

**Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the
Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on Microsoft Teams on
Friday 30th April 2021 at 10.00am**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chairman) – Leader, ABC
Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Cllr Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Corporate Property,
ABC
Mr Mike Whiting – Cabinet Member for Economic Development, KCC
Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive, ABC
Paul Harwood - Highways England,
Paul Sayers, East Kent College - (Substitute for Graham Razey)
Michael Claughton, Chairman, Ashford Access Group

Non Board Members

Cllr Peter Feacey, ABC
Cllr Matthew Forest, ABC
David Smith, KCC
Rebecca Anderson, KCC
Victoria Thistlewood, KCC
Simon Jones, KCC
Matt Hogben, KCC Highways and Transportation
Shona Johnstone, Homes England
Ben Lockwood, ABC
Paul McKenner, ABC
Lorna Ford. ABC
Andrew Osborne, ABC
Christina Fuller, ABC
Charlotte Hammersley, ABC
Simon Cole, ABC
Hannah Clayton-Peck, ABC
Len Mayatt, ABC
Dean Spurrell, ABC
Jeremy Druce, ABC
Linda Stringer, ABC
Danny Sheppard, ABC

Apologies

Cllr Neil Shorter, Mr Michael Payne, Graham Razey, Tim Read, Rebecca Spore, SallyAnne Logan.

| Item | Notes | Action |
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| 1. | <p>Welcome</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all those present to this Virtual meeting. He apologised for the length of time since the last meeting but thought all would relate given the coronavirus pandemic and well as Ashford's own specific emerging issues with the Sevington Inland Border Facility and the Stodmarsh nitrates issue. He reminded all present that the meeting was expressly confidential.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Notes of Previous Meeting – 16th October 2020</p> <p>Noted.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Ashford's Corporate Plan and Priority Projects</p> <p>Tracey Kerly (TK) gave a presentation giving an update on ABC's Corporate Plan and strategic projects. It provided an update following the disruption of the last year and the pausing of the current five year plan, with the void being filled by an ambitious two year Recovery Plan to bring Ashford out of the pandemic, leading into a new Corporate Plan to 2024. The presentation focussed on: - the Ashford Ambition; Strategic, local and recovery projects (including examples which the Board would already be familiar with); ABC's own priority projects and how much was actually still happening; and watching brief projects.</p> <p>The Chairman wanted to reiterate that whilst certain projects had been paused, they had certainly not been cancelled and he outlined just a few of the many things that were continuing to go on in the Borough. It was important to keep the momentum going.</p> <p>Michael Cloughton (MC) advised that he had already spoken on behalf of Ashford Access to Emma Wood on the Stour Centre refurbishment, and they would shortly be sending their comments on the facilities for the disabled. They had also had input on the Conningbrook Park which he was excited about. TK advised that the pace of the development of the park at Conningbrook would be somewhat reliant on the pace of the housing development and the S106 funding coming in from the developer.</p> | |

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| <p>4.</p> | <p>Levelling Up Fund</p> <p>Andrew Osborne (AO) gave a presentation on the Levelling Up Fund, introduced by the Government in March 2021. He advised this was a Capital Fund accepting bids from District Councils of up to £20m, with match funding of at least 10% encouraged. Support from the local MP would also add weight to the process. KCC and Medway would also each be able to put a transport bid in, as the Highway Authority, of up to £50m.</p> <p>The first round bids were due by June 2021, but only for ‘oven ready’ projects that could start to be delivered by March 2022. AO advised that the three main priority themes for the fund were: - transport investments; regeneration and town centre investments; and cultural investments, and that all should contribute to the Government’s net zero carbon objectives or wider environmental considerations. He also gave details of tiered system determining which were priority areas, and where Ashford fell within that for Kent. Ashford was not in a top priority tier, so Ashford’s bids would have to be that much better to be successful. He outlined some of the parameters the Government would be looking at when assessing bids and three options that were currently being considered.</p> <p>The Board agreed the priority project that should be pursued and Damian Green (DG) agreed that this was the one he would support as MP. AO thanked the Board and reiterated that partners may be asked to demonstrate their support for the bid so there would be a role for everyone to play.</p> <p>Paul Sayers (PS) from East Kent College advised that there was a potential tie in for an exciting project to link Further Education and Skills with the scheme mentioned in the bid and potentially also address the higher than average youth unemployment figures in the Borough.</p> <p>PS also gave an update on the Community Renewal Fund for East Kent College Group. This was a separate fund to the Levelling Up Fund and essentially the pre-cursor to what would become the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The College had devised a programme that would apply across the whole of East Kent to design a learning for life and work programme, assisting people to access the jobs market and employment. The College’s new Employability Centre that had already been opened in Ashford would be a big part of this, working with local employers. It was an exciting bid and they were looking forward in working in partnership with ABC and others. The Chairman thanked PS for his update</p> | <p>AO</p> |
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| | and reiterated the Council's full support for this bid and the wider work of the College. | |
| 5. | <p>Town Centre Recovery Response</p> <p>Hannah Clayton-Peck (HCP) gave a presentation updating on town centre activity over the last year and plans for the upcoming year. The presentation focussed on: - the Town Centre Reset; Town Centre Footfall; One to One Business Support; The Maybe* Digital Platform; the new Love Ashford Website; Elwick Place and Park Mall; monthly Business Forums; Emergency Exit Arts; Made in Ashford; and the Welcome Back Fund.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked HCP for her presentation and the remarkable amount of work undertaken during the pandemic by her and her team. Her enthusiasm and number of ideas for the future shone through and this positive outlook would be vital in recovering from the pandemic.</p> <p>MC raised previous concerns about facilities for the disabled (and not just physical disabilities) in Ashford Town Centre and considered this would be vital in any reopening and recovery. HCP said she would be happy to liaise further with MC on this issue and how to help in getting that message across to businesses.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>Project Updates</p> <p>The report enclosed with the agenda set out the latest position on progress in respect of the Big 8 projects and the Watching Brief projects, for noting.</p> <p>Mike Whiting (MW) said he just wanted to say how fascinating and forward thinking he found meetings of this Board and how impressed he had been with how Ashford took issues "by the horns" and attacked them, rather than running away from them. With KCC elections coming up, this may be his last meeting, so he wanted to congratulate Ashford on the work it was undertaking and thought this Board was an exemplar one for others to follow.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Friday 16th July 2021 Friday 15th October 2021 Friday 11th February 2022 Friday 22nd April 2022</p> <p>all at 10.00am.</p> | |

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Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services
Tel: 01233 330349 Email: memberservices@ashford.gov.uk
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