

**North Kent Economic Development Group Meeting
Tuesday 22nd October 2013 - Medway Innovation Centre**

Minutes

Attended:

Richard Lavender- Chair (RLC) Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Director

Carlo Gargiulo (CG) Swale Borough Council

Richard Longman (RL) Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

Janet Robinson (JR) SET Training

Steve Gerring (SG) UK HSE

John Austin- Brooks (JAB) Vector Resources

Peter Cooper (PC) Penshurst Planning

Steve Boxall (SB) Regeneration X

Emma Harraden (EH) Hatten Wyatt

Louisa Felstead (LF) Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, Membership Representative

Apologies:

Jo James Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, CEO

Suzanne Wood Medway Fibreglass

Chris Inwood Gravesham Borough Council

Wayne Saunders Medway Council

Lewis Kirnon Dartford Borough Council

David Liston-Jones Thames Gateway (Kent) Partnership

Martin Garside Port of London Authority

Stephen Parker Willmott Dixon

Robert Goodman Bluewater/Lendlease

Stacey Driver Stickleback Manufacturing

Leslie Fernandez North West Kent College

Alastair Gale Port of London Authority

1 Minutes

1.1 Minutes of previous meeting-approved

1.2 Matters arising- signed off

2 Action List Review

Completed

3 Chairmans Report

RLC- Suzanne Wood has stepped down from the chair due to ill health- new chair to be sought. NK EDG is yet to be fully established and the sheer size of the area is problematic. Important that practical projects are found that will help N. Kent businesses.

Recent joint EDG – RLC said that KCC had some excellent feedback from the recent joint EDG held in Ashford for their draft growth plan strategy for Kent. The importance of a long term strategy rather than shorter term for the County was clearly expressed. JAB asked when the full response on this from KCC would be received. RLC stated that this would be by the end of November. SB commented that KCC have already submitted their interim findings to the SE LEP.

Chamber AGM is this Friday- 25th October. All Directors will be wearing badges to be identified- delegates are urged to lobby them with any relevant issues.

ACTION- RLC to send minutes of joint EDG to LF for distribution to all members of the N K EDG

4 Group Reports

- **Environment**

SB commented that with many local plans such as Lodge Hill and Paramount if environmental issues were considered first developments could successfully incorporate them.

SB asked if the group had any information on strategy linking estuaries to the local economy. He believes that there is such a strategy but can find little evidence of action.

Dartford Tesco-now given go ahead. Dartford Co-op site now almost all demolished. Asbestos has been found on the site. RL- Co-op site is under HCA control working in conjunction with DBC. The site is being actively managed and ties in with the Station mound site. Ultimately DBC are to relocate as part of this development to a nearby mixed use site. LF- closure of Waitrose in Dartford would appear to be a done deal.

RLC-Dungeness A to be decommissioned. It is the only nuclear power station with FED (fuel element disposal) capability. The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority have separated the SW and SE of the Country re disposal of nuclear waste. If current

proposals are accepted up to 40 tonnes per year of waste could be travelling to Dungeness by train for disposal from Sizewell and Oldberry and storage of intermediate waste from Dungeness could go in the opposite direction to be stored at Sizewell. Good news is the go ahead for Hinkley Point new power station consisting of two reactors..

SB Chatham Waters- Peel Holdings have been given phase 1 permission. Rochester riverside will be going to market soon.

SE LEP draft European funding strategy has already been sent onto central government

- **Education and Training**

JR has recently been to the House of Commons to discuss new apprenticeship funding. Previous training funding has been drawn down via the Skills Funding Agency but this is set to change. There are four direct options that have been considered and the most favoured would appear to be employers managing funding directly via PAYE. JR expressed serious concerns regarding whether smaller employers would be fully equipped to do so. Workforce reform seems certain in both the public and private sectors with a form of CIPD scheme strategy being announced at the end of October. This would be worked towards in the way that Investors in People currently is.

Barclays have implemented a national scheme to assist employers to look at taking on apprentices. The ethos is to promote creative and digital skills in particular as it is thought to be beneficial to encourage employers to use these areas for furtherment.

There are many grants available to employers to help take on young workers. RLC- paperwork in achieving funding can be onerous. Three schools in Kent are now participating in the 212 Project which is a new scheme concentrating educationally on Mathematics, English and Science with students spending two days a week for the whole school year working for an employer.

JR- are 6th forms set up properly for all up to 18s? She believes not.

CG- can the Chamber chase KCC to ensure that careers advice in schools is available at an earlier stage? Businesses should take the opportunity to engage with young people and show them what the world of work is about.

SB- can empty shops be linked to businesses showcasing the world of work?

ACTION- RLC to look into both CGs and SBs points

SG- Concerned that most training funding seems to end at 24 and asked if there is any funding to help employers to upskill existing staff over the age of 25? JR- employees can receive loans to undertake further training but not if the employee already has a degree. Some schemes are available via the likes of Price Waterhouse Coopers. RLC- Magnox is also offering funding for training.

SG asked about a University for vocational skills in Medway (opening 2015) as well as the Leigh UTC in Dartford (opening 2014).

ACTION- LF to contact Wayne Saunders at Medway Council for details of the UTC

- **Transport and Infrastructure**

PC- no announcement yet on 3rd Thames Crossing. Manston airport has been sold to a company who may link it to transport elsewhere. There is a need for extra air capacity. RLC- Chamber has been lobbying for better rail links between airports. Manston is a big recipient of freight and motorway infrastructure for these needs to be improved. CG- SE airports are competing with other European airports and income comes from passengers. There are arguments both for and against a hub airport. RLC- no long term strategy on this yet.

- **Planning**

No portfolio holder at present. RLC gave a brief report on a project that the Ashford EDG have commented on regarding changes of legislation on change of use of buildings.

- **Commercial Property**

No portfolio holder at present

- **Business Legal**

No portfolio holder at present. SB asked about energy efficiency legislation coming in 2019 re commercial leasehold property

ACTION -EH to bring legal updates to future meetings

- **Retail and Tourism**

Suggestions requested-town centres seen as key

ACTION- EH to invite Graham Long, Town Centre Manager, Gravesham

- **Manufacturing**

Portfolio holder not in attendance

- **Membership**

LF- going well in North Kent. Re-iterated from last meeting that membership has already exceeded that of the old Thames Gateway Chamber. New offering available with European funding for HR support via IMPRESS Scheme in Medway and Swale

- **Local Authority updates**

CG- new economic development strategy for Swale. Invited comment and feedback on this. Detail can be found via: <http://www.swale.gov.uk/open-for-business/>

Swale are trying to be more outward facing as an authority and will be holding a twice yearly steering group for the area as well as looking to host a regeneration conference.

Through the LEP, Swale and Medway are bidding for assisted area status. If successful, this will mean a relaxing of state aid rules and highlight the areas as those with government preference for support. RL- The emphasis is upon opportunity and potential for growth rather than deprivation. CG- if successful, there is the opportunity to extend TIGER funding to companies with over 250 employees.

[ACTION- RLC-Chamber to support. All- to comment on Swale plans where relevant](#)

Comment from RL that deadline passed 30/09/13. The LEPs submission proposed Retention of the existing AA (Thanet and Dover) plus six other candidates- in no order of Priority- Medway- Swale, Hastings and Rother, Tendring, Thurrock and Gravesham, Tendring, Thurrock and Gravesham.

Businesses invited to lobby MPs in support of this. CG to send on contact details for each

[ACTION- CG to forward MPs contact details](#)

CG- Queenborough/Rushenden-potential for 1500/1800 new homes.

- **AOB**

Update from the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership

RL- the Partnership is consulting on the growth plan for North Kent. They will be holding a breakfast briefing on 20th November in Medway and all group members are invited. RL attended the LEP launch for the initial draft of their European funding submission. £165 million in funding is split into ERDF and social fund and then further sub divided to priority objectives. The LEP is looking for a pipeline of proposals as part of its consultation. The submission will be finalized by end- January 2014. Funding will be drawn down from central government via formal applications, in line with agreed strategies from summer 2014

[ACTION- All to consider LEP consultation document and invitation for project ideas where relevant to further develop the plan \(see <http://www.southeastlep.com/news/press-releases/294-south-east-lep-launches-165m-investment-plan>\)](#)

[ACTION- RL to send November meeting invitation to all group members](#)

- **Date of next meeting**

10.00am -12.00 noon, Tuesday 17th December 2013, The Swan room, Medway Innovation Centre. For catering purposes, all delegates are requested to RSVP as soon as possible.

The first meeting of 2014 is booked for Tuesday 25th February in the Darwin room of Medway Innovation Centre. Again, timing is 10.00am-12.00 noon.