



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
TOGETHER
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

RTW Together Business Improvement District

Minutes – 09 January 2024 Lonsdale Gate, Lonsdale Gardens, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1NU

In attendance: Alex Green (AJG), Alex Greig (AG), Alexia Taylor (AT), Hilary Smith (HS), Jenny Kitchen (JK), Joseph Oates (JO), Justine Rutland (RT), Nicola Paffard (NP), Richard Simm (RS), Peter Allinson (PA), Suzie Lewis (SL)

Apologies: Clare Waller (CW)

1. **Welcome** by Alex Greig
2. **Minutes from last meeting:** Approved.
3. **Any conflicts of interest:** None
4. **BID Director Report**
 - **Better Town – AI Seminar:** JR gave feedback that the speakers were good, lots of engagement with questions at the end, venue gave gravitas to the event. Some staff from Yoyo gave JK great feedback and commented how great it was not to have to travel into London for an event like this. Noted that BID school section of the website needs updating.
 - **Better Town-Graffiti removal:** Extinction Rebellion (ER) graffiti. AG suggested engaging with ER to explain it is costing the BID money to remove the graffiti and this money was intended for sustainability use. Meeting would be an opportunity to understand what the town is doing about sustainability and establish common ground. ER may have no idea about the BIDS sustainability goals. JO suggested meeting, with minutes, to give a sense of accountability. JK gave the names of two contacts and will set up meeting. It is a street scene issue and not political.
 - **Better Town-Energy Broker scheme:** NP and JO companies both use energy brokers and will forward names.
 - **Footfall data:** From week 9 we will have a year of Springboard data and so comparisons can be made. Justine to try and get RVP data including Sundays to see impact of parking offer.

ACTION: AG to update Bid school in Website

ACTION: JK to intro AJG to ER and set up a meeting

ACTION: JK to introduce AJG

ACTION: JO & NP to forward names of energy brokers

ACTION: JR to send RVP footfall data to SL.

5. **Finance Report:** Currently £362,210 in the bank, year-end cash balance approximated to be £56k. Levy income figure, including some previous years collection, £428,046. There is £31,399 left in the re-ballot budget. Total BID costs YTD are £377,768, total ballot costs YTD are £13,846. Breakdown of spend per cost base as a % of total spend including Xmas lights and High Street which have not yet been paid:

Marketing 15% v 21%

Activities 14% v 24%

Overheads 8% v 13%

Environment 15% v 22%

Better Town for Business 8% v 20%

The remainder is committed and unallocated that has not yet been spent.

With all bad debt write offs that were been processed up to board meeting date, the most the BID can receive in outstanding levy is £48K.

6. **Ballot progress:** Consultation completed and first letter to Secretary of State was completed last year. 2nd letter to Secretary of State was sent out 8 January 2024. Cover letter for business plan is ready and will arrive with business from Saturday 13th January. Ballot notification will be sent from Civica to our businesses advising of ballot on 17 January. Ballot papers will start to arrive on 1 February. A 2-page summary (Ballot statement) from the BID accompanies the ballot paper- will be completed by 12 January. Julie Grail meeting on 11 January to run through operating and baseline agreements and final details. TWBC have signed off on support of the BID. Business plan was approved. The BID will know twice weekly in February who has voted however not how they have voted.

Lists will be sent to each director in the next two weeks to identify businesses they are familiar with/have relationships with to assist them through the ballot process and be available to answer questions about the BID. AJG will provide a script. Julie Grail advised that the week beginning the 5th Feb is the key week for lobbying businesses and answering any of their questions. AJG happy to help with any questions or to meet any business on the directors lists if necessary. AJG highlighted that BIDS are legally obligated to not replace council or statutory services, eg no legal obligation for council to do Xmas lights. BID cannot provide core services but provide shine to core underlying services eg little bit extra on street cleaning, graffiti removal, which makes a difference. The recent security patrols were done in collaboration with the council which enabled it to happen. The BID is in the best position to identify business priorities.

Bid should use the opportunity to engage with our businesses and ensure they know what they can get from the BID.

Letter in Times of Tunbridge Wells, Francis Robinson, – AJG respond to say BID could not extend to St John's, it is already at the top end of the BID scale.

ACTION: AJG/SL to provide a script to assist board directors.

7. AOB

Amplifi: event on Wednesday 31 January, Amelia Scott. Invites sent out pre-Christmas. Personalised invites, 70 ppl so far, prof services, media & tech, some retailers. Aiming for 120. Event to launch 2024 programme: state of nation around sustainability & climate crisis then splitting into sector groups to bring together working groups. Sector leads identified e.g. hospitality group and prof services etc. Then 3 meeting across the year, coming together in those groups, sharing ideas, swapping challenges, and then feeding back up to Amplifi for Amplifi to figure out different ways, through funding & grants and through collective procurement, to help make change within the local business community. There is an urgency to climate & sustainability but there are also lots of business & commercial benefits. Employees want employers to do better in terms of sustainability. Challenge is to make a noise around this in an inclusive positive way. Representatives from local businesses are speaking. Amplifi wants to fund businesses to have additional consultative support to help them get to net zero quicker. Event is free, so no barrier to businesses coming.

TWBC Update: attached.