

## **Draft Notes of the KEB Board meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

Members of KEB, with Sector Business Champions invited, 22 attendees altogether.

### **1. Welcome and introductions.**

Geoff started with a statement outlining three key issues he hoped would be discussed and resolved during the meeting:

1. Sector Consultations – 3 had now taken place with members of the Business Advisory Board and Board involved, acting as Business Champions, but it was important now to plan the follow up to the issues these meeting are raising to maintain the goodwill we have built up.
2. The LEP – there is an Executive Group meeting tomorrow on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June and discussions from this Board will be particularly useful regarding the Enterprise Zone and RGF submissions. Also it is important to reflect on the process we decide on how to choose the Chairman. Our LEP need re-invigorating to maintain the initial momentum we enjoyed.
3. Kent Forum – Ambition Board – members will be updated on the status of the Kent Forum – Ambition Board 1 and will need to consider what KEB's role is in relation to this new board. He noted that the Business Advisory Board was going from Strength to Strength, task and finish groups were being established as a result of the sector conversations, and networking forums may also be formed. We need to discuss what will be the role for this Board as we go forward.

### **2. Meeting notes from 8<sup>th</sup> March.**

All action points have been addressed and matters arising will be dealt with through the items on the agenda.

### **3. The Sector Consultations and follow-up programme**

Megan gave a short presentation on the progress of the Programme of Sector Consultations and follow up to date. She stated that these are key features of KEB's work for this year, and that the purpose of these events is to hear directly from business what their needs are and to stimulate business growth. The policy drivers for the events come from the KCC papers; Bold Step for Kent and the KCC Regeneration Framework, which advocate developing a new deeper and broader relationship with businesses. The three events that KEB has carried out so far, have been able to attract 100-120 businesses each. At the end of the program of consultations, KEB expects to have engaged directly with around 800 – 1000 businesses. Members of the Business Advisory Board and the Board have either acted as host and many have attended these consultation events.

There is a common format to the events, businesses who attend are able to hear from members of their local business community about how their sector is placed and what their particular take is on opportunities in the sub sectors that they represent. All the events reports are available on the KEB website at [www.keb.org.uk](http://www.keb.org.uk).

Feedback is captured in the workshop session following the presentations, and to further capture participants' views, KEB receives feedbacks from questionnaires on the day as well as on line. These have provided KEB with some sharp sector specific issues, but we have also identified that there are also common issues which feature around high level and technical skills, infrastructure and planning, and we will need to consider how we respond to this.

### Actions and follow-up

All the events have been well received, and there has been a general request for more communications of this type, but also for more specific sector informal networking events. Megan explained the importance of the strategic merits of each sector and as a result, KEB has decided to set up some Task and Finish Groups to assess the skills issues raised. KEB is also working to develop targeted bulletin briefings on sector-by-sector basis which will be accessible through the KEB website; [www.keb.org.uk](http://www.keb.org.uk), she explained that these would be updated on a monthly basis. Water use and water conservation have come up as common issues and there has now been follow-ups meetings with the members of the agriculture and horticulture industry with the Environment Agency to discuss these issues.

One suggestion from the agriculture and horticulture meeting was the notion of Kent as a 'PLC', and work has been progress on this, the launch of this concept of a Kent Rural 'PLC' will now take place on 15 July at the Kent County Show in Detling.

Kevin Lynes explained that he had attended all three events, his observation was that these sector conversations are being well received and attended. He commented that KCC now wants to build a new rapport with businesses, and develop this as an ongoing relationship.

Barbara Cooper stated that it is important for KEB/KCC to capture the momentum, maintain the contact, and to continue to facilitate networking, harnessing these enthusiasms.

Paul Carter pointed out that this is the start of a new journey, and is about having a relevant and meaningful conversation with business but agreed that KCC is only just scratching at the surface in terms of reach into these sectors. He re-iterated that the role of the public sector was to engage and make things happen for business.

Douglas Horner said that he was sceptical about the prospects of these events particularly with the land based one but had been very surprise how successful they have been. He pointed out that this may have been because in Kent we have some very supportive institutions and as such we are in a good position to engage with the sectors and offer support.

Paul Wookey made the point that in the UK networking events were not generally well supported, but if informal networking events are established as a result of these meetings, and were successful they could be of great benefit.

Megan, explained that it was at the Low Carbon meeting where this suggestion was made, and in this sector, with such a wide ranges of sub sectors, we would need to be specific about whom to invite, to ensure there was a valid reason to attend.

Stephen Gobbi commented that the opportunities facing the Low Carbon sector in Kent in the next year are going to be incredible with multiple levels of supply chain resulting from the potential anchor tenant (Vestas), KEB/KCC should be looking to help in clustering business on this site.

Douglas Horner asked if Kent Ambassadors might be able to help in attracting potential attendees to these networking events.

Kevin Lynes explained that we needed to use all our contacts to build and champion these networks, like Visit Kent did for the tourism sector.

Robert Clewley asked if there were an opportunity to scale from these new emerging sectors to the mature sectors we already have.

Paul Wookey explained that we mustn't forget that there will be some companies who for commercial reasons will never want to engage with us. There might be a need to map these clusters and as a result use this to draw new investment plans together to help with skills,

infrastructure etc. He went on to suggest that we might like to get some of the major low carbon companies together to present a 'Kent cluster' at national exhibits.

Stephen Gobbi asked if we could cluster together the Low Carbon sector and bid to become a Technology and Innovation Centre TIC?

Paul Carter commented that we need to ensure we have the capacity to deliver, and focus on where we can make a difference.

David Candlin asked if KEB was going to involve the Transport and Logistics, and Finance/Insurance sectors?

Megan explained that nothing has been planned beyond Jan 2012, and that KEB would be looking to see where the next conversations could take place.

#### **4. Local Enterprise Partnerships, Regional Growth Fund and Enterprise Zones: Progress Update**

Ross Gill updated members on the progress of the LEP, Regional Growth Fund and the Enterprise Zone bids.

Regional Growth Fund – the first round of bids launched in 2010 none from Kent were successful. He explained that government had made clear they wanted to see bids that were very much orientated around clear delivery strategies and private sector jobs with clear commercial advantage.

He continued to explain that the second round of bids still needed to be robust, and the fund is worth around £900million nationally, bids closes on 30<sup>th</sup> of June. Private sector companies are also welcome to apply to the Regional Growth funds and have no obligation to seek the endorsement of any public bodies or partnerships. He explained that the majority of effort within KCC was going on a programme bid through East Kent, geared around the closure of the Pfizer site.

BIS have been supportive of KCC putting together the Regional Growth Fund bid, but recommend that the focus as far as possible be on very specific measures that will provide direct assistance to business through developing a package of grants and loans associated with business support. KCC has recently held a small successful business consultation event in Thanet and was planning others to follow for Shepway and Canterbury, to seek business support for the bid..

Unlike the Enterprise Zone and the LEP, no LEP support is required for the RGF proposal.

#### Enterprise Zone

Ross explained that the Enterprise Zone concept was launched immediately following the budget this year, unlike the RGF they do need LEP endorsement. Their two main objectives are; 1) discount on business rate of occupiers on the site of up to £275,000 for business over 5 years and 2) a presumption of simplification of planning within the areas.

The LEP would need to decide which Enterprise Zone proposals from across the LEP area they would support at the meeting tomorrow. Notification of successful Enterprise Zones will be sometime in July with RGF announcement possibly in October.

#### Local Enterprise Partnership

As regards to the LEP, the Executive Team is meeting for an away day on 23<sup>rd</sup> June to discuss the big priorities of the LEP as it moves forward, and which of the six proposed Enterprise Zones will it be supporting.

Geoff Miles then asked members present for their thoughts and comments; and if they would like to suggest their top five priorities for Kent that the LEP might wish to support, and thoughts around the chairmanship of the LEP, so that he could make these recommendations at the meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June.

Paul Carter explained he would be making a presentation at the meeting and he would be concentrating on how we can apply the principles of subsidiarity appropriately across the LEP area, to establish where it makes sense for the LEP to become involved, adding value, and where it is appropriate for Kent to go its own way.

Douglas Horner felt high on his list would be a strategic discussion on planning, which affect business growth across a number of sectors, and right across the LEP area. Also on his list would be the questions of the third Thames crossing, coastal regeneration.

Bernard Spring commented that he felt the LEP should only get involved where its size and power would make a difference. He also agreed that it would be important to get some quick 'wins'.

Megan commented that the LEP doesn't have any dedicated resources. Also that planning, as a topic would be unlikely to attract general support (or resource). She explained that it was important to focus on investment, increasing productive capacity and communications, these were the issues that were raised at the last board meeting.

Paul Wookey commented the issue of inward investment, and that attracting this should be a priority for the LEP working alongside UKTI.

Douglas Horner ask if it would be possible to rate priorities by achievability and impact, this would help in prioritization.

Laura Pelling asked that some attention be paid to how success was to be evaluated.

## **5. Kent Ambition Board 1 – Growing the Economy**

Graeme Brown, Kent Partnership Manager gave a situation report on the Kent Ambitions Boards. Ambition 2 had met that afternoon (22<sup>nd</sup> June), Ambition Board 3 had met the week before and Ambition 1 was still to meet. They had organised a pre meeting for Friday 24<sup>th</sup> where they hoped to identify the challenges and scope the questions that needed to be resolved. There were clearly some areas of interest that would span all three boards, such as skills he explained.

Barbara Cooper explained that the challenge for ambition board 1 would be to identify what would be its USP and role, it would need to establish its relationships with KEB, the BaB, NKKP, EK Regen Board, Margate renewal Partnership, and others. She explained that this ambition board shouldn't involve itself in these activities. It needed to establish what it should be considering that these other aren't, to add value, what was its clear focus.

Geoff Miles recalled at the last KEB meeting that it was suggested that this board (KEB) should become the ambition board 1. What was its role vis a vis KEB in the future, as it appears from the papers presented that they are to be no business involvement on the ambition board.

Paul Carter explained that he could see the need for these ambition boards to meet up perhaps once a year to share thoughts and ideas, and act as a scrutinising board. He explained that he had always assumed that KEB would be the substantive part of this ambition board, which seems to have got lost in this proposal.

Bernard Spring explained he couldn't see the need for this ambition board, or if we did then there wouldn't be a need for the existing KEB board. He couldn't see how a board with no business membership could decide what was good for business, and this sent out the wrong messages.

Paul Carter explained that clearly this needed to be taken away and rethought, and brought back for further discussion.

Geoff Miles reiterated that those round this table were very supportive towards KCC and would offer their help if requested.

## **6. AOB**

The Vision for Kent document is now out for consultation, and link to it can be found on the KEB website at [www.keb.org.uk](http://www.keb.org.uk)

### **Dates of Future Meetings**

#### **Kent Economic Board – 5 to 7 pm**

Tuesday 20 September

Wednesday 14 December

#### **Business Advisory Board – 7.30 to 10.00 am**

Tuesday 19 July

Wednesday 14 September

Tuesday 22 November