

MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP MEETING

HELD ON THURSDAY 18 April 2019

AT ASHFORD BUSINESS POINT

Present: Richard Lavender (Chair), Richard Stafford, Dan Sherlock, David Jackson, Hugh Summerfield, Graham Galpin, Hannah Clayton-Peck.

Apologies: Maria Callow, Jo Nolan, Malcolm Vint, Annette Bunn, Jo Rossi, Peter Corr, Katie Hodson, Andrew Osborne,

Guest: Samuel Taylor

RL opened the meeting and welcomed our guest speaker Samuel Taylor from EMR who would be giving a presentation during the meeting.

		Actions
1.	Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as being a true record and were signed by the Chairman	
1.1	Matters Arising The matter relating to the Ashford Bowling Green in Vicarage Lane was discussed as an item postponed from the March meeting. HS gave a brief outline of his and others concerns of the possible sale of this area of green space to a property developer, and this being one of the only remaining green spaces left in the centre of town was felt should be maintained as a green space when sold by the Ashford Bowling Club owners. HC-P read out a statement from AO which outlined ABC's negotiations with the Bowling Green Club to date and this clarified several points, notably the efforts made by the Council to negotiate with the Bowling Club. It did however confirm that the Bowling Club are in negotiations with a property developer for the sale of the land. HS felt that all of our green spaces are being given over to development and unless ABC makes a stand this area will also be lost to housing. The group felt that a letter of concern should be sent to ABC proposing that this area of land be taken in as part of the Remembrance Gardens and developed into a green space for town centre workers and families visiting the town. ACTION RL to write to Leader ABC	RL/HS
	The March visit to Towers School was discussed and several points were raised which could be used in a future school visit. ACTION RL to propose future structure and circulate for discussion	RL
2.	Chairman's Report RL had nothing to report except the continued frustration regarding BREXIT and the inability of the Government to deliver. This could well affect the forthcoming local elections results. Presentation by Samuel Taylor of EMR Samuel gave a very good presentation of European Metal Recycling Company who have recently opened a state of the art new depot in Cobbs Wood Ashford	

ST asked if a future visit and tour of the facility would be of interest to the members, all agreed a good idea.

RL/ST

ACTION RL to discuss with ST and set a future date and circulate

3. Round Table

DJ –, Reflected on the effects of BREXIT on the retail business. Larger retailers still holding back awaiting decision.

Confident regarding the Easter break and hoping for good footfall.

Phase 1 will be complete in 3 weeks' time and final opening still scheduled for October. The living wall is now in situ and looking good. Leasing is tough and are now offering 1-year leases. Employment take-up has been very good from recent road shows.

Reminder that New Town Road will be closing on the 23 May

HC-P - Town Centre foot-fall up by 5% when rest of Country are seeing a 5% downturn.

As announced, nationally M&S is closing down. There is much interest in the Annual Easter Egg Hunt. Three new services are a possibility shortly, but more information hopefully at next meeting.

The Picture House is exceeding all expectations.

GG -, Mentioned concern regarding the Local Elections and feels for his own seat. Discussed M&S closure, was in Brussels last week regarding High Streets and had meeting with Jake Berry, High Street Minister, last week in London. Ashford is still doing very well compared to others nationally.

RS -, Brexit has stopped many speculators however things are happening it has not yet come to a standstill.

DS -, Consolidating programme of changes for the future, briefly discussed current JCT. We still have problem with Town Centre Parking. RL mentioned the new multi-story car park HC-P confirmed the additional parking and we will discuss further at the next meeting.

HG -, Transport and Civils are flat out at the moment. The BROCK 50 MPH speed limit is still a very controversial subject, together with the non-use of the additional unused west bound lanes.

CAN I APOLOGISE IF THE MINUTES ARE RATHER SKIMPY BUT CHAIRING AND MINUTE TAKING DOES NOT ALWAYS WORK EFFECTIVELY ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU CANNOT READ WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN. HAPPY TO MAKE AMENDMENTS AT NEXT MEETING.

4. Next meeting :- 16 May 4pm at Kent Invicta Chamber