

BedfordBID Board Meeting 104
Thursday 3rd June 4:30pm, Virtual Online Teams



BedfordBID
Business Improvement District
Funded by Town Centre Businesses
www.lovebedford.co.uk

Directors attended:

Christina Rowe	BedfordBID
Sam Laycock (Chair)	The Harpur Centre
Dave Roffey	Bedford College
Greg Warwick	Jeeves Gentleman's Hair & Grooming Salon
Martin Keys	Gallone's Ice Cream Parlour
Steve McBrearty	Cash Converters

Also attended:

Patrick Lyons	Bedford Borough Council
Leah Perkins	BedfordBID
Mohammed Aziz	Bedfordshire Police
John Elliott	Bedfordshire Police

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair, Sam Laycock, opened the meeting and thanked them all for attending. She informed them the meeting was being recorded.

Apologies were received from:

Amanda Olliver	The Body Shop
Paul Hunt	Impakt Board Observer
Dean Thompson	The Swan Hotel, Board Director
Mike Lewis	Riverside Bedford
Alex Falcon Huerta	Soaring Falcon Accountancy
Tony Moliterno	Mayfair Financial
Charles Royden	Bedford Borough Council

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING. ITEMS FOR AOB.

The Directors approved the minutes of the last meeting. The Chair, Sam Laycock, welcomed Christina Rowe back, now she is attending the office part-time with the team, and thanked her for her dedication.

Christina Rowe, Director of Operations, revisited the previous minutes to address two points.

1 - Christina apologised to Greg Warwick for not yet providing information regarding the Vice Chair position, which she will follow up this week. Greg Warwick said we have a good team and he is still interested.

ACTION: *Christina to send Vice Chair information to Greg Warwick*

2 – Regarding the BID4 review, there were ten key points to achieve and already good progress has been made. The obvious is the High Street Heritage Action Zone 4-year programme, with the three main elements; shop front improvements, High Street and Cultural Programme. Leah Perkins, Office Manager, sits on the Cultural Programme and the BID sits on the Partnership Board. Patrick Lyons to give an update of the developments later in the meeting.

3. NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS

None

4. DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS UPDATE - Affiliate Membership / Voluntary Contributions. **Discussion and agreement**

Christina Rowe, Director of Operations, gave her update. She started with the annual review and showed the hard copy and said there is also a link on the website. She explained there is the anticipated revenue for BID levies this financial year and we are awaiting confirmation for when the first instalment will be paid and BID levy invoices sent out.

The Directors in the meeting confirmed they have not yet received a levy invoice.

Christina made the following further updates. There are 46 new businesses in town. The marketing for 21st June will include reinstating a dedicated social media resource by someone with a business in the BID zone and an advocate for the town and excellent 'tone of voice' (At the time of the meeting this was going to be Charlie @ Fays but due to her work commitments we are now looking into alternative options she has recommended, with the similar characteristics of being experienced with social media from a business within the BID zone). Dream Digital will continue to provide expertise with the Love Bedford website. Christina has sent the Directors the job description if they have any views or additions. One of the core aims is to create some Vox Pops as part of the Welcome Back Campaign for the 21st June. Due to budget restrictions, we can't afford to do videos like before with Yakety Yak.

Christina said we had an update from our night team who were on duty last weekend and she requested for an update from the police later in the meeting, regarding the expectations of police presence at weekends, as well as information regarding the Day of Action that was postponed.

Dan Field is back with us part-time primarily to do the BeBAC backlog with the expectation he will be working full-time and hopefully forging ahead with the Affiliate (now Voluntary Membership) to bolster the BeBAC scheme, with the current membership update in the documents sent to the Directors.

We are supporting the team with mental wellbeing as outline in the update and giving them the opportunity to seek advice if needed.

As a contingency for our finances, there are some key things we would like to be doing this year, one of which is the development of our website and CRM programme. New facilities and functionality will improve speed and the inclusion of an interactive map will provide added benefits. We have made an application for the website as well as an extension to the Christmas lights scheme on Mill Street, via the Town Centre Priority Fund. We hope to expect to hear news from those in the next few weeks and we will keep you posted.

Sam Laycock thanked Leah Perkins for her work so far.

Greg Warwick said hopefully the next meeting will be a real meeting so we can meet each other.

Dave Roffey said he works with Dream Digital are well known and used by the college.

Sam Laycock reiterated the need to update the website and increase traffic by linking it to real time social media updates.

Christina presented the WIP titled 'Affiliate Membership' paper now referenced as the 'Voluntary Contribution scheme'. Currently, we do not offer businesses outside the BID zone the opportunity to enjoy the benefits businesses in the BID zone receive. These are different times from when this idea was initially raised some years ago with an emphasis now on generating additional income to assist the longer-term financial prosperity of BedfordBID. The offer to businesses outside the BID zone will be specific and based on 1% of the business rates value, as the services they will get will be limited. The reason is to generate revenue so we can widen the services of the BID, particularly with regards to improving the service of BeBAC. It is becoming of particular interest to businesses and partners within the vicinity e.g. the BPHA. There is also going to be a new Town Centre Intervention Group with discussion about some of the individuals in the town causing disruption and by partners such as the BPHA using BeBAC, it will help to

demonstrate to others issues within the town and taking action against the key people involved for those who are not as inclined to embrace the services they are signposted to.

Sam Laycock said the BPHA have an interest in the safety of their teams with the people we are already dealing with and it will help with everyone putting on the history of where these individuals are. With the BIDs additional staff, we now have the man power to move it forward.

Martin Keys agreed this would be beneficial and to get hold of the reigns and start moving it forward.

Sam Laycock highlighted that we have had some people come to us about it already but we will get to the stage where we will talk to people who might have asked us two years ago.

Dave Roffey said he is in two minds. He thinks it is a good idea but worries we may alienate some of our key members. If we start promoting Brewpoint and take customers out of town, how will core BID night time economy members feel about that. He said we have had conversations about events out the town potentially taking shoppers away from the town centre.

Sam Laycock asked if anyone had any further thoughts. She said we could take each case individually, as how it is written we have leniency.

Christina thanked Dave and said it is important we make it clear that we only are interested in a partnership with any business that can provide a tangible benefit to our town centre businesses. Whether that's directly or indirectly. It will be up to the business concerned to come up with the idea rather than us. As long as we are clear there is an ultimate benefit to the town and businesses in the town, then it is worth considering.

Sam Laycock said for large businesses like BPHA it will be financially viable and well worth it. For other people, they either give us what we need and we look at it on a case-by-case basis.

Christina Rowe said the position we are in, it is our choice. If the Directors say no, then it is a no. It is important we demonstrate to all our stakeholders and partners that we are trying hard to generate additional revenue and we aren't relying on the core levies. If it means we have to decline some interest as we cannot put a tangible association, then we say no.

Dave Roffey said in principle he is for it, and if there can be a tangible link to a benefit to the town centre then he is even more for it. We just need to be aware and ready for some of those counter arguments to our members. In general, any event in Bedford is a benefit to Bedford. It's if we can link it to the town centre and those BID payers.

Sam Laycock said we have got to be mindful that we are one of the first BIDs that had gift vouchers straight away, we have gone online. There are lots of BIDs out there doing new income generators and we are keeping our ears to the ground. We might not have as many business rates coming in as the town centre evolves over the next few years. If we can start this now, it can grow and we can keep reviewing it.

Sam Laycock said Christina will be speaking to those Directors absent and if they approve, she will move forward with it. The Directors at the meeting agreed.

ACTION: *Christina to discuss Voluntary Contribution Scheme with all directors who could not attend the meeting.*

Greg Warwick suggested running our own business making use of the river. Sam said it is great seeing the John Bunyan boat back and the best we can do at the moment is keeping our ears out for any opportunities of funding.

5. TOWN CENTRE UPDATE

Patrick Lyons, Acting Manager for Economic Growth and Development, Bedford Borough Council provided an overview of the town centre development works;

Town Investment Plan – We are still waiting on notification of what our town deal offer will be. We are still expecting a positive response. We had hoped we would hear by now but it is down to number 10 with how they release the news. It will probably be 12 months until we get the deal and see spades in the ground but we are expecting a good result. (At time of the meeting the £22.6m investment announcement had not yet been made, this is now clear and media release update circulated.)

High Street Works – These are still ongoing and Patrick showed some up-to-date images. High Street West, the crossing at Lurke Street is being installed and is nearing completion. Trial pits are being dug for trees to be implanted, completion is to be towards the end of this week. There are benches ready to be installed at Silver Street Square. The team have been liaising with police regarding the easing of restrictions with Euro 2021, to make sure everything goes swimmingly with the high street works.

High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) - The £10,000 pilot project artwork on the bankside, The Vault, is now finished and there has been quite a good response and with some decent media coverage on it. In regards to the physical works on the High Street, this ramped up in October and we have been the putting framework into place and talking to landlords. The former Goldings building is moving well, we are doing a shop front replacement and a window repair there. This will be the first scheme to hopefully generate further interest. BBtea, 43 High Street is having a shop front replacement and a 1st floor conversion. The restaurant at 19-21 High Street is making progress with 1st and 2nd floor window repairs. The bazaar at 1a Lime Street is going to have a new shop front. On Silver Street Square, where Gelatos and Phone Bazaar are, we are looking to doing a shop front scheme. It is the perfect place for a plaza and outdoor seating, which is the vision.

There are conversations this and next week regarding investment in the Debenhams building. The consultants have been given the green light to make inroads with it and we aim to have some designs to attract further investment.

Sam Laycock said she and Patrick Lyons are having place making training for Stage 2 of this town progression. They are both being mentored by a lady with excellent experience in planning and architecture and who is involved in the East West rail.

Patrick Lyons confirmed the old M&S is going to be a B&M. The old BHS store is going to be a pop-up store.

Greg Warwick asked if Jeeves/Venus and Harrison & Simmonds, 80 High Street can be looked at for investment. Patrick said he would look into this and he explained that the grant is to bring shop fronts back to historical significance.

ACTION: Patrick to look into 80 High Street as a candidate for HSHAZ.

Sam Laycock said everything is going in the direction of being experiences and what you cannot buy online. Geek Retreat is coming to the Harpur Centre where you can meet your friends and play computer games. The reason the franchise picked Bedford is because of it being safe.

Sam Laycock introduced the police representatives for an update.

Inspector Mohammed Aziz gave an overview of the year, which has been difficult and eventful which has created resilience and increased communication. There were challenges during the first lockdown, with confusion of guidance and information. There were a few protests in town against lockdown and Black Lives Matter which was policed sensibly and worked well. Infection rates dropped and then Bedford became a concern again as the rates jumped up high. The latest meeting on Wednesday showed the rates have since gone down. The biggest positive is the death rate is very low and those in hospital tend not to have had their vaccinations.

The police were going to their new policing model which involved local policing teams to be part of the night time economy between 6-9pm and engage with the businesses. If there are known or vulnerable individuals, the police will engage with them using a joint up approach. The reality is some weekends there are not sufficient numbers but there will be some level of presence we didn't have before. We have John, Umar and Ian on the team who are fantastic and know the area. They are trying to utilise more civil powers through CPOs and CBOs and there has been an increase in them. This is not suitable for everyone and we are working with multi-agencies, which is a priority. The Mercure will or have stopped housing people, which has been a massive success for helping homeless people and giving them support with the LA and agencies in one place. It is one of our largest call for services but the short-term pain will bring a long-term gain. There are proposals for a long-term housing location over the river in Cauldwell Street in the coming months.

Mohammed Aziz is working with the organiser of an event, Jamaica Day, which will bring people into the town centre but with the correct measures in place on Harpur Square.

He said Luton get support from the LA and partners to add resources and the town deserves at least one more PC or PCSO.

Sam Laycock said it would be good to have evidence for the funding and they can look into it.

Christina Rowe explained the BID funded 2 PCSOs in the past and she would be happy to resurrect discussions about how it worked specifically shift presence and police being onsite/called away.

Mohammed was very keen and asked Christina to share the previous agreement and information with him.

ACTION: *Christina to send previous information regarding the BID funding a PCSO to Mohammed Aziz*

Greg Warwick asked they were recruiting Special Constables. Mohammed Aziz said yes but it does not solve the problem. It is difficult for them to commit as volunteers but what they do offer is appreciated.

PC John Elliott explained that the action day was unfortunately cancelled due to being operational and, on that day, they were pulled away to deal with a big incident. This day is going to be replanned and Bedford BID will be involved.

Mohammed Aziz asked for all the email addresses and key contacts to get to know them better.

Sam Laycock would love to do this and said they sit on the Community Safety Partnership and work closely with Sarah Stevens. She is happy for one of the Harpur Centre security to assist and share information regarding hotspots and individuals. The issues from before are starting to creep back in again and information that could indicate more organised crime behind the begging in town. It shows how much we have to work together on this.

Sam Laycock praised the work of the police officer Ian Bevis-Mott over the years. We need to motivate and thank them.

Mohammed Aziz said this would be a great idea and they celebrated the three PCSOs at the beginning of lockdown and presented a scroll from the Chief Constable. If that came from the public it would mean ten times more. If you want to link in with John to do that with Ian, that would be brilliant.

Sam Laycock suggested to do this after the day of action.

Mohammed Aziz said despite some of the negative feedback, they are a lot more present on social media. If people are doing wrong, they need to be highlighted, without giving names. This needs support from people in the group.

ACTION: Police action day with Bedford BID and Harpur Centre to be rearranged.

ACTION: Special thanks to the police to be arranged.

6. ONGOING ITEM – GENERAL OPEN DISCUSSION

Town Centre conversation; how town centre businesses have/are adapting to the current situation and what we can do to further support BID businesses.

Sam Laycock said business are still working towards bouncing back and they have enjoyed having people return.

Martin Keys agreed and said it is about recognising what is going on around town; the roadworks, developments, everything that is being done. He thinks it will all arrive at the same time. All the projects will finish, we will see a massive return of people and they will come back to a different place, almost like a new place which is going to generate a lot of interest. We have noticed a massive visual presence from the police in the park and it is reassuring. The one thing standing out is the older generation are starting to filter back into the town centre. That is a really good sign as they are often the ones that feel the most vulnerable, from the undesirables, and things are starting to turn the right way.

Sam Laycock said the town has changed since Greyfriars Police Station was in operation. From evacuation plans to where are our footprints and hotspots are has changed. The pandemic has made us go back to basics and safety comes up in every conversation now.

Greg Warwick asked if we have a budget to publicise coming to Bedford. Jeeves hairdressers is the only one in the country with 10 independent rooms, you can't get safer. It is a Bedford Gem, and Martin's place Gallone's.

Sam Laycock said we do but we have to be careful of the message at the moment with changes in guidance. We are conscious the money we are spending is on things we can do even if there are changes next week. There is going to be an opportunity and some positive stories to start singing from the rooftops.

Christina Rowe said the new representative will be having a focus on social media and our local audience. We still have roadworks going on and we don't think it is appropriate to do any campaigns until the new look is finished, which will be next year. Once events start kicking in that is another compelling reason to come to Bedford. It is slowly but surely, as well as cautiously, that we want our communications messages to be primarily to local people.

Greg Warwick said it is still a case of having a budget for this.

Sam Laycock said marketing and promotions are our biggest spend of the budget. We are looking at this dynamically. Even with the latest confusion, the message has still been positive.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

N/A. Sam Laycock invited the directors to contact her or the BID team if anyone needs anything or has any questions.

8. FORTHCOMING MEETING DATES SCHEDULE

8th July @ 4.30pm; venue TBC.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and concluded the meeting at 5.57pm