

**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**Canterbury District Economic Development Group (CDEDG)**  
**25 September 2018**  
**Furley Page Solicitors**

<p><b>In Attendance</b></p> <p>Carole Barron (CB)                      The University of Kent (Chair)  Heather Cobb (HC)                      The University of Kent (Minutes)  George Crofton-Martin (GCM)                      Furley Page Solicitors  Sandra Hayworth (SH)                      Canterbury Cathedral Lodge  Lisa Carlson (LC)                      Canterbury BID  Pat Mills (PM)                      Clague Architects  Debbie Green (DG)                      Chives Catering  Simon Chambers (SC)                      New Leaf Tech Solutions  Matthew Arnold (MA)                      Stagecoach South East  Jo Rossi (JR)                      Locate In Kent  Paul Gardiner (PG)                      BSF Construction  Tony Line (TL)                      Kent Recruitment Bureau  Mark Hosea (MH)                      Canterbury Cathedral</p>	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Tom Mellish (TM)                      HBCCT  Peter Hawkes (PH)                      Furley Page Solicitors  Nick Churchill (NC)                      Canterbury City Council</p>	
<b>Discussions</b>		<b>Action</b>
<p><b>Welcome from Furley Page - GCM</b></p> <p>GCM welcomed all to Furley Page Solicitors and gave a brief introduction to the organisation: a full service law firm operating from Whitstable, Canterbury and the Historic Dockyard Chatham. GCM has been with firm for 14 years and lived in Kent all his life, thus the area and organisation are important to him. The firm is well-established, unique and has great people working within it.</p>		
<p><b>Approval of minutes from last meeting</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">All agreed approved</p>		
<p><b>Outstanding Actions</b></p> <p>MA suggested that he and Ruth to present jointly at a future meeting. <b>HC will contact MA and he shall liaise with Ruth to organise a joint presentation.</b></p> <p><b>HC to contact NC regarding progress against his actions from the previous meeting.</b></p>		<p><b>HC &amp; MA</b></p> <p><b>HC &amp; NC</b></p>
<p><b>The Canterbury Journey (MH)</b></p> <p>MH gave a presentation about the 'Canterbury Journey'. This will be sent out with these minutes. Key points were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The investment has come about via a two-round submission process (details on slide 2).</li> <li>• This is a significant investment into Canterbury, into the buildings and physical spaces, as well as towards the engagement of people.</li> <li>• The project has involved 70 – 80 contractors plus project staff working together to deliver.</li> <li>• It is a 5 year project: 2016 – 2021</li> <li>• Plans shown to demonstrate reconstruction work underway, as well as a description of future plans, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Re-landscaping, relocating ticket area and shop;</li> <li>- Building a viewing gallery so that people can see the cathedral clearly without paying a ticket price to enter the grounds;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

- Building new community space: a multipurpose and a secure space especially designed with children and vulnerable adults in mind;
- Having a new interpretation and display stations within the Cathedral for historic documents etc. as these have previously not been able to be displayed;
- Producing a new media guide, as the current audio was last updated 10 years ago;
- Creating an online archive for research and collections online as well as on site, providing accessibility and to expand the knowledge and use more widely.
- The introduction of 'Gregory Gargoyle' to engage a younger audience.
- The research shows barriers include: cost, physicality and religious beliefs. Therefore the changes are intended to help engage people out in communities by breaking down these barriers with outreach by engaging with people in their own environments.
- Several challenges have been faced throughout the project so far, including finding buried bodies during the renovation and having to have areas of the Cathedral covered up during work. Future foreseen challenges include work on the clocks and bells, which means they will be out of use temporarily.
- The activity and marketing plans were shared, as well as 'coming up' information shown.

Discussion was held around other Cathedrals having undergone similar work, including: York, Rochester, Winchester, Lincoln. There are few funding opportunities available for such large scale projects and the Cathedral costs £20K a day to run, hence they have to bid for external funding to undergo such intense work.

It was commented that the Cathedral is considered by many as a national asset and needs to be protected for generations to come, which hopefully this work with help towards.

Pricing was discussed: currently entry fee is £12.50 (concession rate available) but if you Gift Aid your entry you get free admittance for the year. The prices were increased last year and statistics have shown that the Cathedral had fewer visitors but generated more income. It was mentioned that there have been many debates about the entrance charge but it is difficult to find the balance between the costs required to cover services vs the need to re-engage people.

The schools market is big, with primary and junior being more popular than secondary age. The foreign market is also strong but schools from abroad don't always engage with school programme, often buying on the gate and undertaking self-guided tours.

An enquiry regarding the bell harry was made, visiting this is not going to be readily available as part of this regeneration work but this is continually assessed.

Some of the journey has been filmed and some TV companies have been in filming some of the processes but the entire project has not been formally recorded. A time-lapse film of the safety deck work has been created. This and other media is being drip-fed out via social media etc. to keep interest in the development.

Tony Robinson and team created a documentary that was shown on Channel 5, a 6-part series, though this was more to do with history than the regeneration journey.

The predicted impact on the engagement throughout the works stage is difficult gauge in terms of what is a direct correlation. People have commented they have seen elements on TV etc. and visited, which is positive. Throughout the work, refunds have been offered to anyone who was unhappy with their experience, but only a handful have requested this.

Part of the project is to track website and engagement to work out what attracts people so that these elements be heavily marketed and promoted once the regeneration work is complete.

A new ticketing system is underway, to allow people to buy online. In addition, monitoring of residents passes will be undertaken. Residents will be provided with swipe cards so that visiting can be tracked and marketing can be targeted to help keep visitors in touch with events etc. - Smart marketing.

It was commented that disruption to the local area has been very minimal and quiet. This is excellent feedback.

## **Round Table**

### **PM**

The industry is holding up with new enquiries in and keeping busy. Clague are currently recruiting but noticing the market is tentative, this could be a result of Brexit unpredictability.

Houses are selling and builders are building! The sector seems robust, which is positive for the future.

Mountfield Park queried (see NC update from last meeting) as PM is not sure of impact on the delay of this. Will it affect Canterbury's housing need? It will be interesting to see how this pans out. All seem to want it to happen, so if it does not go ahead, it's unsure what the alternative is.

Staff turnover is low and this is good for business but might be demonstrating uncertainty as people not wanting to move.

### **PG**

Reflection of PM's comments mostly: they too are busy with new enquiries

House surveys increased and this moves the construction market – the business is primarily residential not commercial.

They are also looking to recruit but not active (as above).

All discussed the upcoming Construction expo which has grown to huge numbers and has received excellent feedback in recent years. Several members of CDEDG commented that they will be in attendance.

### **MA**

Stagecoach has a good Summer, but it seems that the weather extremes have meant fewer elderly people have travelled at these times.

Back to school travel has been challenging, as it always seems to be. This is due to the unpredictability and impossibility of forward planning as they do not know each year what to expect. Stagecoach have remained on top of the press coverage around this.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> September Stagecoach celebrated 25 years of ownership. In celebration they painted the outside of a bus silver and are going to promote this further. Since Stagecoach took over, buses on road are up by 80% and staff up by 80%. There are a number of events coming up linked to this celebration.

Stagecoach sponsored a KICC event recently and have a stakeholder's dinner at the Canterbury Cathedral Lodge coming up.

They have 1300 staff, 250 in Canterbury (most drivers) but don't recruit very often. However, have recently taken on a Business Data Analysis. This position shortlisted 30 to 6 and is being offered to someone local. This is a leap into the unknown as recruiting for specialist position but it was positive to see many great quality applicants for the post.

Generally speaking the bus market in decline as car ownership has rocketed. However, fewer young people are going out and buying cars early on, so Stagecoach have been offering special prices to young people to take advantage of this.

They have been recognised as 'best value fairs' in recent survey.

#### **TL**

September is typically a busy time in the world of recruitment and this year has been no different. However, there seem to be lots of things not making sense, e.g. high employment and high unemployment!

Candidate and skill shortages are being discussed all over and the TUC are suggesting working a 4 day working week. People are looking for more flexible working. It will be interesting to see how all of this will all come together.

Within the sector of accountancy there have been discussions on technology replacing people and TL, as always, is still trying to stop people recruiting to London!

It was mentioned that Reflect Digital had been in the news recently regarding their decision to move employees to a 4 day working week. Mon – Thu & Tue – Fri. This is an incentive to find new talent as well as retain current employees.

Stagecoach do this for many, as do some at the Canterbury BID.

Sometimes this is helpful for office space, as it is cost effective if using space for fewer days.

Other discussion was held around remote working & outsourcing. This is already a big market and likely to grow further. It results in fewer overheads and often promotes productivity as it prevents interruptions.

#### **GC-M**

Work at Furley Page has been steady which is encouraging.

Business has been in the right areas, including construction, real estate and commercial.

Some people holding back from making decisions, until after March 2019.

There has been a previous concern that people might be putting off selling their houses until after March 2019 but so far this has not been evident.

#### **LC**

At the Canterbury BID, investment is still evident as coming through but vacancy rates have been creeping up.

BID are looking to work carefully with the closed shops to make them look presentable for all those using the town, until they are re-opened.

Brexit has not yet had a large impact, with investment still coming but wonder when the conversation regarding supply chain, tourism and HE will come. **CB will put LC in touch with chamber to discuss this further.**

**CB**

Since the Destination Management Plan was discussed at a previous meeting, some joined up marketing has taken place and a second plan was launched. A leaflet has been provided to review (given out) and the full document on the website.

How people 'see our city' was taken in to account in the creation of the leaflet, incorporating photographs from social media.

Many events are coming up in and around the city, including Graduations; Golf; Lambeth 2020. These all have a knock on effect at the time and to other months (as people move their events around others).

#### **JR**

Locate In Kent brief overview given:

- A free & confidential service to assist business to grow or relocate to the area.

- A property portal; talent pool; and showcase of case studies, celebrations of success etc. **Please get in touch if you would like to feature**
- Currently working with 260 companies in the pipeline, including 28 interested in Canterbury and some more in East Kent. The top sectors include food and agriculture.
- Locate in Kent celebrates 138 successes in 2 years – these are companies landing or growing in Kent. 6 of these are in Canterbury and these have creating or safeguarded 62 jobs.

ALL

**HC arrange a Locate in Kent presentation for a future meeting**

HC

**DG**

Catering sector is good. In 20 years, Chives has never had a Winter like this, with so many events, nearly all of which have been corporate.

Coming up, Chives are undertaking 8 events in 7 days. They have also just committed to work with Wine Garden of England, which is 7 local vineyards all joined together.

2019 was strong for weddings but the 2020 commitment not as positive as expected yet. This could be unpredictability of Brexit.

Chives have now recruited a new chef and were very lucky to have found someone known to the company for a long time. However, this has been a struggle in the past and know others who are still finding it very difficult to recruit to chef positions.

Chives were looking to take on an apprentice from college but were unfortunately told that there were not many catering students this year and all of the ones they do have already have part time jobs. This is not good for the industry. In general, catering and waiting staff are mainly students and they don't stay in the sector due to the long hours and poor pay.

**SC**

The software industry has seen a skill shortage but strategies such as outsourcing and remote working are trying to tackle this.

SC was an AI engineer in the past and sees this tech as positive thing. He believes people are beginning to recognise the social aspect of AI and its ability to supplement rather than take over: "assisted AI".

**SH**

The Cathedral Lodge has had a busy summer, as they always seem to: they are at 95% - 100% capacity most days.

It is on a prime site, with a large conference/event facility but does not have enough rooms for all the delegates who attend events at the conference centre. Currently they outsource some guests to other venues in the city.

September has also been busy and now they are gearing up for Christmas and capitalising on this by hosting Christmas events. There are some limited spaces available so get in quick for your Christmas meals!

There is a new car parking system for hoteliers now in place. In the past guests used to have to buy a yellow book but this has now gone digital and is all done online. However, this cannot be booked by guests, it can only be done by the hotel once the guests arrive and come onto the grounds. This is because you cannot edit details, so if guests gave incorrect information before they arrive (e.g. by using a different car) then the hotel would have to rebook them entirely, losing the cost of the original booking (about £6 per car). This clearly needs some work so SH would like NC to review and let her know if there are any system updates/improvements in the pipeline.

Feedback from others in the group reflected the opinion that the Cathedral Lodge is a great asset and people enthusiastic to visit. It is seen as prestigious, being on the Cathedral grounds and the facilities, service and food are all highly rated.

CB

Chamber update

The chamber has been focusing on membership retention and have seen a 91% increase in this area.

A new initiative 'Business Togetherness' has begun a 3 months campaign in conjunction with Chamber.

A new Chamber website has been created, in response to the current one being out of date. The new site is launching next month (October 2018). There will be a 'my chamber' section to tailor to your needs/area of interest.

The Chamber achieved an ISO audit accreditation.

The general feeling at recent BCC meeting regarding Brexit was not to keep focusing on the negatives but try to and find any positives, as well as an eagerness to 'get on and deal with it!' The BCC will lobby to make sure its impact is as low as possible but at the moment the impact is unknown and unpredictable, thus only so much planning can take place.

University update

The University submitted 3 bids to SELEP:

- A building for KMMS, which has been invited to second stage
- A research bid related to biotech, which was unsuccessful
- And the creation of ICELAB. This was a capital bid to create a site for businesses; digital enabling technology; AI; and to encourage students to move into the sector. This EOI has been invited to the full business plan stage, which is very exciting. The icelab building would be located at the back of the CIC.

The University league tables have been released and Kent moved up within the Shangai global league table, which is positive. It's unknown how many Universities there are globally

CB may not be available to Chair the next meeting as she is waiting for knee replacement surgery. If this is the case, Chris Hare will Chair instead.

**Dates of next meeting**

**Wed 14<sup>th</sup> November 2018**  
*Canterbury Innovation Centre*