

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

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1. Children In Care, Children In Need

In last week's Thanet & East Kent Insider, we asked readers for comments on the economic impact of foster care in Thanet. We have received a lively correspondence which emphasizes the benefits to local families and businesses of the increased income coming to the district. There has also been much criticism of some of the negative publicity that has recently been appearing in the local press. One correspondent referring to a local head teacher's use of the word 'dumped' went so far as to write, "I really take exception to the use of the word 'dumped' and wonder what it might feel like, firstly to be a child who needs to be in foster care, secondly to be referred to as 'dumped' and thirdly to realise that you are unwelcome in the community that has been chosen to be your home." Thanet and East Kent in general has a long history of offering a warm welcome to tourists, to visitors and to immigrant workers who are prepared to arrive on time and do a good job for their employer. The East Kent coastal business community will surely want to encourage inward investors with a more positive outlook. Readers may be assured that the Thanet & East Kent Insider will never refer to vulnerable children as being 'dumped'.

2. What About Private Providers?

East Kent has some excellent private fostering agencies. One of the best is undoubtedly By The Bridge which was recently judged as "Outstanding" in all six key areas of Ofsted inspection. This private sector agency is the recipient of numerous accolades including ISO 9001 and Investor in People status and is an official sponsor of the Duke of Edinburgh awards. Despite its curious name, By The Bridge has acquired an excellent reputation for all aspects of its services. In a correspondence exclusive to the Thanet & East Kent Insider, Managing Director Nicola Tunbridge writes: "Kent is a centre of excellence when it comes to providing quality foster care. Hundreds of families earn an income from fostering and spend their money in the local community". She praises unreservedly the "skilled parenting" offered by foster families "and the people who take on this incredibly challenging task" and offers strong words directed at one local press report that quoted a head teacher as saying foster children had been 'dumped' on his establishment. As she put it: "The statements in this article undermine the professional training undertaken by these families and the life-changing service they have provided to thousands of British children and young people. These children are not dumped and their foster families are not dump sites". When an expert in fostering makes such a statement, we must treat it seriously, especially as she began her email with a declaration that "I always enjoy reading your Thanet business circular, the humour really strikes a chord with me along with the interesting content." All the more interesting, Nicola, thanks to your contribution.

3. What Does The Council Think?

One Thanet District Councillor has kindly briefed the Chamber on the history of foster children in Thanet. We are most grateful for the background. The Councillor notes: "There has been considerable emphasis on the negative but what is needed is also an examination of the financial benefits to Thanet of employment for foster parents.". The Councillor continues; "In all of this we must not forget the tragedy of children who have been abused and let down by adults. Any of them who read in local papers that they are not wanted in schools and towns, where they have been sent for safety, must feel even more insecure. A recent article in the Observer showed how well a young man did from being placed in Broadstairs after a traumatic start in life. I know of others." We are happy to relate success stories and would welcome reports from Chamber members with news of any of their employees who have won against the odds.

4. Yet More On The Budget

Last week's Thanet & East Kent Insider discussed the budget and its implications for businesses in the East Kent coastal business community. We welcomed the emphasis on the private sector and the need to address the national debt as a first priority. There has been reluctant acceptance by most companies contacted since last week that it is only fair that those on the lowest incomes should be taken out of the income tax system and that the changes in Capital Gains Tax could have been a lot worse. Similarly, no-one has objected too strongly to the rise in VAT on the basis that it impacts largely on discretionary spending and not on essentials such as children's clothing and unprocessed food. Some anomalies remain. For instance, if you buy "Caramel or Millionaire's shortcake" topped with caramel or chocolate, Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs informs us it is zero rated for VAT. However, "Shortbread partly or wholly chocolate-covered" is classified at the standard rate of VAT. Work that one out if you can. This may be an example of where the "Millionaire" does actually profit from the budget, despite what the press reports have told us. .

5. Why is the South East Excluded From National Insurance Incentives?

We do not know the answer to this question. Readers will recall that start up companies are offered the powerful incentive of no National Insurance payments for the first 10 members of staff; a potential subsidy of £50,000. Companies in the South East and East are excluded. Powerful support has arrived from Roger Gale MP who writes: "I do not believe that it is right that "London and the South East", embracing, as it does, areas of need such as East Kent, should be excluded in totality as "prosperous" from government concessions." Neither do we, Roger, and we welcome your support.

6. Your Business News On The Air

Thanet & East Kent Chamber has reached agreement with 107.8 Academy FM to feature a local business each week in the Chamber news spot on Wednesday afternoons. Regular listeners to Kent's newest radio station will have heard the Chamber's comments on the budget, inward investment opportunities, property matters and the products and services available from Chamber members. There is now an opportunity for your company to be the main item in the Chamber business news broadcast from the Ramsgate studios. As a community radio station, 107.8 Academy FM is not allowed to accept advertising. However, companies will be allowed to be mentioned by name at least twice during the ten minutes or so of the session and your interviewer will take an understanding approach towards your operations. Pre-interview coaching is available from the Chamber if you have not appeared on the radio or television before. For more details, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Academy FM Chamber News Spot".

7. News From Dover

Plans for a National War Memorial on Dover's Western Heights have received a boost from a film by KETV recording the Dover Arts Festival on 15th May 2010 which was itself designed to raise the profile of the campaign. The film is available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYBmDGOjZ8Y>. Lasting just seven minutes and sixteen seconds, the film also promotes Chamber members Cloudberry and Lovely's Gallery. Lovers of traditional art, fine wine, patisserie and good music will find something of interest in the broadcast. There is currently no single memorial in the UK to commemorate those who died in the service of this country in the first and second world wars. The campaign for a National War Memorial seeks to create a permanent site to celebrate the sacrifice made by the 1.7 million British and Commonwealth service men and women, Merchant Navy personnel and civilians who perished in the two greatest conflicts of the twentieth century.

8. Question Time

Three Chamber members volunteered their services to appear alongside the Thanet & East Kent Chamber Chief Executive at a BBC style Question Time at St Saviour's Junior School last Thursday. Questions from the 180 pupils of years five and six touched on the attractions of working in the private sector, memories of a first paid job and cultural differences in dealing with international clients. Meeting the challenge were Joanna Hunt of Cloudberry tel: 07980 920370, Warren Dunham of Sota Solution tel: 01795 413500 and Mary Campbell of Adecco, tel: 01843 609292. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is keen to support an enterprise culture in local schools and looks forward to working with educational establishments of all types to promote positive messages about private companies. In a BBC radio exchange with Chamber members earlier this year, Lord Digby Jones made the point that too often business is portrayed in the media as an unsavoury refuge for scoundrels. He lamented that Coronation Street, East Enders and even the Archers seemed to portray businessmen and women as villains. The Thanet & East Kent Chamber is happy to bring a more positive message to enquiring minds. Joanna, Warren and Mary were certainly able to do that and the Chamber is most grateful.

9. Credit Control

In the last few months, this Chamber has been assisting some members with their unpaid bills. Sometimes an unfriendly word from the Chamber can assist the debtors to appreciate the error of their ways. At other times, sterner action is required. The Chamber is fortunate in being able to recommend the services of first class legal brains at Girlings tel: 01843 220274, Robinson & Allfree tel: 01843 592361, Barnes Marsland tel: 01843 221466, Macalister White LLP tel: 01843 572789, Boys & Maughan tel: 01843 234000 and Brachers tel: 01622 690691. The costs of legal action may not be high and in many cases can be recovered from the other party. The aforementioned solicitors are all fully aware of the need to balance risk and reward and will assess every case on its merits.

10. News From The House

This Chamber is continuing its campaign to review the exclusion of East Kent from the National Insurance incentive to start up companies announced in the emergency budget of 22nd June 2010 and mentioned in item 5 above. Last Monday, the Chief Executive of the Chamber enjoyed a discussion of one hour at the House of Commons with an MP close to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In a wide-ranging exchange of views, this Chamber stressed the importance of considering the East Kent coastal business community as a distinct economic region that should not be confused with the needs and interests of Kent as a whole or the Greater South East. Measures were discussed to bring a sharper focus on the private sector in our area so that economic development is promoted with more vigour and local companies are freed from some of the petty regulations that restrict growth and hinder operational efficiency.

11. Thanet District Council

In a lengthy meeting yesterday, the Thanet & East Kent Chamber enjoyed a fruitful dialogue with Cllr Roger Latchford, Deputy Leader of Thanet District Council, and Louise Askew, TDC Economic Development Officer. The discussions centred on strengthening the cooperation between Thanet's largest business support organisation and its elected representatives at TDC. The Thanet & East Kent Insider will report on the results of these discussions and will keep readers informed of progress. Many Chamber members will be aware of the business-friendly support offered by the TDC Director of Regeneration Services, Brian White, who has been instrumental in solving seemingly intractable problems relating to planning and development. Like his counterpart in Dover, Tim Ingleton, Brian is always able to see the issue in question from the point of view of the wealth creators.

12. Beat That

Since corporal punishment was abolished in state schools in 1987 followed by its obligatory departure from fee-paying schools in 1998, reports of domestic floggings have also diminished sharply. One Chamber member, aware of the Thanet & East Kent Insider's abiding interest in the progress of Doncaster Rovers FC and our current focus on children in care, has sent us this story. We have our doubts, but readers must judge for themselves. "One poor child, the victim of a split home and abusive parents, was brought into court and was asked by the presiding magistrate: "Well, young Shane, who do you want to live with? Would you like to live with your father?". "No", said the eleven year old, "He beats me." Unperturbed, the magistrate continued: "Would you like to live with your mother then." "No", said Shane, "She beats me as well." "In that case", continued the magistrate, "What about your aunty and uncle, I am sure they would like you to live with them". "Certainly not", cried Shane in alarm, " They beat me too." "Well", said the magistatre somewhat at a loss for choices, "Who would you like to live with?" "Doncaster Rovers", came the immediate reply. "Doncaster Rovers?", said the magistrate. "That's a football team. Why on earth do you want to live with Doncaster Rovers? " Well", said the child with a wisdom beyond his years, "The thing is your Honour. I would feel completely safe. Doncaster Rovers never beats anybody".

13. Our Sponsors

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