

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Canterbury Economic Development Group (CEDG)

Thursday, 5th July 2012
Canterbury Innovation Centre

MINUTES

Present:

Natalia Pizzo (NP)	University of Kent (Secretary)
Carole Barron (CB)	University of Kent (Chair)
Paul Gardiner (PG)	BFS Consulting Engineers
Malcombe Pollett (MP)	Polett Marketing
Mark Hill (MH)	Canterbury College
Pat Mills (PM)	Clague
Sezen Zeki (SZ)	Kent Invicta Chamber

1) Welcome and apologies

Sezen was welcomed to her first CEDG meeting, present members briefly introduced themselves.

Apologies were received:

Paul Wood (PW)	Reeves (arrived but was unable to stay)
Andy Davies (AD)	Handelsbanken
Peter Hawkes (PH)	Furley Page
Dawn Hudd (DH)	Canterbury City Council
Jo James (JJ)	Kent Invicta Chamber
Michael Stannard (MS)	Cardy Construction Ltd
Martin Tanner (MT)	ADM Computing Ltd

Richard Moore was also unable to attend – Richard will be encouraged to attend next meeting to keep group apprised on Westgate Towers traffic situation.

2) Minutes of previous meeting

- No feedback received by CB regarding residential parking.
- PM – lack of additional business parking, despite more office space being built. Permits sold but insufficient spaces to use them.
- CB to feedback that the lack of business parking is disappointing. **CB**
- PM queried the exact purpose of C4B group, SZ queried what type of businesses take part in C4B – C4B is a policy/pressure group which anyone can be invited to join, and it is willing to raise and push issues and therefore delivers results. E.g. C4B can canvass opinion on issue such as the development of another London airport. The Chamber however having a wide geographical spread of members has to ensure it represents all members views.
- CB to circulate papers to inform group of C4B's activity. **CB**
- Discussion on planning permissions – urgent need for housing but 'mixed space' required to ensure there are also businesses, schools and facilities required for additional residents. PM queries would the Chamber support it from an employment and growth perspective? CB to ask Jo James – planning reference CA/12/00160 **CB**

3) Membership update – Sezen Zeki, Canterbury Membership Manager

- SZ has been with Chamber since January with the role of increasing members in Canterbury and surrounding area, which currently has low membership retention. Jo James has hired apprentices to focus on retention, making calls to members around the time of renewal to try to persuade those considering leaving by making them aware of the services the Chamber provides to aid their performance and cost effectiveness eg advice services, insurance. CB queried whether there is monitoring of who uses the services? CB commented that being contacted by someone senior to ask why membership isn't being renewed has a greater impact.
- SZ based at CIC, raising profile through use of social media and networking events such as 'Ladies Lunch' in Sturry on 4 July which attracted 37 attendees, previous 'after hours' informal networking events (no need to pre-register) held at the Abbots Barton hotel attracted similar numbers from Whitstable and Herne Bay as well as Canterbury.
- SZ also based in William Hill office in Herne Bay, plans to extend after hours events to Herne Bay area.
- PM noted a high proportion of members join for support but few use the services and often pay external suppliers for services (eg HR support, CB noted this could be of great benefit to small companies in particular); PG gave example that he was paying an external company for services provided by the Chamber as he was unaware of benefits when signed up. SZ agreed further work is needed to promote benefits; Chamber should also be used by businesses as a voice to communicate issues affecting their businesses. MP noted people often leave because they don't perceive the value and are not engaged with a 'faceless organisation' – more memorable interaction could reverse that trend.
- CB suggested next CEDG meeting is held at Abbots Barton in conjunction with an after hours event to promote visibility '*Come and meet your local development group*'.
- Next after hours event after the summer is 18 September, CEDG could introduce themselves, perhaps present a case study of a business that's saved money through using Chamber services.

4) Changes to EDGs – Carole Barron

- Canterbury to become 'Canterbury District' to include Whitstable and Herne Bay, whose businesses otherwise don't have an EDG to go to.
- CB queried whether we can get a presence from these areas to join the CEDG, SZ knows some people who may be interested; PM queried should potential members be screened?
- SZ to send potential new members list to NP to circulate to All for feedback – whether business would be a good fit for the group, is there an existing contact within the group?

**SZ, NP,
ALL**

5) Group Member Updates/Any other business

- PM – Businesses opening: Sainsbury's in St Dunstan's, The Beany, Club Hotel has another developer trying to get an agreement, Thanet Way scheme underway, Wyevale Garden Centre at Harbledown still trying to develop new businesses; CB commented Little Chef is closing in August as part of a series of closures – will this affect the Travelodge?
- CB – Submitted a Regional Growth bid on 13 June for 8.2 million for infrastructure on the University of Kent Campus for a pre-incubation start up building. Would fit well with existing services as CIC is now full and Hub currently has 12 companies but has set up 43, all those who have moved on have left Kent. Canterbury has 43% public sector jobs and is the 5th lowest city for start-ups; also relevant for Army redundancies or leavers – officers with leadership skills who may be keen to start up a business, there is demand in Kent to help Canterbury stop relying on tourism, education and retail exclusively. However, KCC have submitted a bid focusing on Thames Gateway for 40 million. RGF has received 400 applications, will know

outcome in autumn (likely November).

- Uncertainty on student enrolment for next academic year due to fees, however UoK is financially stable and attracts a lot of foreign students so should be less affected.
- **AOB – Issue raised by Canterbury business - Paul Babra’s global food stall**
- Discussion re Paul Babra’s complaint fed through to CB & SZ by Tudor : initially given permission to operate food stall on the site near Westgate, but complaint lodged due to unsuitability of unit (did not meet Health and Safety standards) and use/positioning of global partners logo. Mr Babra claims he has lost money and therefore cannot comply with regulations now.
- Paul Babra is not a member of the Chamber and does not want to join, however the Chamber is there to support members and non-members alike.
- Discussion as to whether CEDG should support his cause – group agrees that they can share his frustration regarding possible conflicts with other businesses use of logo (Canterbury River Tours use is similar), however Babra should have gone to CCC for advice before purchasing an unsuitable unit, Chamber cannot support a business who does not comply with regulations, especially where Health and Safety is concerned.
- CB to feedback CEDG response to Tudor for her to pass on to Mr Babra.

CB

6) Discussion: Chamber Member Concern regarding ‘one way traffic’ system

- Reason for discussion – complaints from residents and businesses from Canterbury and surrounding areas regarding congestion caused by closure of Westgate Towers to protect this listed building which is now eroding due to volume of vehicles scraping by, also to improve air quality.
- Consensus is that Canterbury simply does not have capacity for traffic volume – therefore there isn’t a viable alternative solution readily available.
- Idea put forward of a Park & Ride on the St Dunstan’s side of the City as the other is well-used but does not alleviate congestion around Canterbury West and Westgate Towers.
- Business impact of Westgate closure – some improved e.g. Bishop’s Finger & Refectory which have responded to more street space & customers due to increased footfall in the area, others suffering people unable to ‘drop by’ in the car e.g. Dry Cleaners and Pet Shop on station road west.
- 29 September there will be a public consultation, CEDG to speak to council and ask to take part, canvassing opinion of members and local businesses beforehand (not residents).
- SZ – Could create a survey monkey to collect opinions from business contacts – all to send ideas for questions to NP to collate and pass to SZ.
- CB – Could use the after hours club meeting on 18 Sept to communicate with businesses in and around Westgate ‘*whether or not you’re a member of the Chamber, this is your chance to feed back to the consultation*’ – could be a way of engaging, getting new members.

SZ, NP,
ALL

CB/SZ

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 18 September at 5.00 pm – Abbots Barton Hotel

Abbreviations:

CCC	Canterbury City Council
CIC	Canterbury Innovation Centre
UoK	University of Kent
C4B	Canterbury for Business