

MINUTES

Thurrock Business Board

Wednesday 6 November 2019 at 2pm to 4pm

Meeting venue

The Old Courthouse, Grays RM17 5DD

Attendees: Perry Glading (PG) (Chair), Lyn Carpenter (LC), Emma McCulloch (EM), BJ Chong (BJ), Lucy Harris (LH), Neil Woodbridge (NW), Mike King (MK), Louise Ince (LI), Brett Smallcombe (BS), Andy Millard (AM), Danielle Lawrence (DL), Andy Vickers (AV), Justin Thomas (JT), Stephen Taylor (ST), Matt Kiely (MK), Kristina Jackson (KJ), Dorion Hayes (DH), Anna Eastgate (AE), Sophie Coston (SC)

Apologies: Lisa Duxbury (LD), Westley Mercer (WM), Howard Oldstein (HO), Angela O'Donoghue (AO), Robert Edge (RE), Steven Swaby (SS), Ian Lewis (IL)

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Members of the Board were welcomed by PG and introductions were made. A minutes silence was held for the tragedy in Purfleet where 39 victims died.</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>ST stated that the South East Productivity Strategy was at the stage of being fleshed out, workshops have started and will be running over the next couple of weeks.</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>BJ – It's been a slow start to the year but quite vibrant, people are just getting on with it. Residential is quite strong, people doing lots of mortgage financing.</p> <p>LH – No huge amount of new businesses, mainly working with current clients. Waiting for the £1 to drop in value.</p> <p>NW – Social Enterprises – Could do a presentation in a future meeting in order to show the new prospectus .Employers are finding it tough to employ staff.</p>	

MINUTES

	<p>LI – Thurrock Network Group is going well with new and old members attending regularly. Businesses have said that renting/buying office space is too expensive, have decided to just work from home – more cost effective.</p> <p>BS – 30 members. 10% more business throughout the year, 16% up this year. Focus is on SME’s, this is working well.</p> <p>AM – The interest in investing in the borough is high.</p> <p>MF – Very quiet recently and hasn’t picked up. The forecast for next year is not looking good.</p> <p>AV – Busy October with no issues. There is concerns about the care home sector. This time of year is a good time for garden centres.</p> <p>MK – Unemployment remains at its lowest level. Christmas recruitment in retail has not been as good/as much as it usually is this year. Recent redundancies in Thomas Cook and Mother care could be contributing to this.</p> <p>KJ – There has been an increase in charities starting in Thurrock</p> <p>DH – Lots of investment and funding opportunities in enterprise.</p> <p>PG commented that generally speaking everyone is ok at the moment.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>New River</p> <p>JT gave an overview of the company – New River is focused on buying, managing and developing retail and Leisure assets across the UK. With 35 shopping centres, they are one of the UK’s largest owner/managers of Convenience and community shopping centres. Working in partnership with over 60 different local authorities to regenerate and protect the towns they are invested in. They bought Grays Shopping Centre in June 2018.</p> <p>Retailers are getting deliveries from larger delivery vehicles, there is not enough space to accommodate them all, and they are causing damage to the roof. Challenges include the increasing popularity of online shopping, some retailers are coping well with this by having both a physical and online presence.</p>	

MINUTES

	<p>Customers needs to find a reason to go out to shopping centres and high streets other than to just shop i.e. community centres, doctors, leisure offer etc. Grays is ready for change.</p> <p>Town Centre Framework – Grays is well connected via the train lines, bus routes etc. It is suitable for more residential units to help make it a more desirable location.</p> <p>New River are looking at opportunities for the shopping centre to take advantage of the proposed underpass to replace the railway crossing. JT explained that there is the possibility of lowering the high street the northern side of the underpass so it is on the same level as the area below the railway line this could create a better access point to a shopping area through an open square area.</p> <p>Questionnaire feedback forms have been produced to help obtain an initial sense of the priorities of the customers, retailers and visitors in Grays. The results of this questionnaire will be used to help influence the role of Grays Shopping Centre in the regeneration of Grays Town Centre.</p> <p>Timeframes for the underpass project and open square are currently in the early stages, it is expected to be at the planning stage by mid-2020. There will be an opportunity for conversations with businesses to gain feedback on what they think.</p> <p>LC explained that Grays has been shortlisted for the Town Centre fund, with potentially up to £25 million for Grays. Community engagement is important however as a general election is coming up we are now going into purdah so this can't be discussed publicly for the time being – collective input is important.</p> <p>PG commented that it's a good idea to not have an underpass, the proposed alternative will have better connectivity and will avoid the risk of any anti-social activity.</p>	
	<p>Action: EM to pass KJ details to JT to circulate contact details of community groups in Thurrock</p>	EM
5.	<p>TEP</p> <p>DL explained that the vision for Thames Enterprise Park is the creation of a unique assemblage of work, research and education in a fully sustainable environment that sets standards for high quality design and place making. The proposal aims to create four hubs -Sustainable Industries, Energy, Food and Amenity.</p>	

MINUTES

	<p>They have also proposed making taller buildings for logistics and a multi-modal logistics hub.</p> <p>They are looking to partner with colleges and higher education, the education industry to fill the site with what is needed.</p> <p>As C2C are almost at capacity there is the possibility of linking other public transport (bus) to the site, TEP are currently looking at this and are in discussions with C2C at the moment.</p> <p>PG commented that the rail link/connection is the biggest problem, pressure needs to be taken off the roads.</p> <p>As there is good rail connectivity in Grays TEP have proposed to run an off peak freight service in order to repurpose passenger cars, can this be utilised well? It was agreed that more should go on rail but not to disturb passenger travel – only to be run during off peak hours.</p> <p>LC stated that the voice of South Essex is becoming positive and influential, the A13 is the key to unlocking Barking and Dagenham into London.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Transport and Infrastructure</p> <p>A13 – East Facing Slips MK gave an overview of the project. In the Lakeside area traffic is becoming an issue. An outline business case is being developed to present options to the Department for Transport.</p> <p>5 leading schemes have gone through the initial shifting process, there will be further discussion before a submission in February 2020.</p> <p>A full business case will be prepared including the options taken forward detailing design and costs with a £50 million funding envelope. It is hoped the scheme can commence in 2022.</p> <p>Work for the East Facing Slips will be avoided during key retail times i.e. Christmas etc.</p> <p>Lower Thames Crossing AE gave an overview of the LTC.</p> <p>Consultations ended December 2018, . Issues raised from the Thurrock responses were air quality, more congestion, impact on the greenbelt, it should be free for Thurrock residents and it should be going across Canvey instead.</p>	

MINUTES

	<p>AE stated there are issues regarding funding, what is the benefit to businesses?</p> <p>MK explained that there is to be a discussion about the updated model, Thurrock growth is to be added to the model.</p> <p>Transport bottlenecks MK explained that they are currently identifying pinch points across the borough and invited comments from the board</p>	
7.	<p>Updates</p>	
	<p>ASELA LC explained that it is working well, opening doors to issues such as the LTC. More discussions need to be made.</p> <p>Brexit Update Good response times regarding the lorry incident, issues were dealt with well and in a timely manner. As a general election is to be held, we are in purdah as of Monday.</p> <p>Local Plan AM explained that it is important to take forward. The value and level of engagement was good regarding the Your Place Your Voice initiative. The next key date will be the draft plan in 2020, the plan will come into place in 2022.</p> <p>South East LEP/South East Productivity Strategy ST explained that the expressions of interest stage for the Growing Places Fund has now closed. It was open for a limited period of time and there was not much demand for GPF as it is a loan with a relatively short repayment period rather than grant funding</p> <p>PG suggested going out to groups to talk to them about what is available in future. ST agreed to review procedures for sharing information on funding available.</p>	
	<p>Action: ST to review procedures for publicising LEP funding when it is available</p>	ST
8.	<p>AOB</p>	
	<p>EM introduced the reverse advent calendar which is being run by the Thurrock Food Bank. Information to be circulated to the board.</p>	

MINUTES

	EM reminded the board about the Civic Awards, they are looking for sponsors and nominations.	
	Action: EM to circulate information to the board on the Reverse Advent Calendar	EM
	Action: EM to circulate Civic Award applications	EM
9.	Business Conference	
	EM explained that the High House Production Park has been provisionally booked for the conference for Wednesday 4 March 2020. PG thought that the date might be too soon given the outcome of the upcoming general election, would be good to wait and see what happens. There should be a discussion whether to go ahead with the proposed March conference date in January when we will have a better idea of what's going on.	
	Action: ALL to feedback any ideas for the conference theme	ALL

Date of Next meeting

Wednesday 12 February 2020 at 2pm , venue TBC