

## **Notes of the KEB Business Advisory Board – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

**The Business Advisory Board meets bi-monthly and provides an insight from the business community in Kent on current trading conditions and experience of the real economy on a sector by sector basis – the headline points are extracted below and the full meeting note follows**

### **The Headline points from the Economic Commentary**

- Signs of optimism particularly amongst creative industries
- Increasing focus on promotion and profile rising – including maximising opportunities for place based marketing through events ie the Open, Hop Farm Festival and the forthcoming Olympics
- Cereal, top fruit and soft fruit yields with good or on target despite drought conditions early in the growing season
- Pressure on overheads from need for increasingly competitive pricing
- Need for greater vigilance to guard against supply chain failures

### **Local Enterprise Partnership Update**

Paul Winter gave feedback on the LEP Board meeting which took place on 15<sup>th</sup> July – key points were:

- The Vision was broadly adopted subject to minor amendments
- Jon Regan will act as business lead on the LEP for rural issues
- Kent & Medway will lead for the LEP on Thames Gateway
- A Coastal interest group already established which includes Canterbury and Dover will lead on coastal regeneration issues
- The Universities will prepare a paper on skills issues - as will the business reps
- Essex offered to prepare a briefing on new financial instruments
- BT had offered to lead on Broadband - some concerns re conflicts of interest
- the Communications paper is work in progress.

There was some discussion about the need to generate business drive and vision to shape and raise the profile of the LEP.

Roger House – though not present at the meeting – had raised a point with the Chairman about LEP briefing. It was agreed that all BAB members were willing to receive by email all the LEP papers and weekly briefings, and noted that papers are posted on the KEB website.

Graham Brown asked that the LEP Business Reps and alternates are provided with an induction pack/briefing – this has now been actioned.

A meeting of all the Kent & Medway business reps on the LEP Board and all the alternates is being pulled together during August - so that now the agenda for LEP is starting to take shape with task groups etc input can be co-ordinated and planned - any BAB members who are not current LEP reps but would like to be involved or attend the session will be welcome. (The date for this meeting has now been established as 17<sup>th</sup> August).

### **Kent Design Initiative**

Kathy Putnam, Kent Design Manager gave a short presentation explaining the objectives of this initiative and its recent review that recommended a stronger role for the business community in shaping its development and output. She invited members of the BAB to participate in a Task & Finish group to oversee and implement the review findings. Graham Brown volunteered some involvement from his organisation and Andrew Metcalf offered to get involved. Attached to these notes is a brief explanation of the initiative for those not at the meeting and anyone wanting to get involved can contact Kathy at [katherine.putnam@kent.gov.uk](mailto:katherine.putnam@kent.gov.uk)

### **Matters arising**

Membership – members were asked for any nominations to refresh the membership. Miranda suggested reviewing KEIBA award winners as potential BAB members.

### **Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September (7.30 am breakfast buffet) 8 – 10 am @ the Village Hotel, Maidstone

### **What is the Kent Design Initiative?**

The KDI is currently an informal partnership that brings together all the key sectors of the development industry, from local authorities, investors, the construction industry, architects, planners, other design professionals, environmental bodies, organisations, key stakeholders, universities and amenity societies, to encourage and work towards delivering high quality design and sustainable communities in Kent. It is an important partnership approach to design advocacy in the South East and has a strong network. It has received a high level of support, from within the county and the wider South East region, with a range of stakeholders pointing to the main output, the Kent Design Guide as an example of best practice. Since its launch, the KDI has played a key role in championing high quality design, and equipping local authorities and the development industry to deliver high quality design through the planning process.

### **Kent Design Guide**

The Kent Design Guide (December 2005) is recognised by CABI (now part of the Design Council) as one of two national examples of good practice already delivering Government policy, that has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance by most of the district/borough authorities. It has a strong brand and reputation that represents excellence and is a useful vehicle for supporting current national and local priorities, and bold thinking on a range of issues for design adaptations and innovation.

### **Where we are**

To ensure that the KDI remains fit for purpose and is able to respond to national and local priorities and the wider policy context, the Kent Planning Officers Group (KPOG), the client group for the KDI, along with KCC's Regeneration & Economy Division (the host authority for the KDI) in September 2010, agreed to carry out an independent and objective review of the KDI. Urban Practitioners were appointed and carried out an engagement-led approach with a range of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, over a four month period.

Based on Urban Practitioners' findings and recommendations, the main focus will be on strategic leadership, developing policy interventions & guidance tools to inform and improve decision-making; promoting and raising awareness of the issues: delivering training and building capacity; facilitating and co-ordinating the design and place-making agenda. As part of this, and in partnership with the private sector, the Kent Design Guide and its supporting website will be updated and refreshed.

### **Proposal**

At the Business Advisory Board (BAB) on the 19 July, Katherine Putnam, the Kent Design Manager gave a short presentation inviting members of the BAB to join a high level public/private task and finish group, and help steer and reshape the direction of the KDI, and in particular the new iteration of the Kent Design Guide. To date, this group includes two members from KPOG (the current Chair and the Medway Council representative), a Kent Developers Group member, one definite BAB member and provisionally a second from BAB and a well known housebuilder.



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