

Kent and Medway Economic Partnership

KENT AND MEDWAY ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

8 September 2014

ITEM 2

Subject: Draft minutes of the meeting of Kent and Medway Economic Partnership Board held on 14 July 2014 at Medway Innovation Centre, Chatham

Board members present

Business representatives

Geoff Miles (Chair)
 Roger House
 Jo James
 Andrew Metcalf
 Jon Regan
 Paul Thomas
 Paul Winter

Elected local government representatives

Andrew Bowles (Swale and Canterbury)
 Paul Carter (Kent County Council)
 Rodney Chambers (Medway)
 Nicolas Heslop (Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks)
 David Jukes (Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone)
 David Monk (Shepway and Ashford)
 Paul Watkins (Dover and Thanet)

Higher education representative

Carole Barron

Non-voting participants present

Iris Johnston (Thanet District Council)

Officers in attendance

Julie Beilby (Tonbridge & Malling, Alison Broom (Maidstone), Ann Carruthers (KCC) Robin Cooper (Medway), Ross Gill (KCC/ KMEP Secretariat), David Godfrey (SE LEP), Madeline Homer (Thanet), Tim Ingleton (Dover), Richard Longman (Thames Gateway Kent Partnership), Karla Phillips (KCC), Susan Priest (Shepway), Mike Rayner (KCC).

Apologies

Business representatives

Graham Brown
 Eliot Forster
 Paul Gardiner
 Vince Lucas
 Nick Sandford

Elected local government representatives

Annabelle Blackmore (Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells)
 Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling)
 John Gilbey (Canterbury and Swale)

Higher education representative

Prof Dame Julia Goodfellow

Further education representative

Graham Razey

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

Geoff Miles introduced the meeting. Apologies were noted as above.

It was noted that while an item on the European Social Fund was to be considered, it had been decided to postpone this, given that Graham Razey was unable to attend the meeting and the primary focus on the Local Growth Fund outcomes.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the KMEP Board meeting held on 30 June were considered. In relation to Item 6 (General Report), Cllr Paul Watkins noted that the minutes did not fully record the discussion. Specifically, it should have been recorded that the Board noted the regional and potentially national importance of Manston Airport in relation to the aviation reports produced by the South East LEP and KCC's aviation policy paper.

With this amendment, the minutes of the Board meeting of 30 June were agreed.

There were no matters arising.

3. Local Growth Fund: Outcomes for Kent and Medway

Ross Gill introduced the report for this item. In addition, David Godfrey provided an overview of the funding outcomes, noting in particular the prospective freedoms and flexibilities that were set out in the Growth Deal, especially in relation to skills commissioning. He also noted that Government had promised feedback on the reasons for the success or otherwise of specific project proposals.

In discussion, the Board noted its disappointment with the outcome. In particular, it was noted that:

- It was disappointing that major schemes such as M2 Junction 5 had not been recognised in the Growth Deal, and that several schemes ranked as high priority by KMEP had not been successful.
- The allocation of funding appeared to be strongly Whitehall-driven. While welcoming the funding that had been made available, there did not appear to be evidence that the process had listened to the business voice. It was strongly requested that feedback should be sought from Government as soon as possible.

However, it was also noted that:

- Despite the outcome, KMEP had been successful in generating substantial business engagement as a result of the process, and the unity demonstrated between the public and private sectors was impressive.
- The business support outcome was more positive, with the proposed Growth Hub likely to be beneficial to business.

In moving forward, it was noted that:

- There must be better greater contact with civil servants to understand their objectives and feedback (potentially by inviting the appropriate individual(s) to a meeting of KMEP Board.
- There must be better engagement by Kent and Medway MPs. It was suggested that it would be helpful to organise a meeting with MPs, perhaps facilitated by business.

The Board discussed whether or not Kent and Medway had benefited from being part of the South East LEP, and it was noted that the transport funding outcome was not greater than under previous funding regimes.

In this context, it was questioned whether a separate Kent and Medway LEP would be a preferable alternative, and if so, whether this should be sought. No conclusion was reached, although the Board noted that several county-region LEPs (e.g. Oxfordshire) exist and had been successful in the LGF round. However, it was also noted that were an alternative Kent and Medway LEP to be pursued, consideration would need to be given to the impact on funding streams – such as the 2014-20 European Structural Funds programme that are allocated at LEP level.

It was agreed that the views of Essex partners should be sought in considering next steps.

4. Manston Airport: Progress Update

Cllr Iris Johnston introduced this item, noting that Thanet District Council had met with the owners of Manston Airport on 3 July and the current position was reported to Full Council on 10 July. An emergency meeting of Thanet District Council's Cabinet will take place on 17 July.

Thanet District Council is seeking expressions of interest from prospective partners in the event that the Council should decide to pursue the compulsory purchase of the airport. However, Cllr Johnston emphasised that compulsory purchase will only be considered if there was a clear and credible partner in place. Cllr Johnston also reported that she had spoken to the Aviation Minister as well as the Davies Commission regarding the airport's position in relation to national aviation strategy.

Thanet District Council is preparing a report on the viability of the airport and it was agreed that this shall be shared with KMEP for consideration at a future meeting. It was also agreed that the report shall be discussed at Business Advisory Board.

Cllr Watkins noted that Dover District Council had made a statement in support of Manston's future role as an airport in the context of wider aviation strategy.

The potential for the designation of Manston as an Enterprise Zone was discussed. In particular, it was noted that there is a commitment in the South East LEP's Strategic Economic Plan for Enterprise Zone designation, and that consideration should be given to taking this forward. This should include consideration of the boundaries of the potential Zone, its impact on and relationship with Discovery Park and whether it should be considered a new Zone or an extension of the existing Zone.

5. Future agenda items

It was noted that for the next Board meeting on 8 September, potential items include:

- European Social Fund and employment and skills strategy and funding;
- Business support, the development of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub and strategy for ERDF (building on the report considered on 30 June);
- Further progress regarding Manston Airport;
- Feedback from Government regarding Local Growth Fund and potential future bidding rounds.

It was suggested that Board members may have additional items, and it was requested that these be forwarded to Ross Gill.

6. Future meeting dates and any other business

The future Board meeting dates were noted.

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 6.45pm.