

CDEDG Meeting
Zoom Virtual Meeting
14 July 2020, 13:30

Agenda Item	Notes		Action
Welcome (TP)	In attendance: Tudor Price, KICC (TP) - Chair Heather Cobb, UoK (HC) – Secretary	Peter Hawkes, Furley Page Solicitors (PH) Lucy McLeod, Canterbury College (LM)	
	Introduction & welcome from TP.		
Apologies (HC)	Sandra Heyworth, C/bury Cathedral Lodge Isabella Stock, Sandtander Paul Gardiner, BSF Consulting Pat Mills, Clague Possibly Debbie Green, Chives Danielle Ward, Rewards Events Jo Rossi, Locate in Kent	Simon Edridge, SEA Marketing Nick Churchill, CCC Nick Lee Evans, Lee Evans Partnership Samantha Scott, Marlowe Melanie Sewell, Metrobank Jaqui Offen – JJ Systems Lisa Carlson, Canterbury BID	
Approval of minutes & actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes noted as approved by the group. • HC to send latest Growth Hub report out with these minutes. 		HC
Roundtable (ALL)	PH, Furley Page Solicitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH noted that Furley Page are operating reasonably normally, just with lots of people working remotely. • There is an ongoing debate regarding whether they should be in the office or not, as the guidance now is a little unclear. As there is a momentum for working from home, this is what they are going to continue to do for the time being. This prevents any concerns over commuting and PPE etc. • The business is doing a lot of health and safety planning ready for they do return to the office. • Originally Furley Page furloughed around 15% of their staff with everyone else working from home and coping very well with the work. Other agencies they also interact with are coping well also, e.g. courts. Thus, life and work are continuing with little change. • Workload and developments are very dependent on sectors but overall most have continued to progress or are beginning to return to their activities. • Though the budget has been steady, there is no room for complacency as it is feared the rough might still be to come. PH is looking cautiously at end of the year (October onwards) as this is still unpredictable. • TP noted a disconnect between the media coverage and his interactions with businesses: The media has made out that there are a lot of problems for businesses and returning to work, whereas many seem to be coping extremely well. • A potential knock on effect of some sectors was noted (i.e. supply chains; property sales; events and the Arts sector). • It is challenging to get an accurate picture of how things will be effected in the months to come. • The government support measures were discussed: there is clearly a desire to help but most measures are not likely to have much on an impact. For example, the £1000 grant for every employee who returns from furlough is not enough to allow continued employment. In addition, large employers are feeling as though they have to say no to the money. PH agrees with the motivation behind the scheme, but these actions are not likely to be very effective. TP noted this is something shared by others he has spoken with. 		

- PH noted that some have been ‘playing the system’ with the government furlough scheme as well: Giving notice to staff but using the furlough scheme to pay to employ them throughout their notice period.
- TP noted that the scheme was organised in a very short period of time compared with how long these schemes would usually be given to organise.
- Supply chains were briefly discussed: a national shortage of cement and plaster board were noted, and it only takes 1 material in short supply to ground everything to a halt. The ‘Just in Time’ system is not really working currently which is causing delays to construction. This could cause problems with the government productivity plan.

LM, Canterbury College

- The College has been in lockdown since 20th March, with no students on site. The college had offered for vulnerable students to stay but there was no take up for this originally.
- Around 85% of students continued to engage in learning during lockdown.
- The lockdown pushed the organisation to become more innovative with their practice, with lecturers becoming increasingly creative with the online technology.
- In May some vulnerable students returned to college, and as of 15 June, other students came back too, to continue their vocational learning (construction, hair dressing etc. which have practical elements).
- The return of just 50 students was challenging but ultimately well-organised. Facilities were amended (toilets, one-way systems etc.) and staff marshalled students accordingly, which was labour intensive but ultimately led to students being able to continue their studies and achieve, without their learning being hindered.
- The college year usually ends around 3rd July but this year this is continuing to the end of July and in some cases into August. This will likely lead to this academic year feeling very blended into the next one.
- The workloads have been busy with normal activities alongside additional coronavirus jobs added in.
- LM noted online meeting fatigue, as well as missing the impromptu nature of meetings help physically ‘with’ people.
- The college is starting to plan for September, but the guidance for FE is not very helpful. Originally they had planned for 50% capacity but now the guidance is to have all students back with the implementation of ‘bubbles’. This will be a challenge to organise, but hopefully by September guidance will be clearer, with more alignment between sectors and education.
- LM is trying to meeting with MA (Stagecoach) regarding the impact on public transport. Guidance is to try to minimise the use of public transport but for most students, this is not an option.
- PH noted Stagecoach drivers have not been enforcing people wearing masks, and this was briefly discussed.
- TP asked about consumer confidence for FE – is this anxiety with the students, parents, or staff? LM noted that they have not fully felt the brunt of that yet, with so few students being on site. The challenges is likely to come when shielding is lifted but people might not necessarily feel safe to return, despite all safety measures being put in place. The College will do as much as possible to reassure these individuals.

TP, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC), Kent & Medway Growth Hub (KMGH).

- TP explained that KICC run business support contracts, including KMGH.
- KMGH opened a business support helpline in response to accessing government support measures during COVID-19. They have since had around 8000 business enquiries and have signposted people accordingly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They produce a weekly report, including statistics and impact. HC will circulate the latest reports. • KMGH have been primarily supporting businesses with under 25 employees, including lots in the retail and hospitality sectors. Some have benefited from grant others not, and there is currently a lull where people are getting back into their offices/businesses/retail premises. These organisations now seem to be starting to assess footfall and trade, to see how their businesses will cope/return in the months to come. • The impact is likely to begin to be seen from now on, until late down the line as organisations return. Conversations with businesses suggest that many are “okay now, but waiting to see what happens”. • There has been a shift from government recently, as they move away from cash handouts and more in to providing interventions, business support and advice. • Brexit also still in the background having some effect and likely to continue to do so. All these aspects make it difficult to see how things will play out. • KICC will continue to keep abreast and consult where possible. They will be contributing to the recovery action plan for the county. • In addition, KICC spend a lot of their time hunting down the government figures published, to find out where the money is and how they can retrieve it! 	HC
AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH echoed LM’s thoughts on zoom meetings and networking being ‘different’ and feeling ‘zoom fatigue’. • TP noted that KICC have been experimenting with conferences and seeing how people are participating. They have noticed that many gravitate towards the informal chat elements and have discovered that it works well to have 2/3 speakers for an interactive speaker session with questions. This seems to be a quite effective substitute. • Standing up also makes a difference, as body language comes in to play more and they tend to share and converse in a more natural way. KICC likely to speak with UoK about this. • TP also noted that attendance on information seminars is actually higher than before, especially for lunch time slots as people can fit these in and do not need to allocate travel time etc. • Environmental perspectives and productivity argument discussed and it was noted that if we do more home working in future, we need to consider effective management during this, in addition to staff well-being. • LM noted the challenge of work experience opportunities for students. Businesses are wary about taking students and this could lead to fewer opportunities for students. • Job opportunities for young people discussed – TP said that KICC will continue to lobby regarding this. 	
Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TP thanked all for participation. • HC said that CB will send an update through with/after the minutes. 	
Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th September 	