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Minutes of the **Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting** held in the Darwin Room, Innovation Centre Medway, from 2.30pm to 5.00pm on **18 May 2012**.

**Present:**

**Board members and observers:**

Rob Bennett, BBP Regeneration (Chair)  
Cllr Andrew Bowles, Leader, Swale Borough Council  
Cllr John Burden, Leader, Gravesham Borough Council  
Cllr Rodney Chambers, Leader, Medway Council  
Mark Dance, Cabinet Member, Kent County Council  
Jennie Donovan, Environment Agency  
Cllr Jeremy Kite, Leader Dartford Borough Council  
Ann Komzolik, North West Kent College  
Naisha Polaine, Homes and Communities Agency  
David Simms, Lafarge Cement

**Also present:**

Barbara Cooper, Kent County Council  
Neil Davies, Medway Council  
Ross Gill, Kent County Council  
Martin Hall, Greening the Gateway Kent & Medway  
Graham Harris, Dartford Council  
Katharine Harvey, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
David Hughes, Gravesham Borough Council  
Abdool Kara, Swale Borough Council  
David Liston-Jones, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
Linda Searle, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
Lee Shostak, Shared Intelligence

**Apologies:**

Kamal Aggarwal, Thomson, Snell and Passmore  
Professor Tom Barnes, University of Greenwich  
Rehman Chishti MP  
Robert Goodman, Lend Lease  
Andrew Pearce, Environment Agency

**Item 1: Welcome and Introductions**

1. The Chair brought to the Board's attention that this was the first Board meeting since Kevin Lynes' untimely death. He informed members that he had written to Kevin's family on behalf of the TGKP Board to offer condolences. He said that

Kevin had been a great supporter of the Partnership and a tremendous asset to the Board. He would be sadly missed.

2. The Chair advised the Board that as a new date for the TGKP Board Breakfast Workshop (rescheduled from 4 April) could not be found, it had been decided to allocate the bulk of this afternoon's Board meeting for this purpose.

## **Item 2: Minutes of TGKP Board Meeting held on 20 February 2012 and Matters Arising**

3. **The draft Minutes were agreed.** On Matters Arising:

- Paragraph 1: Stephen Clare attended the last Board meeting on 20 February and had since contacted David Liston-Jones to say that, although Nat West were committed to initiatives, they didn't feel they were able to take up a place on the Board. However, they would deal with specific issues if we needed their advice.
- Paragraph 3, 4th Bullet Point: This had not yet been actioned, but hoped would take place some time after the Olympics.
- Paragraph 4: Robert Goodman had been appointed as a TGKP Board member.
- Paragraph 5: Actioned.
- Paragraph 12: The Growth Plan had now been produced and copies were available.
- Paragraph 15: Actioned.
- Paragraph 26: Actioned.

4. Order of Agenda Items

It was agreed at the beginning of the meeting that the running order of the Agenda be changed and Item 4 should take place before Item 3.

## **Item 4: A Local Nature Partnership for the Thames Gateway?** Paper TGKP(12)7 – Martin Hall, Director, Greening the Gateway Kent & Medway.

5. Martin Hall introduced his paper which set out the background to the proposals for Local Nature Partnerships. LNPs did not come with any core funding from Government. The National Planning Policy Framework stated that local authorities would be required to have regard to the views of their local LNP on planning matters. The issue before the Board was whether to agree to an application being made to DEFRA for a Thames Estuary and Parklands LNP. The deadline for proposals to be submitted to DEFRA was 6 June 2012.
6. Funding had been received from DEFRA to explore the potential of a Thames Estuary and Parklands LNP and two stakeholder engagement events had been held (in Essex and north Kent). A decision on whether to proceed with a Thames Estuary and Parklands LNP application should also be informed by other proposals that are being considered. A Kent-wide application for an LNP was also being put forward.
7. The Chair asked the Board for comments. In discussion a number of points were made:

- Barbara Cooper said that KCC would be putting in an application for a Kent-wide LNP. However, KCC would be content to also work with a Thames Gateway-wide LNP if that was established
  - if both a Kent and Thames Estuary LNP went ahead it would be important to have a clear agreement on how the two partnerships worked together and their respective responsibilities
  - there would be value in going for a Thames Estuary LNP because it would help reinforce the Thames Gateway concept
  - although there was no funding associated with them, it was possible that future Government funding could be routed through LNPs
  - it was important that any LNP was not a constraint on development
  - at this stage there would seem to be advantage in keeping options open and going for an application for both Kent and Thames Estuary LNPs
8. **In conclusion, the Chairman** said that the clear view of the Board was that an application should be made for a Thames Estuary and Parklands LNP. The recommendations in paper TGKP912)7 were therefore agreed.
9. **Action: Martin Hall to coordinate the preparation and submission of the LNP application by the deadline of 6 June 2012.**

**Item 3: North Kent Regional Growth Fund bid 3 – paper by Ross Gill TGKP(12)6**

10. The Chair invited Ross Gill to introduce his paper. Ross said that there had been a number of discussions with officers from the North Kent local authorities and with businesses, including at the 9 May Business Breakfast event, which had led to the development of a proposal concept – called TIGER – Thames Gateway Innovation and Growth. This was set out in the Annex to the paper. Further work was needed to develop the concept into a full proposal. Time was short as the deadline for submission of applications was 13 June. The Board's views were sought on a number of aspects of the proposal. Was the overall rationale and concept for the bid - which focused on supporting innovation and growth - the right one? The concept note suggested that the geographical coverage should be the Thames Gateway, but with North Kent at its core. Was this right? Ross said that the £50million figure quoted for the bid was only indicative at this stage.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
- it was important that we produced a good, credible bid that could be delivered. It was right that the focus of the bid should be on supporting growth rather than failing companies
  - in terms of the geographical coverage of the bid, it was argued that the bid should be focused on North Kent. There would however be value in exploring the scope for involving South Essex, possibly as a phase 2 of the bid. Involvement of another part of the Thames Gateway could give the bid added traction.
  - it was important to be realistic about the amount of funding requested; the amount bid for would need to be justified
  - business support and backing for the bid was vital. There had been very positive support for a bid at the Business Breakfast meeting. Work was going

on to identify businesses which would be interested in applying for funding. Ross said he had prepared a short Expression of Interest pro-forma to gauge private sector interest.

- it was envisaged that the bid would be submitted by TGKP with, if the bid was successful, one of the local authorities acting as accountable body. Kent County Council would be willing to act as accountable body.
- it was important to recognise that, if the bid was successful, there would be management costs which local authority partners would need to meet.

12. Barbara Cooper reported that a meeting would be held with BIS on 29 May at which feedback would be given on our initial proposals. From that point on, Ross Gill would be heavily engaged in finalising the bid, and would require quick comments and responses from partners to drafts and requests for information.

13. Summing up the discussion, the Chair said that there was agreement to the concept for the bid, subject to continuing support from business partners. The bid should be focused on North Kent, but with the possibility of South Essex being included if that proved possible, maybe as a second phase.

**14. Action: Ross Gill and Katharine Harvey to continue work on developing the bid, with the final proposal to be submitted for agreement by the TGK Officers' Group at its June meeting.**

## **TGKP BOARD WORKSHOP SESSION**

**Item 5: Workshop Discussion** – facilitated by Lee Shostak, Shared Intelligence - papers TGKP(12)8 and TGKP(12)9

15. Lee Shostak introduced the discussion by asking the Board:

- what would success look like in 12 months' time?
- how would the Partnership be adding value?
- what set of behaviours would make success happen?

16. There followed a wide-ranging debate centred around identifying issues and roles for the partnership, and establishing what 'success' would look like in 12 months' time.

17. 'Success' was defined in a number of broad ways during the course of the discussions and included:

- recognition by business leaders and residents alike that being based or living in North Kent was an asset
- having a more effective dialogue with businesses in North Kent
- understanding and addressing the issues facing North Kent businesses
- reigniting the Government's interest in the Thames Gateway
- getting the message across to private investors that the Thames Gateway Kent had enormous economic potential.
- ensuring that local residents were equipped to take up new job opportunities that arise from new investment
- realising new opportunities for the area that might arise from new Government announcements, such as those relating to the 'City Deal' approach.

- better coordination of activities being taken forward individually by local authorities to achieve greater efficiencies and economies of scale.

18. In order to achieve 'success', it was argued the partnership should:

- focus on priorities for the next year where the Partnership can make the most difference
- identify targets that are realistic and not over ambitious; and
- undertake specific 'tangible' activities

19. The Partnership already had a clear vision and Growth Plan for North Kent which partners were signed up to. The key areas which should be the focus of activity included:

- Support for business – identifying and addressing business needs
- Skills challenges - matching skills to jobs and ensuring residents benefit from the new opportunities
- Infrastructure – unlocking development sites
- Promotion of North Kent – both in its own right and as part of the Thames Gateway - championing the potential of the area, attracting inward investment, enhancing and developing a 'pride in the area'
- Housing
- Environment

### **Partnership working in North Kent**

20. There was recognition that taking forward this agenda for North Kent would be better achieved through a greater commitment to partnership working across North Kent. By bringing together the partners to work in a more coordinated way would, it was argued, lead to the work of the partnership as a whole being greater than the sum of the individual parts.

21. Several Board members referred to the successful partnership working in 2008 and 2009 which had led to the Multi Area Agreement (MAA). A feature of that approach had been that a number of task groups were set up, each chaired by local authority Chief Executives and each taking forward a particular workstream.

22. There was discussion on whether we could re-establish that method of working to drive forward the Partnership's work more effectively. There are a number of points to consider:

- we no longer had the MAA to provide the impetus for the work. However, the City Deals approach introduced by this Government shared some of the same features as an MAA. Depending on how that initiative was taken forward by Government it could be a useful mechanism to progress our priorities in North Kent
- there was no reason why we could not embark on our own 'voluntary MAA' approach as was suggested at the workshop. But it would be more of a challenge, and clear targets and milestones would be needed to maintain momentum in the face of all the other competing priorities for people's time.

- any new arrangements would need to recognise that staff resources available in local authorities, and in other partners, were more restricted in 2012 than they were in 2008. The aims and objectives of any new task groups would have to be clear, limited and realistic.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

23. Lee Shostak summarised what he took as the agreed views of the Board, namely:

- it was important to sustain and strengthen the trust that had been built up around the Partnership table over a number of years. That trust should be valued, respected and not taken for granted.
- the Partnership should have a much stronger dialogue with businesses in North Kent, both directly and via social media.
- additional work should be done on the scope for greater collaboration and partnership working on the issues which had been identified (see paragraph 19 above), so that when the invitation came out from Government on the next stage of the City Deals, the Partnership would be geared up to respond collectively.

24. **The Chairman** thanked Lee for his facilitation of the workshop. He asked David Liston-Jones and Katharine Harvey to reflect on the points that had been made, and to develop the conclusions into proposals which could be put for consideration first to the Officers' Group, and then to the Board. In doing so it would be important to identify those actions that were for the Partnership itself to take forward, as opposed to general aspirations for North Kent. Finally he thanked Board members for their helpful and positive contributions to the workshop debate.

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
May 2012**