

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Canterbury Economic Development Group (CEDG)

Thursday, 12th January 2012
Canterbury Innovation Centre

MINUTES

Present:

Carole Barron (CB) (Chair)	University of Kent
Kerry Hickmott (KH) (Secretary)	University of Kent
Andy Davies (AD)	Handelsbanken
Peter Hawkes (PH)	Furley Page
Pat Mills (PM)	Clague
Paul Wood (PW)	Reeves
Jo Clarke (JC)	Canterbury Innovation Centre

1) Welcome and apologies

- CB introduced KH as her new PA and Secretary to this Meeting. CB announced that Mark Hill from Canterbury College had hoped to come to this meeting, but had to send his apologies due to an imminent Ofsted Inspection. It is hoped that he will commit to joining the Members of the Group. CB informed the group that she had contacted Phil Medicott from Stagecoach to invite him to join the Group.

Apologies were received:

Paul Gardiner (PG)	BSF Consulting Engineers
Michael Stannard (MS)	Cardy Construction
Jo James (JJ)	Kent Invicta Chamber
Mark Hill (MH)	Canterbury College
Malcombe Pollett (MP)	

2) Minutes of previous meeting

- The minutes of the last meeting were agreed without amendment.

3) Innovation Centre: Update of tenants and their fields

- JC updated the group on the current situation at CIC, a report is appended to these minutes.
- JC reported that the majority of enquiries are through word of mouth with current occupancy at approximately 92%. However it should be noted that companies only have to give 2 weeks notice to leave CIC, so there is not room to become complacent, although it is acknowledged that some turnover is needed to make room for new companies coming through. There are a range of companies, some of which have been at CIC since it opened 2 years ago, some of which just hire office for 1 month. It was noted that it is important to strike a balance of existing and new companies and that no company should monopolise too much space.
- Geneform Technologies was a great example of a success story, who handed in their notice as they sold their company for a huge profit to a company in Finland.
- It was noted that it had been necessary to turn away potential clients due to the style of

their business or due to space requirements, such as wet lab space.

- It was acknowledged that there may be some competition from the new Business Enterprise Park at Pfizer, which will offer free business rates for the first 5 years.
- It was suggested that JC might like to develop an article on Economic Impact highlighting the success of CIC and their contribution to the economy. **JC**
- AD reported that as a new client of CIC, the feedback from his visitors was excellent.
- It was noted that CIC also have around 70 virtual clients, who have no physical space at CIC, but have all the benefits, such as the address; phone number; facilities, some of which have then become physical tenants.
- CIC also hold networking events every couple of months for existing clients and local visitors which are well received. It was acknowledged that CIC had a great company interface.

4) Matters Arising

- There was no update regarding a representative from the hotel side.
- Richard Moore from CCC will attend the next meeting to update the group on the Westgate Towers Development.
- It was noted that the Chaucer Field Hotel development is currently on hold. Infrastructure funding is sought for development of the Tech Park from a £38 million fund for East Kent.

5) Document for Note or comment

5.1 Canterbury District Transport Steering Group Minutes held on 7 December 2011

- A discussion took place regarding the road markings at the junction with the Police Station and Fire Station in the City Centre. It was felt that these were not clear and had the potential to cause accidents. Action for CB to write to Richard Moore. **CB**
- A discussion took place regarding the 4 CCC car parks that are currently up for re-development. It was felt that whilst office accommodation would be welcomed it should not be to the detriment of parking spaces. It was agreed that this group had the opportunity to respond to the Transport Steering Group Minutes and that we should forward the concerns of the group to Richard Moore. **CB**
- It was queried who had taken up the tenancy of the KCC Offices in the City Centre.

6) Chamber Update

- CB reported Chamber Membership recruitment and retention are still a concern as businesses are continuing to suffer through these difficult economic times and are cutting back on expenditure. With effect from the 16th January, The Chamber are employing someone 3 days per week to work on building our profile and membership in the Canterbury area. Once settled, they will be invited to attend this meeting.
- The Chamber were awarded the Thames Gateway Area in December, which means they cover the whole County with the exception of Folkestone, Dover, Deal and Thanet. They have a small office in the Old Town in Gravesham and will employ a full time person to build membership in this area.
- Frankie Wiggins (Events Coordinator) will retire at the end of March 2012. Events will be resourced out to Best Business Events.
- Tony Logan (Business Support) left the Chamber in December to join Kent Union. Tudor Price has taken over this role.
- A Board Strategy Day is arranged for February. JJ will be asked to feedback the outcomes to this meeting. **CB**
- It was queried whether the Chamber have a high enough profile in Canterbury, since the

Office is based in Ashford. It was also felt that C4B currently capture a wider audience within Canterbury.

- CB informed the group that KIE have offered the Chamber their meeting room at CIC for drop-in sessions that they could use for networking. It was felt that this was not known by Clients at CIC and would be useful to know. It was suggested that this information is communicated to clients at CIC. **JJ**
- A few members of the group did not receive regular updates from the Chamber and it was felt that their e-mail contacts may be out of date. Although this may be a resourcing issue it was felt that this should be addressed. It was suggested they take on a summer student/apprentice to update their IT system. **JJ**

7) Group Member Updates

- PM reported that a planning application had been submitted for a hotel (Premier Inn) and retail development on the old Blockbuster site. It was noted that there are currently several applications for hotels within Canterbury and questioned whether Canterbury can support all of these hotels however it was deemed that they would each attract different customers.
- There has been interest in the Habitat site a health Club (Bannatynes).
- There is an application for student housing (448 bedrooms) at the former Peugeot Garage site. It was noted that approximately 60% of the Westgate development is pre-let for student housing.
- AD reported that there is a circle of negativity in the community and overall the market is very difficult at the moment and Banks not lending money to businesses any time soon. However there are a few manufacturing businesses who are doing very well in the area.
- We have no high profiles casualties since the last meeting which noted the loss of Blighline. However La Senza is expected to become an empty unit. Blacks have been brought out by JD Sports.
- CB reported that the application for the Chaucer Fields hotel development is currently on hold. This hoped to provide post graduate student accommodation and conference centre. **CB**
- The new Colyer-Fergusson building next to the Gulbenkian Theatre is in construction. This will provide a new huge music/rehearsal space. CB will inform the group once the building is opened. **CB**

8) Any other business

- None

Date of next meeting: 15th March 2012 at 5.00 pm - Canterbury Innovation Centre

Abbreviations:

CCC Canterbury City Council

CIC Canterbury Innovation Centre

UoK University of Kent

C4B Canterbury for Business