

Thames Gateway Kent Partnership

**BOARD MEETING**

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Minutes of the **Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting** held in the Darwin Room, Innovation Centre Medway, from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on **Friday 21 September 2012.**

**Present:**

**Board members and observers:**

Rob Bennett, BBP Regeneration (Chair)  
Cllr Andrew Bowles, Leader, Swale Borough Council  
Cllr John Burden, Leader, Gravesham Borough Council  
Mark Dance, Cabinet Member, Kent County Council  
Cllr Jeremy Kite, Leader Dartford Borough Council  
Ann Komzolik, North West Kent College  
Naisha Polaine, Homes and Communities Agency  
David Simms, Lafarge Cement

**Also present:**

Alexandra Brown, Lend Lease  
Barbara Cooper, Kent County Council  
Richard Coppell, Lend Lease  
Neil Davies, Medway Council  
Terry Fuller, Homes and Communities Agency  
Graham Harris, Dartford Council  
Katharine Harvey, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
David Hughes, Gravesham Borough Council  
Abdool Kara, Swale Borough Council  
David Liston-Jones, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
Rob Scott, Dartford Borough Council  
Linda Searle, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
Paul Whittlesea, Department for Communities and Local Government

**Apologies:**

Kamal Aggarwal, Thomson, Snell and Passmore  
Professor Tom Barnes, University of Greenwich  
Cllr Rodney Chambers, Leader, Medway Council  
Rehman Chishti Member of Parliament  
Robert Goodman, Lend Lease  
Andrew Pearce, Environment Agency

**Item 1: Welcome and Introductions**

1. The Chair welcomed Alexandra Brown and Richard Coppell from Lend Lease, who had been invited to give a presentation to the Board on Bluewater expansion plans.
2. The Chair announced that the order of the agenda items would be changed with the presentation on Bluewater – Item 5 on the agenda - being taken immediately after the minutes. In addition, Item 6 on Ebbsfleet and Eastern Quarry would be taken before Item 4.

### **Item 2: Minutes of TGKP Board Meeting held on 18 May 2012 and Matters Arising**

3. The draft Minutes were agreed. On Matters Arising:
  - Paragraph 9: The application for the Thames Gateway Local Nature Partnership (LNP) had been submitted, and had been successful, as had the bid for the Kent LNP, with discussions now underway to ensure the two initiatives work together and complemented each other.
  - Paragraph 14: Actioned – update in the Chief Executive's report.
  - Paragraphs 23 and 24: Follow-up to the workshop detailed at Item 3.

### **Item 5: Bluewater Expansion Plans – Presentation by Alexandra Brown, Lend Lease**

4. Alexandra Brown introduced her presentation detailing the expansion plans at Bluewater. She informed the Board that Bluewater had been in existence now for 13 years and was performing extremely well. However it was important to keep moving forward and bring in new brands and choice for customers. The new extension would do that and provide new employment. Working through the Learning Shop, Bluewater had an excellent record of employing local people. 85% of Bluewater's employees were from the Thames Gateway area.
5. The planned new West Village extension, from the House of Fraser car park, would create up to 2,300 new jobs, with 30,500 sq meters of floor space, only slightly impacting on the current car parking spaces (loss of approximately 100 spaces). A public exhibition of the proposals was taking place at Stone Pavillion on 21 September from 4pm to 8pm and on 22 September between 10am and 4pm.
6. In discussion a number of points were made:
  - Members queried what the impact of internet shopping had been on Bluewater's business. In response, Richard Coppell said that despite the growth in internet shopping, super prime centres like Bluewater were doing well, and shops such as John Lewis operated through multi channels with both shop sales and internet sales working hand in hand.
  - Members also enquired whether the new shopping centre at Westfield had had any impact. Alexandra said that the impact had been marginal.
  - It was argued by Board members that we should not see Bluewater's growth as a threat to local town centres. It was important to enable Bluewater to grow and the challenge for us was to develop visions for local town centres which did not seek to compete but which focused on ways which they could complement the Bluewater offer.

7. **The Chair thanked** Alexandra and Richard for their very informative and helpful presentation.

### **Item 3 Partnership working in North Kent – Paper TGKP(12)13**

8. David Liston-Jones introduced the paper, which reviewed the position on partnership working following the Board workshop in May. The workshop had concluded that the Partnership should have a much stronger dialogue with businesses in North Kent, and that we should do further work on the scope for greater collaboration and partnership working.

9. David said that the dialogue with businesses was being progressed, e.g. through holding further business events. The uncertainties over the future of City Deals and on the likelihood of success in our RGF bid made it more difficult at the moment to determine what further partnership work would be most worthwhile, beyond the work on Employment and Skills which had been set in train. In the meantime it was important to have an up to date Work Plan and a draft was attached as an Appendix to the paper for the Board's consideration.

10. In discussion the following points were made:

- The priorities and the content of the draft Work Plan were fine but there were too many actions included. It was not realistic with the resources at the Partnership's disposal to make progress on all of the proposed actions. The work plan should be slimmed down and the number of priorities reduced.
- There was some discussion about the value of the Thames Gateway Strategic Group. However, the majority view was that TGSG did perform a useful role. It was the only Thames Gateway wide group and had value in that it brought the local authority Leaders from Kent, Essex and London together with the Thames Gateway Minister. It was important in keeping the Thames Gateway initiative as a priority for Government.
- We should not underestimate the workload that would fall on the Partnership if the TIGER RGF bid was successful. The Expansion East Kent programme involved fortnightly meetings of the panel set up to decide on applications to the fund. Kent County Council had ring-fenced resources for management of the TIGER scheme, subject to other partners contributing to the funding pot.

11. **In conclusion, the Chair said** that the Board was generally content with the actions and priorities contained in the Work Plan, but the plan needed to be slimmed down to more manageable levels, and the number of priorities reduced. The position would become clearer once the outcome of RGF bid was known. Success in the bid would bring its own requirements for additional resources for the management of the scheme.

**Action: David Liston-Jones to revise the Work Plan once the requirements of the Partnership, particularly in respect of the TIGER bid were clearer.**

### **Item 6: Progress on Ebbsfleet and Eastern Quarry and**

### **Item 4: Discussion on what Government announcements on planning and housing could mean for development in North Kent**

12. The Chair said an oral report would be given on Eastern Quarry and not a paper as stated in the agenda. This item was taken with Item 4, for which Katharine Harvey had produced a paper TGKP(12)14.

13. Rob Scott from Dartford Borough Council introduced the item and explained the details of the agreement on Eastern Quarry which had been announced in July. It had been thought that a funding package was in place but the last CSR settlement had left a significant funding gap. Through a process of discussions involving KCC, the district authorities, DCLG, Department for Transport and Land Securities, the costs of the transport infrastructure requirements were reduced, spending profiles were smoothed out and a position reached where, whilst there was still a funding gap in the longer term, there was sufficient commitment amongst the partners to enable hopefully a start on site in 2013.
14. David Simms commented that there was another piece of good news on Ebbsfleet. Sufficient agreement had now been reached to move to public marketing of the site. There was a lot of interest in the site.
15. Members asked what were the lessons for other major schemes we could draw from the process on Eastern Quarry? This led to a wider discussion on the development of key sites in North Kent, and which recent Government measures might help, as summarised in TGKP(12)14. A few detailed points of accuracy were made in relation to the entries for individual sites which would be taken on board.
16. In the course of the discussion, the issue of the private sector was raised. It was argued that the Partnership could usefully do some work on the opportunities for developing the private rented sector.
17. **Summing up** the discussion, the Chairman thanked Rob Scott for his helpful presentation on the Eastern Quarry agreement. He said it had been a useful wider discussion. He requested that the Officers' Group give further consideration to the suggestion that the partnership should do some work on the private rented sector.

**Action: The Officers' Group to consider the scope for work by the Partnership on the private rented sector and to report back in due course to the Board.**

**Item 7: Report-back on Thames Gateway Strategic Group meeting on 20 September.**

18. David Liston-Jones reported back on the TGSG meeting the previous day. The meeting had been chaired by Sir Edward Lister and Brandon Lewis, the new Thames Gateway Minister, had been present. Taking the key items in turn:
  - The Minister had said that the Government wanted to build on the Olympics legacy and ensure that the benefits were spread to areas of East London and the Thames Gateway more generally. There would be a meeting with Government officials to follow this up.
  - Paul Carter had led on a discussion on unblocking key sites. The need to get on with reaching a decision on the location of the Lower Thames Crossing was raised during the discussion. If possible, it was argued, local partners should agree on their view and press Government.
  - Sir Edward Lister and Jeremy Kite reported back on the positive meeting with Lord Green on marketing the Thames Gateway for inward investment.
  - There was a presentation on Southend Airport and, on airports issues more generally, Sir Edward said the GLA were 'stepping up a gear' on their airports work.

- Future work programme – Susan Priest had argued that we should be pressing for the Thames Gateway to be an ‘urban platform’ under the next EU 2014-2020 Funding regime.

**Item 8: Updates on current issues from members, including Kent and Medway Economic Assets: Stewardship of Land and Property Assets**

19. There followed the usual round-table update on current issues. In the course of this, the HCA confirmed that the Stewardship Agreement had now been signed. Mark Dance mentioned the recent Infrastructure Summit and this led to a debate around methods of investment in housing development, e.g. on the use of pension funds, innovative ways of investing, equity shares and so on.

20. **Summing up, the Chair said** that it would be helpful if the Officers’ Group could examine the issue on methods of investment and report back to the Board in due course.

**Action: the Officers’ Group to examine the issues raised in relation to mechanisms for investment and report back to the Board.**

**Item 9: Budget Report - paper TGKP(12)15**

21. David advised the Budget Report was largely for information. The paper proposed that the initial budget of £302,000 for this year stay in place for the time being.

**Item 10: Chief Executive’s Report - paper TGKP(12)16**

22. David said that the Report was for information.

**Item 11: Economic Outlook, Policy Update, Newsletter and Census update**

23. The Chair advised that these documents, prepared by Katharine Harvey, were circulated for information. All except for the Policy update were also available on the TGKP website. Members commented that the reports were very helpful.

**Item 12: AOB**

24. There was a brief discussion on the best timing for future Board meetings. A suggestion was made that breakfast meetings might be more convenient, particularly for private sector members.

**Action: David Liston-Jones to give further consideration to the timing of next year’s Board meetings.**

25. The issue of whether we should press for Assisted Area status for North Kent was mentioned as a possible item for future consideration by the Board.

26. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.20pm.

**Thames Gateway Kent Partnership  
October 2012**