

# Thurrock Business Board

## Minutes

Wednesday 9 September 2020

2:30pm to 4:30pm

### Meeting venue

Microsoft Teams – virtual meeting

**Attendees:** Perry Glading (PG) (Chair), Emma McCulloch (EM), Stephen Taylor (ST), Lucy Harris (LH), Louise Ince (LI), Andy Vickers (AV), Howard Oldstein (HO), Wesley Mercer (WM), Andy Millard (AM), BJ Chong (BJ), Kristina Jackson (KJ), Andy Melbourne (AME), Ian Anderson (IA), Jon Birkett (IB), Justin Thomas (JT), Angela O'Donoghue (AO)

**Apologies:** Brett Smallcombe, Lyn Carpenter, Michael Ibiayo, Neil Woodbridge, Ian Lewis

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>	
	<p>The Board agreed the notes as an accurate reflection of the last meeting.</p> <p>AO: Point 4 from previous minutes should state 'devolution of skills', and there is usually a big intake in September but not this year</p> <p>Action points were discussed and PG confirmed the ASELA prospectus has been circulated</p>	
3.	<b>Thurrock Business Community Views: response to COVID-19</b>	
	<p>AO: Receiving new guidance daily regarding Covid-19 in the education setting. Enrolled students, over target for 16-19 age group attending college. Student welcomes completed. Most 16-19 group start college W/C 14<sup>th</sup> September with two days per week at college and the rest delivered online. Unpredictable times ahead but all geared up for Covid guidelines. Social distancing in place and explained how this</p>	

<p>will work. Students will be back visiting Grays town centre due to attendance at college.</p> <p>PG: Queried the impact this has on education.</p> <p>AO: Apprenticeships will be reduced, the Kickstart programme with a maximum of 30 per employer.</p> <p>AME: Early Years provision for 0-5, 15 employed staff with 2 apprentices. Busy and lots of enquiries. Testing ongoing. This week tests and results more difficult. Parent's rotas changing due to WFH and returning back to work. As an Early Years setting doing well. 30-40% reduction in places taken up possibly by Jan. Early Years section in the Grays area doing really well.</p> <p>AV: Busy times. Success stories from clients. Supply BC industry with contract for 40 new trucks and 45 new jobs. Businesses in Thurrock clawed back deficit, other businesses stayed open and worked well during lockdown. Furlough ends 4<sup>th</sup> November. Developing online business programme. Bank is paying for 15 hour programme. Analysing and adapting to Covid impact. Brexit is now on the new agenda with potential new news released today. Business is picking up as people are now doing things. Bounceback loans – 6-12 months with no payments. Debt has increased. Next year will be able to provide a better update on the impact.</p> <p>PG: Queried how larger companies were doing.</p> <p>AV: Colleagues saying smaller businesses are being quite resilient, and large companies doing okay.</p> <p>BJ: Stamp duty relief helping. Postcode recovery with new schemes and initiatives. Retail and hospitality sectors have issues.</p> <p>HO: Have been retail challenges but surprised with quick return to the new normal. Larger companies may not be doing as well. Footfall down 20%, was as low as -55% YOY. Trade outside hours as reduced opening. Leisure operators now back open. Lockdown will have a big effect and unsure about Christmas. Apart from that, pleasantly surprised with comeback.</p> <p>PG: Asked about average spend</p> <p>HO: Jewellers and Primark have seen high expenditure. Transactions are higher than normal. Food retailers down. Eat out to Help Out has helped with food.</p>	
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	<p>IA: Icen working on projects Thurrock want; Potter's Barn (Aveley), housing in East Tilbury and Stanford le Hope. Arena Essex project to be signed off. Housing growth through strategic planning. East Tilbury have a regeneration scheme and masterplan.</p> <p>JT: Grays has seen a strong bounce back. Footfall down 85% YOY, now roughly at -20%. Supporting retailers with reduced service costs and provisions to help with running costs. Optimistic about the future but cautious about today's news.</p> <p>PG: Commented on impressive figures considering Thurrock Council are mostly WFH and college has been closed.</p> <p>JT: Footfall good indicator on bounce back. Positive news.</p> <p>KJ: Guidelines keep changing and disruption is not helping. Shielding has been lifted but numbers down on courses/ groups and micro businesses. Increase in domestic violence and debt. Supporting residents through the Winter months. Stronger Together partnership working well. Mobile Covid testing in Corringham Monday and Wednesday.</p> <p>LI: Original clients on hold until 2021. Weekly networking meetings. Step back for a few people, no work. Enthusiasm needed. Mixed responses received. People writing books during lockdown. Passing on knowledge to others. Emails have been negative and need to restore positivity. Some seem to have lost their way.</p> <p>PG: Queried on any businesses closing</p> <p>LI: A few have stopped trading. Massage therapist closing.</p> <p>LH: Pixel has work loyalty from long term clients. Some have brought projects forward. Focus on wellbeing, film, web, brand and advertising. Documentary made with release date 13<sup>th</sup> October. Film festivals are not happening. Currently in a good place and doing okay.</p> <p>AM: Thurrock has business challenges and working closely with the Cabinet. Looking at possible interventions, revenue and capital programme. Health indicator in planning income, down by half compared with last year. Investing and building opportunities show neighbouring boroughs down by 20%, Thurrock down by only 6%. Good place to invest.</p> <p>PG: Queried whether this was a good time to invest.</p>	
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	<p>AM: investment interest is still there.</p> <p>WM: News is positive, surprised by this. Government measures supporting with millions of pounds has helped. London looks set to struggle and not likely to change. Working patterns are changing. Developers and land owners interested and positive for South Essex development. South Essex has the best growth hub.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>BEST Growth Hub</b></p> <p>JB: Having issues with microphone not working.</p> <p>PG: Move on to the next item and come back to this at the end of the meeting</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>ASELA update</b></p> <p>AM: Proposal submitted 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020, Local Government Minister has stepped down. Current position – national debate. Prospectus identified 5 priorities and 10 major areas of work identified. Integrated functional area. Regional dimension missing up until now, key step in ASELA progress.</p> <p>PG: ASELA programmes are all on the same page, with cross border working throughout South Essex. Asked if anybody had questions for AM.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Recovery and Growth</b></p>	
	<p>AM: Local Plan update provided and moving forward with the new plan has been delayed by the Lower Thames Crossing project. Things are moving forward now. Government have produced a white paper planning reform. There are issues of concern but the paper is welcomed on the whole. The proposal will simplify the planning process. Infrastructure funding is welcomed. Working towards submitting the Local Plan end October 2020. Would like Thurrock to act as a pilot borough and advocate the paper. Within the next 2 weeks CLG officials will meet.</p>	<p>AM to provide update on Local Plan at next meeting in November</p> <p>ST to ensure You Train You Gain is resent to everyone</p>
	<p>PG: Pointed out there have been talks with developers. Concerns on planning decision momentum.</p> <p>AM: Local Plan to be put forward as soon as possible. Continued development within South Essex, but lack of available land. Once Local Plan adopted can move forward ASAP.</p>	


	<p>IA: Brownfield site process needs to be simplified. Developer's negotiation needs to be simpler. Strategic planning around Green Belt land is required. Behind on delivering the housing demand. South Essex and Thames Gateway needs a white paper. Need to encourage a task force. Radical changes are necessary so the purpose isn't lost.</p> <p>WM: Epping Forest Council have allocated land for housing. A pilot in Thurrock would be really good. Other local authorities are fighting the changes but would make Thurrock a more commercial area.</p> <p>AM: The planning system needs to change and the pilot can help with this. In 30 plus years in planning this is the biggest change seen.</p> <p>AO: Queried the Local Plan being on hold and possibly being replaced with the white paper.</p> <p>AM: The progression of the Local Plan will continue, with the white paper being an addition. The white paper will shape the final changes and help progress with the changes.</p> <p>AO: Asked for a timescale.</p> <p>AM: No date for the next stage at the moment.</p> <p>IA: Taskforce looking at the white paper not being kept on. Consultation going out, to keep task force and stay true to principles.</p> <p>ST: Outlined refresh economic strategy programme. Not statutory document so can progress quicker. Draft version completed and on website for review. Essentially the document outlines that before COVID we were doing okay but we had a focus on improving productivity and skills. COVID has had a significant impact - unemployment statistics are high and continue to stay high. The Council have focused on sharing information and on distributing Government grants and support. Now looking at additional support such as Buy Local campaigns. This could support the whole of South Essex.</p> <p>Longer term target is to work with key partners, design and develop an implementation plan that should be completed ready for 2021 and will be refreshed on a regular basis. First stage of implementation ready for 2020. Going to consultation next week for views and comments to be received.</p>	
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	<p>PG: Funding process for Thurrock Projects such as 'Get Building Fund'. There were limited numbers of schemes ready to go and we do need schemes ready to go now to help with the recovery plan and take advantage of funding opportunities as they arise.</p> <p>ST: Pipeline to be refreshed to keep these projects strong. Immediate action is required to recover from Covid however we shouldn't lose site of the medium and longer term.</p>	
	<p>PG: Businesses need to know where to go find Business Buzz. EM: Business Buzz is available on the Thurrock website and available to all.</p>	Action: EM to send link for signing up to Business Buzz
	<p>PG: Asked about Kickstart Programme</p> <p>ST: COVID has had a direct impact on apprenticeships but supporting young people aged 16-24 is a priority. Kickstart programme is about offering a 6 month placement in work, similar to old Future Jobs Fund programme. South Essex conversation underway for the Local Authorities to offer a south essex wide scheme. Discussions are ongoing.</p> <p>AO: We need to insist on training as part of placements but guidance is not clear. The 6 months working should be upskilling. We should try to use education budgets – and package together to support this.</p> <p>KJ: Umbrella body can form partnerships to deliver training.</p> <p>LI: Asked what is available for older adults.</p> <p>AO: Government has provided no new money for adults. People may need to change career and so sad there is no more Government support. Offer is limited to particular eligible people but South Essex College offer some courses, £2M Secta funds training for construction related activity. Thurrock Adult Community College has some funding available to offer provision as well.</p> <p>LH: Funding for adults – bursary funding available for ex-military and people with connections to the military within their family eligible. Attention needs to be given to logistics.</p>	
	<p>ST: You Train, You Gain to be resent out to everyone.</p>	Action: resend you train, you gain ST
<b>7.</b>	<b>Town Fund</b>	

	<p>JT: Towns Fund has been made available to particular towns across the country to support the levelling up agenda. Tilbury and Grays in Thurrock. Boards created in each town to guide and develop proposals.</p> <p>Grays board was created in January 2020. Need to identify projects to be put forward – 34 potential projects identified, reduced to 9. LSH appointed to help with projects, timelines and budget. January cohort submission planned.</p> <p>Can request up to around £25m. Applications for more are possible but MHCLG will scrutinise carefully. We need to understand the budget for the 9 items identified to see if we need to increase the request to above the £25M.</p> <p>There is also an application for Future High Streets Fund in Grays. This is a competitive process but again for a significant amount of money and is intended to fund capital schemes. Advisory boards being set up and everyone is welcome to participate.</p> <p>LH: Levelling up of towns and urban regeneration is required. Tilbury project board developing proposals but not clear on ask yet. Funding is project lead and value of the funding depends on the project.</p> <p>Advisory group for ages 20-25 who live/ work and go the school in the area is key for engagement. Public consultation would be required. Riverside Grays and Tilbury have different projects and in Tilbury there is a particular focus on promoting the history and the link to the river front, housing, parks, open spaces and library. Tilbury has won £500k advance payment to kickstart the work and secure some quick wins. Local community is jaded and need the project to start. Website for this is coming.</p> <p>PG: Good choices and regeneration is needed. Funding is everywhere and we need to make sure we don't lose opportunities.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Lower Thames Crossing</b></p> <p>AM: Update given on the Lower Thames Crossing, in Anna's absence.</p> <p>Two consultations in quick succession ending April and August. August was the Design Refinements Consultation. Highways England DCO application due to be received in October 2020.</p>	

	<p>The next stage is Phase 2 - economic impact phase – to identify prosperity and economic growth within the borough. There are still concerns around traffic modelling and local impacts and futureproofing the scheme.</p> <p>PG: Queried whether the taskforce was still open</p> <p>AM: Taskforce is still operating and a recent meeting has been held.</p> <p>WM: Supply chain businesses can invest in the Lower Thames Crossing. Further and higher education can be provided if money is available.</p> <p>AO: Skills need has been discussed. Will develop steel fixing, with supply chain to provide training. Bidding for contracts taking place.</p>	
<b>9.</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	<p>KJ: Stronger Together is a business support platform for the local community, work can be showcased and join up services. Link being sent out to take part.</p> <p>PG: Suggested the link be added to Business Buzz</p> <p>IA: Queried the development of Paramount studios.</p> <p>AM: Outline for the project will now include an area north of the river in Tilbury. Park and Sail across the river can be offered. Negative is whether the road network can take the traffic, plus if economic/ spin offs will be good for the borough. Similar facility opportunity in Grays with a rail and sail service. DCO application due later this year.</p> <p>LH: Community consultation group would be good so we can be proactive. The proposal is good for the community but concerns about traffic. Can update the Board with any future updates.</p> <p>PG: Thames Estuary Growth Board – meeting this week. Freeports – paper going to Board Friday. November meeting can provide an application update.</p>	EM: Add link to Business Buzz for Stronger Together platform
<b>4.</b>	<b>BEST Growth Hub</b>	
	<p>JB: Apologies for the technical issues. Slideshow presented (attached)</p>	



	 <p>GROWTH HUB - An EvolutionTH.ppsx</p> <p>JB: Growth Hub have been incredibly busy and now experiencing up to 6 weeks waiting list for business diagnostic</p> <p>Retail and leisure sector is critical with things moving quickly with Covid updates. There are 30 business support providers across Essex as a collective. Supported 3000 business pre-covid. Business festival scheduled for 2021 – awards dinner.</p> <p>KJ: Remit includes social enterprises so a great opportunity to link up with CVS groups.</p> <p>JB: Will increase the knowledge of the voluntary sector, still create revenue, but not profit.</p> <p>PG: Asked whether this connected with the work ST mentioned earlier.</p> <p>JB: Creating economic landscape which is strong, where normal businesses would pay for business intelligence.</p> <p>PG: Invited JB to attend again to present test cases.</p>	
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<p><b>Date of next meeting</b></p> <p>Wednesday 25 November 2020, time 3pm teams meeting (online)</p>
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