

## Geoff Orton

My comments are confined to Matter 10 - Economic Development. Others will no doubt comment in extenso on physical infrastructure problems (not least 'transport' or even more basically 'water') and the looming 'middle-aged renter' problems which aren't peculiar to Thanet but to which Thanet is particularly vulnerable (as no doubt other coastal peripheries.)

Some years ago when 12,000 houses were allocated there was a forecast of 5,000 jobs without any clear idea of where those jobs derived. I asked SELEP for their projections and justifications for them and was told 'it's what Thanet District Council' told us' which wasn't very productive.

At that time the Local Plan talked of a 'robust public sector' which rather undermined its credibility - there was also concern that other major parts of the 'employment tripod' (Care and Retail) were looking distinctly shaky (Living Wage Effect is closing care homes and in fact the NHS seems to be moving off Isle wherever it can + Artificial Intelligence is further decimating retail of course.) All three major sectors are of course in an even worse state than predicted 4 or 5 years ago.

Since the housing allocation has gone up by 50% and some are forecasting AI as leading to redundancies of 30% (Centre for Cities) and 50% (Bank of England) over the next few years in low wage low-skill economies such as Thanet, it may not be unreasonable to expect a job need of up to 15,000 on the present workforce and presumably another 15,000 at least for the inward migration presupposed by the 50% extra housing (much of which will be taken by London Boroughs as part of their social cleansing exercise ?)

SELEP were asked what plans they have for meeting this demand for upskilling and reskilling : they do not have any (but are investing £1.6 millions in Folkestone which is not of apparent relevance.)

The argument is :

First	Create Skills
2nd	This may attract Investment Interest
3rd	Which will create jobs
4th	Which will create effective demand for housing

This is hardly an original argument and I refer you to the IEA Report attached which underlines the difficulties of a low skill economy in attracting investment (admittedly we in Margate have at last started to see light from the Turner Contemporary Effect with new hotels in the pipeline but these are not high-skill high-paying jobs usually - and of course sensitive to 'seasonality'.)

If anyone thinks (as some do) that by building houses in itself you create the jobs this hardly explains why Thanet has such a high proportion of empty residences (and prospective empty residences as represented by empty commercial buildings.)

Even with an Airport Thanet will be hard put to employ its present population and the lurking fear is that 'social dumping' will simply go to exacerbate all those multi-deprivation indices and generally regress the efforts over the last decades to climb out of the morass of the 70s and 80s. I appreciate the Council's difficulties in arriving at a sensible Local Plan when the major driver potential represented by the Airport remains unresolved.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to a 'Round Table' discussion in due course..

Regards

Geoff Orton