

BedfordBID Board Meeting 105
Thursday 8th July 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
Martin Keys	Gallone's Ice Cream Bedford Parlour
Steve McBrearty	Cash Converters
Amanda Olliver	The Body Shop
Dean Thompson	The Swan Hotel
Charles Royden	Bedford Borough Council

Also attended:

Patrick Lyons	Bedford Borough Council
Samantha Hunt	Inspector, Bedfordshire Police
Leah Perkins	BedfordBID

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/absence noted were received from:

Paul Hunt	Impakt, Board Observer
Mike Lewis	Riverside Bedford
Tony Moliterno	Mayfair Financial
Dave Roffey	Bedford College
Greg Warwick	Jeeves Gentleman's Hair & Grooming Salon

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

The Directors approved the minutes of the last meeting.

Christina Rowe, Director of Operations, revisited three points the previous minutes.

- 1 – The matter of the deputy chair, to come back to.
- 2 – All directors have now been spoken to about the voluntary contribution, with no adverse reactions.
- 3 – One action was to send information to Mohammed Aziz about contributing towards a PCSO, which whilst completed, is now not going forward.

3. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Greg Warwick was previously interested in this but unfortunately now has decided he cannot due to personal reasons. We have approached another director already to ask if they would consider this position, and once we have news on that an update will be given.

ACTION: To carry forward this item to the next meeting.

4. NEW MEMBERS APPLICATION

As detailed in the Director of Operations update, Christina Rowe informed the board that Alex Falcon Huerta is in Bali with no plans to come back to Bedford. As she has no registered office in the BID zone, it has been decided she will be removed as a director. She has been removed from Companies House and the website.

Christina Rowe also confirmed that she has met with Shaun Barnett, the manager at Leaders, 100 High Street. He is local, committed to the town and keen to join the board. He has completed his membership application and unless anyone has any objections he can become an interim director, until he can be formally approved by the Members at the AGM.

Sam Laycock, The Chair, confirmed that the board are in support of him becoming a director and he will be a great addition to the team.

5. UPDATE FROM SAM HUNT, BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

Sam Hunt explained that for the football final of Italy v England, they are expecting some level of disruption. They will have 60 officers on duty including regular officers and riot trained officers. They are aiming to block The Embankment where the Italian fans will congregate, from the High Street England fans, to prevent them from meeting one another.

For the town centre, Sarah Stevens from the Community Safety Partnership is putting together a Town Centre Intervention Group (TIG) which is mirrored on the model that Luton adopt. Sam Hunt said it is a good setup and involves the main partner Public Health England signposting and supporting people with addictions, to support and divert them from begging and street drinking. The officers are putting together a list of those who they are coming up against on a regular basis to provide to the TIG and discuss what is already in place and be put in place for them. There is also the PSPO but they will go down the supportive route first. This will replace Op Highgate and we should have more of an update at the next meeting.

There has been an increase in complaints around E-Scooter usage, by 300% in the last six months and collisions have doubled in the last year in Bedfordshire. We are not part of a government trial. They are treated like a motor vehicle and need insuring, which is not possible at the moment. Bedfordshire Police have educated and engaged with every school and asked them to send letters and advise parents that they will be seizing E-Scooters. Messages have also been put in the local and national news, and through social media where it reached over 48,000 people. The responses are diverse and so far, they have seized scooters and educated persons. If they are not riding on them, they get educated. It may appear inconsistent but if they are not riding on it, it is difficult to prosecute. There is a huge concern that a fatality could result in the irresponsible behaviour so any initiatives will also be incorporated into the town centre.

The biggest concern Bedfordshire Police have had raised previously is the ASB and street drinking inside the bus station. They are getting told verbally about this problem but this is not being reported, so the statistics don't reflect it. There is a case open for the police to try and work with Angela from the Community Safety Team and try and reduce it and that will be incorporated in the TIG going forward. A lot of those people are going to be the same people.

ACTION: If this is affecting any of the Directors or anyone they know, to call it in so the police have a record and deal with it accordingly.

Christina Rowe thanked Sam Hunt and said she had a follow up from the Community Safety Meeting about the use of BeBAC with Path 2 Recovery, who have had some significant funding for four years, and it is great to see some strong collaborative partnership work going on due to that forum.

Sam Hunt said the outreach works really well in Luton and is optimistic we can get it up and running in Bedford and have the same impact.

Christina Rowe said all the BedfordBID/Love Bedford social media posts for the weekend are encouraging people to stay at home, order takeaways and not encouraging them to come in on Sunday.

Sam Hunt said Bedfordshire Police and Bedford Borough Council will be sending out a consistent message.

Sam Laycock passed on her thanks to the team and said that Sergeant John Elliott and Sarah Stevens, who has been promoted to the Community Safety Manager, joined the Harpur Centre and BID team for a walk around of the town centre. Within 5 minutes John Elliott was dealing with an incident at Iceland. Sarah had a full tour to show her everything that was going on, which people are not reporting. A lady approached us and said it was her first trip back into town and someone knocked on her car window in the car park asking for money. That was her first impression of the town centre, showing that we really do need to do something.

Steve McBrearty said he is usually at Cash Converters weekly and there are regulars around the bus station that stay there all day. They had to call an ambulance for one of them recently because he had a fit. It is a problem.

Sam Hunt said there is an increase in begging in Bedfordshire as a whole, which she has raised with MP Mr Yasin. She explained government laws around begging require updating as that is a problem for the police with the laws being so old. The way they deal with begging is they get a Community Protection Warning (CPW) which is a written document that says you cannot do these things. If they breach that, they get a notice (CPN) and if they breach that they get arrested or reported to court. Ideally, they will be arrested as it means conditions can be put on them and it will be dealt with a lot quicker. It depends on the severity and if it is aggressive begging. For a lot of people, it is too risky for them to go into custody, they may be alcoholics or withdrawing and need to go to hospital and officers will then sit there for hours with them. We then apply for a CBO at court, similar to the old ASBO, and they have to get convicted for the breach of the CPN for these conditions to be put in place. It is a long process and it is now happening out of town in residential areas, with people knocking on doors for money. We've put a lot of efforts into Goldington which has been successful but it is difficult. Part of the problem is people do give them money thinking they are homeless, when they do have a home and claim benefits. We will continue to look at Bedford town centre as well which will overlap with Tavistock Street. At the end of July when we have all this data, we will have the same names meaning we have more resources to deal with it, from these overlapping wards.

Sam Hunt informed the board a new Sergeant is joining the team in September, Cliff Kaile. He understands community policing and how important it is and will be a great addition.

Sam Laycock said Cliff made such a difference in town in the past and it is fantastic news. It was great spending time with Sarah Stevens in town and her seeing the frustrations of business owners when beggars outside their shop are taking more money than them. Higher level crime was also being identified and information was being fed back to the BID team.

Sam Laycock asked Sam Hunt to thank the police for being there for us.

Dean Thompson said that Pen & Cob have made the decision to close at 5:30pm on Sunday for the football. Sam Hunt thanked him.

Sam Hunt said there is a new PCC coming out on the days of action, to show him they need more staff for community policing, which is very different to how it was 10 years ago. The more data we can provide to show the resources we need, the better. He is really a strong advocate for community policing and if crimes are at least reported online, they will be documented as a statistic.

Christina Rowe asked whether the BeBAC data can be used in the police's statistics. Sam Hunt said the report would have to come directly into the police control room but it could be a copy and paste online. 101 and online for non-emergency and 999 for emergency.

Charles Royden said the top part of the High Street should be open in the next 24 hours, prior to the football on Sunday. He also said they are looking to include E-Scooters in the PSPO, as the council are getting lots of complaints about them. He has seen an accident involving an E-Scooter and they are incredibly unsafe. He has also been asked to include skateboards as part of the PSPO as it can damage furniture and asked for feedback.

Sam Laycock said listed buildings are being damaged by skateboarders and people can easily be knocked over by them as an E-Scooter. In an ideal world they would have a safe skatepark. It became worse over lockdown, as there were no markets or shops open. There was also an incident where the skateboards were being used as weapons.

Amanda Olliver said they have seen a massive increase in skateboarders since the new, smooth pavement went down in Silver Street, where they have been jumping from the concrete benches. Someone is going to get really hurt.

Charles Royden said this is all really helpful feedback. The PSPO gets renewed in June next year but they want to get the current PSPO amended as soon as possible to include this.

Patrick Lyons said he had an email from Tilly's Tea Room on Harpur Square saying she is considering giving up her pitch due to skateboarders weaving in between her tables and she does not want to get into a row with them.

ACTION: Patrick will forward the email to Charles Royden.

Sam Laycock thanked everyone and said she is getting some great feedback of the works in Silver Street and the High Street for how it looks and how serviceable it will be with the loading bays.

Amanda Olliver asked Charles what trees are planted on Silver Street as she has had a few people ask. He said he will look into it. Charles later confirmed that the trees on Silver Street are Liquid Ambers.

6. 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 – Since the last meeting we have had notification we have been granted the £22.6 million. We had another town deal board meeting where Sam Laycock signed the Heads of Terms which has gone back to government. We have two months now to work out which of the seven projects we initially proposed will fit into the funding. The majority of the projects will be able to go forward and the major ones will progress. The key projects are an Adult Learning Centre at Bedford College, highway projects around St Paul's Square and Harpur Square, one round the Station Quarter, Midland Road shop front improvement scheme and cycling and other junction improvements around John Bunyan statue and Greyfriars. That is all moving forward well. We have about eleven months to complete the business cases and in parallel doing the design and relevant consultation to shape these schemes, to the long-term benefit of Bedford.

This is all to improve the area and stimulate the private sector investment to look at regenerating some of the assets that aren't being used. They are looking at Debenham, Beales, The Corn Exchange, Library block square area, vacant stores and the wider public realm. Also, how they make Mayes Yard a key pedestrian interchange and link up The Embankment and St Paul's Square with Silver Street Square, and

from Harpur Square over towards the High Street, onto Castle Quay and Castle Lane and making it safe and pedestrianised. That is a long-term plan.

Short-term, they have been in discussion with the owners of Debenhams and are looking to use some of the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) money to get the building back into use. It is complicated in terms of the layers of ownership but they have UK based consultants they are engaging heavily with. We are making the case that Bedford is where they should keep hold of and invest in, with some innovative ideas. Finding another department store to take on that space isn't going to happen so it's finding something suitable that works sustainably, such as business space, leisure or hospitality. It is 120,000 sq. ft and offers a lot of opportunity.

High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) - This is moving forward. The council were in touch with Greg Warwick and as his building is in good condition there is no need for a grant. 113 High Street (Salvation Army unit) has a new owner who has assets and interest in Bedford already. It will be a landmark building that we are looking to do a HSHAZ project with. Goldings, BBtea and Gelato are projects that we are working on, along with others on Lime Street and the High Street that are a bit further behind.

We are going into events season and thinking of being Covid compliant but all in all, there is a lot happening.

Tesco on the corner of Midland Road were going to close but they have renewed their lease for another year.

Sam Laycock thanked Patrick Lyons and updated the board that they are both really involved in these projects and they can exchange finer details at a later date.

7. DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS UPDATE

Christina Rowe, Director of Operations, provided some further headlines to the previously circulated update and discussions already had in the meeting which included:

Eat Feast is back attracting an 82% week on week increase on the flow. Accepting it was a lovely evening, it still demonstrated how a well-executed event can work in the town and work with businesses.

Thanks to the council regarding Peel Street, where there was a squat identified. The council worked with the police and the BedfordBID team to secure it and ensure the area was visited. It is now boarded up and businesses in that area are extremely appreciative.

The DoO updated included an overview of current progress on BID4 business plan document, with one area of responsibility unclear being the idea for an outdoor screen to be somewhere in the town and whether this is something already in the Town Investment Plan.

Patrick Lyons asked if the screen would be temporary and Christina Rowe said a permanent attraction, designed to provide real time information on site to the benefit to town centre and primarily businesses and be linked into the Love Bedford online activity; screenings might be considered in the future.

Sam Laycock said we have the infrastructure and electrical points for events, such as on Harpur Square, where they had to rely on generators previously. We don't have anything like this as a town at the moment for safety messages and promoting events. This would also reach people who are not on social media and could be used as an income generator.

Sam Hunt said there is a waiting list of months to put an E-Scooter messages on the billboards. The police could utilise a screen and would be really supportive of it, where the police funds could go.

Sam Laycock said if you attach the screen to a building and then it gets sold or the ownership changes, problems arise. It needs to be attached to somewhere with a long lease.

Charles Royden said it would be useful to get some ideas for locations that the council can then look into. It is doable and a great idea but we need to know the best location.

ACTION: To look into locations for the screen.

Sam Laycock said that Freedom Day is coming up on 19th July and she is talking to other shopping centres next week and waiting for the confirmation on Monday to decide how the Harpur Centre are going to play it. It is important to consider doing things gradually, when less than a month ago we were one of the top 3 in the country for Covid cases. The mandatory requirements will go but we are consulting with our team and tenants if they would still want to wear a mask. Business is up by 10% compared to last year and we want to celebrate that it is a milestone, but safely and ensure the customers are happy.

Amanda Olliver said they are waiting for comms and guidelines from Head Office. Her team still want to carry on with face masks / visors.

Sam Laycock said the BID will be an important team to see what is happening with this in town and changes in activity. It will be an interesting month. Jamaica Day will be the first Harpur Square event and Bedford Park Concerts is going ahead in September. We would normally be organising Christmas by now but we need to get safely through the next month first.

8. ONGOING ITEM – GENERAL OPEN DISCUSSION

Dean Thompson said that Pen & Cob is busy in phases. The hotel bedrooms keep The Swan going and midweek when they would usually be full, they are about 50% now. They are anxious in the short-term but weekends have been great and they need to get the weddings back and filling the rooms.

Sam Laycock said one of her team is having her wedding reception at The Swan after being let down by another venue. Word of mouth is going to be the next stage to look forward to. The Harpur Centre is running on 60-65% at the moment and they are looking forward to getting that 40% back in the next couple of months, in a slow and safe manner.

We are getting put on the map for good reasons, such as a comedian making a joke about the Italy v England football here means Bedford as a town, wins.

9. NEXT MEETING

9th September @ 4.30pm; venue TBC.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and concluded the meeting at 5.45pm