

From: davidfoley@tekc.co.uk [mailto:davidfoley@tekc.co.uk]
Sent: 08 April 2008 21:41
To: admin@tekc.co.uk
Subject: Thanet & East Kent Chamber weekly bulletin "The Insider"

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

Your Weekly Business Bulletin from Thanet & East Kent Chamber

Thanet & East Kent Insider

8 April 2008

1. Information Technology

The Chamber IT Forum took place last Friday morning and brought together IT specialists from companies ranging from a multinational with sales representation in 124 countries to a web designer operating as a sole trader. Following a presentation of the products and services available from each of the participants, the forum was treated to a live internet demonstration by VitalSoftware of the web-based CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software package, ContactTracker. Issues discussed included data security, access to buyers in large companies, local infrastructure developments and member-to-member sales. A more detailed report will follow in the next Chamber newsletter.

2. Property

The Chamber Property Forum followed in the afternoon of last Friday and united residential property developers, a commercial property developer, estate agents, surveyors, suppliers and a legal representative. It was agreed that despite the generally favourable outlook for property in Thanet, there was a need to project a more positive image of Thanet to the region. Members were keen to support the Chamber in playing a positive role in attracting investment to the area and in bringing the concerns of developers to the attention of elected officials. It was agreed that the Chamber would approach Thanet District Council to arrange a formal meeting to address the concerns of members. These included the abolition of rate relief on commercial property, the paucity of commercial development sites and a coordinated promotion of Thanet. Planning issues relating to Westwood Cross were also discussed. A more detailed report will follow in the next newsletter.

3. Finance & Grants Workshop

As listed in last week's edition of The Insider, a Finance & Grants Workshop will take place at the Chamber on Tuesday 22 April 2008. Brian Short of South East Grant Advisory Service will brief delegates on the public funds available for companies wishing to secure grants for expansion or particular projects. He will also cover the extra funding available to companies located in Thanet and the criteria required to qualify. David Milham of ASC Finance will outline the sources of finance available to companies from banks, venture capitalists and other sources. With 40 years of experience, ASC Finance is the preferred supplier to the Federation of Small Businesses and can claim many successes in supporting the expansion and refinancing plans of UK companies. To register your interest, please email admin@tekc.co.uk with the subject line "Finance & Grants Workshop".

4. Need a Coach?

Chamber member K&A Executive Travel has just taken delivery of a new 49-seater coach. This vehicle joins their fleet of minibuses, people carriers and an S Type Jaguar. All vehicles are available for hire with a fully licensed driver. For full details, contact Kevin or Angela Ingram in their Broadstairs office on tel: 0845 00 63 150.

5. Kent 2020 Vision Show

The Kent 2020 Vision show took place at the County Showground, Detling on Thursday 3 April 2008. Over 300 Kent-based exhibitors promoted their wares to an estimated 3,500 visitors. The event was

launched with a combative speech from the former Director-General of the BBC, Greg Dyke, who spoke at length on the qualities of leadership required to head an organization of 28,000 employees. For a report on Greg Dyke's prescription for business success and an overview of the show, email the Chamber on admin@tekcc.co.uk with the subject line "Kent 2020 Vision Report".

6. Hands Off Private Business

Is Kent County Council getting above itself? Are we seeing communism in Kent with the effective centralised control of the means of production? Some companies in Kent evidently think so. KCC's move to compete with the private sector is of growing concern to many Kent-based businesses. They claim that they are faced with direct competition from KCC which is allegedly competing and winning contracts for the following services: Bus and Coach Transport, Recruitment, Minicab Hire, Printing & Graphic Design, Stationery & Office Supplies, Landscaping & Grounds Maintenance, Vehicle Maintenance and MOT testing. For more information, see the campaign website at www.kcc-hands-off.co.uk and let the Chamber know your thoughts by sending an email to enquiries@tekcc.co.uk with the subject line "KCC Competition".

7. Would you like a cone, sir?

It's worrying to learn from the ALARM survey (Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance) of 2 April 2008 that 2.5 million trenches are dug each year by utility companies, costing the UK an estimated £8.6 billion. If that's not depressing enough, we are shocked by the news that thousands of traffic cones were left on the M2 at Boughton, near Canterbury for a year after repairs had been completed. There followed profuse apologies from the Highways Agency but, work to replace a barrier started last week and guess what? Yes, you are right. The cones are back again.

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David Foley
Chief Executive, Thanet & East Kent Chamber Limited
Director, Channel Chamber of Commerce
Fellow, Royal Society of Arts
Tel: +44 (0) 1843 609289
Fax: +44 (0) 1843 609291
Email: davidfoley@tekcc.co.uk
Mobile: +44 (0) 7967 284850

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