

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

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the AEDG held at Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 at 8.30am.

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

**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 17<sup>th</sup> October 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**

There were no matters arising.

**4. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

**EXIT ENTRY SYSTEM (EES)/BROCK REVIEW**

**DS** expressed his concern for the lack of appreciation from the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) regarding the economic impact of Brock on the Ashford businesses and wider area. He felt the

AEDG concerns were not fully acknowledged at the last meeting and that it was wrong that we are expected to put up with Brock indefinitely. He questioned why Brock is considered to be only temporary and a low priority and why it is overlooked for investment. And questioned if Brock was a low priority, does that mean alternatives to Brock are not being actively considered.

**AB** mentioned the fact that Brock operational for 12 weeks and implemented for only nine days was a poor excuse not to take the economic impact seriously. **AB** emphasised the need for the business voice to be heard not just public sector bodies.

**TS** felt the response to the AEDG concerns were overall defensive and not responsive. He added if Brock is temporary, what is the permanent solution.

**RL** stated it was time that the AEDG needed to be 'at the table'. **TP** agreed to make Brock an agenda item for the next KiCC Board meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

## **PREVIOUS GUESTS AND JOINING AEDG**

**SB** agreed that Ashford College could be considered as a venue for the meeting in March 2025. **AB** suggested Handelsbanken could be invited to a future meeting. **TP** will extend an invite to join the KiCC to Rollo Parsons (**RP**) from Acres Insurance Brokers.

## **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**TP** mentioned the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is keen to be a KiCC patron. He added October 2024 had been the most successful month for recruiting new members. There was also an ambition to capture more feedback about business issues from members and the wider business community across Kent.

**SB** requested for the Thinking Business digital link to be shared more widely [https://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/?sfid=737&\\_sft\\_resource\\_subjects=thinking-business](https://www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk/?sfid=737&_sft_resource_subjects=thinking-business).

**RLL** mentioned that it might be good idea to have AI as a business topic to explore more in the future. **TS** shared that he was facilitating AI workshops in Canterbury for SMEs.

**SB** shared that Ashford College is collaborating with Everon who are supporting with AI technology learnings for health and social care students to understand how it can support those housebound by illness. She suggested Everon may be a business to join the AEDG.

**RL** requested an update on Dungeness and Rolls Royce being on the shortlist for the Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technology contract. **TP** said there was no update yet.

**RL** also asked for AEDG members and wider businesses to sign up for the UK Armed Forces Covenant <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/show-your-support/sign-the-covenant/>. **RL** reiterated serving military people are an important asset to the economy.

**TP** updated on his recent meeting with the Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry to explore collaborative opportunities. He also mentioned the KiCC is hosting a Trading in Singapore webinar on 27<sup>th</sup> November in collaboration with the British Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Trade and Industry and London Gatwick to support the new flight connection to Singapore.

**PH** requested that an update on Newtown Works should be put on the agenda. It was

suggested that Mark Quinn from Quinn Estates could be invited to attend a future AEDG meeting to give an update.

**6. CLOSE**

**AB** thanked AEDG members for their continued support.

Date of next meeting - 6.30pm, 3<sup>rd</sup> December at Eastwell Manor.

There was no further business and therefore the chair declared that the meeting was closed at 9.45am.

.....Chair – Nettie Buss - Date