



Thames Gateway Kent Partnership BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the **Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting** held in the Darwin Room, Innovation Centre Medway, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on **26 September 2011**.

Present:

Board members and observers:

Cllr Andrew Bowles, Leader, Swale Borough Council (Chair)
Kamal Aggarwal, Thomson, Snell and Passmore
Professor Tom Barnes, University of Greenwich
Cllr. John Burden, Leader, Gravesham Borough Council
Ann Komzolik, North West Kent College
Cllr Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member, Kent County Council
Naisha Polaine, Homes and Communities Agency

Also present:

Barbara Cooper, Kent County Council
Ross Gill, Kent County Council
Graham Harris, Dartford Council
Katharine Harvey, formerly South East England Development Agency
David Hughes, Gravesham Borough Council
Abdool Kara, Swale Borough Council
David Liston-Jones, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
Linda Searle, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (note taker)

Apologies:

Rob Bennett, BBP Regeneration
Cllr. Rodney Chambers, Leader, Medway Council
Rehman Chishti MP
Neil Davies, Medway Council
Cllr Jeremy Kite, Leader Dartford Borough Council
Andrew Pearce, Environment Agency
David Simms, Lafarge Cement

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1. Cllr Andrew Bowles, Leader of Swale Borough Council and Vice Chair of TGKP, chaired the meeting, as Rob Bennett, the Chairman, was on Annual Leave.

2. Cllr Bowles welcomed David Hughes to his first meeting of the Board and also welcomed Katharine Harvey, ex-SEEDA, for agreeing to attend to give a presentation to the Board.
3. Cllr Bowles advised the Board that Andrew Parkinson had left his post as General Manager at Bluewater and had therefore written to say that he would not be able to take up his place on the Board.

Item 2: Minutes of TGKP Board Meeting on 26 May and Matters Arising.

4. The draft minutes were agreed. On matters arising:
 - Paragraph 9: Action completed, with a report contained in the Chief Executive's report.
 - Paragraph 12: Action completed and the position on ex-SEEDA assets was on the Agenda.
 - Paragraph 15: Monitoring progress against the Work Plan was ongoing; recruitment of a third team member had been progressed and was covered in the Chief Executive's report.

Item 3: Making a Success of the Thames Gateway in the new world of localism – Paper TGKP(11)20

5. David Liston-Jones introduced his paper which was in two parts. The first part discussed the implications of Government's decision to decentralise the leadership of the Thames Gateway to local partners. David argued that it would now be up to TGKP and the other sub-regional partnerships to maintain the momentum of the Thames Gateway project. The second part of the paper updated members on the work of the Thames Gateway Strategic Group and the outcome of the meeting on 7th September.
6. Ross Gill explained the purpose of the Thames Gateway Charter document that had been discussed at the TGSG meeting. The document was intended as a high-level, light-touch strategic statement of key commitments. Ross said the draft text was illustrative only and the title would be changed. He said it would be helpful to have members' comments on the draft to inform the preparation of a final text.
7. In discussion a number of points were made:
 - it was important for this Board to be kept fully in the loop on issues being discussed at TGSG.
 - TGSG needed to be clearer about what its role was. It needed to rally around an agreed agenda, but this hadn't yet been clearly articulated.
 - on economic priorities the views of business were key. There was a strong business community in North Kent but their views were not coming through strongly enough. There was a particular need to find out the needs of SMEs and what was holding them back, as many of the new jobs would come from small and medium sized businesses.

- at the Kent level the views of business were being sought through the KEB sector discussions and through the Business Advisory Board meetings
 - we needed to build closer relationships with the banks which had a key role in enabling growth. It was suggested that it would be very helpful if there was a representative from one of the main high street banks on the Board.
 - rather than ask businesses in an open ended way what they wanted it might be more effective to say what we as a partnership could do for them.
 - concern was expressed that the focus on economic priorities and jobs should not exclude housing. Economic development and housing needed to be considered together as they complemented each other – every new home built led to 2 or 3 jobs.
 - TIF arrangements had potential. There was valuable experience from the operation of TIFs in the USA, eg on the use of claw-back which we should learn from.
 - used separately many of the mechanisms designed to encourage growth and unlock delivery – TIFs, business rate retention, CIL, New Homes Bonus etc. – are unlikely to have a major impact. But if they could be put together in some way and used in combination there could be a more significant benefit.
8. David L-J said there had been a number of helpful and useful suggestions made in the discussion. There was a need to have more focus in the work of TGSG, and the Board's comments would be helpful in redrafting the charter document. We needed to improve communication with businesses, and the idea of seeking a bank representative on the Board should be followed up. The idea of looking at the possibility of using some of the financial mechanisms in combination was well worth exploring further. Barbara Cooper said that Kent County Council would be willing to fund a small consultancy study to explore the potential of this idea in more detail.
9. Summing up the Chair thanked members for their helpful contributions. He asked the Officers' Group to consider the suggestions made in more detail. He thanked Barbara Cooper and KCC for offering to fund the consultancy study.

Action: Officers' Group to take suggestions forward. Barbara Cooper to arrange to commission consultancy study and Ross Gill to prepare draft brief for the study.

Item 4: Economic Priorities for North Kent: Updating the TGK Economic Development Strategy - David Liston-Jones – Paper TGKP(11)21 and Key Points from the review of the evidence base – Dr Katharine Harvey – Paper TGKP(11)22

10. David Liston-Jones advised the Board that this paper TGKP(11)21 set out the proposals for updating the TGK Economic Development Strategy. The proposed purpose and scope of the review was set out in paragraphs 6 to 9. The paper posed some questions to the Board on aspects of the

strategy, especially in relation to the ten economic objectives. The intention was to work towards a single document which would serve as a summary and update of both the Economic Development Strategy and the Local Investment Plan. This could also serve as the basis of North Kent's contribution to any Thames Gateway-wide plan.

11. David said that the paper also requested agreement from the Local Authority Leaders on the Board that their respective Economic Development Officers could spend some time on this work assisting the TGKP team.
12. Katharine Harvey informed the Board that her paper looked at the changes and trends in the key indicators since the last strategy had been prepared. It assessed whether progress was being made towards the meeting the economic objectives. The paper looked in particular at changes in GVA, employment growth, skills attainment and business growth. The paper raised the issue of whether it was still appropriate to set 'closing the gap with the South East' as a benchmark. It also warned that as a result of the loss of jobs in the recession, creating 58,000 new jobs between 2006 and 2026 was now looking to be a very challenging target.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
 - Objective 4 on raising the skills attainment was vital to enable local people to take advantage of new job opportunities.
 - The suggestion in the paper that there may only be 4,000 extra new jobs by 2026 was overly pessimistic. It was recognised that there was other research which indicated higher levels. The figure of 58,000 jobs in the current strategy was challenging, but past experience had shown that one or two major developments could make a huge difference to job numbers.
 - It was important that housing continued to feature in the list of economic objectives and that housing growth and the housing agenda was properly integrated into the economic development strategy
 - Katharine's paper pointed to an encouraging growth in the number of high value professional, scientific and technical jobs, but concern was expressed that these jobs were not going to local people. Tackling this problem should be a key focus of the revised strategy
 - in this context it was important to retain qualified young people in the area
 - in terms of the benchmark it was argued that that closing the gap with the South East was no longer appropriate. For some objectives a national benchmark or a LEP benchmark may be more appropriate. For others it may not be useful to set a benchmark target of that kind
 - it was suggested that the food sector be added to the list of priority sectors
 - in devising the strategy it was important to recognise that different council areas were at different stages of the economic cycle.
14. There followed a brief discussion on the involvement of the local authority economic development officers in the update. In response to a question on

the amount of their time that would be sought, David Liston-Jones said that it would not be a significant demand – the request was to use the Economic Development Officers Group as a sounding board, as a means of checking and obtaining statistics, and as a forum for getting feedback on the draft document. **Cllr. Bowles sought the approval of the local authority leaders on the Board to the EDO group being used for this purpose and this was agreed.**

15. Summing up the discussion the Chair said that a number of good points had been made in response to the questions posed in the paper. **It was agreed** that the TGKP team should now work on preparing first draft of the updated strategy to be brought back to the Board for further consideration.

Action: TGKP team to coordinate preparation of draft strategy and bring back to next Officers' Group meeting and then to the Board for consideration.

Item 5: Arrangements for Stewardship of Ex-SEEDA Land and Property Assets – Update from Naisha Polaine, Homes and Communities Agency.

16. Naisha Polaine updated the Board on the latest position on the Economic Assets programme. The ex- SEEDA land and property assets had transferred across to the HCA on 19th September. Ten professional property staff had transferred to HCA from SEEDA on the same date. HCA was responsible and accountable for the assets, but the purpose of the stewardship arrangements was to allow local partners to influence the way the development of the portfolio was taken forward.
17. Naisha went to explain that an officers' group and Leaders' group had been established (to be called the Kent and Medway Economic Assets Advisory Group). Meetings of these groups were being coordinated with TGKP's officers and Board meetings, and hosted at the Innovation Centre, given the overlap in terms of issues and membership of the groups. Two officers meetings had been held so far. The meeting earlier today (26th September) had discussed the preparation of the business plan for the portfolio. The first meeting of the Leaders' group would be held on 18th November, just before the TGKP Board meeting.
18. **The Chairman thanked** Naisha for updating the Board on the stewardship arrangements.

Item 6: Draft paper on the Thames Gateway for the South East Local Enterprise Board – paper by Ross Gill, KCC – Paper TGKP(11)23

19. The Chair asked Ross Gill to introduce his paper. Ross said the LEP had identified the Thames Gateway as one of its key priorities. The LEP was setting up a number working groups on specific issues, but on the Thames Gateway the Thames Gateway Strategic Group was already in existence, and there would be duplication to set up another group.

20. At the last meeting of the LEP Board, Cllr. Chambers offered to lead, together with KCC, on the preparation of a paper to the LEP setting out how the LEP and TGSG could work together and add value to each other. Ross said that a draft of the paper to go to the LEP Board on 12th October was attached. If the TGKP Board was happy with the proposed draft it would be circulated to colleagues in Essex for their consideration. The draft paper recommended that the LEP recognised TGSG as the key strategic body for the Thames Gateway, and that TGSG should report regularly to the LEP on its activities.
21. The Chair invited the Board to indicate whether it was content with arrangements proposed in the draft paper. **The Board confirmed it was content with the proposals.**

Item 7: Updates on Current Issues from Members

22. The Chair invited members in turn to give short oral updates on current issues.

Item 8: Chief Executive's Report – paper TGKP(11)24

23. David Liston-Jones advised that the Chief Executive's report was for information, apart from the item on the National Planning Policy Framework consultation. David said he was seeking a view from the Board on whether TGKP should submit a response to the consultation. There was a case for responding on one key issue - the apparent reduction in the emphasis being given in the draft Framework to the importance of development on brownfield land.
24. Following a brief discussion **it was agreed** that a response from TGKP should be submitted. If it could be arranged for the response to come from the Thames Gateway as a whole this would carry more weight.

Action: David L-J to prepare a draft response and circulate to members for approval.

Item 9: Budget Report – paper TGKP(11)25

25. David Liston-Jones introduced the paper and advised the Board that the Budget Report was for information. However, he drew the Board's attention to the section of the paper on future funding. The partnership did not have confirmed income for 2012/2013. A key activity for the partnership was to examine the options for new sources of funding, in addition to the contributions from local authorities. David said that it was the intention to reconvene the funding working group made up of local authority officers under Mike Bodkin's (KCC) chairmanship to consider this further. The working group would report back to the Officers' Group and to the Board.
26. **The Board noted** the contents of the paper.

Item 10: AOB

27. No other business, the meeting closed at 4.50pm.

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
October 2011**