

**Notes of a Virtual Meeting of the
Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on Microsoft Teams on
Friday 15th October 2021 at 10.00am**

Present:

Board Members

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chairman) – Leader, ABC
Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Cllr Paul Clokie – Portfolio Holder for Housing, ABC
Cllr Neil Shorter – Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT, ABC
Mr David Brazier – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, KCC
Simon Jones – Corporate Director - Growth, Environment and Transport, KCC
Tracey Kerly – Chief Executive, ABC
Michael Cloughton, Chairman, Ashford Access Group
Graham Razey, CEO, East Kent College

Non Board Members

Cllr Peter Feacey, ABC
David Smith, KCC
Rebecca Anderson, KCC
Shona Johnson, Homes England
Ben Lockwood, ABC
Paul McKenner, ABC
Lorna Ford, ABC
Andrew Osborne, ABC
Christina Fuller, ABC
Dean Spurrell, ABC
Len Mayatt, ABC
Simon Cole, ABC
SallyAnne Logan, ABC
Dan Daley, ABC
Danny Sheppard, ABC.

Apologies

Paul Harwood, Tim Read, Paul Sayers, Rebecca Spore, Matt Hogben.

| Item | Notes | Action |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| 1. | Welcome The Chairman welcomed all those present to the Virtual meeting being held on Microsoft Teams. He advised that there was a lot going on in Ashford at the moment including | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>the formation of the Greater Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission and the bid going in to the Government for the Levelling Up Fund. He reminded all present that the meeting was expressly confidential.</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Minutes of Previous Meeting – 30th April 2021</p> <p>Noted.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>Ashford College – Update on Capital Project and Developing Skills Provision in the Borough</p> <p>Graham Razey (GR), the CEO of Ashford College, gave a presentation updating on the development of the College itself and the longer term goal of developing skills levels in the Borough.</p> <p>The presentation included updates on: - numbers – showing a significant growth in student/apprentice enrolments; improvements to the wider course provision, retention and achievement rates; the new employability centre working with Jobcentre Plus; the new Local College Board including prominent local figures; the specialisation agenda and delivering relevant skills aligned with the local economic need; the Phase 2 development (now split into phases 2a and 2b) and capital plans for the site; involvement with the Newtown Works programme; and wider funding and costs.</p> <p>Michael Cloughton (MC) asked about provision for those with disabilities. The presentation had been very impressive, but there was no mention of disability and this was something that he had spoken with GR about previously. GR assured that everything the College did was driven towards supporting the needs of the local community full stop, and that included everyone. East Kent College Group was the highest provider of Special Education Needs of any organisation in England, so it was fair to say that they were meeting needs and were fully inclusive in their approach to education. Indeed, the building itself was a modern and inclusive one. He would expect everyone involved at the College, including its Board Members, to be “living and breathing” their Inclusion Strategy. This may not have been mentioned in this particular presentation, but he had not intended to focus too much on any particular area.</p> <p>Tracey Kerly (TK) said she was extremely encouraged by the presentation and also wanted to thank GR for the support the College had recently provided for the Afghan refugees from the bridging hotel.</p> | |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>Cllr Shorter (NS) asked if bids for funding for the capital programme were not successful, that this could come back to the Board for discussion on a way forward for the College and examine how everyone involved could assist before 'pinch-points' were reached. This was agreed.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Graham Razey for the presentation.</p> | |
| 4. | <p>South of Ashford Garden Community</p> <p>Simon Cole (SC), Dan Daley (DD) and SallyAnne Logan (SAL) gave a presentation updating on the South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) Project which had evolved from the original Chilmington Green Project to also incorporate the new developments at Court Lodge Farm and Kingsnorth Green. The presentation focussed on the five year vision and strategy for the SAGC to 2025.</p> <p>SC updated on: - the branding and identity; the vision statement; the model of community led governance; match funding and 'early wins'; and priority projects (including Discovery Park and sustainability). In terms of what was on the horizon, this included the opening of the new Primary School on the 1st November which was a major milestone, a planning application due for the carbon neutral Secondary School (hopefully to open in September 2023) and housing occupations which were now nearing 200.</p> <p>DD gave more detail on the sustainability agenda which included a number of actions to reduce emissions and carbon, but also to increase biodiversity. The Garden Community had an opportunity to be a leader in the Borough's overall aims for carbon neutrality and this included a sustainable transport strategy and early improvements on the ground for walking and cycling, working with KCC. He concluded by drawing attention to the upcoming publication which would promote and celebrate the vision and strategy for the SAGC and what was being done there. This would be produced in both a printed and online format.</p> <p>SAL also updated further on: - the five year vision; community development; governance and stewardship in Chilmington Green and the extension of this to the two newer developments; health and wellbeing; and education and skills.</p> <p>Damian Green (DG) said the presentation had shown what an exciting vision there was for the SAGC, but the realities for those already living on site did have to be born in mind.</p> | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>Those people were experiencing some build quality and infrastructure issues and in his view some of these would have to be dealt with before there was too much publicity of the vision and its success. He considered that getting the CMO up and running properly and in the hands of residents, and even getting the Community Cabin occupied and operational, would be clear visual signs to the people that lived there that the vision was becoming a reality.</p> <p>The Chairman said that he wanted the Council to start to take formal action against developers who flaunted planning rules and what was agreed as part of their applications. Enforcement was key. He considered it would be important to stand very firm and resolute.</p> <p>NS wanted to stress that all were frustrated with the snagging issues and delays. He was part of the CMO Board and he knew that all involved were intent on delivering a quality model, but the response had to be structured and methodical and based on solid evidence.</p> <p>Ben Lockwood (BL) advised that they had held a community meeting earlier that week and launched the recruitment of a Resident Board Member (of which they were eventually aiming to have two). So resident engagement was underway and the next step was to formalise the handover of more community assets. The focus was on positive community engagement regardless of the barriers.</p> | |
| 5. | <p>Stodmarsh Update</p> <p>SC gave a presentation updating on the current position with Stodmarsh and nutrient neutrality. Board Members would already be well aware of the issues this had caused ABC as the Local Planning Authority and SC focussed his presentation on what was being done in terms of the preparation of a mitigation strategy for the Borough and making appropriate assessments.</p> <p>In July 2021 the Cabinet had agreed the principle of acquiring land in the Borough to create future strategic wetlands, and potentially rewilding agricultural land, as part of a mitigation strategy. It had also agreed to approach Government for a grant and/or loan to fund the delivery of the solutions and to potentially forward fund those as a fall back option. SC's presentation also outlined: - the benefits of a strategic wetland solution; timescales for the Borough strategy; the catchment wide strategy (covering multiple Districts across East Kent as well as other agencies); keeping developers informed; and urgent next steps</p> | |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| | <p>including a discussion with the Environment Agency on abstraction licensing in the Stour catchment.</p> <p>The Chairman said that in his view water authorities had failed to keep up with the national demand for growth through under investment. He had attended meetings with the new management at Southern Water and they were now focussing on bringing their sewerage treatments plants up to standard, but this was one of the wider issues to consider. Government support would be needed because ABC, and indeed none of the affected Local Authorities, could solve this on their own.</p> <p>DG said he would be happy to be included in any lobbying efforts from the Districts or KCC. At the moment this appeared to be an issue that was stuck between Government departments, but it was clear that a sensible way forward needed to be found quite urgently.</p> <p>Shona Johnstone (SJ) advised that there was a Working Group between DEFRA and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which was working on a solution, but as had been said, this was now a national problem that needed an urgent resolution.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>Project Updates</p> <p>The report enclosed with the agenda set out the latest position on progress in respect of the Priority Projects and the Watching Brief projects, for noting.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Friday 11th February 2022 at 10.00am Friday 22nd April 2022 at 10.00am</p> | |

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Member Services
Tel: 01233 330349 Email: membersservices@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas and Minutes are available on: <https://ashford.moderngov.co.uk>