

COUNCIL MEETING – 15 OCTOBER 2019

REPORT OF THE ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

9 September 2019

Present: Councillors Carr (Chairman), Bell, Ekins, Hallam, G Lawman, L Lawman, Maguire, Partridge-Underwood, Patel, Walia and Watts.

Also present: Mr A Piper (Assistant Director/Committee Manager), Mrs V Phillipson (Principal Property and Projects Manager), Mr J Murray (Economic Development and Delivery Officer), Mr S Darcy (Director of Resources), Miss B Cox (Communications Officer) and Mrs C A Mundy, (Democratic Services Officer).

(Councillors Griffiths and M Waters attended as observers.)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED to note that apologies were received from Councillors Anslow, Emerson, Skittrall and V Waters.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED to note that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the council's code of conduct and the council's constitution, the following declarations were made:

Councillor	Min no.& Item	Reason
Carr	3 – Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal – knows some of the speakers
Ekins	3 – Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal – knows some of the speakers
Hallam	3 - Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal – speaks with the local business community
L Lawman	3 – Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal – knows some of the speakers present and has previously received hospitality from one of the speakers
G Lawman	3 – Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal - previous BID director, knows some speakers and has attended events as a councillor
Maguire	3 – Wellingborough BID – New proposal	Personal – knows some of the speakers

3. WELLINGBOROUGH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) – NEW PROPOSAL

The annexed circulated report of the managing director was received to update the committee on the Wellingborough Town Centre Business Improvement District's new business plan, as appended to the report, to enable a decision to be made on how the council should vote in the new ballot to be held in September for the period 2019-2024.

Appended to the report were the following:

- Appendix 1 - BID new business plan 2019-2024;
- Appendix 2 - Previous BID plan 2019-2024;
- Appendix 3 - BID new area map;
- Appendix 4 - BID financial expenditure changes;
- Appendix 5 - List of BCW properties in new BID area;
- Appendix 6 - BID clarification letter;
- Appendix 7 - BID survey results June 2019;
- Appendix 8 - Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce and Town Centre Partnership letter of support for the BID.

The chairman had received five requests from the public, along with one from a councillor, to speak at the committee.

Mr R Rowlatt, Mr S Taylor, Ms M Richardson, Mr C Bailey, Mr S Toseland and Councillor M Griffiths all addressed the meeting and answered questions of clarity.

The speakers made reference to the benefits of the BID which they considered included cost savings, the enhancement to the streetscape, website presence and town centre app., used to promote special offers, the delivery of events, including the promotion of the heritage of the town centre, community and cultural celebrations, competitions and arts provision at both the Castle Theatre and the museum, and the promotion of Wellingborough as a place to live and work.

The Bid levy payers also appreciated the benefit of training and support and marketing through the BID website. Small business owners often did not have the time, or money to create their own website and they considered this was a vital benefit in the current climate and a good way of promoting the town.

The holding of events increased footfall and encouraged people from other towns to visit Wellingborough, and with the benefit of the free parking these people frequently returned to shop and spend money in the small businesses in the town centre.

The advantages of the recycling service were considered to be good value for money and had saved the levy payers a great deal of money and the speakers considered this to be financially beneficial to them.

Members of the BID board wished to work with the council to achieve the best for the BID levy payers and the traders in the town centre. The new BID made reference to the ambitions of the council with the introduction of a town centre coordinator to work with partners and local business and this included the '10 Point plan'. The town centre needed to be a vibrant place and a destination of choice where people wanted to visit and use the shops, coffee shops, bars and restaurants, not just at night but during the day as well.

Local retailers would face more and more competition and online retailing was expected to rise considerably in the next few years.

Encouragement to support the BID was also given by the Wellingborough Chamber of Commerce and Wellingborough Town Centre Partnership. They informed the committee of the background to the original BID, which had been established in 2009 as a council initiative, to encourage businesses to contribute and make a real difference to the town centre by becoming more involved and taking ownership of its future. The commitment of £900,000 over the next five years would ensure that the town centre would thrive, particularly with competition from on-line shopping and Rushden Lakes.

Councillor Griffiths, noted the changing national shopping habits. He referenced the two large developments taking place at Glenvale Park and Stanton Cross. These urban extensions would bring large numbers of people to the town and therefore significant footfall to the town centre.

The council was planning to make improvements to the public realm at Burystead Place, where the Tithe Barn was located and there had been grant funding made available to enhance the shop fronts. The work on the Hind Hotel was ongoing and progressing well. Work would soon commence on the improvements to the multi-storey car park. There would be an opportunity for the public to attend open day workshops in the autumn to comment on the proposed improvements. It was intended that free car parking would remain for the duration of the council. The annual International Waendel Walk Weekend also brought visitors to the town centre. Parkwood Theatres had recently taking over the running of the Castle Theatre and there was an excellent programme of shows to encourage people to visit the town and enhance the night time economy.

He expressed surprise that the redefined BID area plan meant that there was a reduction from 18 council properties to 8 in the BID area. Key service delivery hubs, such as the Tithe Barn Road offices, Swanspool House and Waendel Leisure Centre were no longer included.

He noted the comments made about the difficulties over the years between the council and the BID and he hoped that if the BID was successful that relationships would improve and that the town centre could thrive.

Some of the questions raised by members for the purpose of clarity are précised below:

- **What did BID payers think was the benefit of being part of a BID?**
It was generally considered that the cost savings of recycling, the website presence, town centre app., promotional events and training received were the key benefits.
- **What training was offered to BID levy payers?**
Workshops were regularly held with subjects including the use of online presence & social media as a marketing tool, a recent training event on window displays had proved to be very beneficial and this had been followed with a competition for the 'best dressed' window.
- **Most events appeared to be held during the day, how did this help those involved in the night time economy?**
Whilst events were generally held in the day or early evening, many of the pubs and restaurants were open during the day and the increased footfall also encouraged people to return and use the restaurants in the evening;
- **The BID area had been redefined, and this had significantly reduced the number of council properties in the area. What was the reason for this?**
The BID board had decided to concentrate on core businesses in the redefined area and it was coincidental that this had resulted in some council properties no longer being included in the BID area.
- **How many BID levy payers were there and how many had voting rights?**
It was clarified that there were 296 BID levy payers who were eligible to vote if they wished to do so.
- **How many BID levy payers were members of the Board of Directors?**
The BID was a not for profit company and was governed by a Board of Directors who were BID levy payers and volunteers drawn from both large and small businesses within the BID area. Any local levy payer was eligible to become a member of the BID company and they could stand for a position on the board.
- **The borough council was expected to form part of a unitary council within 18 months and the BID was asked how they thought the working relationship would look in the future?**
It was hoped that the BID would be able to work with either the unitary council of North Northamptonshire and/or the soon to be formed Wellingborough Town Council with the focus being to continue to encourage footfall and spend within the town.
- **At the meeting in March, Mr Cable, Executive Director of the BID had indicated that discussions were to take place with Bedford, Milton Keynes and Northampton BIDs, how had such discussions progressed?**
It was clarified that Wellingborough BID was in discussion with other BID towns and had shared discussions, ideas, information and objectives.

- **Why, when there was an event held on a Sunday, were some businesses not open?**

It was up to individuals whether to open, for small traders a Sunday was the only day that they had to spend with family.

- **Did the BID feel that it provided good value for money, particularly when the costs of salaries was a large amount from its budget?**

It was considered that staffing costs were kept to a minimum but had to be paid and that there was still a considerable amount of money left to use on other enhancements to the town centre.

- **Did the BID feel that the events supported by the council, such as 'the beach' were good?**

Whilst it was considered that 'the beach' was an excellent and successful event, the purpose of this was to give children a beach experience, rather than to encourage footfall. The BID did not think that the location, in the Market Square, was beneficial to the town centre and their preference was for this to be located opposite the Hind Hotel, so that it could be seen by those walking or driving through the town this would then increase footfall and spend. The current location at the market did not encourage this.

Following the discussion and questions raised members discussed the report before them and the new BID proposal before them. There was concern expressed that the BID was particularly critical of the working relationship between themselves and the council. It was considered that for the BID to work well these issues needed to be resolved and that the relationship needed to improve to ensure the best possible outcome for the town centre. The advantages and disadvantages of the BID were also outlined in the reports.

Members raised their individual concerns and expressed their concern that they needed more assurance that the BID could achieve what was being promised in the documentation before them, that they would provide value for money, would work with the council to achieve the '10 point plan' and aspirations for all the businesses in the BID area.

A lengthy debate ensued.

It was proposed by Councillor Maguire and seconded by Councillor Watts that the council instruct the assistant director (corporate landlord) to vote on behalf of the council, to support the Wellingborough Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID) for the period 2019-2024, in respect of the eight council properties.

On being put to the vote there were two votes in favour, three votes against and six abstentions and the proposal was therefore declared lost.

The chairman then asked the committee to vote on the proposition that the assistant director (corporate landlord), on behalf of the council, vote against the BID, in the BID ballot, in respect of the eight council properties.

On being put to the vote there were two votes in favour, two votes against and seven abstentions. The chairman did not use his casting vote.

(Councillors Maguire and Watts asked that their vote against this proposal be recorded.)

A further discussion ensued and the chairman proposed the following amendment:

That the assistant director (corporate landlord) be instructed not to vote in the BID ballot in respect of the eight council properties. This was seconded by Councillor L Lawman.

On being put to the vote there were five votes in favour, three votes against and three abstentions and this was therefore declared carried.

This then became the substantive motion which was put to the vote and declared carried with five votes in favour, two votes against and four abstentions.

RESOLVED that the assistant director (corporate landlord) be instructed to abstain from voting in the BID ballot on behalf of the council in respect of the eight council properties.

Chairman

The meeting concluded at 8.55pm.