

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017 - paper TGKP(17)12

### Introduction

1. I am pleased to be able to update the Board on TGKP's activities in 2017.
2. I would like to thank all Board Members, observers and their advisors, for their time, commitment and positive contributions to the Partnership's work over the year.

### Background and Context

3. 2017 has been a year of transition and change for North Kent and there are genuine positive prospects for 2018. Whilst the national political situation resulted a hiatus in the activity of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, other Government activity has been more positive: the preferred route announcement for the Lower Thames Crossing, the publication of the Industrial Strategy and, in the Autumn Budget, a redoubling of the financial measures to encourage growth and development. 2017 concluded with a flurry of activity as the Growth Commission kicked back into gear with a new chair and I am cautiously optimistic that it will produce a set of recommendations in 2018 that North Kent will be able to get behind collectively.
4. I want to start this report by paying tribute to John Cubitt, Leader of Gravesham Borough Council, who sadly passed away in 2017. John was a strong advocate for Gravesham and for North Kent as a whole and it is wholly appropriate to acknowledge his contribution.
5. After a long and distinguished career, David Liston Jones retired as chief executive of TGKP and we wish him well. Matthew Norwell took over from David in April this year.
6. TGKP adopted a new work programme in September, identifying four new areas of work:
  - Positioning North Kent
  - Supporting town centre regeneration in North Kent with new technology
  - Ensuring the cultural and creative sectors can contribute fully to North Kent's regeneration
  - Making the case for improved transport in North Kent

### Partnership Highlights

7. The Partnership has continued to work on areas of collective importance for North Kent. Highlights include:
  - Developing the **new TGKP work programme**.
  - **North Kent Enterprise Zone (NKEZ):** The NKEZ was launched on 1 April 2017. TGKP continued to provide overall coordination and programme management. We welcomed Bernard Spring as permanent Chairman of the Board in March. There has

been much progress on the ground, particularly at Kent Medical Campus, and key applications are due to be determined in early 2018 for Ebbsfleet and Innovation Park Medway (at Rochester Airport). NKEZ was also exhibited at MIPIM UK.

- **Lower Thames Crossing:** Government made their ‘Preferred Route Announcement’ in April 2017. TGKP has remained closely involved with Highways England’s Stakeholder Advisory Panel. We convened a North Kent Working Group, aiming to build consensus across the area about how best to shape and influence the developing proposals.
- The **Government’s draft Industrial Strategy:** TGKP responded to the Industrial Strategy green paper in April, highlighting the contribution to the national economy that could come from raising North Kent productivity to the south east average (potentially £4bn annually), the need to improve road and rail infrastructure, enterprise zones’ contribution to economic growth and the importance of working through existing institutions. These are likely to be themes we return to in our engagement with the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission.
- **Other Government consultations:** TGKP responded to draft proposals for the retendering of the south east rail franchise, highlighting the immediate need for increased capacity, and to the Kent Route Study. We added TGKP’s voice to the near unanimous view that Highways England’s proposals for junction 5 on the M2 do not go nearly far enough, and we also attempted to demonstrate to government that proposed changes to housing legislation risk overburdening local authorities with undeliverable targets and do not tackle the long-term systemic problems.
- **Crossrail to Ebbsfleet:** TGKP, Dartford, Gravesham, KCC, LB Bexley, Ebbsfleet DC, GLA and Transport for London have jointly developed the business case to extend Crossrail to Ebbsfleet. This has included wider stakeholder and public communications work
- **Private sector board members:** have met regularly during the year. This informed the work programme, particularly the emphasis on promoting North Kent, and on harnessing the benefits from new and emerging technology.

#### **TGKP Board Membership**

8. There have been some changes in Board membership in 2017:
  - Paul Jackson from Dovetail Games has joined the Board as a private sector member;
  - Mark Heeley has replaced Alan Everard as Tarmac’s representative on the Board.
  - Ian Piper has taken over from Paul Spooner as interim Chief Executive of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation;
  - Professor Alan Reed, University of Greenwich, is to retire at the end of 2016. We thank him for his contribution to TGKP and the development of the enterprise zone.
9. I would like to welcome all our new Board representatives and again thank all those who have moved on.

#### **TGKP Budget**

10. TGKP’s income for 2017/2018 is forecast to be £232,570, against a budget of £244,542. Expenditure in excess of in-year income will be met by drawing on TGKP’s accumulated

reserve. I am grateful to the five local authorities and to Ebbsfleet Development Corporation for their financial support and to Medway for financial services support.

### **Legal and Human Resources Support**

11. I would also like to thank Medway Council for continuing to provide legal services and Swale Borough Council for providing HR support to the Partnership.

### **Looking forward to 2018**

12. 2018 looks set to be an exciting, challenging and potentially pivotal year in North Kent:

- we will work with the **Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission** under the leadership of Sir John Armitt. We look forward to helping the Commission to develop their final report by May 2018 and we want to make sure that it focuses on interventions which bring maximum economic benefit to North Kent.
- we will keep up the close engagement with Highways England about the **Lower Thames Crossing**, continuing to champion the need to deliver the project quickly: the problems are manifest now and ten years is far too long to wait for a solution. North Kent needs to maximise the economic benefits the crossing can bring.
- **North Kent Enterprise Zone** – TGKP will continue to provide the programme management for this work, building on the considerable success of 2017.
- we will develop local initiatives to support the Government's **Industrial Strategy**.
- we will continue to work with SELEP and other partners to develop the **Thames Estuary Production Corridor** to build a world-class cluster of creative industries.
- we look forward to continued progress to deliver **London Resort** on the Swanscombe Peninsula, providing maximum benefit for North Kent.
- **Crossrail**: work will continue to develop the business case for submission to Government.

13. It has been a privilege to serve as TGKP Chairman in 2017. I would like to thank you for your help and support. I look forward to working with you in 2018.

**Rob Bennett**

**Chairman, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership**

**14 December 2017**