

***** Welcome to the Thanet & East Kent Insider *****

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

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22nd January 2009

1. Never Volunteer

Fortunately for all of us, there are over 1,000 organisations in Thanet that depend on the goodwill and freely given services of people who do volunteer. Lisa-Maria Browning, Secretary of Thanet Voluntary & Community Sector Forum (TVCSF), coordinates relations between most of them. On Wednesday, 20th February 2009, TVCSF held its winter conference at the Pavilion, Broadstairs. Sponsored by Pfizer, Thanet District Council (TDC), The Big Lottery, Kent Community Alliance Network and Thanet Local Strategic Partnership, the conference brought together a number of experts in funding issues and provided some useful networking opportunities for delegates. The presentations were mercifully short and there was remarkably little repetition from the speakers. TVCSF Chairman, Steve Ward, opened the proceedings. He was followed by Cllr Jo Gideon who outlined the difficulties faced by TDC when deciding on the budgets to allocate to large scale events such as Broadstairs Folk Week and the relatively small amounts for groups like Wantsum Savers. The annual headaches this caused and the difficulties in reconciling competing demands from equally worthwhile causes have proved to be time-consuming distractions that move the focus away from the primary objective of meeting social needs in Thanet. Her solution is to work in partnership with voluntary groups at a much earlier stage and to work together on Community Partnership Agreements. There was widespread acknowledgement of the wisdom of this approach which is due to be put before TDC on 12 February 2009. Cllr Zita Wiltshire is about to inherit the Voluntary Sector portfolio as Cllr Jo Gideon takes up her post as Chairman of Thanet Works. Cllr Wiltshire is renowned for not being satisfied with “good enough”, but always looking for the best. Quite right too. But we do wonder, did she volunteer?

2. Signs of the Times

The Business Barometer produced by Visit Kent offers a welcome insight into tourism trends in Kent for last November. Canterbury shows an encouraging increase of 10% over the previous year and registered 61% room occupancy in serviced accommodation. This contrasts with a gloomier picture in Shepway, down nearly 7% to 30%, and Thanet, down 8% to 39%. Tunbridge Wells was the only town in Kent joining Canterbury with improved figures and registered a 13% gain to 52%. Presumably, this increase is the result of visiting relatives coming to comfort redundant city financiers. We wonder if the hotels in question demanded payment in cash. The Business Barometer also makes an interesting observation that is worthy of the attention of any hotel, guesthouse or inn in Kent. Some European visitors may interpret the sign “Vacancies” as meaning that no rooms are available as the owners are on holiday. This Chamber has checked this fact with French and Spanish native-speakers and it appears that this is indeed the case. Tourists with a low level of English may go elsewhere if they see no evidence of occupation. Although “Rooms Available” on its own is one option, this Chamber recommends using bilingual signs. If your main overseas visitors are from France, your sign might read, “Rooms Available” and in characters of equal size below “Chambres Libres”. We have seen no evidence to suggest that Australians are attracted to the hotel by turning the sign upside down. For all your signage needs and a thoroughly professional service at a reasonable cost, contact Chamber members Alphabet Signs in Cliftonville tel: 01843 229891 and Signscope in Sandwich, tel 01304 620100.

3. Breaking Up Has Never Been Easier

These pages have featured car dealers who offer great discounts to Chamber members and reduced prices on repairs, servicing and rentals. We have heard nothing but excellent reports about ICar I, Enterprise Rent-a-Car, Invicta Motors Westwood, K&A Executive Travel, Kent Volkswagen, Palm Bay Renault, Portcullis Executive Travel and Premier Caravan Services. However, if you are looking for a spare part for your Ford or Vauxhall or looking to dispose of your vehicle, the person to speak to is Dean Murray at Ford IT-Spares in Ramsgate. Dean is keen to offer readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider the opportunity to recycle their cars. Chamber members also qualify for a special deal on repairs and a free winter check on lights and levels which he will tell you about direct. Neil Sadaka wrote the song “Breaking up is hard to do”. He had obviously never visited Dean’s yard in Hereson Road where vehicles are broken up rather easily every day of the week. Give Dean a call on tel: 01843 593888. There is no obligation to sing.

4. Leaflet Distribution

This is a reminder of the Chamber Leaflet Distribution Service. If a member supplies 350 copies of an A4 or A5 flyer, we will include it in our next round of letters for just £30.00. We can extend the area covered to our partners in the Channel Chamber constituency of Folkestone, Hythe, Hawkinge, Dymchurch and New Romney for an additional £45.00 in which case 750 leaflets are required. To summarize: 350 leaflets/£30.00 or 750 leaflets/£75.00. All that is required of accredited members is that they

deliver the leaflets to Thanet & East Kent Chamber, Kent Innovation Centre, Millennium Way, Broadstairs CT10 2QQ together with a cheque for the required amount and we will do the rest.

5. A Horse, a Camel and a Local Strategic Partnership

Sir Alec Issigonis is the revered designer of the Mini. Before you voice what you may be thinking, it was indeed Mary Quant who popularized the mini skirt in 1965. The great Sir Alec's Mini was launched six years earlier as the Austin and Morris Mini Minor. Both Mary Quant and Sir Alec recognised the full value of an attractive suspension system and good universal joints. What distinguished Sir Alec's contribution is that he knew that big committees marginalise creativity and stifle inspiration. One of his most famous remarks is, "A camel is a horse designed by a committee". Whether the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership (EKLSP) has this in mind when it sits down to describe its "vision" for East Kent is open to question, but the EKLSP board consists of 43 persons. Splendid though the individuals are – all of them are distinguished practitioners in their own field – the EKLSP Draft Sustainable Community Strategy would benefit from the frank comments of readers of the Thanet & East Kent Insider. We are informed in the Strategy that "East Kent has much to offer visitors", that "East Kent will never be immune from the effects of increasingly rapid changes in worldwide economies" and "a balanced housing supply which serves the needs of current and potential residents is essential to this vision". All very true but is not the same applicable to Wigan or Cornwall or any other district in Europe? The EKLSP welcomes your views. You are invited to download the Strategy at www.eastkentlsp.org.uk and to send your comments by email to Marie Newell at marie@eastkentlsp.org.uk before 13th March 2009.

6. £50m and Above Only Please

The falling value of the pound sterling has encouraged overseas investors to look again at some of our property assets. Although the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007 has put a stop to new commercial buildings in England and Wales without a pre-let tenant, premises such as shopping centres and business parks which do have a sustained rental income are looking like an increasingly attractive purchase for overseas investors from China, Japan and the Middle East. This Chamber has no information about the plans of HRH Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal, owner of the Savoy Hotel, a home with 317 rooms and, shortly, his own Airbus 380, the world's largest passenger jet. But we do know of individuals overseas looking to take advantage of favourable exchange rates to purchase tenanted business premises in Kent. If you hear of any available properties independently valued at £50m or above, please contact the Chamber by email to davidfoley@tekc.co.uk or telephone in confidence 01843 609289 for further information.

7. Expert Help

Sir Alec Issigonis, see 5 above, also had a particular view about experts. He once said, "An expert is someone who tells you why you cannot do something". Creative geniuses like him obviously thrive on achieving the supposedly impossible. For most of us, the advice of specialists is welcome and useful. This Chamber offers the services of a wide range of experts who offer a free consultation by telephone or in person. In every case, they can call on much experience of the commercial world and offer guidance on how to fix problems as well as how to avoid them in the future. *Cost Reduction:* Atlantic Business Resources tel: 0781 353 7456; *Business Planning:* Harrington Associates tel: 07974 374683; *Computers & IT:* 5 Star Computer Systems Ltd tel: 01843 844000; A.L.E. Business Services tel: 0845 241 7311; Cariss tel: 0870 224 5421; Coastal Data Systems tel: 01843 846935; Deltace International tel: 01843 861888; Mach Associates tel: 0870 3219986; Profile Development & Training tel: 01843 869100; Sota Solutions tel: 01795 413500; Web Dandy 01843 582502; *Management:* ILM tel: 01843 861616; *Marine:* Deepwater EU tel: 01227 290305; Ferry Management Services tel: 01795 520268; Hartman Marine Services 01304 614121; *Marketing:* Rapid Results Marketing tel: 0844 4480070.

8. Fishing Big

Big Fish Recruitment in Broadstairs would like to announce their new telephone number to any company or organisation looking to recruit staff, temporary or permanent. Claire Topsom is available to take your call on telephone number 0845 06 02 999. Big Fish may not be the sole plaice to do business, but Claire can show you a list of clients that have been completely satisfied; hook, line and sinker.

9. Wearing a Uniform? It Doesn't Add Up

The Marlowe Academy is a serious school making excellent progress in its magnificent new buildings. The Principal, Ian Johnson, can call on the support of Caroline O'Conner, Business Development Leader, Liz Hubbershaw, head of the sixth form, and a first class management team to lead their students to a bright future. Increasing success in their GCSE results and the professionalism of their business outreach programmes do not mean that the school is immune from human frailties. Tim Scott of Multimedia Services was visiting the Academy recently when he witnessed a remarkable exchange which went something along the lines of the following. "Why are you not wearing your school uniform? You know the rules and there are no exceptions", the teacher explained sternly. "But, you should know..." "I do know", continued the teacher, "and you should know that school rules are there for your benefit. You must wear your school uniform in school and on the way to and from school." "I know that", spluttered the unfortunate object of the criticism, "but I think I ought to point out to you that I am the new maths teacher". It's not only policemen that are looking younger.

10. Sponsors

We are grateful to Adecco Recruitment, tel: 01843 609292; Girlings Solicitors, tel: 01843 220274, Evans EasySpace, tel: 0800 039 3900 & 07753 799 333 and Express By Holiday Inn tel: 01843 820250 for sponsoring this edition of the Thanet & East Kent Insider.



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It's happening now, it's happening in Thanet & East Kent.
For details of membership, email admin@tekc.co.uk and be happy.