

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
EAST KENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP (EKEDG)

THURSDAY 31ST JANUARY 2019 10.00am

The Yarrow Hotel (EKC Site), Ramsgate Road, Broadstairs, CT10 1PN.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Members Present:

Ray Johnson - Chair

Jonathan Clarke – Morgan Jones

Daniel Sangiuseppe – Castlewood Hotels

Graham Hammond – Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Karen Dean – Brachers LLP

Lee May – Brachers

Jason Lewis – Peter Brett Associates

Tarih Bolton – Martello

Jonathan Smith – East Kent College

Steve Wisbey – NIC Instruments Ltd

Apologies:

Dan Deed –Woodley Coles

Katherine Harvey – Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Mike Marsh - Barclays Bank

Mark Minus – MHA

Philip Clapham – Smith Wooley

Ella Brocklebank –Jenner Construction

Jo Rossi – Locate in Kent

Richard Christian – Betteshanger Park

Kimberley Anderson – Discovery Park

Louise Askew – Thanet District Council

Jo James – Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Agreed.

3. Outstanding Action

- Further to Peter Bettley's previous presentation RJ said that Peter had really enjoyed the meeting and felt that the engagement from the group was great.
- RJ confirmed he would add GH to email list for the group.
- RJ confirmed that KA would be sending report through but was busy at the moment. LM said that he had attended the launch of the new Laboratory Collaboration event at DP. JC said they were having a big drive on pharmaceutical at the moment. LM confirmed that Chris Broom from LIK was now working for Discovery Park.
- Office space still available
- Tech Hub Dover, 20m project – chamber supports.
- Folkestone Glassworks facilities – RJ will send the details through.

4. Chairman's Comments and Report

RJ had nothing major to report but reported as follows:

- RJ attended Chamber Dinner – British Chamber of Commerce, fully engaged in BREXIT.
- RJ attended Liam Fox BREXIT lunch. Which was very positive.
- RJ confirmed a transport logistic company with time critical delivery around Europe had invested in a helicopter in preparation for BREXIT.
- RJ confirmed British Chamber of Commerce were doing lots of work. Good information on the website and RJ said he would send through the link.

RJ mentioned his meeting with Liam Fox. Also that he understands that on the London market there is money available waiting to be released. Lloyds Bank have special task force for BREXIT. The Treasury had a lot more money coming in through International Trade. RJ mentioned a manufacturer in Wales manufacturing baby food turning over £40,000 a year. Looked at Export as funding available. Went over to China had a trade stand and now has 3.9million worth of orders from China. RJ said support for export was phenomenal.

5. Sector Update

TB – Martello, reported that the market had slowed down. High end developers were having to reduce their prices as people were waiting to see what happens. TB said that commercially it was very buoyant.

DS – Castlewood Hotels, reported that January/February are the quietest months for bars/restaurants. He said that there had been a lot of growth in the area last year and was very sustainable in the summer of 2018. Lots have been closing down due to the winter, and less visitors. Some were just operating at weekends. Rocksalt had seen changes in the last 12 months

due to the opening of new bars/restaurants in the area. Things should start to improve March/April time and things were positive despite BREXIT. The problem would be staffing, along with HR and maintaining costs. Bed tax will also affect the sector if it comes into effect. Across Europe accommodation, food and drink are at a reduced VAT rate whereas the UK is still 20% in this sector.

LM – Brachers, reported in the Agricultural sector staffing was a problem as getting labour in for fruit picking etc, due to BREXIT. He confirmed that the commercial property sector at Brachers was busy.

SW – NIC Instruments Ltd, reported that 2018-2019 was looking good. They were expanding and looking for 4 new staff. SW said that he had a Greek guy doing software works for him and that Europeans are waiting to see what happens. They have several youngsters they are training up. SW said he was in Germany at the weekend and talking to a guy in Army and that the Army were having recruitment issues.

SW said that he was looking for new premises but there were no sites in the area and was keen to stay in Folkestone. He has been speaking to KH at Folkestone & Hythe District Council about a site that can potentially be developed. He will then look to develop the current site to residential.

SW said that tendering for work was a problem at the moment due to the fluctuation of currency. Their materials come from outside the UK so purchasing prices have gone up. SW said the advantage for him was that more than 50% of their work goes outside EU so need to prepare for No Deal.

RJ commented that if there was anything Chambers can do to help to let him know.

RJ passed information on to the group from DD at Woodley Coles – construction, things were positive. BREXIT – uncertainty remains and housing sector is the one to watch.

JL – Peter Brett Associates, reported it was 2 speed. Delivery there was a slow down in housing. A few clients were changing their approach. One client has changed 200 timber frame units where you have to commit an outlay of a lot of money, reverting back to brick and block buildings so not forward funding. On the planning side they were working for Lydden. They have lost rally cross championship to Silverstone and are now building new Grandstand and pit facilities to attract new clients.

GH – Folkestone & Hythe District Council, reported relating to funding, there was a Future High Street Fund and Coastal Community Fund. Relating to BREXIT the M20 and putting in place provisions for lorries to stack up, they had 12 weeks to sort out the highway and put in a 2 lane contraflow.

JC commented about holding freight at sites all over the Country and using technology to let them know when they can move.

RJ asked how they would enforce the technology and why isn't infrastructure work being done in advance.

GH said that was what Highways England was trying to do.

GH further reported there was other funding which may be of interest to SW. Also consultants were looking at productivity in East Kent and how to balance Kent.

JC – Morgan Jones, reported that training staff/apprentices important to the future of Kent. Challenges will be in agriculture/produce/hospitality. There are online applications for European workers – individuals working in the UK for last 5 years. Others applying can go into a waiting hold.

Employment levels – there are 32.53 million working in the UK. The workforce is highest level since 1971.

JC said there will be enormous challenges going forward. Productivity is a major problem in the UK compared to European countries. Need to look at how to improve productivity. Businesses need to engage with staff, investing in them, giving career paths.

JC feels that recruitment will really change in the next 10 years.

Employment laws today are not helping with productivity.

National Stats are down – bucking trends here as apprenticeships are good.

JS – East Kent College, in agreement with JC and mentioned funding for upskilling in social media/word/excel.

6. Any other business & topics

RJ said if anyone would like to make presentation to the group, anyone is welcome.

RJ asked if anyone would like any changes to the EKEDG meeting to let him know.

The next meeting would be at Betteshanger with a Tour and Update and meeting 29/05/2019 would be held at Port of Dover.

Date of next meeting

27/03/2019 – Dover District Council