

MINUTES

Taunton BID Working Group Meeting – 21.05.19

In Attendance

Lucy Ball – Destination Marketing
Duncan Brown – Greenslade Taylor Hunt
Tony Derdek – Merchant Menswear
Rod Salmine – MailBoxes Etc
Keith Lowe – Orchard Shopping Centre
Colin Barrell – Mr Miles Tea Room
Lisa Redston – Localities Manager - Somerset West & Taunton
Nigel Pearce – Pearce Practice Architects, President Taunton Chamber of Commerce
Minutes taken by Bethan Turner, Membership & Events Manager, Taunton Chamber of Commerce

Philippe Messy – The Little Wine Shop & Social
Sally Petrich - Lakeland
Mark Bouchier – Perkin Warbeck
Jon Air – Company Spaces
Jayne O'Brien – Eden May lettings

Apologies

Katy Hawker – Crew Clothing
Clare Filer – Debenhams
Janet Garland – Primark
Jane Amour – Jane Amour Trading
Suzanne Roper & Michelle Brooks – Somerset County Cricket Club

Elle Perry – TK MAXX
Ed Thorne – Webbers Estate Agents
Lee Tomkins – Blackdown Financial

**Andy Harris – M&S, Adam Carbis – Boots. Both of these managers are soon moving on, though the businesses, and hopefully the new managers, are keen to be involved

Welcome

Lucy Ball (LB) welcomed attendees to the meeting – the first meeting of what will be a very important group, crucial to delivering a positive BID ballot in approx. 9 months' time. Good to see a fair representation of size and sector of local business attending, but with attendees from the 'apologies' list hopefully attending future meetings, this will help to increase the spread of size and sector – a mix that is crucial for BID success.

Taunton BID Feasibility Study

LB made reference to the BID feasibility study, copies of which were circulated prior to the meeting. Headlines from the study were highlighted:

- Took a long time to decide whether Taunton was ready for a new BID after the previous BID history.
- Conversations had with the business community during the study concluded that the time was now right, and there was a groundswell of positive opinion. The business community wants to make Taunton the very best it can be, a beacon of positivity and Taunton as a destination in the South West.
- The study saw much discussion around the area of the BID for the map – to include/exclude charity shops?, to exclude based on rateable values? Etc
- Current map is a work in progress – the red line can be moved by extending or reducing the area to include particularly enthusiastic businesses, or to exclude negative voices.

- Rateable value threshold set at £5k per annum – this way excluding ATMs, billboards, tiny businesses. BID map as lines are currently drawn include 410 – 415 eligible businesses. Levy rate decided on = 1.5% giving pot of c. £270k per annum over 5 years. Due to changes in Retail Levy and Business Rates, most businesses should see a considerable saving going forward, even after the BID levy.

The meeting raised no questions regarding the Feasibility Study.

Role and purpose of the BID working group

LB explained that the only way to persuade businesses to vote yes, is for them to see ideas in the proposal that they want to see happen. Business leaders/ owners are far more likely to express opinion to another business than they are to a consultant, so the members of the working group really need to be the eyes and ears – gathering and feeding back ideas and opinions from the wider business community. The working party members will also be key to getting important information regarding progress, and ultimately the ballot into the hands of the businesses in the proposed BID area.

LB also explained that the working party members would be in charge of putting together the BID Proposal document: deciding what the £ should be spent on and in what proportion. This would then be put to the vote at the ballot stage. At this ballot stage, it will be a case of ‘all hands on deck’ to get the voting message out, to encourage all eligible businesses to support the BID, and to ensure everyone actually takes up their vote.

Question was raised by Colin Barrell (CB) regarding whether the current attendees was a typical number of businesses on a BID working group – LB said in theory yes, but always keen to add more members – the important issues being continuity of attendance, willingness to take action and collaborate with other local businesses.

BID Proposed Timetable – phases of delivery

LB circulated a copy of the proposed BID timetable (available as an attachment with these meeting minutes). LB highlighted the main phases of the BID timetable, adding that this was a timeline that had developed across a number of BIDs across the UK and was ‘tried and tested’

Information gathering stage:

Issue was raised by Jayne O’Brien (J O’B) that if improved/ increased policing was not going to be a BID proposal, that the working party needed to have some thought out response to those who will either want it to be included, or who will expect it to be. In this way business leaders would understand this from an early stage. LB suggested that for the larger businesses, for whom theft and shrinkage were major concerns, there would need to be something in the BID proposals that seeks to address these issues – gave the example of the BID proposing to support key crime/ theft reducing initiatives, rather than looking at policing. KL and CB raised the recent introduction of the DISK system which seems to be having some early positive outcomes, and urged the working group to familiarize themselves with the system. Lisa Redston (LR) suggested she could get hold of some leaflets that could be circulated at the next working group meeting. Bethan Turner (BT) added that if there was an electronic version, it could be circulated with future minutes. CB went on to say that he had tried to manage expectations at the recent Retailer’s Meetings that the BID *may choose to support* a successful crime reduction scheme, but that retailers shouldn’t expect a lump sum coming their way to start or prop up a scheme.

Jon Air (JA) raised the point that much as he was in full support of the need to gather opinion and information, that if this is the only ‘data’ that is used to formulate the BID proposal it will end up being a very reactive plan – and that this will miss the great opportunity that Taunton has for the BID to really propose a positive and forward thinking vision of what Taunton can be that inspires business leaders into action, so that it can realise far more than just the £ value of the BID pot. He went on to say that it was this sort of BID proposal that he would be keen to be involved with, and not a reactive ‘checklist’ approach – if the proposal was simply a reactive plan then this would be a woeful missed

opportunity. CB, J O'B and Philippe Messy (PM) all stated that it was vital for the working party that JA was involved, both from the freshness of approach he would bring, from the ideas and opinions he would be able to gather from the type of young and future thinking businesses using Company Spaces, and from his 'newness' to Taunton enabling him not to be influenced by past history.

LR asked whether there would be a specific way of capturing opinion and ideas – LB said there would be a form circulated.

JA asked whether it was just ideas and opinions from those within the BID area/ actual voters that was to be gathered, particularly as this may be quite insular opinion – LB stressed it was vital to gather as much opinion as possible, and that views from regular town centre users, and visitors were very valid. LB added that it was crucial that everyone who is eligible to vote feels that they have had plenty of opportunity to contribute, whether they take up the offer or not.

Ballot Stage:

Keith Lowe (KL) stressed it was important to identify who is the person in the national companies is, who will actually be the one to cast the vote on behalf of that business. LB reassured the meeting that this would form part of her responsibilities, and that based on her work with other BIDs she had a good knowledge of who many of these individuals were. She added that most HQs wait to see a detailed BID proposal and then consult with the manager on the ground at local level before voting.

Question was raised by Duncan Brown (DB) regarding whether national companies tend to have a BID policy, or whether they are looked at on a case by case basis. LB said that this varies between companies, giving the example of Tesco (who have an HQ member of staff responsible for liaising and facilitating the BID voting process) and Sainsburys (who employ an external Bid consultant who visits the proposed BID area and scrutinizes the proposal with the local BID team)

Legal Phase:

LB explained that though this is a 'closed period', there is actually quite a bit of work carried out during this time. LB will be liaising with the local authority to set up all the relevant and necessary legal documents. Baseline agreements are also put in place where the BID proposal looks to enhance/ increase a service already provided by the local authority. This is so that there is a clear pathway to measure effectiveness, and a clear route to proving added value. This is particularly important to negate the voices who raise the 'shouldn't the council be doing that anyway' argument.

The BID Launch Event

LB stressed that it was vital to launch the BID to as many of the 410 businesses who have voting rights as possible. **The BID Launch Event is taking place at 5.30pm at the Brewhouse on Tuesday 18th June.**

Anne Hunter, Exeter BID Manager was attending to give a presentation about how BID is working positively in Exeter – she is a great BID advocate and an effective communicator, so this should be an inspiring launch. It will be a great opportunity for 2 way conversation about ideas, likes and dislikes.

There will be leaflets available in the next couple of weeks to promote the launch, and LB will ensure these get out to the working party members so they can be distributed further. LB will supply a detailed list of which businesses need to be covered in each geographical/ sector area by which working party members (see sector/ geographical area decisions later in the minutes). CB stressed the importance of trying to get these into the hands of people over a positive conversation – shouldn't just take a leaflet through the letterbox approach.

Marketing, PR and Branding

Marketing & PR – this will be handled by Karen Morledge (KM), who has been involved in several successful BID projects previously and has worked with LB on several occasions. KM will be organizing the launch event and will attend the next working group meeting in July.

Branding – LB distributed some logo ideas that the graphic designer had come up with. The group were not very keen on them and gave the following feedback: colour should be more in tune with Taunton's 'Garden Town' status, and the red used was not dissimilar to the Chamber of Commerce branding. A palette of greens was suggested. The group also felt that the 'Taunton' in the logo should be bolder/ stand out more. It was also suggested that there could perhaps be a symbol added? - either reflecting the Garden Town status, the Bridge or the River Tone. LB will go back to the graphic designer with feedback – need to get something firm asap ready for the launch event marketing and the website.

Website and Social Media – LB informed the group that there is a Taunton BID website being created which will act as an up to date resource for all the information about the BID, the BID timetable and a feedback mechanism to assist the collection of ideas and opinions. The BID will also have a twitter account.

Allocation of Constituents

LB explained that to ensure that all businesses in the BID area are covered, and to ensure there is a fair distribution of workload, it is advisable that each member of the working group has a set allocation of businesses to 'look after', dependent on their own business' location or the trade sector they operate in. LB sought agreement from the meeting that this was a sensible idea, and sought buy in from the working group to take this forward. The meeting was in agreement. Following a short discussion, the following areas/ sectors were agreed upon:

Bridge Street – Rod Salmine and Jon Air

Fore Street – Katy Hawker? (LB to approach her about this)

High Street – Colin Barrell and (?)

St James Street & Riverside Place – Jayne O'Brien and Tony Derdek

East Street, North Street & Bath Place – initially LB, but will look to get some of the absentees from this meeting involved in covering these areas

Hammett Street & the Professional Services businesses – Duncan Brown and Nigel Pearce

Orchard Centre, County Walk and Major Retailers – Sally Petrich and Keith Lowe (with possibly Elle Perry, Clare Filer and Janet Garland?)

Hospitality & licensed businesses – Philippe Messy and Mark Bouchier

AOB

Tony Derdek asked why in the group's opinion, the previous BID had been unsuccessful. There was a discussion with points raised including:

- Lessons had not been learned from the previous BID regarding dealing with negativity, and 'cancelling out' those businesses who saw BID as a cost rather than an investment.
- BID area was badly thought out (eg: The Crescent being included, where businesses weren't going to see a major benefit, East Reach which is a tricky business community to convert)
- BID was too close to the Police and Council – it was difficult to prove that the BID was adding value over and above what was being provided by the Police and Council. It was particularly difficult when policing resource was pulled elsewhere. Difficult to prove added value when the perception (and sometime the reality) was that the basic services were lacking.

It was felt that the working party should be mindful of all of the above. LB and CB added that the lessons learned from previous BIDs had been important in shaping the scope and the direction of the feasibility study.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that meetings should take place monthly, and that Tuesdays from 5.30pm were a suitable time for attendees to make the meetings. The next meeting was scheduled as follows:

Tuesday 16th July at 5.30pm – venue is the Lakeland store Training Room

(thanks to SP for the offer of hosting)

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.15pm.