

**Subject: MINUTES of the 20 June 2023 Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP)
meeting held at the Jasmin Vardimon Company, Ashford**

Board Member Attendees:

KMEP Board Members

Liz Gibney (KMEP Chairman & Lee Evans Partnership)
Roland Cooper (Considine Ltd)
Carol Ford (Horticultural Taskforce)
Vince Lucas (VA Rail)
Chris Broom (Discovery Park)
Andrew Metcalf (Maxim PR)
Jo Nolan (Screen South)
Matthew Arnold (Stagecoach)
Miranda Chapman (Pillory Barn – online)
Jason Davies-Baker (Unipet)

Cllr Roger Gough (Kent County Council)
Cllr David Burton (Maidstone BC)
Cllr Monique Bonney (Swale Borough Council)
Cllr Alan Baldock (Canterbury CC)
Cllr Perry Cole (Sevenoaks District Council)
Cllr Lauren Edwards (Medway Council)
Cllr Kevin Mills (Dover DC)
Cllr Matt Boughton (Tonbridge & Malling BC)
Cllr Noel Ovenden (Ashford BC)

Additional In Person Attendees

Steve Samson (Kent County Council)
Emma Watson (Kent County Council)
Tracey Kerly (Ashford BC)
Andrew Osborne (Ashford BC)
Chris Townend (Dover DC)
Kirsty Roberts (East Kent Leadership Group)

Additional Online Attendees

Stephanie Holt-Castle (Kent County Council)
Adam Bryan (SELEP)
David Smith (Kent County Council)
Sunny Ee (Medway Council)
Jessica Jagpal (Medway Council)
Richard Longman (Greater North Kent)
Karla Philips (Kent County Council)
Edward Thomas (Kent County Council)
Joe Ratcliffe (Kent County Council)
Jeremy Whittaker (TMBC)
David Candlin (TWBC)

Board Member Apologies:

KMEP Board Members

Jo James (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce)
Prof. Mario Caccamo (NIAB)
David Milham (FSB)
Prof. Jane Harrington (Uni. of Greenwich)
Simon Cook (Mid-Kent College)
John Keefe (Getlink)
Nicholas Scott-Gray (Peel Ports)
Sweena Badhan (IOD)

Item 1 – Welcome, introduction and apologies.

- 1.1 Liz Gibney (the KMEP Chairman) welcomed attendees to the meeting and facilitated introductions, particularly for new board members.

Item 2 – Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No interests were declared.

Item 3 – Minutes of previous meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the 21 March 2023 meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Item 4 – Overview of KMEP for New Members

- Steve Samson provided an overview of KMEP including its board members, aims and objectives, recent activities and the importance of the public-private-education sector partnership in shaping and influencing economic growth activities in Kent & Medway.
- Information provided is contained in the following slides:

The Purpose & History of Economic Partnerships



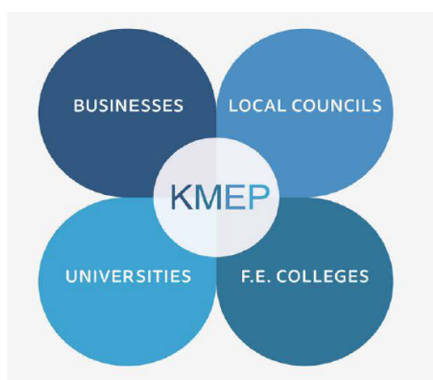
“There are some things only government can do to drive growth in the economy. It must do those relentlessly and to the very highest standards set around the world. There are many areas where government should stand aside completely.

But in the vast majority of cases we will only get the very best results for our economy if government, the business community and local leaders exploit their skills and resources in partnership.”

The Rt. Hon. Lord Heseltine (Oct 2012)

Who are we?

KMEP is the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership



KMEP brings together local council leaders, the business community, University Vice-Chancellors, and Further Education College Principals – 34 Board Members.

KMEP Business Board Members

Name	Company	Sector
Matthew Arnold	Stagecoach	Transport & Logistics
Professor Mario Caccamo	NIAB EMR	Agri-food
Miranda Chapman	Pillory Barn	Creative & Digital
Roland Cooper	Considine	Civil Engineering
Jason Davies-Baker	Unipet International	Manufacturing
Nick Fenton	Kent Housing and Development Group	Construction
Carol Ford	Ford Synthesis	Agri-food
Liz Gibney	Lee Evans Partnership	Architecture
John Keefe	Getlink	Transport & Logistics
Vince Lucas	VA Rail	Transport & Logistics
Andrew Metcalf	Maxim PR	Media
Jo Nolan	Screen South	Creative & Digital
Mayer Schreiber	Discovery Park	Life Sciences / Business Support
Nicholas Scott-Gray	Peel Ports	Transport & Logistics

KMEP Council Board Members



Kent CC
Roger Gough



Medway Council
Lauren Edwards



Ashford BC
Noel Ovenden



Canterbury CC
Alan Baldock



Dartford BC
Jeremy Kite



Dover DC
Kevin Mills



FHDC
Jim Martin



Gravesham BC
John Burden



Maidstone BC
David Burton



Sevenoaks DC
Julia Thornton



Swale BC
Monique Bonney



Thanet DC
Rick Everitt



TMBC
Matt Boughton



Tunbridge Wells BC
Ben Chapelard

KMEP Business Membership & Education Board Members

Jo James



Sweena Badhan



David Milham



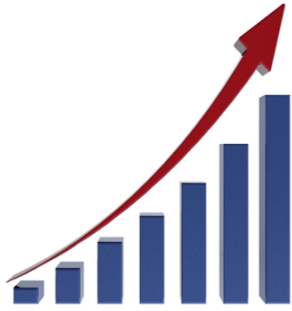
Prof. Jane Harrington



Simon Cook



KMEP's role



To drive forward **economic growth** in Kent and Medway by:

- 1) Setting Economic Strategy
- 2) Prioritising Funding Allocations
- 3) Using our convening power to bring together partners to agree local solutions and unlock opportunities
- 4) Acting as advocates for Kent and Medway

... however, not growth at any cost.

Recent Activity

Prioritisation of Kent & Medway Funding Bids to SELEP

- (Local Growth Fund)
- Sector Support Fund
- Getting Building Fund
- Growing Places Fund

Feeding into consultations:

- APPG on SE Transport Infrastructure
- Relevant Representation for Lower Thames Crossing
- Future LEP Funding Questionnaire

Lobbying & Advocacy:

- Operation Brock
- Nutrient Neutrality



Item 5 – LEP Transition (& Devolution)

- Steve Samson presented to background and current situation relating to the government's 'minded to' proposal to cease funding to Local Enterprise Partnerships in England from April 2024 and transfer responsibilities to Local Authorities. This will affect the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).
- The following slides capture the information that was shared:

Local Enterprise Partnerships & SELEP

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were set up by Government in 2011 to identify and support local strategic growth priorities, encourage business investment and promote economic development.

Strong **voice of business**

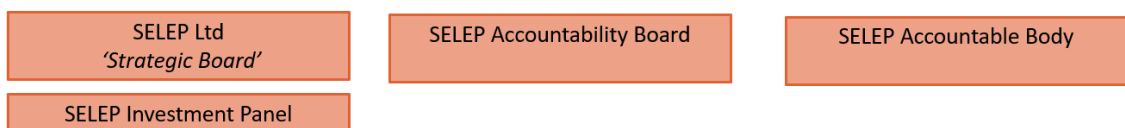
Kent & Medway is part of the **South-East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)** – one of 38 in England

SELEP's strategic priorities:

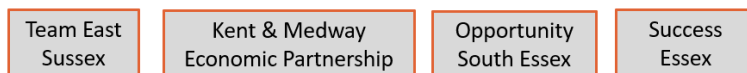
1. Business resilience and growth
2. UK's global gateway
3. Communities for the future
4. Coastal catalyst



The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)



4 Federated Boards:



- Thematic / Sector-specific advisory groups:
- Coastal
 - Creative
 - EU funding
 - Growth Hub
 - Housing & Development
 - Rural
 - Skills
 - Social Enterprise
 - Tourism
 - Transport
 - U9



SELEP's Activities

- Business Support
- Major Projects
- Sector Working Groups
- Investment Programmes
- Strategic Partnerships & Networks
- Skills (including digital)

Funding Channelled through SELEP

Local Growth Fund (from 2014)

Secured a total of
£ 579 m
investment for 108
potential Local Growth
Fund projects

**108 LGF
Projects**
have been awarded
funding by SELEP
Accountability Board

£ 472 m
Local Growth Fund
spend to date

Getting Building Fund:

Kent and Medway: 8 projects, GBF value £37,009,342

Britton Farm Redevelopment Learning, Skills & Employment Hub

Digitally Connecting Rural Kent and Medway

Incubator R&D facility, Discovery Park, Sandwich

Javelin Way Development

New Performing & Production Digital Arts Facility @ North Kent College

Romney Marsh Employment Hub

Thanet Parkway Railway Station

The Meeting Place, Swanley

INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

£800m programme

Total value of **Local Growth Fund: £578.935m**

Local Growth Fund projects: **106**

Completed Local Growth Fund projects: **65**

Total value of **Getting Building Fund: £85m**

Getting Building Fund projects: **41**

Completed Getting Building Fund projects: **9**

Total **Growing Places Fund** available for investment as recyclable loan scheme: **£39.076m**

Total value of value of projects supported through Growing Places Fund investment: **£72m**

Growing Places Fund projects: **29**

Completed Growing Places Fund projects: **11**

Total value of **Sector Support Fund: £2.35m**

Sector Support Fund projects: **21**

COVID-19 Recovery Funds Programme: £4.4m

COVID-19 Business Support Fund: **£2.4m**

Skills COVID-19 Recovery Fund: **£1.5m**

Transition Priorities for SELEP

1. Leaving a legacy
2. Continuing successful workstreams
3. Clarity for Staff
4. Retaining the voice of business
5. Smooth handover/transition

Priorities for Kent & Medway

1. Putting Kent & Medway in the best position for future investment
2. Enhancing Kent & Medway role in setting and delivering growth agenda
3. Clarity from government on what responsibilities are being transferred – practical implications
4. Funding & Resource provision for 'new burdens'
5. Retaining expertise and good practice from SELEP
6. Continuing added value activity with neighbouring areas
7. A smooth transition to new arrangements

Overarching Principles

1. Quick Decisions
2. Clarity for:
 - Staff
 - Business
 - Stakeholders
3. Transparency, Openness, Efficiency
4. Partnership Working
5. Building on past success

SELEP Activities to Continue in Kent & Medway

Activity	Potential Kent Solution Post-April 2024
Staffing / Retention of SELEP Expertise	KCC (+ ESCC & ECC) to take on key staff members
Future Monitoring of Capital Investment Programmes	KCC to take on accountable body role (17 current + new/future projects) KMEP to shape priorities for future funding round and prioritise and select projects
LEP Network	Transition activity to County Councils Network / Local Government Association networks
Communications Activity	SELEP to support sharing of 'investment & impacts' for Kent & Medway and promotion of capital programme as legacy activity
Voice of Business	KMEP, BAB, Membership Organisations (KICC, IOD, FSB), Sector / Thematic Groups, District, University, Key sites networks
Insight, data and intelligence	KCC Research Team, KICC QES, BCC reports, FSB & IOD reports etc.
Strategic Skills Work	Transition SELEP activity to Employment Task Force and Local Skills Improvement Plan/Fund
Business Support	Continuation of Kent & Medway Growth Hub
Strategic Housing Agenda	Kent Developers Group, Links to District Local Plans etc.
Major Projects Group & Skills Group	Establish new group or KMEP / BAB subgroup
Key partnership groups	Identify Kent & Medway leads to continue activity Continue at Kent & Medway Level
U9	Kent & Medway Universities to decide whether to continue activity
Sector / Thematic Work Groups	Kent & Medway organisations to continue involvement / lead groups including SECEN, Rural, Coastal, Energy etc.

LEP Transition Timeline

15 March - Spring Statement announcement: 'government is minded to withdraw central government support for LEPs from April 2024'. The government intends for the functions of Local Enterprise Partnerships to be delivered by local government in the future
(Working assumption that this is Tier 1 Local Authorities: Counties / Combined Authorities)

17 March – 19 May DLUHC Information Gathering Questionnaire – KCC & KMEP Responses submitted – varied picture across the UK

12 June – (informal) workshop for SELEP board members to discuss transition scenarios

7 July – SELEP Strategic Board Meeting to agree preferred scenario

19 July – government announcement expected confirming direction of travel

(Transition plan finalisation and implementation)

31 March 2024 – LEP funding withdrawn and transition to new arrangements

- Cllr Roger Gough then shared some additional information from his perspective as Leader of Kent County Council including his view that LEPs had suffered from a lack of clarity for several years leading to uncertainty about their future.
- The future of the SELEP-led funding schemes would need to be considered – how long they would continue to operate and how these might be continued in Kent & Medway. SELEP (through KMEP) had facilitated some very good projects locally over the years. It would be important to determine how best to make use of the Growing Places Fund recyclable loan funding for Kent & Medway going forward.
- LEP transition would need to link to a potential devolution deal in Kent & Medway but the processes and timelines would be different. Level 2 devolution deals had previously included LEP functions but this has now been superseded following the Spring Statement ‘minded to’ announcement.
- We will need confirmation of new burdens funding to support LEP transition and functions in the future.
- Following an informal workshop meeting of the SELEP board on 12 June, the general direction of travel seems to be working towards the closure of SELEP in March 2024 which will mean that clarity for staff is required as soon as possible and details of functions to be transferred to local authorities.
- Adam Bryan, CEO of SELEP confirmed that the update had been helpful and emphasised the good working relationships that existed between SELEP, KMEP and the various local authorities in the area. This puts the area in a good position to move forward on a smooth LEP transition compared to many other areas where local authority-LEP relations are not so strong.
- Liz Gibney confirmed that the role of KMEP would need to evolve to respond to these changes providing opportunities for more influence on the growth agenda in the county.

Questions & discussion:

- Cllr Monique Bonney asked about interest rates for future allocations of GPF funding. The SELEP board was due to discuss the future use of recycled GPF funding at its 7 July board meeting but a possibility was that each of the federated areas (including Kent & Medway) would receive an allocation and may be given responsibility for managing and monitoring projects in future. The interest rate was likely to remain at 0% and future allocations would need to be in line with the original purposes of the fund (enabling stalled or paused capital programmes to be delivered). The current value of GPF funding to be reallocated is between £9m and £15m across the SELEP area. Adam Bryan explained that there was a possibility that a management fee could be taken from the fund. He also confirmed that there was currently no mechanism in place for government to reclaim recycled funding.
- Jo Nolan asked whether funding allocations had been confirmed to accompany the new Responsibilities in particular with regard to supporting the specific Sector Development groups like SECEN. As yet, nothing had been confirmed although DLUHC had indicated that it was very aware that areas had highlighted the need for new burden funding. Areas that are progressing devolution deals might be better placed to secure funding for LEP responsibilities

- Liz Gibney remarked that KMEP needs a clear strategy about its future role in delivering the economic growth agenda including sector links and activities.
- Cllr David Burton highlighted the need for Districts to be part of the discussion around LEP transition (and devolution) and acknowledged that devolution might be needed in order to draw down funding.
- Cllr Roger Gough emphasised the continued role of business and the private sector in contributing to the growth agenda for Kent and Medway. He also clarified that KMEP is the starting point for the agenda going forward – building on the local authority and business partnership. He confirmed that KCC was committed to ensuring that we position ourselves to secure as much funding as possible in future.
- Matthew Arnold highlighted that managing future GPF allocations at a SELEP scale would necessitate a SELEP-wide governance arrangement which might be impractical in future. This would be possible from a LEP perspective but federated areas were potentially moving towards separate management of GPF funding in future.
- Ashford BC colleagues requested some information about how previous funding had been allocated.
- Cllr Lauren Edwards mentioned that it would be important to retain and build on KMEPs role, be proactive and take the initiative to put forward something that will align with government expectations.
- Andrew Metcalf confirmed that the expectation of business board members was that a collective approach to Kent & Medway's agenda was essential and working at this strategic level was an important aspect of KMEP's work.
- Liz Gibney concluded that Kent & Medway needs to work to put itself in the strongest position moving forward and work on priorities for the future of KMEP.
- Steve Samson explained that KCC and KMEP would be preparing positions / offers for SELEP and DLUHC to set out Kent & Medway's preferred position with regard to responsibilities to take on going forward and highlighting what we can build on in future.
- Cllr Matt Boughton echoed the view that defining and clarifying the role of District Councils was crucial in the process and mentioned that each district will need to justify its involvement in KMEP, how they can access opportunities to secure investments for the future etc. Governance and the role of districts would need to be clarified.

The future role of KMEP was then briefly discussed in terms of topics/sectors and links to wider organisations / groups / partnerships in Kent & Medway:

- Vince Lucas highlighted that funding streams can sometimes distract from the broad strategic work of KMEP. On transport issues, KMEP would need to work with Transport South East to resolve infrastructure challenges in Kent & Medway. Going forward, KMEP would benefit from more local sectoral groups.
- Cllr Monique Bonney suggested that considering modal shift to rail freight was an important issue for the county as well as access to finance for business and improved / coordinated business support in the county. Tackling Kent's transport challenges would be of vital importance for the future.
- The board discussed a number of topics, the need to secure funding but also that the strategy for KMEP was important to define first and foremost.
- Cllr David Burton requested further clarity for the purpose of the group moving forward given that Kent Leaders already meet regularly. Other views were shared that KMEP has

been successful in bring business and the public sector together and had a good track record in securing significant amounts of investment for the county.

- Cllr Noel Ovenden recognised the importance of KMEP (as a new member) and suggested that regardless of the size of any future funding pots, that setting strategic objectives first would provide opportunities to respond to funding calls of any size in the future
- Carol Ford suggested that work around Kent’s role in UK food (landing place for imports, importance as a production area etc.) could be an activity that could provide a strong case for a suitable use for rail freight as a county.
- Steve Samson referred to KMEP’s response to the DHULC information gathering questionnaire which confirmed the importance of the role of districts, unitary, education and business working together.
- Suggested priorities, topics and partnership links going forward were presented in the following slides:



Topics of Interest



Connections, Partnerships & Stakeholder Links



Actions:

- KMEP secretariat to provide details of past GPF and GBF projects for Kent and Medway.
- KMEP secretariate to develop a short questionnaire to survey board members about future priorities for KMEP.

Item 6 – Kent and Medway Economic Strategy Update

The draft Kent & Medway Economic Framework had been presented to the KMEP board in 2022 and was currently in the process of being finalised. KCC was planning to share the most recent draft with Kent Leaders over the summer with formal endorsement being requested from KMEP at the next meeting.

Item 7 – Lower Thames Crossing Update

- Steve Samson explained that KMEP had been asked to agree a ‘Statement of Common Ground’ (SoCG) with the Lower Thames Crossing following the submission of its relevant representation back in February. In addition, KMEP would be expected to submit a full ‘written representation’ by 18 July. The draft statement of common ground is attached to these minutes.
- The SoCG had only been received the day before the KMEP meeting so the draft would be circulated to board members to enable them to feed in views to the KMEP secretariat for the formal response to the SoCG.
- A number of board members expressed strong concerns that the issues previously raised by KMEP were not being taken seriously or were being ignored given the draft SoCG and in particular about the need to tackle infrastructure pinch-points and issues (e.g. Lorry Parking and Operation Brock) concurrently. It was suggested that the position of the board should be to disagree with a number of the National Highways responses provided and even consider disagreeing with the planning application unless a suite of measures to resolve Kent & Medway’s transport infrastructure challenges are put in place.
- Andrew Metcalf mentioned that the issues around the M2 Jct 1 were not highlighted in the original KMEP response and were a significant concern in terms of potentially halting development on the Hoo peninsula. Detail would be provided in the more detailed written representation to the planning inspectorate.

Actions:

- Board members to send input to KMEP secretariat for Statement of Common Ground and formal Written Representation as soon as possible.
 - KMEP secretariat to draft responses to initial SoCG and Written Representation request.
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Item 8 - The Jasmin Vardimon Company & Javelin Way Development

Executive Director, Alison Tedbury and Head of Education, Megan Saunders from the Jasmin Vardimon Company gave a presentation about the new facilities (part funded through SELEP/KMEP), the Company’s educational outreach activities and its wider role as part of the local community in Ashford and Kent. Two Videos were shown to the board:

<https://vimeo.com/763101625/402aa8be44?share=copy>

<https://vimeo.com/763101181/61188d46ff?share=copy>

Any Other Business

Registers of Interest were required from a number of Board Members.

Action:

- KMEP secretariat to contact individual board members to request outstanding registers of interest.

SELEP Board – Kent was required to nominate a District or Borough Council representative to join the SELEP board for 2023-24.

Action:

- District leaders to contact the KMEP secretariat to nominate themselves for joining the board.

Cllr Lauren Edwards highlighting an issue that Medway Council was facing the withdrawal of an amount of Housing Infrastructure Funding which would have a negative impact on Medway's ability to deliver relevant infrastructure funding. The board agreed to provide a letter of support to Medway Council to help in resolving the issue.

Action:

- Medway Council to send information to KMEP secretariat to facilitate the drafting of a letter of support.

Given the timetable for LEP transition, a number of board members requested some additional interim meetings (July / September) be put in place online to discuss emerging issues.

Action:

- KMEP secretariat to confirm dates for additional KMEP meetings asap.