

PART I MINUTES
of the Board meeting of the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC)
held at 1pm on Wednesday 29 January 2025
taking place at the Observatory, Castle Hill, Ebbsfleet

Board Members Present:

Simon Dudley (Chair)
Simon Blanchflower CBE
Cllr John Burden
Neil Cameron KC
Fred Maroudas
Valerie Owen OBE
Nick Shattock
Ian Piper (EDC CEO)

Apologies:

Cllr Jeremy Kite MBE
Cllr Derek Murphy

In Attendance:

Parbej Ali	Boardroom Apprentice Programme
Paul Abrahams	EDC Director of Infrastructure & Enabling Works
Jen Hunt	EDC Director of Development
Mark Pullin	EDC Director of Planning & Place
Gerard Whiteman	EDC Director of Corporate Services
Caroline Alexander	EDC Head of Marketing and Communications
Kevin McGeough	EDC Head of Strategy and Placemaking (Part 1 only)
Chris Horton	EDC (Item 11 only)
Sophie Robinson	EDC (Item 11 only)
James Richardson	EDC Head of HR & Corporate Affairs
Elizabeth Roach	EDC Board Secretariat

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.

1.3 The Chair introduced Parbej Ali who was joining the Board as the 2025 Boardroom Apprentice. Parbej was the third Boardroom Apprentice for the Corporation.

Apologies

1.4 Apologies had been received from Cllr Kite and Cllr Murphy. Apologies had also been sent from the MHCLG sponsor team.

Declarations of Interest

1.5 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.

Part 1 Minutes of the 20 November 2024 Meeting

1.6 The Board agreed the Part I minutes of the 20 November 2024 Board meeting.

Actions Log

1.7 The Board noted the Actions Log. There were two open actions concerning information to be reported to Board, one of which would report to Board in March and the other in May.

Item 2 Chief Executive's Reports

2(a) CEO's Strategic Report (Paper 025/001)

2.1 Ian Piper's Part I CEO report was Paper 025/001. Ian briefly summarised the content, starting with an update on the Government Spending Review process. He said that the second stage of the process – covering 2026-2029 - was now underway, but that the outcome for EDC of stage one of the process, covering 2025/26 budgets, had not yet been confirmed. The Chair said that he had raised this with the MHCLG Permanent Secretary at the recent MHCLG ALB Chairs' meeting. Ian continued, reporting that the EDC bid for stage two of the process had been required to be submitted within a short time window earlier in January, and that this was in line with the initial outline bid the Board had considered in August.

2.2 Ian moved on to cover two other matters in his report; firstly an update on the work the Corporation had been undertaking to enhance its processes under the Public Sector Equality Duty, and secondly an update on corporate performance against the annual Business Plan at the end of Q3.

2.3 The Chair asked for comments from Board members. Valerie Owen thanked the EDC officer team for being ready to submit the SR bid in line with MHCLG's deadline. Valerie then asked about EDC staff equality, diversity and inclusion monitoring; James Richardson said that EDC collected and reviewed anonymised EDI data relating to recruitment campaigns, but that EDI data was not collected on individual EDC staff members. Simon Blanchflower asked if the PSED recommendations action plan referred to in Ian's report could be shared with the Board. Ian said the Action Plan would be circulated by email. Simon also welcomed the work the EDC team had done to consider the London Legacy Development Corporation 'making space for women and girls' initiative.

2.4 On corporate performance, Board noted the housing completions which placed EDC very close to the annual target. Referring to the KPI on community floorspace, Neil Cameron said that whilst the community continued to report concerns about the availability of community facilities, it was very positive that work was now progressing at pace at the two Ebbsfleet Green community buildings. The Chair added that there was a strong pipeline beyond these facilities. Referring to the 'Red' rating against the Northfleet East business plan action, the Chair said that this was marked as red for a positive reason, as EDC had wanted to put more challenge into the costs of the project and improve the business case.

2.5 The Board **NOTED** the report.

01-01	PSED Recommendations Action Plan to be circulated to Board members for information. Action: Ian Piper
--------------	---

2(b) Communications and Marketing Report (Paper 025/002)

2.1 Caroline Alexander presented Paper 025/002, providing an update on communications and marketing activity since the November 2024 Board meeting. Caroline said there had been a reduction in website visits and press releases over the Christmas period but that this had been expected. She said her focus was now on the communications calendar for 2025; there would be a Spring relaunch of the Green Map which will include a local community tree planting event scheduled for February. She said the Winter Lights event would take place on 1 February at the Platinum Jubilee Park and a local resident had been engaged to take photographs, with publicity taking place across Ebbsfleet and surrounding communities to encourage attendance. Caroline said she was also working on promoting the new Community Board member recruitment. Finally, Caroline reported that the Ebbsfleet Central brand and visioning work was continuing.

2.2 Cllr Burden said he had been unable to attend the pre-Board session on Ebbsfleet Central brand and visioning and asked if a briefing paper would be available. Caroline said that she would bring an update to a future Board meeting and also agreed to send a summary of the morning's discussion.

2.3 The Board **NOTED** the report.

02-01	Summary note of the brand and visioning pre-Board session on 29 January 2025 to be circulated to Board members not in attendance. Action: Caroline Alexander
--------------	--

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

3(a) Planning, Design and Delivery Report (Paper 025/003)

3.1 Mark Pullin presented Paper 025/003 that provided an update on planning, design and delivery across Ebbsfleet. Mark started by highlighting the receipt of the application for the temporary secondary school at Alkerden. The Chair asked about the facilities at the temporary facility and Mark confirmed this would include outside space including a sports pitch and pavilion, and portacabins providing the classrooms. Mark said the temporary school was scheduled to open in September 2025 and the permanent school would then open one year later in September 2026. Mark also said that the opening of the Rosherville School at Cable Wharf had been deferred by KCC to Spring 2026.

3.2 Mark moved on to other updates in the paper including on Vistry's Phase 3 at Ashmere and the Grove Road Fastrack scheme from Bellway. Mark then covered housing numbers and flagged a strong Q3 with 618 completions in the year to date. Mark said that the Planning team continued to work on long-term forecasting numbers for the rest of the Corporate Plan period up to 2030, and also noted that developers were reporting that labour and material shortages were no longer an issue and any housing challenges were now more financially based, often associated with mortgage interest rates.

3.3 Mark thanked Neil Cameron for his help in the previous weeks in carrying out the interviews for the Independent Planning Committee members. The results of the interviews would now be put forward to the Secretary of State for approval. Finally, Mark drew the Board's attention to point 4.2 of his report covering the recent decision in relation to the LRCH DCO cost claim. This was a joint claim with KCC and DBC and Mark was now discussing next steps with them.

3.4 The Chair invited questions. Neil welcomed the high number of housing completions, particularly in the current climate. On design quality, Neil asked what material changes applicants were asking for and how quality was being maintained. Mark explained that the most consistent requests concerned changes such as brick detailing and other surface materials and that there were mechanisms in place allowing more time to discuss options, for example part condition discharges, that can be structured to help developers. Valerie Owen referred to the changing policy landscape, and said that should EDC be asked to increase the pace of housing delivery it would still be important to safeguard quality.

3.5 Ian Piper drew the Board's attention to the healthy number of homes under construction on the dashboard tracker and said it was a good indicator of future completions. Nick Shattock asked what type of dwellings were coming forward and Mark said that due to the multiple outlets there were a range of products on different sites, such as the large apartment blocks under construction at Cable Wharf and family homes at Alkerden being marketed for the private rental sector.

3.6 The Chair highlighted the recent devolution white paper affecting local government in Kent and said EDC would need to be alive to any reorganisation and how this could affect local plans and housing numbers. Neil said that, depending on the changes, EDC may wish to look at whether it might apply to be a plan making authority, similar to the London Mayoral Development Corporations. Cllr Burden issued caution at EDC isolating itself from Gravesham and Dartford boroughs. He referenced GBC and DBC's high housing waiting list numbers, and said that in its current form EDC did not face this pressure but that this would change if it became a plan making authority. Cllr Burden also provided a short update on the discussions that were ongoing across Kent on potential make up of unitary councils.

3.7 On housing, Nick Shattock defended EDC's position, saying that it had inherited outline planning consents under existing consents that could not be changed, and that the Corporation had done well to navigate existing restrictions and deliver so many house completions. He added that Ebbsfleet Central, the part of land that was under EDC's control, could have provided higher housing numbers but it had been significantly constrained by the SSSI designation. Cllr Burden said that many of the Ebbsfleet residents had moved to the area from other areas and whilst a lot were commuting he wanted to see local employment opportunities. Nick Shattock said the Ebbsfleet Central scheme would provide those jobs.

3.8 The Chair referred to the overall 1,296 affordable homes completed and asked what DBC and GBC's policy requirements were. Mark Pullin replied that DBC's requirement was 35% and GBC's was 30% but as different planning permissions were granted at various stages there were different requirements at the time of consenting across Ebbsfleet.

3.9 The Chair drew the Board's attention to section 4.2 of Mark's report referring to the Planning Inspectorate's decision to award EDC full cost recovery against the LRCH DCO. Mark confirmed the costs were split between the three Authorities and totalled over £0.5m but that given the status of the company concerned, it was unlikely that any payment would be received. The Chair asked Gerard Whiteman if these costs were carried in EDC's Accounts and Gerard confirmed they were only disclosed as a note.

3.10 Board **NOTED** the paper.

3(b) Ebbsfleet Living (Paper 025/004)

3.11 Kevin McGeough presented Paper 025/004 which reported on community building activities since the last Board meeting in November 2024. Kevin highlighted that the newly formed Garden City Events Committee had held their first Christmas fair at Ebbsfleet Green Primary School and the Ebbsfleet Events Committee had their Christmas market at the Platinum Jubilee Park, whilst Eastgate Community Centre hosted the Springhead Park Christmas Fair. The Ebbsfleet Voices local choir had been at many events and of particular note was the Christmas carol service led by the Baptist Church and the Salvation Army which visited various communities in the area aided by local schools. Many of the events had benefited from funding from the Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust Community Fund and Kevin remarked on how vibrant the festive period had been in both the existing communities as well as the new ones like Cable Wharf and Ebbsfleet Cross.

3.12 Kevin drew the Board's attention to the recently held Creative Exchange Cultural Group's Bollywood event which had been part funded by EDC and the Arts Council. The event had been designed and delivered by local residents and was a good reflection of the diversity of people now living at Ebbsfleet. Lastly, Kevin highlighted the Building Future Skills event which took place at the Observatory and was well attended by local 6th form students.

3.13 The Chair invited comments and remarked on the large amount of work being carried out. He asked Kevin to expand on the work being done with communities to build capacity and capability within the community organisations and Kevin said a third of the programme budget was being spent on building a framework of volunteers and increasing local people's skills. He said local groups were not yet at the stage where they could apply for funding themselves but with some continuing specialist support the capability was steadily increasing. Kevin added that the recent Residents' Survey had shown that there was a strong sense of community at Ebbsfleet, and that EDC continued to work with EGCT to build capabilities.

3.14 Nick Shattock asked if any work was being done in relation to the LLDC's safe spaces work and Kevin explained that it was embedded in EDC's planning and design processes, and that there was a young persons' Placemaking group who provided advice and input on some of EDC's projects. Mark Pullin added that EDC consistently consulted with the Police and referred to the 'Secure by Design' principles.

3.15 The Board **NOTED** the report.

Item 4 Director of Corporate Services' Report Part I Update (Paper 025/005)

4.1 Gerard Whiteman presented Paper 024/033 that informed Board of EDC's budget position as at the end of December 2024. Gerard said that the capital spend forecast for the year had reduced to £16.3m and this was detailed in section 3.4 of the report. Section 7 of the report was a staffing and recruitment update and Gerard flagged that at Section 8 of the report he was asking for Board's approval to write off an outstanding debt from 2021 as this was slightly above the CEO's delegation level.

4.2 The Chair remarked that the priority was to spend capital public money well and not necessarily as quickly as possible and that some of the work on Northfleet Embankment East had led to a delay due to de-risking the project to ensure value for money. Simon Blanchflower referred to the Programme Level Risk section of the report and asked if there had been any delay in the receipt of business case approvals from MHCLG/HMT since the change in government; Jen Hunt said the Alkerden FBC decision had come back to EDC in good time, although the Ebbsfleet Central OBC was still with MHCLG and an ISC date was

awaited. Simon also asked for clarity with regard to EDC's staffing turnover and Ian Piper said that although we had a small number of staff who left at Christmas, in percentage terms it was consistent with our size of organisation.

4.3 The Chair asked Board members if they were in agreement to the proposed write-off of an LRCH debt totalling £11,004 (including VAT). Board noted that the VAT would eventually be recovered and therefore the actual total was £9,170. Ian Piper added that the decision to write off the invoice had been made before the subsequent receipt of approval of costs from PINS but that this did not change the request for write-off as it would not affect the outcome.

4.4 The Board **NOTED** the report and **APPROVED** the write off of bad debt as set out in Paragraph 8 of the report.

Item 5 **Development, Infrastructure & Enabling Works Part I Update (Paper 025/006)**

5.1 Jen Hunt and Paul Abrahams' report was Paper 025/006, covering development, infrastructure and enabling works projects. Paul started by updating the Board on the Springhead Bridge project where the procurement for a contractor to make the small scale remedial works prior to adoption had completed and a local supplier had been successful. The works would be undertaken in February half term. On waste water Paul said that there was a change request for the project to be considered in Part II of the meeting, and on the Fastrack Bean tunnels, Paul said that planning determination was now expected in February as KCC had not yet resolved the required biodiversity net gain compliance issues.

5.2 Jen provided an update on development projects, focusing on the images in the report that showed the progress of the Ebbsfleet Green community buildings. The Board welcomed the images and the progress that they demonstrated. In response to a question from the Chair, Jen said that she would find out whether any drone footage was expected to be taken of the building works.

5.3 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 2025 Board Meeting Part II Agenda Items and Decisions

Item 7

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

Item 8 CEO's Commercial/Confidential Update (Paper 025/007)

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

Item 9 Corporate Performance Framework (Paper 025/008)

The Board received a report on the proposed corporate performance framework for the Corporation for the next corporate plan period. The Board APPROVED the corporate performance framework and the proposed suite of key performance indicators for the period 2025-2030, noting that the next corporate plan and annual business plan that the framework and KPIs will be included within will require MHCLG approval.

Item 10 2025/26 Business Plan Draft Key Actions (Paper 025/009)

The Board received a report on the 25/26 business plan including the proposed 'key actions' for the Corporation for the period. The Board NOTED the update.

Item 11 Land at Northfleet Station SOC (Paper 025/010)

The Board received the strategic outline case for a project on the land adjacent to Northfleet Station. The Board ENDORSED the 'preferred way forward' as set out in the strategic outline case and also APPROVED an increase in the project approval from £123,370 to £581,370 (including all irrecoverable VAT), comprising £123,370 RDEL and £458,000 CDEL, to enable the project to develop through to OBC.

Item 12 Waste Water Change Request (Paper 025/011)

The Board received a report on the waste water project and a request for change. The Board APPROVED a change to the scope of the existing project, recognising that two of the original four objectives can no longer be achieved.

Item 13 Development – Part II General Report (Paper 025/012)

The Board received an update on commercial confidential matters connected to development projects. The Board NOTED the update.