

PART I MINUTES
of the Board meeting of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC)
held at 1pm on Wednesday 8 May 2024
taking place at the Observatory, Castle Hill, Ebbsfleet

Board Members Present:

Simon Dudley (Chair)
Simon Blanchflower CBE
Cllr John Burden
Neil Cameron KC (all items except 11a, 11c and part of 11b)
Cllr Jeremy Kite MBE
Cllr Derek Murphy
Valerie Owen OBE (all items except 11a, 11c and part of 11b)
Nick Shattock
Ian Piper (EDC CEO)

Apologies:

Fred Maroudas

In Attendance:

Richard Garvey	Boardroom 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 11a, 11c and part of 11b)
Gerard Whiteman	EDC Director of Corporate Services
Ruth Bryan	EDC Head of Ebbsfleet Central (item 11 only)
Caroline Doidge	EDC Head of Marketing and Communications
Denise Johnson	EDC Board Secretariat
Chris McDonald	EDC Senior Construction Manager (Item 11 only)
James Richardson	EDC Head of HR & Corporate Affairs

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.

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 noted from Fred Maroudas.

Declarations of Interest

1.4 The Chair asked for declarations. Declarations are recorded in full on the Register of Interests that is available from the EDC website, including the standing declarations of Planning Committee members. No additional declarations were made in the meeting.

Part I Minutes of the 27 March 2024 Board Meeting

1.5 Simon Blanchflower asked that references to 'Highways England' in Section 1.4 of the draft minutes be changed to 'National Highways'. The Board otherwise approved the Part I minutes of the March Board meeting.

Board Actions

1.6 The Board noted that all actions had been closed other than Action 03-02 concerning the draft 2024/25 Business Plan. Ian Piper said that the draft Plan had been submitted to DLUHC at the end of March, but that the Plan had not yet been formally approved. Ian said that once approved the Plan would be published. Simon Dudley suggested the action be marked as 'closed' as the action to submit the draft to DLUHC was complete.

Item 2 Chief Executive's Reports

2(a) CEO's Strategic Report (Paper 024/027)

2.1 Ian Piper's Part I CEO report was Paper 024/027. The paper focussed on two main issues, the 2023 and 2024 Board Effectiveness Reviews (BER) and the results of the most recent Staff Survey.

2.2 Ian started by drawing the Board's attention to the results of the 2024 BER, which he said had been lighter touch this year given the Corporation had had an in-depth, independently led BER in 2023. The results were presented at Annex A. The Board also noted that there was update on progress against the remaining four 2023 actions at section 4.2 of the report.

2.3 Ian then moved on to highlight the results of the recent staff survey. He said that there had been 42 responses, and the responses overall were very positive. Ian said there were a smaller number of questions where the responses had received lower percentage positive responses, including those summarised at section 5.3 of the report. Ian said that the Executive Team was looking at the results in detail and that an action plan would be prepared to respond to those areas of the survey where there was an opportunity to improve.

2.4 The Chair welcomed the results of the staff survey which he said appeared to be very positive, asked for comments from the Board on Ian's report. Valerie Owen asked about the two remaining open actions from the 2023 BER. Ian said that good progress was continuing on the action relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and that the next stage of this would involve an audit/review of existing arrangements and recommendations for further work. Ian said that the work concerning the review of governance documents would be complete by the next Board meeting in July.

2.5 Valerie then asked about the staff survey results, and specifically those questions that had received less positive scores, including that of teams working well together. Ian said that a range of initiatives had been implemented to tackle this theme since the last staff survey in late 2022, and confirmed that the Corporation used a range of different approaches to bring teams together, including team building days. He said that the Executive Team had

considered further opportunities in some detail at its recent strategy day. Simon Blanchflower asked about the response rate to the survey. James Richardson confirmed that at the time of the survey there were just over 50 staff members, and so the 42 responses was a positive return.

2.6 The Board moved on to focus on the 2024 BER results. The Chair addressed the BER comments on diversity and the NED vacancy, and said that he and Ian had met DLUHC officials the previous day to consider this. On the skillset required of the new NED, the Chair said that his view was that as the Board was well-balanced with good representation of the main skills and experience required he was not proposing to seek a defined skillset in the recruitment campaign. He said that attracting applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds would be important.

2.7 The Board **NOTED** the report.

2(b) End of Year Performance Report (Paper 024/028)

2.8 Paper 024/028 was the End of Year 2023/24 Performance Report. Ian Piper said that this covered the corporate priorities for EDC for the year and also the KPI targets. Ian said that overall the results were very positive, with the majority of corporate priorities having been achieved and positive results across the 11 KPI targets for the year, including a record number of housing completions for the second year in a row. Ian said that two KPI targets had been missed, the capital spend element of KPI 11 and also KPI 12, the new 'community participation' KPI where EDC had narrowly missed the target.

2.9 The Chair asked the Board for comments. Neil Cameron asked about the priority for 23/24 relating to Fastrack that had not been met, and specifically about next steps for the project. Ian said that the Corporation had been developing a business case for the tunnels project but, as a result of KCC confirming that funding had been secured from central Government, work on this business case had paused. He said that it may be the case that no further work on an EDC case is required given the central Government funding. Ian said that it had always been the case that KCC would be delivering the project, and we would continue to work closely with KCC. KCC would need to obtain a new planning permission in order for this work to progress.

2.10 Ian said that in parallel to the tunnels project, we have been working with Fastrack to enable an interim service into Whitecliffe, starting with a service that would start in the next few months that would go part of the way into the Whitecliffe development before turning around and exiting back through Castle Hill. In the following year there would be an extension of the interim service through the middle of Whitecliffe and on to Bluewater, bypassing the tunnels until these were completed. Neil Cameron welcomed this, saying that when people move to a new area they form travel habits, and so the interim solution was important as more residents moved in. In answer to a question from Neil, Mark Pullin confirmed that the planning application for the tunnels would be for KCC and not EDC to determine. It was noted the application was originally due to be submitted in April, but was now expected in May. Cllr Murphy said that he would follow up within KCC on this matter.

2.11 Valerie Owen said that the officers should be thanked for their work over the year, and it was positive that so many priorities had been delivered and KPI targets exceeded. The Chair agreed, and said that there was no shame in missing some targets as the commitments in the Business Plan had been stretching.

2.12 The Board **NOTED** the report.

2(c) Communications and Marketing Report (Paper 024/029)

2.13 Caroline Doidge presented Paper 024/029, providing an update on communications and marketing activity since the March Board meeting. Caroline reported on the recent website accessibility audit, and said that other from some minor adjustments to layout this work was now largely complete. She highlighted the launch of a video that presented the Residents' Satisfaction Survey results, the relaunch of the Edible Ebbsfleet scheme, and on social media highlighted the approach that EDC would be taking to X going forwards, with the Corporation posting to X but reporting only on 'post impressions' given the prohibitive cost of full analytics reporting.

2.14 The Chair invited questions from the Board. Simon Blanchflower asked for an update on the Ebbsfleet Central Brand & Vision procurement. Caroline said that good quality submissions had been received, and that a preferred bidder had been identified. The Chair asked whether any branding information would be available to accompany publicity on the Ebbsfleet Central East planning application should this be approved by the Planning Committee in June. Ian Piper said that EDC would prepare communications material to publicise any decision on the application, but this would not include new branding which would take some time to develop. Nick Shattock agreed with this approach, saying that branding would come later in the process. The Board noted that any decision on the planning application for Ebbsfleet Central East was likely to generate national interest.

2.15 The Board **NOTED** the update.

Item 3 Director of Planning and Place's Part I Reports

3(a) Planning, Design and Delivery Report (Paper 024/030)

3.1 Mark Pullin presented Paper 024/030, giving an update on planning, design and delivery across Ebbsfleet. Summarising his Paper, Mark said that a request for a scoping opinion for Eastern Quarry had been submitted, and the opinion was issued on 2 May. He said that a new nomination to the Planning Committee had been received from KCC - Cllr James McInroy, and this was awaiting DLUHC approval. On the Planning Committee, Mark said that a June date had now been set for the consideration of the Ebbsfleet Central East application. Mark also highlighted the proposed updates to the Committee's terms of reference at Annex B and C and the update the Board had requested on allotments and community gardens.

3.2 Mark moved on to report on the adoption by Dartford Borough Council in April of the Dartford Local Plan, and explained the relevance of this in terms of planning decisions for the areas of Ebbsfleet that fall within Dartford. He said that training sessions would shortly be arranged for EDC planners and the Planning Committee.

3.3 The Chair asked for comments or questions. Neil Cameron congratulated Dartford Borough Council on the adoption of the Local Plan, and said that he was content with the adjusted wording for the Planning Committee Terms of Reference. He said that the updates would allow a member of the Committee to serve beyond their third term as an exception, and with Secretary of State approval, but that this should in his view be an exception given the value in refreshing Committee membership periodically.

3.4 Neil then asked about the delivery dashboard Annex, and specifically the direction of travel against the risk 'maintain design quality during implementation'. Mark Pullin said that the direction of travel was that this was improving, although the risk itself was still marked with a Red status.

3.5 On the Dartford Local Plan, Cllr Kite talked about the value of clear communications. He referred to the reference to 8,000 homes in recent DBC communications, which had caused some confusion. He said that this referred to existing plans for new homes rather than new, additional homes, and that DBC had had to clarify this.

3.6 The Board **NOTED** the update and **APPROVED** the Planning Committee Terms of Reference dated May 2024.

3(b) Ebbsfleet Living (Paper 024/031)

3.7 Mark Pullin presented Paper 024/031 on behalf of Kevin McGeough who was away. The paper reported on community building activities since the March 2024 Board. Mark specifically mentioned that the custom build housing at Alkerden Gateway developed by Chartway had been shortlisted for the 2024 Housing Design Awards and a recent visit by the Panel had taken place.

3.8 Cllr Kite referred to the Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust grant awards and asked if the Trust might consider offering a small number of larger grants to cater for larger-scale community events. Valerie Owen, who is a Board appointee to the Trust Board, said that this was something that the Trust had been considering, with a possible higher threshold of award for formally constituted groups.

3.9 Simon Blanchflower said that he welcomed the successful completion of the Ebbsfleet Cultural Forum's 6-month training course on events management. He also asked about the strategic partnership being investigated that could help create sustainable outcomes for young people, including those who find themselves homeless, and asked about homelessness in the local area. Mark said that he would take this away and report back.

3.9 The Board **NOTED** the update.

01-03	More information on the partnership to help young homeless people to be reported to a future board. Action: Mark Pullin
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Item 4 Development, Infrastructure & Enabling Works Part I Update (Paper 024/032)

4.1 Jen Hunt and Paul Abrahams' combined report was Paper 024/032, covering Part I updates on development, infrastructure and enabling works projects. Paul Abrahams presented some highlights from the report, and started by informing the Board that that the Board of Southern Water had decided not to take forward the improvements to the Northfleet facility in the current Asset Management Period, resulting in a delay of at least 12 months. Southern Water had decided to prioritise spend in other areas. Ian Piper then mentioned a matter relating to the electrical infrastructure project, and said that it was likely Board approval would be required as this matter was a material change to the project. He said this was a Part II matter and that a special meeting of the Board would need to take place prior to the July Board.

4.2 The Chair asked for comments. Simon Blanchflower said that it was disappointing that Southern Water had decided to delay the improvements. Nick Shattock asked if the works would definitely take place in 2025/26. Ian said that this was not guaranteed and would be a Southern Water decision.

4.3 Nick moved on to ask about the OBC for Ebbsfleet Central Phase 1. Jen Hunt said that the plan was to have the OBC ready for submission to DLUHC in the Autumn, and that as it was a large value case it would also require HMT approval. This approval would enable contractor procurement to commence, and the likely date for the FBC to be submitted was around April 2026. Contractor mobilisation would then be in the latter half of 2026. Ian said that the timetable would take EDC into the next SR period, and this created some uncertainty.

4.4 Simon Blanchflower asked about the number of business cases that were currently with DLUHC awaiting approval. Jen said that there were four cases with the Department, and at present approvals did seem to be taking longer. She said that EDC was raising the impact of this delay with DLUHC, as it was becoming an issue and impacting on delivery. Ian said that the delay appeared to be with subject matters experts in the Department, and that he was planning to escalate this within DLUHC. The Board noted the issue of approvals during the Election period that was expected later in the year.

4.5 The Board **NOTED** the report.

Item 5 **Finance, Programme and Operations Report (Paper 024/033)**

5.1 Gerard Whiteman presented Paper 024/033 that informed Board of the 2023/24 draft final outturn spend position and also proposed the 2024/25 budget. The report also provided the quarterly report on workforce matters and other operational issues. Gerard said that the expected CDEL outturn for 23/24 was £5.4m, and that the expected RDEL outturn was £6.8m, both being subject to external audit which was expected to take place in the Autumn.

5.2 Gerard drew the Board's attention to the proposed 2024/25 RDEL and CDEL budgets. The RDEL budget available to the Corporation was expected to be £7.4m, and the forecasted CDEL spend was £28.6m. This CDEL amount was subject to DLUHC approval. Gerard also said that his report was also seeking Board approval for the updated Scheme of Delegations at Annex C.

5.3 Finally, Gerard reported on health and safety, and specifically a series of trespass incidents and a missing person incidence at Bamber Pit, part of the Ebbsfleet Central site, which had occurred recently. This had resulted in arrests, and damage to fences that would need to be repaired. The Board discussed this matter, asking about the location and also the other land owner in the immediate area. Nick Shattock, the Board Champion for health and safety asked about the security of the site. Gerard said that there was 24 hour mobile CCTV monitoring, clear signage and fencing, although this had been vandalised. Nick asked if more security was needed. Gerard said that in his view the security was sufficient, although the trespassers seemed determined to get through to the site. Gerard referred to the issue of the adjacent landowner, and said that EDC was doing what it could and was compliant, but that dialogue with the other landowner about their security was proving difficult.

5.4 The Board **NOTED** the report, **AGREED** the 24/25 budget and **APPROVED** the updated Scheme of Delegations.

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 May 2024 Board Meeting Part II Agenda Items and Decisions

Item 7

The Board approved the Part II minutes of the March 2024 Board meeting.

Item 8 **CEO's Commercial/Confidential Update (Paper 024/034)**

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

Item 9 **Corporate Risk Register Review and Risk Appetite Statement (Paper 024/035)**

The Board received a report on EDC risk management and reviewed the Corporation's corporate risk register and updated risk appetite statement. The Board NOTED the latest Corporate Risk Register and APPROVED the revised EDC Risk Appetite Statement.

Item 10 **Observatory Infrastructure Upgrades (Paper 024/036)**

The Board received a report on the EDC office building, the Observatory. The Board APPROVED £240,000 of CDEL funding to carry out works to the Observatory building, including replacement of gas boilers and enhancements to the terrace area to ensure that a safe working environment is provided and also to comply with updated 'working at height' regulations.

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

11(a) Ebbsfleet Central Stage 2 – Phase 1 Update (Paper 024/037)

The Board received a report that provided an update on the Ebbsfleet Central project. The Board NOTED the report.

11(b) Development – General Part II Report (Paper 024/038)

The Board received a report on commercial and confidential matters associated with development projects. The Board NOTED the report.

11(c) Development – Part II Planning Report (Paper 024/039)

The Board received a report on planning matters associated with EDC development projects. The Board NOTED the report.