

**Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 8.30am-10.30am**  
**Eaton Room, The Chester Grosvenor Hotel**

## CHESTER GROWTH PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

Peter Carstensen, Cllr Stuart Parker, Andrew Lewis, Carl Critchlow, Phil Harris, Andy Foster, Kate Howe, Richard Grove, Andrew Bentley, Peter Cocker, Nigel Driver, Nicola Said, Andy Farrall, Carolyn Bruce

## OTHER ATTENDEES

Graham Pink, Stephanie Ramsden, Ruth Wojtan,  
 Roz Munslow, Beth Skinner, Denise Heayns, Mike Hogg, Vanessa Bond

## APOLOGIES

Tim Stratford, Chris Matheson MP, Cllr Richard Beacham, Nicholas Dobbs,  
 Harry Bolton, Cllr Adam Langan

	<p><b>Action Points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RG to circulate comparison hotel data from UK and other historic cities/towns to board members</li> <li>• Interim report to be presented to Board by mid-year on development of a Chester tourism group</li> <li>• NS to share comparison data with other 'England's Historic Cities with board members</li> <li>• PC agreed to take soundings from board members over the next two months to find ways forward for engagement in the future phases of Northgate</li> </ul>
1.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions - Peter Carstensen</b></p> <p>PC welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave thanks to all board members for their significant work throughout 2019 to contribute to the regeneration of Chester, including that of the working groups. The minutes of the last meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September were approved.</p>
2.	<p><b>Hotel Sector - Richard Grove</b></p> <p>RG gave an overview presentation of the Chester hotel market with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4* hotels had approx. +2% growth in January and February 2019 compared to same months in 2018, however market has declined since then</li> <li>• 3* hotel occupancy has reduced throughout 2019 however a decline in one market can present strength in another</li> <li>• 4* hotel day-to-day occupancy has declined with most prominent drop on Thursdays and Fridays - also not enough strength in Saturday night market</li> <li>• Historic data shows recurring patterns over time with a steep decline in November 2017 but increasing thereafter</li> <li>• Possibility that 2019 will end with around 76% hotel occupancy for Chester</li> </ul> <p>RG informed of comparison data with UK as a whole and can circulate the data for the</p>

	<p>top ten properties in each cities hotel market, although highlighting that Chester has a low base in terms of rate in comparison. Also mentioned was the usefulness of comparing Chester to data from other historic towns such as Bath, York, Oxford etc. which can be sent to the board.</p> <p><b>ACTION: RG to circulate comparison hotel data from UK and other historic cities/towns to board members</b></p> <p>Questions was raised as to whether the decline in hotel occupancy corresponds with visitor numbers and the decline of footfall in the city. NS highlighted how most of Chester’s visitors are day visitors and we need to ask how we can support the city to drive more overnight stays.</p> <p>CC enquired how this hotel data is used by hotel developers looking to invest in the city with RG informing that even though the market has softened since 2016 and the challenges of rates, developers are still looking at Chester as having steady growth. KH highlighted the significant level of interest from developers for the new hotel going into City Place and the positive reporting they received.</p> <p>The family hotel market was discussed with a suggestion there isn’t enough to do in the city to warrant an overnight stay and the packaging of attractions to appeal to families could be key. The historic driver for hotel stays in Chester is retail however with the changing dynamic of the high street the question now needs to be asked ‘why do people come to Chester?’</p> <p>A discussion took place on events in the City with marketing playing a huge role to inform hotel guests of things that are happening, including a digital offer before arriving. A coordinated programme of events is a gap. The events programme at Storyhouse is a good example of what the city could be doing.</p> <p>Chester is the attack brand for Cheshire and there is potential for a Chester focused tourism group to be set up, however important to recognise the huge assets of the sub regional context. Early conversations have taken place to begin the setup of this group.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Interim report to be presented to Board by mid-year on development of a Chester tourism group</b></p>
3.	<p><b>Marketing Cheshire Update - Nicola Said</b></p> <p>NS gave an overview and update presentation on Marketing Cheshire with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing Cheshire are the Destination Management Organisation for Cheshire and Warrington</li> <li>• Cheshire and Warrington visitor economy is worth £3.7bn, up by 4.7% year on year from 2017 to 2019 (Chester City £0.7bn) and welcomes 63.3mil visitors a year (Chester 14mil)</li> <li>• Destination brand is ‘Chester Cheshire &amp; beyond’ - Chester led</li> <li>• 1.7m visitors per year to visitchester.com</li> <li>• Ultimate guide to Chester &amp; Cheshire is available in hotels - destination guide and events round up</li> <li>• Chester Christmas Markets are run by Marketing Cheshire and emphasise local</li> </ul>

	<p>buyers - current market is at full capacity, looking at future options for growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chester Visitor Information Centre receives 200,000 visitors a year</li> <li>• Chester is the lead city in the 'England's Historic Cities' partnership</li> <li>• Opportunities for Chester include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tourism Sector Deal - part of Local Industrial Strategy. Will be 5 Tourism Action Zones across the country.</li> <li>○ Rows Heritage Action Zone - Rows marketed as a core asset to the city - opportunity to use as a platform for wider city.</li> <li>○ Business Visits &amp; Events - raising national and international profile, conference opportunities for inward investment</li> <li>○ Chester Events Strategy - strong Christmas offer compared to other cities, pull together to promote collectively.</li> <li>○ Sustainable Cheshire - promoting public transport and sustainability.</li> <li>○ England's Historic Cities - have data from other historic cities and happy to share with CGP.</li> <li>○ "Reasons to be Proud" campaign - focus on what we do have and flood social media with positive messages</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Attracting a younger demographic remains a challenge</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: NS to share comparison data with other 'England's Historic Cities with board members</b></p> <p>A discussion took place on the evening economy and the need for the city to be 'open for business' later with businesses struggling to staff late at night being a challenge. A coordinated proposition for businesses to drive the evening economy window between 5pm-8pm especially could be something to look into.</p> <p>PH highlighted the need for provision for international business who usually go to Manchester or Liverpool for hotel stays.</p>
4.	<p><b>Northgate Update and Discussion - Graham Pink</b></p> <p>GP gave an update of the Northgate project with the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval was granted at Council for construction contract for Phase 1</li> <li>• Phase 1 will be delivered as a standalone scheme</li> <li>• Consultations are starting for future phases</li> <li>• Will be concluding developer conversations of what the market thinks Chester should be</li> <li>• CGP is key to this consultation and engagement as well as the wider business community and residents</li> </ul> <p>PC welcomed a discussion from the board to identify the best way of engaging in the consultation process, suggesting a visit from the Urban Land Institute could be a potential way forward to produce a report of their findings, with other board members agreeing with this option.</p> <p>Throughout the discussions it was agreed that the scheme needs to look to the future, take in soundings from a public forum and acknowledge the change in the retail sector. The CRAG is a key channel to reach residents in the area.</p> <p>PC questioned the amount of resource available with the worry that without a</p>

	<p>commitment it is hard for CGP to engage in a meaningful way with the need for the widest group of people to be able to contribute to discussions. Northgate needs to be included in a debate of the whole city - what do we want the city to be?</p> <p><b>ACTION: PC agreed to take soundings from board members over the next two months to find ways forward for engagement in the future phases of Northgate</b></p>
5.	<p><b>CWAC Corporate Plan - Andrew Lewis</b>  Due to time constraints AL agreed to send out an email to board members to circulate the details of engagement on the councils new Corporate Plan.</p>
6.	<p><b>CGP Team Update - Ruth Wojtan</b>  RW gave an overview and update of the recent work of the CGP team including the following highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chester High Street Heritage Action Zone - currently working on a scheme programme with key partners with a submission deadline of 20<sup>th</sup> December, and delivery beginning in April 2020.</li> <li>• Shot Tower Public Realm - currently on site and discussions are ongoing with CWAC heritage team on heritage interpretation for the site. Expected to complete in Spring 2020.</li> <li>• Towers Visitor Attraction - soft market testing for the occupation of the Towers on the walls has taken place with options currently being explored.</li> <li>• Visitor Economy - touched on heavily on the agenda with lots of projects already mentioned and being worked on</li> <li>• Dee House - working groups have concluded and will be providing recommendations to the council. Further drop in events to take place early next year.</li> <li>• Chester City Gateway - work is ongoing with LCR to provide a full update presentation at the next board meeting.</li> <li>• Chester One City Dashboard - reminder of the dashboard which is updated quarterly and contains lots of Chester information about what is going on and planned for the city.</li> </ul>
7.	<p><b>AOB</b>  PC highlighted the recent planning applications with the most notable being a 244-bed hotel application on the Black Diamond Street car park site, being something to keep an eye on how it progresses. PC also mentioned how masterplans for key areas in the city are needed and the presentation at the next meeting from LCR will prove useful.</p> <p>Mike Hogg and Vanessa Bond from the Chester Residents Association Group introduced themselves to the board. The CRAG is made up of 20 out of 30 of the residential groups in the city therefore is a key point of contact for consulting with local residents. The group have identified five key topics to focus on and have produced position reports on each, and are ready to engage. MH highlighted the positive relationship this can create with the city and CWAC as a go to group for two way conversations.</p>
8.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b>  Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 8.30am-10.30am  Chester Zoo</p>