



Your Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

7th September 2014 Issue No.: 208

1. Chamber Business Networking Breakfast

The next Chamber Business Networking Breakfast is scheduled for Thursday, 25th September 2014 at 0730 hrs in Sandwich. Thanks to generous sponsorship from Charlton Athletic Football Club, the first 50 bookings from registered Chamber members will be free of charge. Subsequent bookings will be at the 2014 rate of £12 for members. There are a limited number of places available for non-members at £20 each. There will be plenty of time for networking and all delegates will be offered a full English breakfast with a vegetarian option. Booking is essential. The event will feature a speaker from Charlton Athletic Community Trust which works in partnership with local communities to empower individuals to improve their lives and their environment. To reserve your place, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Charlton Athletic breakfast 25 Sep 2014" Full details of the venue will follow with confirmation.

2. Managing Your Money

Critical to ensuring that you are informed and in charge of your revenue and expenditure is accurate and accessible financial information. If you wish to avoid the dangers of over-trading, ensure that your invoices are paid promptly or simply want to know more about managing your money, the Chamber has the course for you or your trusted staff. The Sage Group has over 6 million customers and is the largest supplier of software to UK Small and Medium Enterprises. In liaison with Wilkins Kennedy, a Top 25 UK accountancy firm, chamber members are offered a Sage 50 Accounts Course at two levels: beginner/refresher and advanced. The sessions will take place at Discovery Park, Sandwich. All participants who complete the course will receive a certificate of attendance. Topics covered include best practice in Invoicing, Receiving Payments from Customers, Credit Control, Invoicing Suppliers, Making Payments, Monitoring Debt, Bank Reconciliation, Vat Returns & Submissions, Financial Reports, Data Maintenance and Data Security. Suitable for any member of staff with an interest in maintaining accurate financial records, the course lasts three hours with a choice of three dates, Tuesday, 23rd September 2014, Tuesday, 28th October 2014 and Tuesday, 25th November 2014. The course fee of £70 for Chamber members includes a Sage manual, refreshments and all documentation. Fee for non-members: £100. A booking Form is attached. For more information, email info@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Sage Courses"

3. Thank you, Guv'nor

If you are one of the few people in Britain who has given a London taxi driver a tip and not heard the response "Thank you Guv'nor", you have the chance to redress this sad gap in your professional life by becoming a governor of a local school. If you are also one of those who complain that school leavers do not have the necessary skills, here is a way to do something about it. There is a growing list of Chamber of Commerce registered schools in the East Kent coastal business community that are looking to engage positively with the private sector and they would certainly thank you for your contribution as a governor. Elizabeth McKee of the well-reputed Charles Dickens School, tel: 01843 862988, tells us that she is more than happy to answer any questions. Five meetings a year with no obligation to join any sub-committees means that your timetable may not be unduly burdened but your experience and knowledge of the workplace will certainly be welcomed with open arms. Dr John East of South East Mediation, tel: 0845 0178393, has referred the Chamber to the words of Susannah Clements, Deputy Chief Executive of the CIPD, who is quoted as saying: "Increasing the number of high calibre professionals putting themselves forward to become school governors is a key step towards bridging the gap between education and work." Members of Thanet & East Kent Chamber of Commerce and our sister Dover District Chamber of Commerce are naturally the "high calibre professionals" Ms Clements has in mind. A less charitable interpretation of her words might be: "Don't complain into your beer about school-leavers, do something about it." The following enlightened East Kent schools will welcome the opportunity to work more closely with private businesses: Charles Dickens School tel: 01843 862988; Cliftonville Primary School tel: 01843 227575; Hartsdown Technology College tel: 01843 227957; Manor House Nursery School tel: 01843 227764; Marlowe Academy tel: 01843 593326; Saint Lawrence College tel: 01843 572855; St. George's C of E Secondary School 01843 609043; Thanet Stage School of Performing Arts 01843 825022; Dover College tel: 01304 205969; Dover Federation for the Arts tel: 01304 200106; Dover Grammar School for Boys tel: 01304 206117; Ripplevale School Ltd tel: 01304 373866.

4. How Are We Doing?

The evidence from the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows a uniformly positive trend across all of East Kent. Canterbury tops the jobs growth for a year-on-year improvement with August 2014 revealing a 26.6% fall in registered unemployed seeking job-seeker benefits. The most number of jobs created has been in Thanet. Over 1,000 adults who may have been spending office hours watching daytime television in July 2013 are now in gainful employment or training helping their company or college grow. The Dover District may have the lowest percentage of new jobs in Kent compared to a year ago, but it still posted a heartening 22.5% fall in unemployment. With the Discovery Park now expanding at a rapid rate, we can expect many more jobs to be added to the Dover District total in the coming year. The Chamber has often commented on positive gains in jobs with a caveat that youth unemployment remains a matter of considerable concern. In August 2012, ONS reported that in Thanet around 1 in 7 (14.0%) youngsters aged 16 – 24 was receiving unemployment benefit. The figure of 10% for Dover was not much more encouraging. We are now delighted to report that the youth in our East Kent coastal business community can take heart from the latest data. Figures of 8.5% for Thanet and 5.3% for Dover must bring a warm glow of hope to every parent concerned at the excessive use of the family Xbox. Parents of unemployed children in Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells where the rate is listed as a meagre 1.3% might consider telling their offspring that the Xbox is locked away. A better use of their children's energies might be to upgrade their skills with a training course at one the following centres which offer a wide variety of programmes in what might be termed 'employability': East Kent College, tel: 01843 605040 or 01304 244332; Canterbury Christ Church University 01227 767700 or 01843 609120; Generation Education Ltd tel: 01843 609360; KCC Skills & Employability Service tel: 01622 696261; Thanet Skills Studio tel: 01843 233130; Charlton Athletic Community Trust tel: 08717 812095.

5. Give Us The Facts

Unemployment based on Claimant Count data supplied by ONS for resident adults aged 16 – 64.

	July 2014		Change since July 2013	
	Unemployed	% of workforce	Number	%
Thanet District	3,467	4.3%	-1,054	-23.3%
Ashford	1,177	1.6%	-583	-33.1%
Canterbury District	1,302	1.3%	-751	-36.6%
Dover District	1,715	2.5%	-499	-22.5%
Maidstone	1,404	1.4%	-733	-34.3%
Shepway	1,681	2.6%	-675	-28.5%
Swale	2,067	2.4%	-926	-30.9%
Kent	17,650	1.9%	-7,320	-29.3%
South East	76,612	1.4%	-39,706	--34.1%
Great Britain	943,207	2.4%	-412,801	-30.4%

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6. EKBAC Update

The East Kent Business Advice Clinic (EKBAC) has operated since March 2011. Since then 195 delegates have been welcomed by our panel of bank managers, senior lawyers, chief executives, chartered accountants, local entrepreneurs and other enlightened private sector professionals who are happy to pass on their experience of successful trading to companies operating in East Kent. The effect of the advice given may be measured by the business failure rate among EKBAC delegates of under 1%. This compares favourably with the 5-year business failure rate for companies registered in Thanet and Dover of over 50%. To book your place at one of the free sessions, email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "EKBAC 2014". One of the key issues which failing companies do not address adequately is credit control. If you do not manage your money well, one of your competitors or customers will be only too happy to manage it for you. The Sage courses listed above at item 2 will give you a large measure of day-to-day information and protection, but so will a good accountant and bookkeeper. Popular among Chamber members are the following: Wilkins Kennedy tel: 01304 897650; Spain Brothers & Co tel: 01304 201994; Reeves & Co LLP tel: 01304 249476; Neville Weston tel: 01843 594571; Michael Martin Partnership Ltd tel: 01227 770500; McCabe Ford Williams tel: 01227 373271; Macintyre Hudson LLP tel: 01634 842205; Levicks Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 862716; Kemps Accounting Solutions Ltd tel: 01843 861188; JHL Accountants Ltd tel: 01304 216296; Haines Watts Kent LLP tel: 01227 766666; Cleverdons Chartered Accountants tel: 01843 866599; JW Accountancy Services tel: 01304 830229; KJA Bookkeeping Services Ltd tel: 07941 653034.

7. Media

The Chamber is often invited to comment on business issues in East Kent and it is the first port of call for many broadcasters and journalists looking for comment on the commercial life in our part of the world. The Chamber is enormously grateful to all those members who keep us updated by email, by telephone and in regular meetings with our staff and associates. It is your views that matter and your concerns that dictate our policies and commentaries. Members will have noticed that not all requests for interviews relate to specific issues such as the future of the Port of Dover or what might happen to Manston Airport. Although our constitution forbids the Chamber to take a party political stance on any matter, it still allows us to welcome the attention from the national and European media in our local constituencies. As we approach the General Election provisionally scheduled for 7 May 2015, we can expect more opportunities to promote East Kent and East Kent business. In the last few weeks, the Chamber has featured on ITV and BBC, see <http://www.itv.com/news/meridian/update/2014-08-28/thanet-constituency-contest-good-for-tourism/> and is a regular contributor to BBC South East, see attached sound file.

8. Regency

If you are a student of the Napoleonic Wars or a descendant of Beau Brummell, the Regency will evoke for you a period of history of two hundred years ago when fashion was highly prized by courtiers whereas uncertainties of all descriptions bedevilled the lives of everyone else in the UK. For anyone in today's investment sector in East Kent, Regency might call to mind Regency Independent Financial Advisors, owned and operated by Barry Williams. In business as an Independent Financial Advisor since 1998, Barry was a pioneer of fee-based advice. It was in part due to his campaigning and the success of his business practice model that the Financial Services Regulator finally outlawed commission-based financial advice in January 2013. Keeping up to date with the rapidly changing investment climate helps Barry's clients to flourish in good times and bad. Now operating from new premises at 125 Snargate Street in Dover, Barry welcomes enquiries from Chamber members wishing to secure their future and protect their earnings from unmeasured risks and uncertainties. Regency Independent Financial Advisors can be reached by telephone to 01304 213902 and by email to advice@regency-ifa.co.uk. It is unfortunate for Beau Brummell that he did not have Barry Williams to advise him. At his peak the famous Regency dandy spent five hours dressing every day and is reputed to have had his boots cleaned with champagne. What he did not do was manage his money wisely. He fled to France in 1816 and eventually died penniless and insane.

9. East Kent Hospitals

In a sharp riposte to a critical report on East Kent Hospital Trust, Chamber Co-President Sir Roger Gale MP notes in a text sent to the Chamber that: "East Kent has one of the lowest mortality rates in the country". Acknowledging that Accident & Emergency departments have difficulty in meeting a demand that should be satisfied by GP services, Sir Roger declares his faith in the quality of our local hospitals, adding: "East Kent's MPs are proud of our hospitals, proud of the medical, nursing and ancillary staff working within them, have been treated by them ourselves and have confidence in the services that they provide." He has less confidence in the inspection regime managed by the Care Quality Commission and calls into question its direction from the top. Sir Roger states: "it is perhaps time for Professor Sir Mike Richards and the CQC team to consider the possibility that there is, to use their words, "room for improvement" in their own approach if they are to continue in the role that they at present occupy." Other members have contacted the Chamber with similar messages of support for our East Kent hospitals in Dover, Margate, Canterbury and Ashford.

10. Belvoir Lettings

Is it old-fashioned to promise “integrity, honesty, teamwork, caring and outstanding service”? Those are the self-confessed values of Major Hughie Horton who brings 34 years of distinguished service in the Royal Tank Regiment to his new company Belvoir Lettings, a franchise operation located in Northdown Road, Margate. Working alongside his son Gavin and Chief Executive Dorian Gonsalves. Hughie is confident that his experience of managing Challenger 2 battle tanks and providing logistical support to armoured fighting operations in Iraq will equip him to withstand any difficulties he will face in assisting tenants and landlords in East Kent. There is certainly nothing old-fashioned about the company’s website at www.belvoirlettings.com/property-to-rent/margate where visitors are invited to choose to receive the information in one of 87 different languages. You may not want to know that ‘fully furnished’ translates into Norwegian as ‘Fullt møblert’, but you will probably be pleased to learn that as a Chamber member you qualify for a 20% discount on standard fees and a £100 Bank of Belvoir voucher for any Landlord Referral when the landlord signs up to the first year the Fully Managed Service. For details of these and other offers for Chamber members from Belvoir Lettings, telephone 01843 293293.

11. East Kent Banking, Finance & Investment Conference Report

The East Kent Banking, Finance & Investment Conference (EKBFI) organised by the Dover District Chamber of Commerce in liaison with the Thanet Chamber brought together a glittering array of speakers who provided the latest news and advice on managing that much coveted asset called “money”. In introducing the speakers, Laura Sandys MP noted the increasing strength of the British economy and the importance of sound financial systems in all aspects of financial management in the private and public sectors. Andy Davies of Handelsbanken explained why this fast-growing Swedish bank had expanded so rapidly in the UK. A decentralised approach that puts the client at the heart of its operations - “the branch is the bank” - has provided the impetus that underlies its consistent position at the top of polls for customer satisfaction. Oli Rehn, Vice-President of the European Union, sent a message of support to the conference read by the George Cunningham EU Deputy Head of Division, in which he emphasised that Member States have to “do whatever it takes” to ensure that the EU has the ability to reform. This is regarded as being essential if we are to achieve sustainable growth.

12. Kent County Council at EKBFI

Cllr Paul Carter CBE, Leader of Kent County Council, prefaced his words from the podium by offering his support for Manston Airport continuing as a going concern. He showed the delegates to the East Kent Banking, Finance & Investment Conference a short film celebrating the huge successes of the Expansion East Kent scheme which has now provided over £20 million in interest-free loans to companies in the East Kent districts of Dover, Thanet, Canterbury and Shepway. He added that secure growth of the East Kent economy was a key objective for everyone at the county council.

13. Bank of England at EKBFI

Ian McCafferty of the Bank of England gave a masterly presentation explaining the most complicated data and research in terms the delegates could understand and appreciate. The recent new powers accorded to the Bank of England may not at first appeared to have had an effect, “it seemed like pushing a piece of string”, but the results were now becoming manifestly apparent. With Governor Mark Carney’s words from the previous evening’s dinner at the Mansion House fresh in his mind. Ian McCafferty outlined a projected GDP growth for the year of around 3.4%. As a member of the Monetary Policy Committee, Ian McCafferty’s comments on possible “gradual and limited” increases in interest rates in the next year received the rapt attention of delegates, perhaps mindful of their own mortgages and loans outstanding. He described the difference between the rise in salaries and wages of 1% to 1.5% and the GDP growth of 3.4% as “economic slack” which would probably disappear as unemployment continued to fall and firms begin to compete more vigorously for staff.

14. Post Office at EKBFI

The afternoon session of the conference began with Mike Granville of the Post Office surprising delegates with the news that the Post Office has more outlets than all the UK High Street bank branches combined; 11,700 against 9,000. Remarkable statistics about the UK’s fastest growing provider of financial services followed: 99.7% of the GB population lives within 3 miles of a Post Office; a third of all small businesses visit a Post Office each week; the Post Office has an annual turnover of £1 billion; the Post Office is the leading provider of travel money. Mike Granville added that the Post Office was rapidly becoming a ‘challenger bank’ and it intends to offer an increasing range of services to business customers. Chamber members in rural areas will be pleased to know that business banking facilities may soon be on the way to their nearest Post Office.

15. Wilkins Kennedy at EKBFI

Paul Nixon of the Top 25 Accounting firm of Wilkins Kennedy gave an entertaining account of the primary importance of managing cash flow. Although he did not repeat the much quoted aphorism of “turnover is vanity, profit is sanity”, he showed everyone present how their revenue can be preserved, their liabilities reduced and their happiness maximised through judicious

use of capital allowances, R&D tax credits and incentive schemes designed to support businesses in retaining their customers and in finding new ones.

16. Bangladesh Opportunities at EKBF

A delegation from Bangladesh had flown to the UK specifically to be present at the conference. To warm applause from the whole room, the President of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce, Mr Mohammad Shahjahan Khan, signed an agreement with the Chief Executive of the Dover District Chamber of Commerce to promote bilateral trade. The result is that members of the Dover District Chamber of Commerce and their sister Chamber in Thanet will henceforth have direct links with over 14,000 companies in an economy that has grown by over 6% a year for the last ten years. Details of infrastructure projects and further exclusive opportunities for East Kent companies were provided by Abu Rashed of the Prime Minister's Office and Mahmud Hussain of Capital & Asset Portfolio Management Company. A graduate of Oxford University, Stern Business School New York and a former star at CitiGroup and Ernst & Young, Mr Hussain left nobody in doubt of the strength of the Bangladesh economy and the potential gains to be made by East Kent companies.

17. Discovery Park at EKBF

Paul Barber, Managing Director of Discovery Park, related the history of the former Pfizer site in Sandwich and outlined the measures taken since 30th July 2012 to transform this former European headquarters of the world's largest bio-medical company into a thriving multi-sector base for 83 companies. As the most successful of the UK's 24 Enterprise Zones, Discovery Park is attracting new companies at the rate of one a week. Plans for the addition of judiciously selected retailers and quality residential accommodation promise to continue the sharply upward trend which has made a significant contribution to job creation locally with 1,600 now employed on site.

18. Conference Closure at EKBF

Drawing the day to a close, Chamber Chief Executive David Foley thanked the speakers for their contributions. He congratulated Discovery Park for the quality of its premises and hospitality. He said that the conference had manifestly met its objectives of promoting liaison between the funders and the funded. He said that: "Good banks need good customers and good customers need good banks" and added that both parties had been much in evidence during the day. Improving access to finance can only benefit East Kent companies. He said that the Thanet & Dover Chambers of Commerce will continue to support local companies of all sizes and looked forward to working with Chamber members throughout the rest of the year. Images of the event are available from the official Chamber image website at www.photoboxgallery.com/dccc.

19. Pretentious Boss

We have been contacted by a senior Personal Assistant at a large company who has recounted her first experiences of working with another company in London where appearances and perceived status held sway over performance and people. We have our doubts about this story, but we leave it to our wise Chamber members to decide for themselves. As she put it: "It was quite a few years ago now, but I can still see his face. I suppose he must have been about 30 or 35 years old, but he acted as if he were the chairman of Shell Oil. He was always putting on airs was my boss. It was all new to me and at the time I thought all senior managers were like that. I remember one morning when he had just moved to a new office and had to interview some candidates for a junior sales post. I was called in to take notes. Before the interviewees arrived, he organised his framed certificates carefully on his desk so that everyone could see how important he was. When he heard a knock at the door, he immediately picked up the telephone on his desk and started talking. Waving the new arrival to sit down, he finished his telephone conversation with the words: "Yes indeed Minister, I can certainly come to 10 Downing Street next Thursday. Thank you for the invitation and I look forward to seeing you again very soon." With a satisfied smile on his face, he replaced the receiver and said abruptly: "Well, young man, what can you tell me about yourself. Come on, come on I haven't got all day." "Well", said the shy 25 year old as he took a screwdriver out of his pocket, "I have come to your office to connect your telephone".

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It's happening now, it's happening in East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekco.co.uk
Offices in Broadstairs, Sandwich and Dover.

Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited

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