

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
11th Annual General Meeting (AGM) – 18 November 2011**

**ITEM 2**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2011 - Paper TGKP(11)26**

**Introduction**

1. I am pleased to report on the activities of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership over the last 12 months.
2. I would like to begin by thanking all Board Members, and their advisers, for their helpful and constructive contributions to the Partnership's work over the year. This has taken place not just in the TGKP Board meetings but also in the TGK Officers' Group and in a wide range of ad hoc meetings. I am very grateful for the commitment and effort shown by everyone.

**Background and Context**

3. Last year I commented that the single word that best summed up the year was 'change' – change in the policy, strategic and organisational context in which we work. If anything the pace of that change has quickened in 2011. This year we have seen:
  - new funding streams coming into effect, for example, the Regional Growth Fund, or announced such as the Growing Places Fund,
  - the establishment of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and the winding down of SEEDA,
  - big changes proposed to national planning guidance,
  - new measures aimed at stimulating growth such as Enterprise Zones, and at stimulating development such as the New Homes Bonus, TIFs and business rate retention,
  - new arrangements for inward investment through UKTI's national investment services team,
  - new employment and skills programmes introduced by DWP and the Skills Funding Agency,
  - big changes in the mechanisms for business support, and
  - in the Thames Gateway, the decentralisation of the leadership of the Gateway and the creation of the Thames Gateway Strategic Group – more about that later.

**Highlights**

4. Despite the reductions in public expenditure and the continuing challenging economic and market conditions, North Kent has seen real progress in the delivery of schemes on the ground during the year. For example:

- the superb new sustainable construction training centre – SusCon - at the Bridge site in Dartford, was formally opened in September
  - also in Dartford, a new centre for businesses called ‘the Base’ opened in July and was visited by Bob Neill the Thames Gateway Minister as part of his recent tour of North Kent
  - important new road infrastructure has been completed, such as the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road and the Rushenden Relief Road in Swale, both of which are opening in December, and the major new road improvements in Chatham following the demolition of the flyover
  - the new Medway Bus station on the Chatham waterfront has been completed and is now fully operational
  - the new Community Square in the centre of Gravesend has been completed providing high quality public realm as the first stage in the ambitious transport quarter scheme
  - new rail infrastructure has been put in place to open up the former Lafarge cement works site in Northfleet, so that spoil from Crossrail can be processed there
  - new housing is going up in a number of locations such as at Rochester Riverside in Medway, at Springhead Park, Ebbsfleet, at Christian Fields, Gravesham, at Thistle Hill, Minster and at the Bridge in Dartford
  - in July the superb new international standard sports centre at Medway Park was opened by HRH Princess Royal
  - a major new Events venue is about to open at Bluewater providing a fantastic new conference and exhibition facility for North Kent,
  - investment in 5 strategic Parklands projects across North Kent was successfully completed in March.
5. In terms of the partnership working there have been a number of highlights this year. For example:
- The Partnership has played a leading role in the establishment of the new Thames Gateway Strategic Group (TGSG). Several members of the Board sit on the new Group and David Liston-Jones, as the TGKP Chief Executive, and Ross Gill from KCC are part of the of the secretariat for the Group. The TGSG has met 3 times this year so far. Its early progress was impacted by the sad and untimely death of Sir Simon Milton, its first Chairman. As a result Paul Carter offered to chair the second meeting, hosted by TGKP at the Ebbsfleet Observatory. I am pleased that our Partnership has been able to respond to the Government’s challenge and play its full part in taking on the leadership of the Gateway. Inevitably TGSG will take a while to establish fully its role and identity. However, as a relatively small and focused group, and with the Minister as a member, it does, I believe have the potential to be an effective body for taking forward the pan-Thames Gateway agenda.

- At the beginning of 2011 we put into effect the decisions of last year's AGM to merge the old TGKP Board and the TGK Leaders' Board into a single, smaller, more focused partnership Board. The transition to the new arrangements has passed off smoothly. The new Board has met on five occasions during the year and discussed a wide range of issues, from the review of the Economic Development Strategy to the operational impact on North Kent of the 2012 Games
- The HCA and TGKP have worked together on putting in place of the stewardship arrangements for determining the future of the extensive ex SEEDA land and property assets in North Kent. This has been an excellent example of practical partnership work in action. The close linking and hosting of the HCA stewardship meetings with TGKP's own Board and Officers' Group meetings has ensured that the work of both sets of meetings is properly coordinated, and has minimised the demands placed on busy Member and Chief Executive diaries.
- The new South East Local Enterprise Partnership has been developing its role and activities during the year. The Thames Gateway is one of the LEP's key priorities. It is pleasing that the LEP has resolved to look to the TGSG as the main forum for discussing Thames Gateway issues, rather than setting up a separate group of its own.

### **TGKP Board Membership**

6. There was a number of changes to the Board's membership during the year. We welcomed back to the Board two former members - Cllr. John Burden who rejoined the Board following his election as Leader of Gravesham Council in May, and Kamal Aggarwal who previously represented the Thames Gateway Kent Chamber but has now rejoined as a business member.
7. We also welcomed several new members and observers – Rehman Chishti, MP; David Simms, Land and Planning Director at Lafarge Cement; Professor Tom Barnes from the University of Greenwich, Ann Komzolik, Director of Enterprise at North West Kent College and Naisha Polaine, Kent and Essex Director at HCA. Andrew Parkinson, General manager at Bluewater also agreed to join the Board during the year but moved on to new employment before he was able to take up his place.
8. I believe we have a high calibre Board in place with a very good mix and range of skills and experience drawn from private business, local authorities, from the higher and further education and from Government agencies. There remain two private sector vacancies on the Board which we will continue to work to fill.

## **TGKP Budget**

9. TGKP's income for 2011/2012 is forecast to be £306,500 and an initial budget was set for the year of a little less than that of £301,000. With the demise of SEEDA and the 3 Local Regeneration Partnerships, TGKP had to seek alternative sources of funding support for this financial year, and I am very grateful to the five local authorities for stepping in to provide financial contributions totalling £252,000 in this financial year.
10. The Partnership was also successful in securing funding of £90,000 from the DCLG Transition Fund (£54,000 in this financial year and £36,000 next year). I am very grateful to the Department for this support which has significantly eased the Partnership's transition from old to new sources of financial support.
11. Future funding for the Partnership is clearly a major concern, however, and is discussed in more detail in the Budget paper which features later on the main Board agenda.
12. The Board has received regular budget monitoring reports and I am grateful to Medway Council for providing the financial services.

## **Legal and Human Resources Support**

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

## **TGKP Executive Team**

14. There have also been changes to the TGKP team. Shanaaz Carroll's post as North Kent MAA Director came to an end in March and I would like to put on record my thanks to her for her work for the Partnership over nearly 18 months.
15. I would like to thank David Liston-Jones and Linda Searle for their hard work and commitment, and I am pleased that Katharine Harvey is joining in the TGKP team as Senior Policy Officer on 17<sup>th</sup> November.
16. In addition, TGKP has continued to receive excellent support on a part time basis from Ross Gill, KCC, especially in the context of developing the Thames Gateway and North Kent strategic work. I am grateful to Ross, and to KCC for providing this support.

## **Looking forward to 2012**

17. I continue to be optimistic about the future of partnership working in North Kent. I believe our partnership is strong and that there is a desire and appetite to work together on the challenges we face, and on the opportunities which are there for us to take. As I said at this time last

year, we are going to have to be innovative and creative in the way we seek to secure investment, achieve delivery and maintain momentum over the next few years. In the Thames Gateway context we can no longer look to the Government to manage and direct the initiative from Whitehall. It is up to us, as the local partners, to be proactive and take the lead in shaping the future of the Thames Gateway project.

18. I would also like to see us continue to strengthen our links with the private sector. We have made a good start this year, but we do need to complete the private sector appointments to the Board and make sure we tap in to the views of businesses on the local economic boards in Swale, Medway and Dartford and Gravesham.

19. We must also do more to reach out to businesses in North Kent, directly and through the representative organisations, so that we are better able to reflect their aspirations and concerns in what we do.

20. As always, it has been a real privilege to serve as TGKP's Chairman for the last year, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the help and support you have given to me over this time.

**Rob Bennett**  
**Chairman, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership**

**November 2011**