

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

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Kent Invicta Chamber on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 8.30am.

<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>
	Nettie Buss (AB)	Chair
	Maria Callow (MC)	
	Steve Garnett SG)	
	Peter Heritage (PH)	
	Katie Hodson (KH)	
	Richard Lloyd (RLL)	
	Andrew Osborne (AO)	
	Jason Rainbird (JR)	
	Tim Sheppard (TS)	
	Richard Stafford (RS) Tom Shaw-Dunn (TS-D)	
<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM</b>	Susan Bonett (SB) Jo Brown (JB) Richard Lavender (RL) James McComas (JMcC) Tudor Price (TP) 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 20<sup>th</sup> June 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**

Discussed that Freedom Leisure is in the process of joining Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. When SB is at the next meeting, follow up AEDG members to be invited to the next parent event in November 2024 showcasing 'Pathways for all' which helps to facilitate T Level placements across Ashford.

#### **4. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

##### **Eurostar**

AO mentioned a potential meeting with Ashford Borough Council and Eurostar scheduled for Autumn 2024. Eurostar is back to 95% patronage, similar to pre-Covid. The public petition to bring back services is at 57,000.

Eurostar are investing in 16 new trains for 2030. It has been announced there will be no intermediary services (Ashford and Ebbsfleet) in 2025. Their core business is to have point to point, capital to capital connectivity.

It was also discussed that the chamber is also taking a dual approach, by raising the issue of competition, with others looking to enter the market and regulation of operators.

##### **Entry Exit System (EES)**

AO mentioned currently the EES is a primary focus. It is unknown what the impact of EES will be to Ashford and surrounding area. There will be a need to engage with new MPs to start lobbying government.

There will be anticipated queuing challenges at St. Pancras, Eurotunnel and Port of Dover. Currently Ashford Borough Council embarking on contingency planning and modelling scenarios around Brock.

##### **New Members of Parliament elected**

In the process of contacting Sojan Joseph MP (Ashford) and Katie Lam MP (Weald of Kent).

##### **Ashford College**

Update to be scheduled for the next meeting.

##### **Future guests**

Suggestions were Deirdre Wells, Visit Kent and Lucy Mayor, Kent Resilience Forum to discuss business issues around Brock and the imminent introduction of the EES, as well as the 2 new MP's – NB to discuss with TF

#### **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AB requested submission of outstanding bios from AEDG members.

Discussion around rural representatives. JR to target members of the KICC.

#### **6. CLOSE**

AB thanked everyone for their continued support.

Date of next meeting - 8.30am, 18<sup>th</sup> August 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