

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
12th Annual General Meeting (AGM) – 30 November 2012**

**ITEM 2**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2012 - Paper TGKP(12)17**

**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 thank all Board Members, and their advisers, for their positive and constructive contributions to the Partnership's work over the year. This has taken place not just in the TGKP Board meetings but also at the Thames Gateway Strategic Group meetings, in the TGK Officers' Group and in ad hoc meetings. As ever, I am very grateful for the continued commitment and effort shown by everyone.
3. The year has been overshadowed by the sad deaths of Kevin Lynes and Mike Snelling. Kevin had represented Kent County Council on the Board since 2008 and Mike, as the then Leader of Gravesham Council, was a Board member for a number of years up until 2011. Both Kevin and Mike made a huge contribution to the work of TGKP and they will be greatly missed.

**Background and Context**

4. Looking back at my Chairman's reports for 2011 and 2010 I see the main theme was 'change' – the first couple of years of the Coalition Government saw huge changes in the strategic, policy and institutional landscape in which we operate. This year the pace of change has been less frenetic and the emphasis has been more on making the new arrangements work effectively. The focus has been on delivery, and what we can all do in these challenging economic times to maximise economic growth and job creation.
5. Inevitably the media's attention has been focused on the big events of the year, in particular the hugely successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and also on the major controversial issues such as the ideas for a new hub airport in the Thames Estuary. However, without as much media fanfare, and despite the tough economic and market conditions, we have continued to see real progress in the delivery of key housing and commercial developments in North Kent during 2012. Let me quote, in no particular order just a few examples:
  - In July, following negotiations between local authorities, landowners and Government, agreement was reached on taking forward

development in Eastern Quarry with construction of the first homes expected in 2013

- The first phase of housing being built by Hyde on the Rochester Riverside site is well underway
- In May the Thames Gateway Minister, Bob Neill, opened the new bus station on the Chatham waterfront
- A few weeks later Bob Neill was back in North Kent to open the new, award-winning rail link into the former Lafarge cement works site in Northfleet, which is enabling spoil from the Crossrail tunnelling to be processed there
- Planning permission has been granted for the £650million Chatham Waters development which will include a major event venue as well as housing, hotel and commercial space
- A development agreement has been concluded for the 'Spirit of Sittingbourne' scheme, one of the key elements of plans for transforming Sittingbourne town centre
- Work has started on the Neats Court scheme at Queenborough and Rushenden, that will create up to 500 jobs, including at a new Morrisons store
- Good progress is being made in Dartford Northern Gateway with the successful Base business centre – opened only last year - now in receipt of Growing Places Fund to enable a 1500 sq metres expansion
- The Cyclopark multi sports activity centre in Gravesham was opened, bringing first class cycling, running and extreme sports facilities to North Kent
- Also in Gravesham in October the new pontoon off the Town Pier was opened providing modern facilities to receive visiting leisure craft from London and from Continental Europe.

## Partnership Highlights

6. In terms of the Partnership's work there have been a number of highlights this year. For example:
  - The biggest boost of the year has undoubtedly been the Partnership's successful bid for the **£20million TIGER RGF scheme** and I am very grateful to all those who worked hard on the preparation and development of the bid. TIGER gives us the opportunity to provide much needed help and support to businesses wanting to grow, and to create high-value jobs, in the key industry sectors for North Kent. The Partnership played a key role in seeking business views, setting up and chairing the reference group of stakeholders and, through the Board, agreeing the final shape and content of the bid. It is, I believe, an excellent example of the added value that the Partnership can bring.
  - More generally we have made good progress in **reaching out to the North Kent business community** over the last 12 months in a number of ways, for example by:

- hosting the successful Big Business Breakfast event in May and through participation in other events such as the Construction Expo in October, and the North Kent Business to Business event in Gravesham earlier this month
- issuing monthly newsletters, and regular progress reports on TIGER, to our contact list of North Kent businesses
- updating and improving our website.

These are positive steps but it is only a start, and there is much more still to do.

- In May, the Partnership agreed its **Growth Plan**, updating and bringing together the Partnership's economic and investment priorities into a single strategic document. We launched a 'glossy' summary of the Growth Plan aimed at local businesses at the Big Business Breakfast.
- TGKP Board members, and the TGKP team, have played an important role in supporting the work of the **Thames Gateway Strategic Group** over the last year. TGSG has no dedicated support or resources of its own, and is dependent on its members and member organisations for support. Jeremy Kite has led on TGSG's work in marketing the Thames Gateway for inward investment including a very positive meeting with Lord Green, the Minister responsible for UKTI at BIS. Jeremy also oversaw the production of a Thames Gateway marketing brochure coordinated by TGKP and using Medway Council's design team. The brochure was made available at a number of events for visiting business people and journalists during the London Olympics.
- HCA and TGKP have worked together on the stewardship arrangements for determining the future of the extensive ex SEEDA land and property assets in North Kent which led to the signing of the **Stewardship Agreement** in September. 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.
- As ever, TGKP has hosted and organised a number of high-level **visits**, including by the Thames Gateway Minister to Medway and Swale in May – see above. In June TGKP, working with the University of Greenwich, organised a day of meetings for Lord Heseltine as part of his research for his Competitiveness Review. And in July we hosted a visit by a high-level delegation from Le Havre who were interested in learning lessons from the Thames Gateway.
- As part of our wish to provide helpful information to the Board and the Officers' Group, Katharine Harvey has produced regular 'Economic Dashboard' reports summarising recent trends in the key economic indicators, as well as a monthly 'Policy Update' bringing together information on the latest Government announcements.

## **TGKP Board Membership**

7. There were two changes to the Board membership during the year. Mark Dance became Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, and KCC's representative on TGKP. Although his appointment came in sad circumstances, we very much welcome Mark on to the Board.
8. Robert Goodman, the new General Manager at Bluewater, agreed to join the Board in place of his predecessor Andrew Parkinson. We also very much welcome Robert to TGKP.
9. 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 remains one private sector vacancy on the Board which we will continue to work to fill.

## **TGKP Budget**

10. TGKP's income for 2012/2013 is forecast to be £313,700 (made up of £252,000 from local authorities, £36,000 from the DCLG Transition fund, £14,000 from the Environment Agency, £9,000 from the South East LEP, in respect of consultancy work Katharine Harvey is carrying out for the LEP, and other smaller items of income).
11. A budget was set for the year of £302,000. Expenditure is now forecast to be about £250,000. The main reason we are below the budget figure is that we have not spent significant sums from the activity/consultancy budget which was set at £60,000.
12. I am very grateful to the five local authorities and the Environment Agency for their financial support for the partnership. I am also grateful to DCLG for the last instalment of the Transition Fund which has significantly eased the Partnership's transition from old to new sources of financial support.
13. 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**

14. 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**

15. There have also been no changes to the TGKP team during the year. I would like to thank the team – David Liston-Jones, Katharine Harvey and Linda Searle - for their continued hard work and commitment.
16. In addition, TGKP has continued to receive support on a part time basis from Ross Gill, KCC. I am grateful to KCC for providing this support and would particularly like to thank Ross for his excellent work in drafting the TIGER bid.

## **Looking forward to 2013**

17. I remain optimistic about the future for North Kent and for the partnership. We have ended the year with the good news on the TIGER bid, and we must make sure over the coming year that the scheme is implemented effectively. There have also been encouraging signs of progress on a number of our key sites and some exciting new opportunities emerging. The proposed new leisure and entertainment resort at Swanscombe and Ebbsfleet would give a massive boost for jobs and growth. As a Partnership we need to focus on what we can do to support delivery of the opportunities that are coming forward, and to ensure that local residents and local businesses benefit.
18. We have made good progress this year in developing better links with business through hosting our own business events and exhibiting at others, issuing newsletters and so on. I would like us to work harder on this theme next year and strengthen our links. The coming into operation of the TIGER scheme will help that process. I believe that working with North Kent companies through TIGER will help us as a partnership gain a better understanding of the needs and concerns of the businesses in our area, which we can then reflect in our own plans and actions.
19. We have a strong and effective partnership but 2013 will test the strength of that partnership. There will be a need for TGKP to address some key issues for the future of North Kent. In May the Department for Transport will seek views on the options for the location of the Lower Thames Crossing. And no doubt at some point in the year there will be a call for views by the new Commission on airport capacity in the South East.
20. It has been a great privilege to serve as TGKP's Chairman over 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. I look forward to the Partnership having another interesting and challenging year in 2013!

**Rob Bennett**  
**Chairman, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership**  
**November 2012**