

**Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**  
**Ashford Economic Development Group**

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Ashford College on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at 8.30am.

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
	Nettie Buss (AB)	Chair
	Jo Brown (JB)	
	Rebecca Butcher (RB)	Guest
	Maria Callow (MC)	
	Steve Garnett SG)	
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Shelby Kersley (SK)	Guest
	Richard Lavender (RL)	
	James McComas (JMcC)	
	Massimo Mozzati (MM)	Guest
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Andrew Osborne (AO)	
	Jason Rainbird (JR)	
	Tom Shaw-Dunn (TS-D)	
	Richard Stafford (RS)	
	Gemma Wise (GW)	Guest
<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM</b>	Susan Bonett (SB) Peter Heritage (PH) Tudor Price (TP) Tim Sheppard (TS) 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 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 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**

### **Welcome**

AB introduced welcomed TS-D from Retainagroup. Set up in 1982, Retainagroup produce a security system that's used to protect millions of vehicles and other valuable assets. Their offer has helped support 4,000 theft convictions last year and they have three locations in Ashford.

AB welcomed JMcC, General Manager at Champneys Eastwell Manor Hotel & Spa. They have 150 staff and Eastwell Manor attracts a mix of independent travellers, spa specific visitors and host a range of private and corporate events.

AB mentioned Richard Lloyd, a consultant to the logistics and waste sectors would like to rejoin the AEDG, this was approved.

### **Industry Liaison Officers (ILO's) at Ashford College**

#### Early Years, Health & Social Care

GW mentioned they have collaborated successfully with Hilton Nursing Partners to provide health and social care placements long term. The challenges are the age restrictions for 16-year-olds and healthcare providers securing relevant insurance policies.

#### Catering, Hair & Beauty

SK outlined the success of former students setting up as sole traders. A key barrier since Covid is that many sole traders 'rent a chair' and so do not have the relevant liability insurance. The college has pivoted and nurture students communication skills through customer service roles.

TS-D is a member of the Kent IoD and will investigate how he might help collaborate. RS mentioned he was happy to offer advice about self-employment and finding local premises. JB will consider how this might work for the next academic year.

#### Building Services & Engineering

MM reiterated the difficulty in sole traders securing employer liability insurance for the placements – the employer would need to fund this for T-level. There are also issues around workplace health and safety – under 18s need to be supervised at all times.

AO mentioned a KCC scheme that is piloting projects to fund these type of placements. AO and JB are liaising on this.

#### Creative, Digital & Business

RB discussed the barriers around time constraints on staff to mentor and supervise placements. It can be an administrative burden for some employers, and some are reticent due to a previous negative experience. The ILO's are collaboratively helping resolve these issues.

JR expressed an interest in finding out more about placements and MC will help share contacts and resources to support RB.

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AO suggested that JB can supply ILO content for ABC business newsletter. JR will contact JB about a potential CRM solution to help improve communication issues. RS talked about the benefits of a dedicated session to support the students.

RL discussed the benefits of student familiarisation visits to businesses. NB mentioned about inviting students to attend future AEDG meetings again and being mentored to take minutes. MC mentioned how JB may benefit from contacting Locate in Kent to help share the ILO messaging.

RS reminded all that in the past we have taken part in 'members site visits' and we discussed the possibility of looking to undertake some of our meetings off site in future.

Finally, NB mentioned Nick Shaw from the Stour Centre will join the next meeting, this was agreed.

**6. CLOSE**

AB thanked everyone for their continued support.

Date of next meeting - 8.30am, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 9.40am.

.....Chair – Nettie Buss - Date