



Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Review of the Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District

Final Report

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Foreword - Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

Members of Melton Borough Council voted to support the introduction of a Business Improvement District (BID) and in 2011 the new Melton Mowbray BID was introduced and welcomed by the Council.

The Government had expected BIDs to be business led but also for the BID and local government to work together to help take the BID forward. Indeed the Government's 2014 Review of BIDs highlighted how the most successful BIDs were those who have established a close and positive engagement with their local authority.

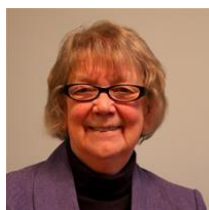
With the forthcoming ballot, it seemed appropriate to review the effectiveness of the BID and the relationship with the Council. In 2020, it was decided that a light touch Task and Finish review would be undertaken in order to identify the following: potential areas of collaboration, suggest ways of improving openness and transparency and improve relations between the Council and the BID.

The Group have been very grateful for the support received whilst undertaking the Review, from the Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer, the Council's Democratic Services Team and the Director for Growth and Regeneration.

Cllr Pat Cumbers

(Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee)

Members of the Task and Finish Group



Councillor Pat
Cumbers
(Chairman)



Councillor Ronan
Browne (*until May*
2021)



Councillor Robert
Child

Background

BID Companies are intended to be business-led partnerships which are created following a ballot process in order to deliver additional services or 'additionality' for local businesses in the defined BID area for a defined period (normally five years).

BIDs are mainly funded by a levy which is chargeable to all non-domestic ratepayers (NDR) in the BID area which is in addition to their non-domestic rates bill unless there is an exemption.

The BID is an important organisation that plays a vital role in supporting businesses in the town centre of Melton Mowbray and they are a key partner of the Council. By raising funds through the levy, they have the opportunity to co-ordinate and direct investment more strategically and deliver beyond that which the local authority could provide itself.

Additionality

Types of additionality vary across the country, and this was witnessed in the case studies, but have included the following:

- Additional street cleansing including chewing gum removal
- Christmas lights and Christmas markets
- Drugs dogs
- Footfall Surveys
- Grants
- Mystery shopper
- Providing maps and/or mini guides
- Provision of street furniture including seating.
- Reducing crime and Anti-Social Behaviour including paying for, or towards, a Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer
- Special events and markets
- Special support for independents
- Street furniture cleaning and maintenance
- Street pastors
- Street wardens
- Training

Government Guidance states that

'The authority and the BID will need to agree which additional services the BID intends to deliver.' (BIDs: Guidance and Best Practice (ATCM), March 2015)

The Levy

The levy amount is a matter of choice for the BID proposer but is usually between 1% and 4% of rateable value. The levy rates for the Melton Mowbray BID are as follows:

- Where the rateable value is less than £7,000 there is an annual levy of £100.
- Where the rateable value is £7,000 or higher, then the levy is 1.5% of the rateable value.
- There are some exemptions to the BID levy such as some charities and some volunteer based organisations.

The Ballot

The ballot is run by the Local Authority and Levy payers are entitled to one vote in respect of each rated property in the BID area.

A successful vote is one that has a simple majority in votes cast and also in rateable value, irrespective of turnout.

In 2011 within Melton Mowbray 443 levy payers were eligible to vote and 175 voted.

The BID Board

In accordance with Government Guidance, BID Boards are expected to be business-led by Directors with appropriate skills and reflecting the mix of businesses in the BID area.

In Melton Mowbray, local businesses include retail, leisure, public houses, hotels, financial, cafes, restaurants, professional, office and education sectors.

There are currently 11 members of the Melton Mowbray BID Board, one of whom is also the Company Secretary, and their occupations are described in the records at Companies' House as follows:

- Chartered Accountant
- Accountant
- Financial adviser
- Retired
- Manager
- Publican
- Gallery owner
- Music Studio/Music Teacher
- Commercial Property Surveyor

In addition, the Board includes an elected member from Melton Borough Council and one from Leicestershire County Council.

Introduction of the Review

On 22 December 2020, following feedback from BID levy payers and receivers of BID services, the Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group which would review the services provided by the BID, its current governance and accountability arrangements and plans for future delivery. The Group decided to look at this in relation to government guidance which was produced to help BIDs ensure the best possible outcomes for their businesses.

There is a desire to enhance future partnership working between the BID and Melton Borough Council. This is especially pertinent in view of the difficulties which business has encountered as a result of the pandemic.

It was agreed on 5 January 2021 that the Task and Finish review would be undertaken by the Chairman Councillor Pat Cumbers and Councillors Browne and Child. Please note that when Councillor Browne was appointed to MBC's Cabinet in May 2021, he could no longer be part of Scrutiny Committee or the Task and Finish Group. Nevertheless, the Group are grateful for the research which Councillor Browne had undertaken which has proved to be invaluable.

On 10 February 2021, the Task and Finish Group's scoping document was finalised. With the purpose identified as follows: to identify the preferred standards of Governance for UK BID companies to enable the Council to formulate a response to the consultation on the Melton Mowbray BID Business Plan and make recommendations in relation to the BID renewal proposals before the renewal Ballot in 2021.

Process and Methodology

With the pandemic limiting face to face meetings and drawing on the limited resources of the Council this meant that most of the evidence was obtained from the following:

- Desktop research
 - Government Guidance
 - Case Studies
- BID records and documentation
- Personal contact with levy payers and former Directors
- Informal meetings held remotely

Evidence Considered

The evidence considered by the Review is listed below. Full details of any of the evidence listed can be obtained from democracy@melton.gov.uk quoting the BID Review and the reference number detailed below.

Evidence

E1. Relationship between the Council and the BID

- The working relationship between the Council and the BID was not as good as it could have been but it has improved significantly recently as in the following three examples:
 - There was the BID's involvement in the Scrutiny Task and Finish work on Covid-19 Response and Recovery (Place), when town centre issues were discussed and how the issues might be addressed. This involvement was invaluable.
 - During the pandemic, there has been regular contact between the BID Board, the Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement and the Director for Growth and Regeneration.
 - Also, the Council's Leader and Chief Executive have met a number of times with the BID and the Town Estate to progress town centre discussions. The BID is also an important member of the Melton Place Board which meets on a quarterly basis to discuss collaboration, tourism and town centre opportunities.

E2. Government Guidance

- The Government Guidance included the following publications
 - Government Review of BIDs, November 2014
 - BIDs: Guidance and Best Practice (ATCM), March 2015
 - BIDs: Technical Guide for Local Authorities, March 2015
 - House of Commons Briefing Paper: BIDs, May 2018
- Where the guidance does discuss best practice, it was clear to Members that key to a successful BID are: having the necessary governance arrangements in place; being transparent and accountable; marketing and promoting the activities of the BID; having a Business Plan and reporting mechanism and ensuring the BID has access to adequate resources in order to run effectively.

E3. Case Studies

- The Task and Finish Group looked into the following BIDs
 - Bristol City Centre
 - Bristol Broadmead

- Derby Cathedral Quarter
- Derby St Peters Quarter
- The case studies were assessed using the following categories: About Presence and Governance before a summary of findings was provided for each case study. Details of which can be found at Appendix 1.
- After analysing the case studies, the Group concluded that the common themes were a highly visible presence and good governance arrangements. All case studies, not only had a variety of social media accounts for communication, had websites which are regularly updated. All BIDs used their websites to show their governance arrangements but also exercise good governance. They would publicise their Board Members, publish their Business Plans, Annual Reports and a statement of their accounts.

E4. The BID's Records

- Cost to the Levy Payers
The BID company is entitled to exemption under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The micro-entity Balance Sheets as reported to Companies' House are as follows:

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Current Assets	£37195	£32586	£2528	£3242
Pre-payments / accruals	-	-	£8128	£2933
Creditors	(£5224)	(£660)	(£6545)	(£5461)
Reserves	£31971	£31926	£4111	£714

Income and Expenditure for the year to 30 November 2020

BID Levy (estimated)	£169042
Grants	£8405
Project Costs	£145039
Fund brought forward	£714
Fund to be carried forward	£33482

- The BID's Plans
The BID's Vision and Strategy states that:
 - The BID will be the Voice of Business, Lobbying and Advocating for Melton Mowbray's Town Centre.
 - Will support campaigns to review business rates and car parking
 - Work on initiatives which support businesses
 - Increase footfall to the Town Centre

E5. Interviews with Former BID Directors

- During the Task and Finish Review, the Group interviewed former BID Directors who questioned the BID's decision-making process. The Group cross referenced the information received with the case studies to establish what other BIDs do in similar situations.

Conclusions

MAIN ISSUES IDENTIFIED	LINK TO EVIDENCE	PROPOSED SOLUTION (S)	RECOMMENDATION
1. Past relationship between the Council and the BID.	E1	The Council and the BID should meet to discuss further collaboration and identify common goals.	R1
2. Openness and transparency of information.	E2, E3, E5	Government Guidance and the case studies have shown that a website is a necessary tool in order to publicise information. The BID should consider re-establishing the website.	R3
3. Ability to fulfil ambitions for Melton Mowbray.	E1, E4	Consider an increase to the BID area to accommodate businesses who could potentially be valuable partners in the future.	R2

Recommendations

It is the Group's opinion that the BID is undoubtedly an important asset for Melton Mowbray, indeed the BID Manager knows the area well and the businesses within the BID district. Despite this there is a perception the operations and decision making of the BID are not as well understood by local stakeholders as they might be and the BID therefore might benefit by taking steps to increase openness and transparency.

The working relationship between the Council and the BID is important and has improved significantly recently, as can be seen from the Evidence above.

Although BIDS are mainly funded by taxpayers, they are not considered to be public bodies and are not required to be open and accountable in the same way as applies to local authorities such as the Council. They are also not subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation. Melton Mowbray BID is not required to produce audited accounts for the levy payers nor for Companies' House however, after reviewing the case studies and Government guidance, the Group found that it is common practice for BIDs throughout the country to be open and transparent by using a variety of communication methods in order to publish Minutes of their Board meetings, annual reports and statements of accounts.

Following careful evaluation of the evidence, the following recommendations are being made

Recommendation 1 (R1)

That the Council undertake greater collaboration with the BID to consider ways that both organisations could take some joint responsibility for shared priorities in relation to town centre businesses. This should include agreeing to an approach to identify realistic and positive expectations and aspirations for the relationship between the Council and the BID.

Reasons for Recommendation (R1)

The Government acknowledges that the most successful BIDs are those where there is a friendly, co-operative and constructive relationship between the BID and the local authority. There is a desire within the Council to enhance the partnership working between the Council and the BID which should lead to improved outcomes for the town.

Recommendation 2 (R2)

That consideration is given to enlarging the defined BID area and then actively seeking a wider representation from local businesses on the Board.

Reasons for Recommendation 2

This would increase the types of business within the BID, giving those businesses a voice but also increasing the levy income. The Group assessed that there are additional businesses, as well as some small industrial sites, located outside of the BID area, but still within the town, that are different to those in the town centre.

Business needs can vary with the type of business and appropriate membership on the Board will help ensure better understanding of local business and their needs and therefore the business plan and budget allocation will be more representative and beneficial to all levy payers.

Recommendation 3 (R3)

That the BID gives consideration to re-establishing a website.

Reasons for Recommendation 3

A website would help with accountability but could also be a valuable source of information for residents, levy payers and potential visitors. Websites are an excellent way of providing useful information in one place which anybody can access. The case studies highlighted that BID websites are used to display a variety of information including (but not limited to) the following:

- BID business plan and vision
- Map of the BID area
- BID board
- Information regarding funding and available support
- Promotional and marketing activities
- Links to other useful websites
- News and press releases
- Parking
- Where to eat and drink
- Shopping directory
- Business directory
- Details of events

Acknowledgements

The Members of the Task and Finish Group wish to extend their thanks to all of those that provided evidence and supported the work of the Group including:

Democratic Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
Melton Borough Council's Democratic Services Team
Director for Growth and Regeneration

Appendix 1

Business Improvement Districts Case Studies

Bristol City Centre

About

The Bristol City Centre BID was established in 2017 and is network of 763 levy payers with most paying a levy of 1.5%. The BID have clear and uncomplicated objectives which are: improve safety, promote success, act in the best interest of levy payers and improve the 'welcome and feel'.

Presence

The Bristol City Centre BID has a highly visible presence both digitally and physical. They have a website and they utilise several social media platforms including: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and YouTube. They can be contacted via their website or alternatively their contact details can be found via the local authority website.

Their physical presence includes the hiring of a dedicated Police Officer, Safeguarding Marshals, Bristol Street Pastors, the rapid response Cleansing Team and their support to a number of initiatives around the BID area.

Governance

The BID have an Advisory Board who meet quarterly to oversee and monitor the strategic direction and financial management of the BID. The websites lists the current membership of the Board and which business they work for. The Advisory Board also includes representatives from the local hospital and Avon and Somerset Police.

The BID produce an Annual Report each year, which can be found on their website, that outlines their activities for the previous year, their plans for the upcoming year and their income and expenditure for the year. The BID has also produced a Covid-19 recovery plan, which is a brief document that outlines the activity being undertaken in order to assist businesses in the reopening of the City Centre.

Summary

It is clear that the Bristol City Centre BID is very active and has a clear presence in the city centre. The BID has a clear set of objectives which they work on and show that they do this via their annual report. Their Governance process is transparent as they

list the members of the Advisory Board on their website and produce a statement of income and expenditure which is published within the annual report.

References and Background Papers

[Bristol City Centre BID Website](#)

Bristol City Centre BID Annual Report 2019/20

Bristol City Centre BID Recovery Plan, June 2020

[Bristol City Council Business Improvement Districts Webpage](#)

Bristol Broadmead

About

The Bristol Broadmead BID is currently in its fourth term which runs until October 2023. Levy payers located within the Galleries shopping centre pay a levy of 0.75% and those outside the Galleries pay 1.5%. The BID has a clear mission statement, which is the first thing a visitor to their website would see.

Presence

The BID have both a physical and digital presence. They have a website and a Twitter account and can be contacted on either their website or using the contact details on the local authority website. In terms of their physical presence they have retail support rangers, they conduct weekly footfall surveys and they have and are involved in a number of projects, all of which can be found on their website.

Governance

The BID have a Management Group who oversee the strategy and implementation plans. The website lists the members of the Group and the businesses they represent. The Management Group also contains representatives from the local authority. The Group meet between 5 and 6 times a year and the notes from those meetings can be accessed via their website.

The BID has a Business Plan for the current term. The plan outlines the BID's priorities for the term, how the BID is to be managed, key performance indicators which success will be measured and financial arrangements for the term.

The BID also produce quarterly performance reports and annual reports, which they call 'Impact Report'. The Impact Report outlines the activities of the previous year, the plans for the upcoming year and a statement of income and expenditure for the year.

Summary

Compared to the Bristol City Centre BID, the Bristol Broadmead BID does not have as big a presence and only has a mission statement instead of a number of objectives. However, having said that, it is clear that the Broadmead BID do undertake a series of projects on behalf of their levy payers.

Their governance process is more transparent than the Bristol City Centre BID because in addition to the Management Board and the Annual Impact Report, the BID produce quarterly performance reports and they publish the notes of their Board meetings.

References and Background Papers

[Bristol Broadmead BID Website](#)

[Bristol Broadmead BID Business Plan 2018-2023](#)

[Bristol Broadmead BID Impact Report 2019-2020](#)

Derby Cathedral Quarter

About

The Derby Cathedral Quarter BID was established in 2007 and has a total of 597 hereditaments. The BID has a Vision, as well as Strategic Objectives, which it has listed in its Proposal and Business Plan 2018-2023 document.

Presence

The BID have a physical and digital presence. Their digital presences consists of a website, Twitter and LinkedIn. They can be contacted using a form on their website or via the contact details which they have also published on the website. The BID maintain a physical presence via their Cathedral Quarter Rangers who support BID business on a daily basis and inform them of developments, events and BID projects.

Governance

The BID has a Board of Directors who are elected to their positions by the Cathedral Quarter BID Company and its function is to safeguard the interests of the levy payers by ensuring the organisation operates in line with the Business Plan.

The Board consists of representatives from a whole range of areas including: retail, professional services, education, religion and the cultural sector. The Board also has Councillors from each political party which are represented on Derby City Council.

The Board produce an Annual Report, which also contains a statement of their financial position but they also produce a separate Statement of Accounts which is available to download from their website. As stated previously, the BID also have a Business Plan. The BID don't list the Minutes of their Board Meetings on their website, however they can be requested via email.

Summary

The Cathedral Quarter BID do not appear to have as big of presence as the Bristol City Centre BID or the Bristol Broadmead BID but it is clear that they undertake a significant amount of work. The strength of this particular BID is their adherence to open and transparent governance as demonstrated by the varied membership of their Board of Directors, the publication of their business plan, annual report and statement of accounts.

References and Background Papers

[Derby Cathedral Quarter BID Website](#)

[Derby Cathedral Quarter BID Proposal and Business Plan 2018-2023](#)

[Derby Cathedral Quarter Annual Report 2019](#)

Derby St Peters Quarter

About

The Derby St Peters Quarter BID was established in 2011 and currently have a total of 213 hereditaments. The BID has a Vision statement as well as a Business Plan and a Prospectus.

Presence

The BID has a significant digital presence which includes a website and social media platforms including: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. The BID maintain a physical presence through their Rangers who help tackle anti-social behaviour and promote the area by supporting business and liaising with visitors.

Governance

The BID has a Board of Directors who are drawn from a variety of businesses but also includes two Councillors from Derby City Council, one from the majority party and the other from the opposition. The Minutes of the Board meetings are not published on the website, however they are available upon request.

The BID has a Business Plan which outlines its vision and objectives, how it will be organised, how the BID intends to deliver projects and its budget. The BID publishes an annual report on its website which outlines the main achievements and what the BID has done in relation to each objective that has been set. There is also a section on the BID's financial position, although there is a separate Statement of Accounts published on the website.

Summary

This BID has a very good digital presence and they utilise a number of platforms to communicate its activities. Like the Derby Cathedral Quarter BID, this BID adheres to open and transparent governance as demonstrated by the publication of their business plan, annual report and statement of accounts.

References and Background Papers

[Derby St Peters Quarter Website](#)

[Derby St Peters Quarter BID Proposal and Business Plan 2017-2022](#)

Derby St Peters Quarter BID Prospectus 2017-2022

[Derby St Peters Quarter BID Annual Report 2020](#)