

# Thurrock Business Board

## Minutes

Wednesday 8 July 2020

3pm to 4:30pm

### Meeting venue

Microsoft Teams – virtual meeting

**Attendees:** Perry Glading (PG) (Chair), Lyn Carpenter (LC), Emma McCulloch (EM), Stephen Taylor (ST), Lucy Harris (LH), Louise Ince (LI), Andy Vickers (AV), Howard Oldstein (HO), Westley Mercer (WM), Andy Millard (AM), Angela O'Donoghue (AO), Brett Smallcombe (BS), Kristina Jackson (KJ), Ian Lewis (IL), Rebecca Horne (RH), Sophie Coston (SC)

### Apologies:

Item No.	Subject	Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	
	Members of the Board were welcomed by PG.	
2.	<b>Notes of the last meeting and actions arising</b>	
	Accurate minutes, good reflection of the last meeting.	
5.	<b>ASELA</b>	
	[Agenda item to be brought forward as LC had another meeting to attend]	
	ASELA: LC explained that businesses and opportunity south Essex were involved in working towards a prospectus for 31st July. Prospectus focuses on transport, connectivity, jobs, growth skills, economic strategy, COVID-19 and Brexit.	<b>Action: to give update on ASELA</b>
	There must be a better way of using the river for connectivity. Document underpinned with economic position, how much growth we can achieve, how many houses we need to deliver over South Essex. This will be approached with an open mind, other authorities are signed up to it, voluntary sectors, businesses etc. The timescale of this means it should be submitted by 31st July, this should be the right time for a deal with government in autumn, summer/early September might be conversations from government/local authorities to take proposed government changes etc, Sept/Oct. There isn't one single timeline, it's open for discussion and timelines etc.	

	<p>PG asked where is the win for Thurrock businesses?  LC stated that there would be ambition, doing things that Thurrock can't do on their own. Digital connectivity would be a benefit to businesses, the scale of things Thurrock can't do alone, things can happen quicker i.e infrastructure to improve delivery of place. Wont just benefit and effect Thurrock, will work on a bigger scale.</p> <p>AO asked about the evolution of the skills budget for adults e.g. having a mayor?  LC explained not determining a government structure yet as want to find best opportunity for South Essex now, want to be flexible for everyone, discussions need to be made.</p>	
	<p>LH asked if the business board will get a sight of this prospectus document?  LC advised that she will check to see what can be shared at this stage. Government want to explore options before turning into a debate etc. will look to see what we can share for a future meeting.</p>	<p><b>Action: can document be shared?</b></p>
	<p>PG added that MCHLG are concerned about confidentiality, happy to share condensed version of prospectus at OSE meeting next week – after meeting can cascade doc down to the board  KJ – how communities can work alongside this, issues with job support, mental health etc. where is space for this alongside growth? (Thoughts from voluntary sector)</p> <p>LC – Thurrock council, financial position challenging for next year, will depend on what government do in next few months, in position of reviewing what they're currently doing, reviewing services in Thurrock.</p>	
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Thurrock business community views: response to COVID-19/recovery</b></p> <p>AV – announcement today, residential client pleased. Clients saying we'll right this year off, next year will be better. Underspensing is an issue. Clients more upbeat, see recovery as 2 – 3 years to get back to pre covid position – resigned to the fact we can get over it. PG asked if there is a particular gap in where government are giving in support? Employee numbers, what they need and when they'll need them, clients want to retain them and use at a later period, would like to see furlough period extended so they can get people back into work</p>	

	<p>BS – network group, same as before, mixed bag, half of businesses doing okay, some people coming back into work now, regular zoom meetings.</p> <p>Have been busy, people changing the way they are working, internet connections from home, want type of connection at home they used to have at work. People are Drifting away from London, are okay with working from home. Overall doing okay. Businesses working from home rather than office, might not know how effective this will be in terms of work.</p> <p>HO – eventful 2-3 weeks. 70% retailers open. Majority stores are open, good footfall through the door. Gone quieter this week, first couple of weeks very busy. Almost all eating places open and back to normality, eventful and challenging few weeks.</p> <p>PG how are you finding with tenants paying rents etc? HO pressure, no paying car park, still collecting rent but not as much as they would like. Interest in retail space available.</p> <p>KJ – mixed bag, voluntary sector things are changing in a weekly basis, 40-50% places dropped in activity, increase in support needs coming through i.e mental health, food poverty, legal advice re job loss redundancy, half of people don't feel they have cash flow to meet problems coming up i.e. digital etc.</p> <p>PG what initiative are they having a push on? KJ where money have been freed up to voluntary sector, very little came down to local organisations, how do they now push this to more local to small/medium organisations</p> <p>AO – Money is being given to DWP to increase job coaches.</p> <p>LI – same as before, tough time for clients. Network meeting, regular weekly meetings rather than once a month, clients come to a stop since covid, good to meet regular for mental health. Time to check in with everyone to make sure they are okay, clients are righting off this year and hoping next year will be better, staying positive, learning new things/skills. Business area still struggling, hoping next couple of weeks to improve. Everyone working from home, even if offices were open they would continue working from home as its cheaper, can't afford to go back to office space.</p> <p>LI clients have taken some government loans which have helped somewhat/worried about paying back, clients choosing not to take government support as don't want pressure to pay back. Good half of people who used to come to network meetings don't come to online meetups. Client have been asking LI when next meeting will be</p>	
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	<p>LH – nothing changed, business carried on like normal. Lot of businesses doing something slightly different, interesting projects re design etc. good economic support, been experiencing furlough apathy, reflects mental state and how people have coped.</p> <p>PG asked if furlough apathy reverted from announcement today? Or with individuals?</p> <p>LH if been out of work a long time hard to get everyone back up to speed, people not as comfortable to come back to work as would have though (suppliers etc.)</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Apprenticeships</b></p> <p>AO – government £2,000 for businesses to take on young apprentices, apprentice market has fallen through the floor. Most SMEs said not prepared to take on apprentices, can't carry out supervision for apprentices, and can't work alongside students to show them what to do re social distancing. Big intake in September, reduction in numbers.</p> <p>Government trainee ship programme, funding to take on work placements. Applications for apprenticeships has gone up, was going to offer traineeship until employers happy to take on apprentices to give students something to be doing.</p> <p>£2bill to create new jobs for people 16-24 at risk of long term unemployment, jobs will probably go to graduates, lots of young people deciding not to go to university, prefer to apply for an apprenticeship instead.</p> <p>Noting about upskilling/retraining adults, more focus on younger people.</p> <p>PG info that can be shared with group and OSE?</p> <p>AO will look at detail of announcement.</p> <p>LH right by saying nothing for adults, people asking for help, should be something for adults.</p> <p>AO they want higher level stuff, at the moment, will need to take out a loan which most people won't want to do.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Emerging plans for recovery phase</b></p> <p>AM – Revision of economic development strategy. Local plan delayed because of lower Thames crossing.</p> <p>ST – [Presentation]</p> <p>ST – ASLEA timeframe in mind, when prospectus is made, will influence and feed into engagement they have across the borough. Can add benefit into Thurrock and South Essex.</p> <p>PG what do you view as being a success at the end?</p> <p>ST need to test out through the table, success would be to keep claimant count down and to get people back into work asap. Impact on mental health and wellbeing and economic</p>	

	<p>standing. To get back to employment level we had at the beginning of this year.</p> <p>PG asked if there was any comment for ST about presentation AM adding to what ST said, question of resilience. Sustainable and resilient.</p> <p>KJ pleased to see voluntary sector in this plan.</p> <p>ST next meeting to go through oxford economic report to share with people? Where we need to focus on going forward. Take on board comments and views of people working in sectors.</p> <p>Money allocated through SELEP to OSE AM – projects have come forward, 5 are Thurrock specific. OSE working on what priorities are.</p> <p>AM update on freeports – consultation closing date 13 July – government looking to introduce Freeport model. Pushing for support on proposals.</p> <p>LTC – AM conversations with highways England, still on track. About to start next consultation on design.</p>	
7.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <hr/> <p>No other business</p>	

<p><b>Date of Next meeting</b></p> <p>9 September 2020, 2pm</p>
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