for investments growing, nothing available in London so looking to the regions to gain a better yield.

## **Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership (RL)**

Government has invited bids for new enterprise zones, TGKP currently putting proposal together.

Thames Gateway Strategic Group is meeting on 15/9 for the first time under the new Government and will welcome Mark Francois MP for Rayleigh & Wickford and Thames Gateway Minister.

Ebbsfleet Garden City – the UDC's planning powers in effect now and will start master planning.

Paramount – Planning application was not submitted by 12/8/15 deadline, which will have an effect on the opening date of Easter 2020. LF advised the group that the next NK EDG on 27/10/15 will be held at the Dartford Hilton Hotel with an update on Paramount from London Resort Holdings.

## **Membership (LF)**

North Kent area continues to grow and be v busy.

## **Local Authority Update**

### **Medway (WS)**

Extension of MIC being built at Watermans Wharf of 15 units, modular build with undercroft parking.

The Medway UTC opens beginning of September. This is at Chatham Waters, providing vocational courses for 14-19 yr olds focussing on Construction & Engineering.

### **Gravesham (CI)**

Movement on Northfleet Embankment East / AEI cables site.

Paramount – Around 15 businesses based on the Swanscombe Peninsula may need to move for the development, they may be looking for quality units but there is limited availability in Gravesham.

Paramount is a NSIP so who is responsible for section 106? Have been putting together a list of what may be expected.

Working with KCC to build a creative hub in Gravesend, sim Brighton, Whitstable; a slow burner.

Borough Market – been awarded £1.6 m to update Borough Market, looking at other areas (such as Greenwich) to see what works there and if it can be replicated.

The old M&S building is up for sale.

Networking breakfast is on 16/9 with presentation from Highways England.

**Swale (DT)**

Negotiations still ongoing regarding the town centre cinema site.

Queenborough & Rushenden development out for tender.

Business Support contracts out to tender along with Medway.

**AOB**

None

Date of next meeting : Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October 10am Hilton Dartford.