

PART I MINUTES
of the Board meeting of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC)
held at 13:00 on Wednesday 20 March 2019 at
the North Kent Community Centre, Eastgate
141 Springhead Parkway, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 8AD

Board Members Present:

Michael Cassidy CBE (Chairman)
David Holt (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr Mark Dance
Sandra Fryer
Louise Hardy
Bob Lane OBE
Ian Piper (EDC CEO)

In Attendance:

Julia Gregory	EDC Director of Projects
Mark Pullin	EDC Chief Planning Officer
Gerard Whiteman	EDC Finance Director
Colin Lovegrove	MHCLG Policy Team
Denise Johnson	Board Secretariat

PART ONE

Item 1

1.1 The Chair opened Part One of the meeting.

Apologies

1.2 Apologies received from Cllr Jeremy Kite and Cllr David Turner.

Declarations of Interest

1.3 The Chair reminded Board members to raise any potential conflicts of interest in relation to specific issues under discussion, and of their responsibility not to participate in the discussion or determination of any matter in which they had an interest.

Part 1 Minutes of the 23 January 2019 Board Meeting

1.4 The Part I minutes were approved.

Board Actions

1.5 The Chair noted that the majority of actions from previous Board meetings were complete, in progress, or due to be considered as agenda items, as set out in the Board Action Log.

Item 2 Chief Executive's Report

2(a) CEO's Strategic Report (Paper 019/009)

2.1 Ian Piper presented Paper 019/009, updating on the EDC's progress since the January Board meeting.

2.2 He explained that it had been a busy quarter working hard to deliver on targets for investment and delivery, and that at the time of writing the report, a total of 551 homes had been completed.

2.3 With regard to preparation for the next Spending Review, Ian explained that in his Spring Statement, the Chancellor had signalled that a 3-year Spending Review would be launched before the summer break, assuming a deal for the UK's exit from the EU had been agreed.

2.4 Moving on to land acquisition, Ian confirmed that acquisition of land adjacent to Northfleet railway station had been finalised earlier in the month, and that this was an important piece of land in contributing to the delivery of the Garden City vision. The land is currently reserved land in the event Crossrail should be extended to Ebbsfleet and important in terms of any possible future link between Ebbsfleet International and Northfleet Station.

2.5 Ian confirmed that the EDC had now completed the re-location of the Corporation to The Observatory at Castle Hill, in the heart of the Garden City.

2.6 Reporting on the Central Area and Swanscombe Peninsula, Ian said that conversations were on-going.

2.7 The Chair asked for any questions. Ian and Bob Lane commented on the significant achievement in completing land purchase as an important step to meeting regeneration objectives.

2.8 The Board **NOTED** Ian's update.

2(b) Ebbsfleet Living (Paper 019/010)

2.9 Ian gave Kevin McGeough's apologies, explaining that Kevin was speaking at a Housing Conference in Birmingham. In delivering Kevin's Paper - 019/010 - Ian advised of a large number of events which had taken place, all part of progressing the EDC's place-making ambitions.

2.10 Highlighting the bid to Arts Council England's Creative People and Places (CPP) which had been co-ordinated by EDC, Ian advised that the outcome of this bid submission, which would bring significant extra resource, would be known by late Summer.

2.11 Ian informed Board that 'The Gathering', which was intended to celebrate the Healthy New Town (HNT) programme, would take place this coming weekend (23 March). He explained that the event would be a showcase of creative activities, entertainment and local food.

2.12 With regard to Edible Ebbsfleet, Ian reported that the programme was continuing to flourish and that Balfour Beatty were keen to be involved. In discussion, Louise Hardy asked for examples of their contribution. Ian gave examples including top soil and timber; Julia added that the organisation had offered apprenticeships and early working opportunities, money, materials and expertise, and also that other local business had become involved.

2.13 Further discussion took place around the recent events and David Holt asked how the EDC would provide post-event feedback to participants. Ian advised that a pre-Board session in April would cover feedback from recent consultations and events, as well as covering emerging themes that would help shape strategic work. Bob Lane questioned the timing in terms of Councillors being able to attend due to the period of purdah. Ian agreed that this should be a consideration and would check with Councillors.

2.14 Sandra Fryer asked a question about the bid to Arts Council England and Ian explained that this was a fund to increase the level of engagement/grass root community involvement. Local authorities were precluded from applying which is why EDC had co-ordinated the bid. Ian added that an officer from KCC had been seconded to the EDC for over a year now, and had led on the work to produce the bid.

2.15 The Board **NOTED** the update.

2(c) Communications Update (Paper 019/011)

2.16 In Mark Templeton's absence, Ian delivered the Communications Paper 019/011. He highlighted the section on drone footage which appeared to have been very popular on social media channels.

2.17 With regard to media take-up, Ian explained that articles of particular interest had been the announcement that the Co-op would be the first major retailer in the Garden City and although not issued by EDC, the news that the Department for Education had awarded the contract for a new primary school in Ebbsfleet Green to Maritime Academy Trust had generated significant interest.

2.18 On website stats, Ian reported that the EDC website had attracted its second highest audience since the website was redeveloped in May 2016, with 5,372 individuals looking at nearly 17,000 pages.

2.19 The Chair commented on the significant development of the Springhead Bridge.

2.20 The Board **NOTED** the update.

Item 3 Chief Planning Officer's Report

Planning and Housing Delivery Programme (Paper 019/012)

3.1 In introducing Paper 019/012, Mark Pullin corrected an error at 2.1 referring to Planning Committee meetings, which should read 'January and February' not 'January and December'. Mark summarised the activities of the Committee during January and February; the Committee had met informally during both months having presentations from developers and updates from officers. These related to various matters including the Area Masterplans and Design Codes at Eastern Quarry together with the Education Campus. Continuing, Mark highlighted the table outlining current live applications which will be reported to Planning Committee. He advised the Board that there will likely be more Committee meetings during the Summer and Autumn but planning these is only really possible when the schemes have been submitted. Mark agreed to keep the Board updated on the meetings considering the current Board vacancy and the need to cover the Committee.

3.2 Moving on to the Development Plan and Guidance Update, Mark advised that EDC had agreed to jointly commission with Dartford Borough Council some of the evidence base needed for the Local Plan review, and that the EDC had agreed to focus on certain key areas. The work will continue to develop this and the resulting Local Plan would be the key document used by EDC as Local Planning Authority, when determining planning applications within the Central and Western parts of the Garden City.

3.3 Mark referred to the KCC Waste and Minerals Consultation and summarised the 2 consultations recently undertaken by KCC. He explained that the consultations have potential impacts for development within the EDC area, and therefore a representation had

been made raising an objection. Mark proceeded to give more detail of the specifics of this consultation in relation to the KCC's proposed changes to the wording of Policies DM7 and DM8 and EDC's objection.

3.4 With reference to the Design for Ebbsfleet document, Mark confirmed that Dartford Borough Council (DBC) Cabinet had discussed the document and agreed to endorse it as compliant with their development plan policies. Mark advised that similar confirmation was awaited from Gravesend Borough Council (GBC).

3.5 Mark drew Board member attention to the highlight reports. Since the Board papers were published there had been a recent meeting with Redrow to discuss phase 2C and plans would be reviewed when they get resubmitted. The S106 for the Keepmoat scheme had now been completed and the planning permission issued that day for 598 homes.

3.6 On the Highways England A2 Consultation, Mark said that this would be covered later in the meeting. At this point, Mark Dance advised that at a recent event, both Highways England and Homes England had each commented that due to complexities and costs involved, they would not commence development until the funds are in place and so the investment by EDC was central to making the scheme happen

3.7 The Chair asked for any questions and David Holt asked if there was any evidence from builders of any potential slowdown in house sales. Mark answered that there was no change in the rhetoric used by builders. David Holt reminded that Board should be advised of any early warning indicators. The Chair suggested that mortgage approvals might be an area to consider in that the timescale could be extended from 6-12 months. Ian thought that tracking the number of houses started but not completed would be useful and Mark will include this statistic. Conversation continued around early indicators of slowdown and Mark advised that brick supply is not now as much of an issue – this was seen by Board as potentially helpful to the Garden City if there was a slowdown elsewhere. Bob Lane commented on more completions than starts and queried if there was a balance change. He also asked of the percentage of 'Help to Buy' sales. Mark Dance commented on the figures on this scheme in other areas: London was 80% and Ashford was 'gearing up' for 'help to buy'. Mark agreed to speak to the developers again about Help to Buy in the Garden City.

3.8 Discussion moved onto the Design code and the Chair commented that DBC were becoming more ambitious with their designs. Mark responded that the endorsement confirmed that DBC agreed that the design document complies with the Local Plan, leaving actual design to EDC and not second guessing on design. Sandra wished to thank Mark and the team and emphasised that a new Board Member was needed. The Chair commented on the GBC lack of response. Mark felt that this was a workload issue rather than anything else.

3.9 The Board **NOTED** the update.

Item 4 **Finance Director's Report**

Finance and Operations Report (Paper 019/013)

4.1 Gerard Whiteman presented Paper 019/013, reporting on the EDC's budget, workforce and other operational issues for the period to the end of February 2019 and the 2018/19 year-to-date/forecast outturn positions

4.2 Gerard said that the finance team were working hard to process invoices and payments before the end of the financial year. Having summarised the Operational and Capital Budgets for 2018/19 he advised that MHCLG had approved and confirmed that an additional £2m (RDEL) for project feasibility would be made available to the EDC for the next

financial year (19/20).

4.3 Gerard drew Boards' attention to section 5 of his Paper relating to the procurement by MHCLG of specialist consultants to facilitate the recruitment of 2 new Board members. He advised that it was hoped to finalise those appointments by late Spring 2019.

4.4 Gerard turned to sections 6 and 7 of his Paper on new HR policies (Health and Wellbeing, Flexi-Time, Equality and a Staff Code of Conduct), and on updates to HR and Governance documents. He said that Board approval was sought for minor changes to these documents. Louise said that she was impressed with the Health and Wellbeing document and that it was a good, well-constructed and well balanced document. David Holt was unsure of the emphasis on 'resilient staff' and suggested perhaps using more systemic language, organisational culture, behaviours etc. Sandra added that she had been doing some work recently looking at the work impact of negative social media and how it affects individual staff.

4.5 The Board **APPROVED** the new HR policy documents, and APPROVED the CEO / Accounting Officer to make minor updates to the other EDC HR and Governance documents / policies.

Item 5

Responses to Written Questions from Members of the Public

5.1 The Chair confirmed that a number of public questions had been received, and that these questions and the responses would be available on the EDC's website.

The Chair declared the public part of the meeting closed. He declared that Part Two of the meeting concerning matters solely of commercial or personal confidentiality and for which the public was excluded would commence.