**KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Canterbury District Economic Development Group (CDEDG)**

**Tuesday 22nd March 2016**

**Canterbury Innovation Centre**

**RECORD OF THE MEETING**

**Present:**

**Carole Barron (CB) Chair (University of Kent)**

Nick Churchill (NC) Canterbury City Council

Pat Mills (PM) Clague Architects

Bob Jones (BJ) BID

Bryan Hall (BH) Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Andy Davies (AD) Handelsbanken

Jo Clark (JC) Canterbury Innovation Centre (Part of meeting)

Mona Hodgetts (MH) University of Kent – Secretary

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

CB Welcomed all to the meeting and introduced Bob Jones and new member and advised that Donna Pearson of WinkWorth discontinued membership.

Apologies Received from:

Alison King Canterbury College

Debbie Trewerne Chives Catering

Linda Marsh Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Paul Gardiner BSF Consultants

Discussion about widening membership. BH to send any contacts of people who CB could approach.

1. **Notes and Outstanding Issues Previous Minutes**
   1. NC advised he would cover outstanding issue later in the meeting
   2. LM absent – BH will speak to LM to establish if members gave any suggestions for events or groups to contact.
   3. AK Action – Not in attendance and to be delivered at next meeting
   4. Minutes passed
2. **Update on CIC – JC**

JC introduced herself and presented facts and figures on current occupancy of CIC

Occupancy maintained over 90% to reach 100% by 5th birthday. Healthy waiting lists for workshop and office space with 2016 seeing increase in enquiries. Gave examples of types of business tenants as varied: - Medical, Legal, Engineering and IT.

Although at almost full capacity there are no plans for expansion as funding not available. Members at the meeting agreed that there was a shortage of small serviced office space.

CIC run frequent networking events which prove successful and Charity events raising money for their chosen charity RDA. Latest events raised £5,000 which is match funded by Basepoint meaning that RDA received total of £10,000.

All Basepoint centres in Kent are all doing well and pleased with investment. This interest in Small Business reflects a good news story for innovation in the area.

BJ enquired if there were any plans to develop further sites for office units eg old Royal Insurance Building? NC advised that business cases are being considered and confirmed that site adjacent to Aldi has been approved for office development. NC also suggested that companies/businesses could consider sub-letting unused office space.

(JC left meeting 5:45pm)

1. **Round Table Updates**

**KICC – BH**

Chamber membership in Canterbury low – maintaining levels but no growth. KICC continually looking at ways to attract new members. Some consideration given to differentiating between members and non-members. Most members share same concerns with Cyber Security named as the biggest issue affecting businesses. A successful Cyber Security Event took place recently and was well attended and BH advised there would be more such events in the future.

Chamber Membership benefits most sought after – access to legal services and networking events.

After Hours Club moved from Abbots Barton Hotel to Canterbury College quite well attended and the intention remains to keep speakers at this event Informative.

Schools events continuing attempting to bridge the gap between industry employability expectation and school leavers.

CB offered congratulations to the Chamber on the success of the recent awards night.

**BID – BJ**

Introduced the Business Improvement District concept. Levy imposed on businesses which is paid upfront. Businesses benefit from all the BID investment initiatives which include achieving Purple Flag (Safe City) Status, and Finalist in Britain in Bloom. BID also offers advice to city businesses on working together rather than competing against each other. Upcoming conference to discuss the Night Time Economy and running new events such as Medieval Festival ( 9/7/16), Hop Pocket Race, Christmas Lights Switch On. BID also involved in the Ambassadors on the Streets (in Bowler Hats), Street Cleaning, Free tourist guides, My Canterbury App, lobbying Student Impact Study and Transport/Access studies, Digital City (considering use of digital technology for the city)

AD asked question on attitudes of business towards Street Pedlars and Markets. Discussion about pros and cons of street markets took place. BID can work with street market traders to encourage more of a variety of stalls etc but limited powers as they are legal and licenced by City Council.

BID working with Council and Social Services to deal with the street beggars and Statutory Agencies to get new powers to prevent aggressive begging and anti-social behaviour.

BJ advised that the new Business Rates recently announced is good news for the city – saving approx £500k for shops and businesses.

City Centre performing well with occupancy of up to 95% of city premises.

NC asked if BID could help with Wincheap Area – near Station Road – rundown and badly lit etc. BJ advised that they are happy to help but this area slightly out of their jurisdiction.

NC praised all the work that BID are doing and meeting members agreed that their services compliment the city centre.

**Planning - PM**

Pleased to report that on Slatters construction site making progress so too is Thannington Business Park. Demand for houses still high both for sale and for rent. Student Housing continues to be the biggest investment in the city.

Discussion on Student housing and control over locations took place. BJ advised that there are 35,000 HMO’s in the city and generate up to £50 million income for landlords and wider trades and services.

PM advised that Canterbury City Design Awards taking place 23/3/16 evening event

Also reported that recruiting and apprenticeships continues to be a challenge to get right people.

**Finance - AD**

AD reported that business is good and there is a still “feel good factor” around

EU Referendum will cause some uncertainty particularly for Exporters.

Discussion about upcoming referendum and question asked to where one can find impartial, non-political information. CB advised that UofK were running several impartial events one of which is for businesses in collaboration with the Chamber.

**ACTION – CB to arrange invitation for CDEDG members to above event.**

**CCC – NC**

Sainsbury Project in Herne Bay to be mothballed for 1yr to 18 months when a smaller store may be opened. Rent still being paid by developer. CCC infrastructure investment still going ahead to include pedestrian bridge, circular roads and industrial units.

Inward Investment Campaign – NC urged members to think about this idea and ways to attract new investments from outside the area, outside UK or worldwide. Bringing new businesses and would like to engage Chamber as a willing partner. NC will formulate his ideas for future meeting outlining opportunities to relocate business to Canterbury, conversations with universities to get sight of their needs and proposed discussions with Locate in Kent.

Question asked about vision for Canterbury – more diversity needed away from the 3 main sectors of Housing, Education and Tourism such as Hotels, light Industry

ACTION – NC to deliver his proposal for Inward Investment Campaign at CDEDG meeting in July.

HE – CB

Government funding for higher education would continue but funding for individual universities won’t be announced until April. CB reported that Science and Research Budgets have been protected for 1 year only.

Uncertainty for HE sector around EU Referendum.

AOB

CB handed out Postcard invitation to upcoming ICE event on 28th April 2016.

Dates for rest of years meetings now known and will be emailed

ACTION – MH to email invitation to other members and dates of future meetings

1. **Date of next meeting –Tuesday 24th May 2016**

**Meeting Closed 19:00hrs**