

PART I MINUTES
of the Board meeting of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC)
held at 1pm on Wednesday 31 January 2024
taking place at the Observatory, Castle Hill, Ebbsfleet

Board Members Present:

Simon Dudley (Chair)
Cllr John Burden
Neil Cameron KC (all items except 11c)
Cllr Jeremy Kite MBE
Fred Maroudas (all items except 11c)
Cllr Derek Murphy
Valerie Owen OBE (all items except 11c)
Nick Shattock
Ian Piper (EDC CEO)

Apologies:

Simon Blanchflower CBE

In Attendance:

Richard Garvey	Board Apprentice Programme
Paul Abrahams	EDC Director of Infrastructure & Enabling Works
Jen Hunt	EDC Director of Development
Mark Pullin	EDC Director of Planning and Place (all items except 11c)
Gerard Whiteman	EDC Director of Corporate Services
Caroline Doidge	EDC Head of Marketing and Communications
Denise Johnson	EDC Board Secretariat
Kevin McGeough	EDC Head of Strategy and Placemaking (Part I only)
James Richardson	EDC Head of HR & Corporate Affairs
Mary Rouse	EDC Community Development Manager (Part I only)
Paul Dunkin	EDC Project Manager (Item 9 only)
Chris Horton	EDC Head of Development - Commercial & Community (Item 9 only)

PART ONE

Item 1

1.1 The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting, which was taking place at the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation's offices in Ebbsfleet. The Chair welcomed Richard Garvey who would be participating in Board meetings during 2024 through the Boardroom Apprentice Programme.

1.2 Board members noted that Part I of the meeting was being recorded and that the video and transcript would be published on EDC's website after the meeting. The Board also noted that Part I papers had been made available on the Corporation's website.

Apologies

1.3 Apologies were recorded from Simon Blanchflower.

Declarations of Interest

1.4 The Chair asked for declarations of interests and drew attention to the standing declarations of Planning Committee members. No additional declarations were made. The full register of Board interests is available from the EDC website.

Part I Minutes of the 29 November 2023 Board Meeting

1.5 The Board approved the Part I minutes of the November Board meeting.

Board Actions

1.6 The Board noted the Action Log.

Item 2 Chief Executive's Reports

2(a) CEO's Strategic Report (Paper 024/001)

2.1 Ian Piper's Part I CEO report was Paper 024/001. The paper reported on Quarter 3 corporate performance, progress in delivering the actions arising from the 2023 Board Effectiveness Review and the Business Planning process for 2024/25.

2.2 Ian drew the Board's attention to the Q3 performance report and commented on the very positive progress against both the corporate priorities for the year and also the KPI targets. On the KPI targets, Ian said that data collected in Q3 had resulted in the Corporation passing the target of 580 house completions during the year, with 652 completions during the year so far. Ian said that when the target had been set in March 2023 there were signs the housing market had been slowing, and this was why the target had been slightly reduced from the 2022/23 target. He said that one of the reasons for the large increase in completions during Q3 was that data had been obtained from housebuilders who had been slow to provide completion data earlier in the year, and also because large numbers of completions had come from some apartment blocks at Cable Wharf which had completed earlier than expected.

2.3 On the corporate priorities, Ian said that progress was very good. He added that one priority which was showing as 'Green' in the report would now not be achieved by the end of the year – that of the preparation and submission of the strategic outline case for the Health and Wellbeing Hub. Ian said that whilst the project was progressing, he had taken the decision that EDC resources currently needed to be prioritised against other projects, and so this action would slip into 2024/25.

2.4 The Chair asked for comments. Valerie Owen said that the completions number was very positive, and asked for clarification of how EDC measured a 'completion'. Mark Pullin explained the methodology, and said that a home was considered complete if it was habitable. He said that the Development Monitoring Officer in his team worked closely with developers on the completions data, and this included some inspections. Neil Cameron asked about the data that had been received from developers that had not supplied completions data earlier in the year, and probed how much of the Q3 data was delivery in Q3 and how much was 'catch up' reporting. Mark said that his estimate was around a quarter was catch up, a quarter was early delivery and the other half was delivery in the Quarter. He said that developer forecasts had always suggested that the bulk of the delivery would be in Q1, 2 and 3, and less completions were expected in Q4. Neil requested that further analysis took place so that the Board was better equipped to consider the 2024/25 housing target in the coming months.

2.5 The Chair said that the data was very positive, and showed that there was strong demand for homes in Ebbsfleet. Nick Shattock asked about developers converting market sale products to affordable, and how this appeared to be a trend. Ian Piper said this was inevitable as the market slowed, and that this was a strategy housebuilders often pursued in such circumstances.

2.6 The Board finished by noting the progress that had been made against the Board Effectiveness Review action plan.

2.7 The Board **NOTED** the report.

2(b) Communications and Marketing Report (Paper 024/002)

2.8 Caroline Doidge's Communications report was Paper 024/002, providing an update on communications and marketing activity since the November Board meeting. Caroline provided a short update on the highlights, and also mentioned the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) which had been released to the public in October 2023. As a result of this WCAG update, Caroline advised that our website Accessibility Statement was currently under review, with the plan to conclude this work by the financial year end.

2.9 The Chair invited questions from the Board. Cllr Burden asked about the digital newsletter, and specifically whether Caroline had information about the locations of digital subscribers. Caroline said that this information was available and that she would bring a breakdown to the next Board meeting.

2.10 The Board **NOTED** the update.

01-01	Information relating to the locations of digital newsletter subscribers to be shared with the Board. Action: Caroline Doidge
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Item 3 Director of Planning and Place's Part I Reports

3(a) Planning, Design and Delivery Report (Paper 024/003)

3.1 Mark Pullin presented Paper 024/003 that gave an update on planning, design and delivery matters across Ebbsfleet. Reporting on the Planning Committee he said that there were two planning presentations to the Committee that evening, one from KCC on plans for the new Cable Wharf school, and a second from Henley Investments on proposals for Alkerden Hub. Mark referred to section 4.1 concerning KCC's Pre-Submission draft of their Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which would form part of the Development Plan for the EDC area and used when determining applications for minerals and waste development. Mark also reported the appointment of Gbolade to produce a planning guidance and assessment tool for EDC to use when dealing with sustainability within development proposals. Mark also referred to the 652 home completions so far in 2023/24.

3.2 The Chair asked for comments. Valerie Owen asked about the spike in housing delivery, and asked whether there was a future cliff edge that would see completions in future years fall. Mark said that whenever he had completed a longer term housing completions projection, the current period of delivery was projected to be very high, but given that some large applications were expected soon, including for Harbour Village and Whitecliffe, the future pipeline looked healthy.

3.4 The Chair asked about the Corporation's planning enforcement activities, and whether there was sufficient resource to tackle enforcement issues. Mark said there had been a steady increasing trend over the years, and this was one of the reasons a Planning Enforcement Plan had been developed for consideration by the Planning Committee that evening. He explained that most enforcement matters related to resident complaints, and that volumes were currently manageable, although he would continue to monitor this.

3.5 The Board **NOTED** the update.

3(b) Ebbsfleet Living (Paper 024/004)

3.6 Kevin McGeough presented Paper 024/004 that reported on community building activities since the November 2023 Board. Kevin drew out some highlights from his paper, including the busy pre-Christmas period of community activity including the Christmas Market which had been organised by the Ebbsfleet Events Committee, made up of local residents and business people. Kevin advised that the EGCT had to date approved 11 grants to local applicants and shortly intended to run an additional round of funding, and said that together with funding from Cycling UK, EDC would be delivering five bike repair workshops across Ebbsfleet and the surrounding areas, intended for people to bring their bikes along for repairs and to learn how to maintain them.

3.7 The Chair asked for comments. Neil Cameron congratulated Kevin on his presentation to the All Party Parliamentary Group on New Towns. Kevin advised that this had resulted in a request to visit Ebbsfleet to share lessons learnt. The Chair said that he was very encouraged by the work EDC and Cycling UK were doing on encouraging cycling. Nick Shattock said that the Arcadis school social value initiative was encouraging, and that it would be good to increase social value initiatives beyond those that are construction related. Kevin said there was lots of work going on to expand social value interventions, and this would increase now that social value was fully embedded into EDC procurement activity.

3.8 The Board **NOTED** the update.

3(c) Residents' Satisfaction Survey Results (Paper 024/005)

3.9 Paper 024/005 presented the results of the 2023 Residents' Satisfaction Survey. Mary Rouse, EDC Community Development Manager, who had managed the survey introduced the paper, supported by Kevin McGeough. Mary summarised the methodology for the survey, and said that it had been agreed a survey would now run annually. She explained that the results supported the new KPI 12. Mary said that the level of response to the survey was very positive, with 1007 responses from the new development areas and 1031 responses from existing communities. Mary moved on to outline some of the highlights from the survey.

3.10 The Chair opened the item for discussion, and started by saying that it was important for the results to now be communicated externally. Valerie Owen said that the results were very positive, and asked about the responses to the transport questions which she found intriguing. She specifically asked whether there was any understanding as to why satisfaction with rail services was reasonably high given there had been a series of train strikes. Cllr Kite suggested this may be more about people's expectations, and that from his experience people often separate out external issues from their responses. The Chair said that the survey showed that it was important that the work on transport infrastructure, including Fastrack, was completed as soon as possible.

3.11 Neil Cameron referred to the volunteering responses, which were lower than in the last survey. Kevin reminded Board that the previous survey had been conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a consequence, volunteering would have been greater during that time as people were not able to work in their regular roles, so volunteered or helped out in other capacities. Cllr Burden agreed that this was a likely reason.

3.12 Neil moved on to ask about the responses relating to levels of physical activity, which had also fallen. Kevin said that based on the local area data EDC had collected in 2016, there was a current lack of accessible green space, and so increasing the space available e.g. through the creation of the seven city parks would help to improve this metric over time. Fred Maroudas referred to the SSSI land and the potential for this to be opened up. The Board continued to probe the data, and agreed that the information would be helpful to guide investment decisions. Cllr Burden said that the data was positive, but that he continued to have concerns about the experiences of residents who lived outside of the new development areas. Richard Garvey referred to some of the negative press there had been about other large developments across the country, and said that the data would be useful for communicating the progress that was being made in Ebbsfleet.

3.13 Nick Shattock said that the data gained from the survey was very useful, and that an important next step would be to share it with housebuilders who were very adept at including positive messages and data in their own marketing material. It was agreed that now the Board had seen the survey data Mary and Caroline Doidge would work together to develop a communications approach to ensure it reached a wide range of audiences.

3.14 The Board **NOTED** the update.

02-01	Agree a strategy for communicating the Residents' Survey findings with residents and other stakeholders. Action: Caroline Doidge
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Item 4 **Director of Corporate Services' Part I Report**

4 **Finance, Programme and Resources Quarterly Report (Paper 024/006)**

4.1 Gerard Whiteman presented Paper 024/006 which provided an update on the budget and resources since November 2023 and requested Board approve the process and associated delegations regarding the distribution of Section 106 funds as set out in Section 8 of the report.

4.2 Referring to the 2023/24 operational budget, Gerard said that the RDEL allocation to the Corporation for the year was £6m, which together with RDEL income forecast to be generated during the financial year provided a total gross revenue budget available of £7.1m. He said that the Corporation expected to utilise the full RDEL budget during the year. On CDEL, Gerard's paper explained that the current forecast outturn for the year was £7.15m, and that this reflected the fact that some projects e.g. Northfleet Embankment East had experienced delay. Finally Gerard updated on new starters recruited to the Corporation, with six new staff members joining in January and recruitment to two vacancies underway.

4.3 The Chair asked about CDEL, and the possibility of rolling forward budget not utilised in the current year to future years. Ian Piper said that a request had been submitted to DLUHC through the 'SUPPs' process, but that no response had yet been received.

4.4 Neil Cameron raised a query in respect of section 8.3 of the report, relating to a new process regarding the distribution of Section 106 funds. Neil said that he supported the process and the delegation, but suggested that the wording of section 8.3.3. be amended such that authority is given to the Director of Planning & Place to approve a distribution that meets the parameters of the Section 106, but with the Director of Planning & Place acting in consultation with the Panel that also comprises the Chief Executive and Chair of the Planning Committee rather than the authority being given to the Panel. The Board discussed the issue of the distribution of monies and agreed to the delegation subject to the change of wording proposed by Neil.

4.5 The Board **NOTED** the report and **APPROVED** the process and associated delegations regarding the distribution of Section 106 funds as set out in section 8 of the report but with the change of wording to section 8.3.3. as proposed by Neil Cameron and agreed by the Board.

Item 4 **Development, Infrastructure & Enabling Works Part I Update (Paper 024/006)**

5.1 Jen Hunt and Paul Abrahams presented Paper 024/007, the combined Part I report on development, infrastructure and enabling works projects. Jen and Paul picked out some highlights from the paper, with Jen updating on the appointment of the Ebbsfleet Central Phase 1 design team, the continuing work to prepare the strategic outline case for the Blue Lake project, the submission of the strategic outline case for the Grove Road South project and progress of the Northfleet Embankment East scheme. Paul's highlights included the agreement from KCC to move towards adopting the Springhead Bridge and progress on Ebbsfleet Central electricity supply infrastructure.

5.2 Paul also updated the Board on the Fastrack Bean Tunnel project, and specifically the decision of the original tunnel contractor, Balfour Beatty, to decline to undertake the work for KCC. Paul said the reasons given by the contractor were that their new Risk Counsel had decided not to go ahead, and also because resources had been redeployed. As a result KCC were looking at a new procurement route. The Board briefly discussed the tunnel project, noting that it was 85m in length and under a dual carriageway that contained a water main. The Chair requested that more information was obtained on why the contractor had decided not to proceed with the project.

5.3 Cllr Kite asked about the MaaS (Mobility as a Service) project, and said that he struggled with the concept as his understanding was that the project was essentially about delivering an app, something the private sector would normally take the lead on. He said that he was interested to see more information about the proposal. Paul said that he would provide more information as soon as it became available from KCC. Finally, Nick Shattock asked about the waste water treatment works peer review. Paul said that this concerned the extra over odour control measures that Southern Water would be proposing.

5.4 The Board **NOTED** the report.

Item 6 **Responses to Written Questions from Members of the Public**

6.1 The Chair referred to the Board responses to public questions that had been received prior to the meeting, and confirmed that responses would now be published on the EDC website.

6.2 It was noted that a video of Part I of the meeting would be made available on the website following the meeting, and that the Part I minutes of the meeting would be made available online once agreed by Board at the next meeting.

Any Other Business

The Chair declared the public part of the meeting closed. Part Two of the meeting concerning matters solely of commercial or personal confidentiality and for which the public was excluded would now commence.

Summary of January 2024 Board Meeting Part II Agenda Items and Decisions

Item 7

The Board approved the Part II minutes of the November 2023 Board meeting.

Item 8 **CEO's Commercial/Confidential Update (Paper 024/008)**

The Board received a report on commercial and confidential matters from the CEO. The Board NOTED the report.

Item 9 **Strategic Outline Cases**

9(a) Grove Road South SOC (Paper 024/009)

The Board received a report on the Grove Road South project and also the Strategic Outline Case. The Board APPROVED the Strategic Outline Case for Grove Road South and noted that the approval of DLUHC was now required. The Board also APPROVED, subject to DLUHC approval of the SOC, additional funding taking the investment approval for the project to £780,647 (comprising £100k RDEL and £680,647 CDEL).

9(b) Alkerden Hub SOC (Paper 024/010)

The Board received a report on the Alkerden Hub project and also the Strategic Outline Case. The Board APPROVED the Strategic Outline Case for Alkerden Hub and noted that the approval of DLUHC was now required. The Board also APPROVED, subject to DLUHC approval of the SOC, additional funding taking the investment approval for the project to £480,800 (comprising £330,800 RDEL and £150,000 CDEL).

Item 10 **Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 (Paper 024/011)**

The Board received a report on the Annual Report and Accounts for 2022/23. The Board APPROVED the final draft version of the 22/23 Annual Report & Accounts document and APPROVED the delegation of authority to the EDC Accounting Officer and the Director of Corporate Services in making any final minor amendments as necessary. The Board ENDORSED the Accounting Officer to provide the Letter of Representation attached with the report and to lay the Accounts before Parliament.

Item 11 **Part II Development and Infrastructure Reports**

11(a) Development – General Part II Report (Paper 024/012)

The Board received a report on commercial/ confidential matters on development projects. Board APPROVED an increase in the project approval for the Ebbsfleet Green Community Facilities project from that approved at the meeting in November 2023, taking the total investment approval to £13.584m comprising RDEL of £0.437m and CDEL of £13.147m and ENDORSED submission of the FBC to DLUHC for approval. Board also APPROVED the disposal to Bellway Homes for Abacus Corner on the terms and conditions set out in the report and described more fully in the attached Heads of Terms, subject to DLUHC approval for disposal at below the existing use value and the provision of a Full Title Guarantee; and AUTHORISED the Chief Executive to execute the legal documentation required to effect the sale and transfer of Abacus Corner to Bellway Homes.

11(b) Fastrack Tunnels Project – Increased Approval RDEL (Paper 024/013)

The Board received a report on the Fastrack tunnels project. The Board APPROVED an increase in RDEL expenditure for the Fastrack – Bean Tunnel project of £125,000 for legal fees in order to update the overarching and funding agreements. This would take the total approval amounts on the project to: CDEL - £9m plus RDEL - £401,500.

11(c) Development – Part II Planning Report (Paper 024/014)

The Board received a report on planning matters relating to the development projects. The Board NOTED the report.