



Thames Gateway Kent Partnership

BOARD MEETING

Approved Minutes of the **Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting** held in the Darwin Room, Innovation Centre Medway, from 4.30pm to 5.30pm on **Tuesday 11 March 2014.**

Present:

Board members and observers:

Rob Bennett, BBP Regeneration (Chair)
Cllr Andrew Bowles, Leader, Swale Borough Council
Cllr Rodney Chambers, Leader, Medway Council
Robert Goodman, Lend Lease
Cllr Jeremy Kite, Leader, Dartford Borough Council

Also present:

Paul Carter, Leader, Kent County Council
Ross Gill, Kent County Council
Graham Harris, Dartford Council
David Hughes, Gravesham Borough Council
David Liston-Jones, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
Richard Longman, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
Linda Searle, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership

Apologies:

Kamal Aggarwal, Thomson Snell and Passmore
Professor Tom Barnes, University of Greenwich
Cllr John Burden, Leader, Gravesham Borough Council
Rehman Chishti, Member of Parliament
Barbara Cooper, Kent County Council
Mark Dance, Cabinet Member, Kent County Council
Neil Davies, Medway Council
Abdool Kara, Swale Borough Council
Ann Komzolik, North West Kent College
Andrew Pearce, Environment Agency
Naisha Polaine, Homes and Communities Agency
David Simms, Lafarge Tarmac
Paul Whittlesea, Department for Communities and Local Government

Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1. The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting and the apologies were noted. He reminded the Board that it had been agreed to convene this additional, 'special' Board meeting immediately prior to today's KMEP meeting. The purpose of the meeting was set out in the background paper (paper TGKP(14)8) and was to:
 - give Board members the opportunity to take stock of the latest developments on the preparation of the South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan, and in particular, on the bids for Local Growth Fund;
 - ensure that North Kent priorities and concerns were being reflected in the draft Strategic Economic Plan and in the LGF bids; and
 - in the light of this, consider the points which the Board would wish those members who are KMEP members to make at the KMEP meeting.

Item 2: Update on preparation of South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan and LGF bid, and

Item 3: Issues to be considered at the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) meeting.

2. Ross Gill updated the Board on the latest state of play on the preparation of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), and the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Bid. The timetable that we were working to is short – the SEP needed to be submitted to Government by 31 March. Ross talked the Board through his paper, which was to be presented at the KMEP meeting.
3. The LEP had agreed to plan on the basis of four funding scenarios: +20%, median, -20% and -40%. We therefore needed to consider the priorities for investment within each scenario. The implications for Kent and Medway allocations under each scenario were set out in Table 3 of the paper.
4. The Chairman proposed that the Board discuss priorities under each of the headings within Ross' paper.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - It was reported that the Minister, Greg Clark, had given a strong steer, at a meeting with MPs the previous week, that he would like to see all projects ranked in priority order, with a short, snappy narrative for each project.

Transport Infrastructure

- Concern was expressed that under the -40% scenario the top priority Highways Agency schemes – the A2 junctions at Bean and Ebbsfleet and Junction 5 on the M2 – were omitted. This had been done, it was understood, on the basis that these schemes, as major transport schemes, should be funded through the Highways Agency. However, Board members argued that there was a real risk that omitting these projects could be misinterpreted, by those looking at the SEP in Government, as indicating local partners did not regard these schemes as top priority. It was argued that, at the KMEP meeting, we should press for these schemes to be included and highlighted under all scenarios.

Land and Property (SEFUND)

- The Board discussed the proposed creation of SEFUND, a recyclable fund to invest in property projects. SEFUND would operate across the SELEP area and it was envisaged that it would be funded in part from the 15% of LGF funding to be retained at the 'centre'. A number of project proposals were being developed to demonstrate a potential investment pipeline, including Rochester Airport.
- Ross said that the paper also suggested other opportunities for land and property investment which could be included in the LGF bid, in addition to SEFUND. Sarah Whitney, who was developing the SEFUND proposal for the LEP would be attending the KMEP meeting to explain the SEFUND proposal in more detail.

Access to Finance

- Ross said that in the bid, £35million had been identified for further access to finance provision – similar to the existing TIGER scheme - across the six-year programme.
- It was argued that the TIGER programme was successful and had shown the demand for a scheme of this sort – despite the challenges in terms of committing and spending the fund within two years, the jobs targets were being greatly exceeded.

Business Support

- The paper suggested a notional request of £12million and proposed the creation of a Kent and Medway Growth Hub to offer a single access point to the full range of business support. It was recognised that the LGF was mostly capital, and that the revenue available to fund activities such as business support would be limited.

Employment and Skills

- Employment and Skills also relied on revenue funding, and so LGF could not be a significant source of skills funding compared with investment from other sources. However, the South East would receive around £82million in European Social Fund investment over seven years from 2014. There were opportunities to use some of the LGF funding to match Kent and Medway's share of ESF funding.
- It was argued that the 'Guild' model was a good model, with companies coming together to promote skills development in key sectors. For example it was suggested a 'High Technology Guild' could be established.

Skills Capital

- Table 3 proposed an allocation of £27million for skills capital funding. The paper suggested, based on previous KMEP discussions, that funding should be focused on areas of Kent and Medway that had not benefited from significant

investment in recent years. This meant Ashford, Folkestone and, in North Kent's case, further development of the Swale Skills Centre at Sittingbourne.

Inward Investment

- There was a brief discussion on the best ways of supporting marketing and promotion effort, and whether there was scope through the public sector procurement process for harnessing the resources and skills of our private sector companies to help promote the area.
- A small amount of LGF funding - £3million - had been allocated in the paper to promoting inward investment and sector growth.
- In considering this issue it was important not just to focus on attracting big business – SMEs were key to growth in GVA in Kent and Medway.

Next Steps and Action

6. Concluding the discussion, the Chairman thanked members for attending this special meeting which had been helpful in clarifying views in advance of the KMEP meeting. The key issue arising from the discussion had been on the prioritisation of transport projects. **It was agreed** that Board members attending the KMEP meeting would press strongly for the key A2/M2 junction schemes to be included prominently in the transport lists under all scenarios, so that there could be no doubt that these schemes were KMEP's most important transport priorities for funding.

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership
March 2014**