

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 8.30am-10.30am  
Online Meeting**

## **CHESTER GROWTH PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS**

Peter Carstensen, Harry Bolton, Andrew Bentley, Cllr Stuart Parker, Andrew Lewis, Cllr Adam Langan, Peter Cocker, Andy Foster, Andy Farrall, Eryl Edwards, Nicholas Dobbs, Chris Matheson MP, Tim Stratford, Cllr Richard Beacham, Joe Manning

## **OTHER ATTENDEES**

Stephanie Ramsden, Robert Gatensbury, Beth Skinner, Stefan Brzozowski, Roz Munslow, Andy Seddon, Andrew Arditti

## **APOLOGIES**

Phil Harris

	<p><b>Action Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AF to circulate C&amp;W LEP Economic Impact Dashboard to board members to share data</li> <li>• PC requested anyone with business contacts who are yet to take up the unclaimed Business Grant to encourage claims</li> <li>• Schedule another shorter board meeting for the third week in June for an update on recovery</li> </ul>
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions - Peter Carstensen</b> PC welcomed everybody to the online meeting and spoke of the challenging time we are facing, with this board meeting to focus on how Chester has been affected by COVID-19 and the strategy for recovery.</p> <p>The minutes from the last board meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February were approved.</p>
2.	<p><b>Covid-19 Recovery - All</b> AL provided a Gold Command update with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most council staff are now working from home and many have been redeployed. Support is being given to 8000 shielded residents and food parcels are being delivered to our most vulnerable. Community response for volunteers has been extremely positive.</li> <li>• Business Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ £76m has been paid out to businesses across the borough through a £10k or £25k grant, based on business rate status.</li> <li>○ CWaC named as best unitary authority in North West for getting the grants paid out</li> <li>○ 1400 businesses have still not claimed</li> <li>○ Initial government scheme was quite specific with eligibility, however a new discretionary grant for an additional £3.5m has been announced to provide funding to those that lost out</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Practicality of Lockdown
  - Taking a measured approach working closely with Cheshire Police
  - Have had a high level of compliance and have focused on informing and educating with positive responses from businesses and residents
  - Releasing of lockdown will be measured by practicalities with most regulations remaining in place – remaining cautious with recreational facilities as safety is key
  - Working closely with schools for their safe re-openings and arrangements are underway in Chester for the re-opening of the city with social distancing measures
  - Once virus has reached a manageable level the Test, Track and Trace system will help deal with outbreaks and clusters and will form part of the strategy for easing lockdown measures only when safe to do so.
- Northgate Scheme
  - Working with Vinci to initiate construction work with social distancing in place to ensure works can progress safely
  - Finances for project have been reviewed and went to Cabinet for Councillor approval of the revised financial model
  - Cabinet reaffirmed commitment to the project so we can proceed with signing of contract and construction
  - Seen as critical to economic recovery of Chester generating economic value and jobs

PC thanked AL and CWaC for the support provided to the community during this difficult time and applauded the level of exceptional communications.

AF highlighted the rediscovery of walking and cycling bringing a European feel to the city with potential for pop up cycleways/walkways. AL informed of the opportunity to accelerate this following the highly consultative process for the walk and cycle strategy, with government announcing additional money which could bring forward some quick wins.

A discussion took place on the impact of the business community in the Rows with SR informing additional guidance has been provided from the High Street Task Force on how to operate public spaces/high streets, with a new area-based groups established to look at this. Consultations are ongoing with individual businesses on how to utilize space to ensure social distancing.

SR provided an update on the Business and Recovery Plan with the following updates:

- Mickledore are producing an economic assessment on the impact on businesses/individuals and how we can help and support in the long term – the interim report is expected next week
- Chester has many smaller independent businesses with virtual webinars available for help and support
- Working with Job Centre Plus to look into what the additional impact will be once the furlough scheme finishes
- Work Zone has reported great success stories of supporting people into work, often into different roles e.g. retail to social care
- No significant redundancies have been announced in Chester – consultations are ongoing with Airbus and Manchester Airport

C&W LEP have produced an Economic Impact Dashboard which indicates through survey data around 60% of staff have been furloughed, number of universal credit payments are going up and there have been few liquidations.

**ACTION: AF to circulate C&W LEP Economic Impact Dashboard to board members to share data**

JM provided an update on the leisure and hospitality industry with the following highlights:

- LEP are working closely on economy wide measures for recovery
- Surveys are live to retrieve data with 90% of respondents wanting more information
- Marketing Cheshire will be running a series of webinars over the coming weeks as a platform to help businesses
- #ourchester has seen an increase on social media over the last few weeks for promotion of digital sales
- Data shows an interest in travel to Cheshire from Manchester and Liverpool. Any campaigns will be in line with public health to send out the right messages
- Destination Chester are collaboratively working on a campaign with shared messages for a safe environment
- Visits are not currently being promoted – message is Visit Chester (soon)
- Concerns over hotspots so a fully integrated approach will be taken when shops begin to open in June
- Cheshire Oaks may operate at 30% capacity which may cause overspill into Chester – something to keep an eye on

AB raised the need for a careful message when it comes to the leisure market by controlling access whilst still encouraging visits, by getting people into the habit of enjoyment in a safe way. Storyhouse can manage demand/access and are working hard to make the necessary changes to allow a safe and responsible experience. AL agreed adding the difficulty of the unified approach with the public therefore the transition period will need to manage public sentiment carefully.

EE gave an update on retail and the high street with the following highlights:

- Around 40-50 businesses are still trading in some manner with a digital high street established to inform residents who are still open
- Part of the four-point plan for CH1 BID is keeping businesses informed through a series of webinars
- Chester Together campaign has reached 500,000 people
- Working with other BIDs on best practice and sit on the Business and Economy Cell with CWaC focusing on recovery
- City needs to be ready for 1<sup>st</sup> June when the government roadmap allows more shops to open and demand has been high
- Urgent collective need for a PR message before 1<sup>st</sup> June to reassure that Chester is safely open which Destination Chester are working on

**ACTION: PC requested anyone with business contacts who are yet to take up the unclaimed Business Grant to encourage claims**

3.	<p><b>Project and Programme Update – All</b></p> <p>RG updated on Dee House with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work undertaken by the working group has concluded with the production of the recommendations report which is being finalized</li> <li>• Next steps will include reporting these recommendations to Council and moving forward with the phasing of further works including stabilization</li> <li>• Whilst underway this will allow work to continue with the working group on shaping a brief for potential development partners</li> </ul> <p>HB updated on Chester City Gateway with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project team has now been established and work has commenced on the evidence gathering stage</li> <li>• Important to run a robust plan of engagement with members, residents and businesses</li> <li>• Will be in touch with members to gauge views and will provide a further update at the next meeting</li> </ul> <p>RG updated on the Chester High Street Heritage Action Zone with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The grant offer letter for £1.08m was received in April however due to the sensitivity of the pandemic we are unable to make any public announcements yet</li> <li>• Currently working with Historic England on finalising details of the grant agreement</li> <li>• Project leads have begun progressing elements in more details however timescales will now be impacted, and outputs may change to reflect the changing nature of the situation and city</li> </ul> <p>AA updated on Chester Northgate with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utility works are currently being finished off with works opening up Hunter Street onto St Martins Way planned to start soon</li> <li>• Works on the rainwater drain build will start later this month due to take one year to complete – working on a comms plan to address the disruption and will share further details once available</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: Schedule another shorter board meeting for the third week in June for an update on recovery</b></p>
4.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>AB updated on the plans for the re-opening of Storyhouse with social distancing measures in place. It is expected all shows in the Autumn will be cancelled so are replacing with single events such as comedy. Aiming for a Christmas show production.</p>
5.	<p><b>Date of Next Meetings</b></p> <p>Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020, 8.30am  Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020, 8.30am  Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 8.30am</p>