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Thurrock Business Board

Wednesday 4 September 2019 at 2pm to 4pm

Meeting venue

IKEA, West Thurrock, RM20 3WJ

Attendees: Perry Glading (PG) (Chair), Lyn Carpenter (LC), Stephen Taylor (ST), Sophie Coston (SC), Lisa Duxbury (LD), Lucy-Emma Harris (LH), Westley Mercer (WM), Andy Millard (AM), BJ Chong (BJ), Lucy Harris (LH), Howard Oldstein (HO), LC, Jacqui Payne (JP), Neil Woodbridge (NW), Robert Edge (RE), Andy Vickers (AV), Ian Lewis (IL), Helen Russell (HR), Kerry Huckstepp (KH), Mike King (MK), Robert Edge (RE), Dorion Hayes (DH)

Apologies: Anna Eastgate, (AE), Andrew Long (AL), Angela O'Donoghue (AO), Emma McCulloch (EMc), Louise Ince (LI), Brett Smallcombe (BS)

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Members of the Board were welcomed by PG and introductions were made.</p>	
2.	<p>Notes of the last meeting and actions arising</p> <p>The Board agreed the notes as an accurate reflection of the last meeting and actions were completed.</p> <p>An update on the LTC and the Business Conference are included on the agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>Thurrock Business Community Views</p> <p>PG asked Business Board members for an update on current trading conditions, issues and opportunities.</p> <p>LD – Good summer with an increased footfall, customers generally spend a lot of time in the store, visiting the restaurant as well as shopping. Currently undergoing transformation that is leading to changes in the way the organisation operate. A new store in Greenwich has opened but the impact on Lakeside is less than expected.</p> <p>WM – The construction industry is on a downward trend this is usual during the summer months but is expected to last until December. There is some Brexit impact – overseas investors are waiting to see if the £ reduces in value before investing. Some employers are struggling to hire labour.</p>	

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<p>MK – Unemployment at its lowest levels in recent history. Universal credit is experiencing some issues but is working well in general, number of people claiming JSA/income support is going down. One issue is that people find it hard to get a job as companies are looking for people with work experience, work experience could help people with confidence issues as well. Big focus on disability confident campaign at the moment.</p> <p>AV – Two particular issues in the current market – uncertainty about the value of the £ and staffing shortages with people looking at where jobs are located. The London Market is slowing down. Nervous about the care home sector at the moment, Generally availability of finance is good.</p> <p>BJ – Since May, the family department has been busy. Housing market seems to be flat and commercial work at normal levels. The month of August had been muted due to it being the holiday period. Work relating to legal disputes is up.</p> <p>LH – Work seems to be increasing but uncertainty about the future means that the company are unlikely to hire anyone - too high a risk at the moment.</p> <p>HO – Strong summer trade. Quayside has been launched and opened. Lakeside is one of the top three intu centres in the country. Fashion at 65%, not doing so well but leisure is attracting a wider range of people. Currently at 95% occupancy.</p> <p>LC – Recruitment has been challenging, currently recruiting 3x directors. An Ofsted inspection is expected at any time.</p> <p>JS – Some difficulties relating to lack of volunteers and funding. Need to promote strengths in the sector. Stronger Together conference coming up.</p> <p>NW – TLS have recently purchased a home care provider and have discovered just how many staff work part time and have two or three jobs at any time. School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) is on its 4th round, there are currently 17 people interested. SENT will be launched in the next couple of months.</p> <p>RE – Inward investment enquiries still being received but a couple of enquiries have been put on hold pending the outcome of Brexit negotiations. A number of investors planning to buy existing companies rather than investing in</p>	
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	<p>their own. Difficult getting people with the right skills for the right job, this is all adding to the logistics sector.</p> <p>DH – Innovation centre is growing and improving engagement with SMEs. Some concern about cross border cooperation with institutions after Brexit. This is causing a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety.</p> <p>AM – There are enormous opportunities in Thurrock at the moment as people look for opportunities to invest outside of but near to London.</p> <p>PG – Dover port 3-4% down in volume, the channel tunnel has an 8% drop. There is less demand for drivers, they are concerned about the economy in the coming months.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Lower Thames Crossing</p> <p>AM updated the Board on the Lower Thames Crossing.</p> <p>Highways England are undertaking survey works. Changes to the LTC design might result in further public consultations. Technical meetings and workshop sessions are currently going on. LH asked about the design changes and AM explained the current position but there may be further changes proposed.</p> <p>LH responded that it feels like the road, if built, will overshoot Thurrock – a real cause for concern.</p> <p>LC explained that the cost of the scheme has increased to approximately £10b because of changes to the way the project will be taxed. A meeting with the Chief Executive of Highways England has been planned. If members want issues raised let Lyn or Andy know.</p> <p>PG asked about the task force. LC stated that meetings used to be once a week but because of the lack of information and progress to report they have now slowed down to once a month.</p> <p>AM moved on to explain that strategic discussions concerning investment in Thurrock are underway with Homes England, MHCLG and others. These discussions could result in investment to address issues in the area and unlock development opportunities.</p> <p>PG asked that there should be an agenda item for the next meeting focussing on bottlenecks and pinch-points in the transport network across the Borough. Initial points identified:</p>	

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	<p>Junction 30 A13 East Facing Slips A1306 – Junction 31</p>	
	<p>Action: All to contact LC or AM about issues on LTC to be raised</p>	<p>All</p>
	<p>Action: EMc to add to agenda for next board meeting</p>	<p>EMc</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Productivity Strategy</p> <p>IL – updated the Board on progress with the South Essex Productivity Strategy and asked the Board for any initial thoughts based on the findings to date:</p> <p>PG asked if there is a dataset or evidence base to accompany the strategy. IL explained that there will be a dataset available to accompany the strategy in due course</p> <p>LH – Felt that the document was a bit flat – it didn’t excite. IL recognised the issue and welcomed any comments to help lift the document</p> <p>PG – agreed with LH. The strength of the South Essex brand needs to come across. At the moment it feels like the document doesn’t reflect the opportunities in the area.</p> <p>LC – said that the document needs to talk to the business community rather than be written in Local Authority language. She also asked how to engage with the business community on the strategy and the development of the implementation plan.</p> <p>The Board also asked that the brand of South Essex is developed and emphasised through the strategy.</p> <p>HR then presented on the development of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). The South Essex Productivity Strategy will help shape and inform the SELEP LIS. HR explained that the development of the LIS a Government requirements but will form the basis of discussion with relevant departments concerning growth and investment in the area – it is important that there are hooks in the strategy that can be used to justify asks of Government.</p> <p>The timeframe for development of the LIS is quite tight with a draft to be issued in January. In the meantime workshops will</p>	

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	<p>be held as opportunities for the business community to engage – further information will be shared via EMc.</p> <p>HR and IL also asked that their presentations are circulated to the Board for information:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Item 5. South Essex Productivity Strategy </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Item 5. LIS Engagement-Thurro </div> </div>	
	<p>Action: EMc to circulate information about workshops</p>	<p>EMc</p>
	<p>Action: Presentations to be sent to Board Members</p>	<p>EMc</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Exiting the EU</p> <p>LC outlined the approach taken to planning for the different outcomes that could be associated with leaving the EU.</p> <p>Risks and issues are being identified and mitigation measures prepared wherever possible. Congestion at Purfleet Port is a particular concern in Thurrock because of the impact on the local and strategic road network. LC outlined the work underway to try to address issue that could arise.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Thames Enterprise Park</p> <p>Andrew Long sent apologies and so the agenda item will be postponed until a future meeting.</p>	
	<p>Action: EMc to invite AL to attend the next TBB meeting</p>	<p>EMc</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Apprenticeships</p> <p>KH gave a presentation on the Apprenticeship Levy and proposals to use some unspent levy at Thurrock Council to support apprenticeships elsewhere in Thurrock rather than return the money to the treasury.</p> <p>Given how complicated the levy system is PG asked if a simple clear message could be put together so businesses understand the offer. KH explained she is working with the Council Communications team to keep the message as simple as she can.</p>	

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	 Item 8. Apprenticeship Levy	
	Action: Future agenda item on apprenticeships	EMc
9.	Updates and AOB	
	PG explained as we have run over our time, the Thurrock Business Conference to be added to the next meeting's agenda.	
	Action: Thurrock Business Conference to be added to next meeting's agenda	EMc

Date of Next meeting

Wednesday 6 November 2019 at 2pm , venue TBC