

Report from the Worthing Town Centre BID for Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Following the review that took place on the BID (Business Improvement District) during 2022, in the lead up to the 4th Term ballot, it was agreed that there would be an annual update from the BID to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This is the first of the updates and will focus on achievements during the financial year, the ballot, the relationship with Worthing Borough Council and updates for the next financial year.

BID achievements 2022/23 Financial Year

This was the fifth, and final, year of the 3rd Term of the Worthing Business Improvement District. Although the 4th Term ballot took a lot of time during the year the business plan delivery did not get forgotten and the following was achieved during the year.

1. To create an environment that is clean, welcoming, and well-maintained.

- Deep Cleans & Chewing Gum removals.
 - Regular Deep Cleaning & Chewing Gum removal on the pedestrian precincts.
 - Hotspot cleans in problem areas.
 - Phone box / street furniture cleans.
- Christmas Lights
 - 1.2 miles of Christmas Lights from Brighton Road to Heene Road
 - New Lighting in Portland Road; in partnership with Worthing Borough Council
 - Walkthrough Christmas Tree / Light up present in South Street Square
 - Upgraded Solar powered Christmas Trees with baubles in the West End & Bath Place
- Planting
 - Maintenance of the sustainable planting scheme on the Pavilion Roundabout
 - 60 hanging baskets and 40 flowerbeds in the West End, Brighton Road, South Street, Montague Street and Warwick Street planted to enhance the Worthing Borough Council displays.
- Cleansing / Maintenance
 - Town Centre walkabouts with Worthing Borough Council and West Sussex County Council to identify issues and areas of concern for action.
 - Over 50 items of street furniture painted.
 - Ongoing reporting of maintenance issues to the relevant Local Authority
- Bunting
 - Summer bunting to celebrate the Queens Platinum Jubilee in Warwick Street and Montague Street to welcome visitors and visually enhance the town.

2. A Safe and welcoming Worthing

- Shopwatch & Business Crime Reduction
 - Offered free membership of the fully accredited Business Crime Reduction partnership to all Worthing Town Centre businesses.
 - DISC access at no cost for BCRP members allowing direct reporting via the app to Police.
 - Gallery of known offenders available on DISC
 - Radio network in place with radios available to rent / purchase.
 - Crime prevention advice

- Town Centre Rangers
 - 3,500 hours of Ranger cover
 - Average of 10 crime deters a week because of a visible presence.
 - Liaising and working with the Police & other authorities.
 - Identifying repeat offenders and helping Police to secure evidence for Community Behaviour Orders, including body worn camera footage.

3. To add vitality, and drive footfall, through marketing and a varied events programme

- Events / Markets / Activities
 - Worthing Food & Drink Festival attracted 25,000 visitors over the weekend
 - Countdown to Christmas Event with Independents Market & Titan the Robot
 - Worthing Toy Soldier Trail covering Heene Road to Brighton Road
 - Worthing Christmas Tree Trail with the vote on social media reaching 25,100 on Facebook
 - Christmas Window competition with the vote on social media reaching 27,000 on Facebook
 - Partnership with Worthing Theatres to deliver Spin Out events.
 - A general Market in Montague Street every Wednesday
 - The return of the Urban Beach to South Street Square during August with regular entertainment
- Website / social media
 - Website with 97,204 views during the year and 542 business listings promoting local businesses.
 - Dec 2022 Facebook reach was 84,116 with 33,609 engagements
 - 14,357 followers on social media (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter)
 - Welcome messages to all new businesses on average attracting 11,500 engagements.
- Worthing Gift Card
 - Launched for Christmas 2021
 - 115 businesses signed up to take the card
 - Press / Media campaign, along with editorials, promoting the card and support local message
 - Ongoing programme of marketing activity to keep spend in Worthing,
- Worthing Guide / Pocket Map
 - Free Listing or enhanced entry for every Town Centre business
 - 5,000 copies distributed around the Town and in other Sussex Tourist Information points
 - Promotes the full Worthing offer and encourages visitors to explore to find more.
 - 10,000 pocket maps distributed around Worthing with QR codes to the business listing on the website

4. To improve transport, parking, orientation and accessibility

- Parking / Access
 - Promote the BN11 workers offer to businesses for discounted staff parking
 - Lobbied for improvements to Car Parking cleanliness / improved maintenance
 - Free map available on website to help visitors find their way around the Town Centre

In addition to the normal activity the BID has :-

- Sent out regular Newsletters to ensure businesses have information on the support available to them as well as other Town information.
- Provided vacancy lists to encourage new businesses to open in the Town Centre – the current vacancy rate is 5% (nationally it stands at 13.9%)
- Collated Footfall & Town performance information and shared this with businesses and the Local Authorities.

The 4th Term BID ballot

Business Improvement Districts are in place for a maximum of 5 years before a re-ballot is required. The business plan put forward for the 4th term ballot was provided during the Overview & Scrutiny review but as a reminder here is the link.

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/62f5eb5d-da28-4cf4-b413-f93ab60e0f68>

During June a copy of the printed business plan was delivered to every business liable to pay the levy on a successful re-ballot. The business plan was also sent to Head Offices, where appropriate, to confirm the information held for the ballot. In June 550 business contacts were made either face to face, or by email, to ensure that ballot papers were sent to the correct location and person.

The postal ballot was open from 3rd October until 31st October and during October 824 business contacts were made ensuring ballot papers had been received and reminding businesses to vote.

The ballot result was announced on 1st November; two criteria needed to be met for a successful ballot.

More than 50% of the total number of votes cast in favour of the proposal
- Worthing achieved 70%

More than 50% of the rateable values of votes cast in favour of the proposal
- Worthing achieved 75%

The turnout was slightly lower than in 2017 at 35% but this trend is in line with other 4th term ballots. The successful BID ballot result was announced on 1st November 2022 with the new term running from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028.

Worthing Borough Council were entitled to 11 votes in the BID ballot; however, it was disappointing that these votes did not arrive with CES in time. A letter was sent by Samantha Whittington, the Chairman to Dr Catherine Howe on the matter.

Since the ballot result was announced work to ensure the required legal agreement between the Council and the Worthing Town Centre BID is in place in time for the billing run. The Worthing Town Centre BID pay the Council £15,334.00 (index-linked) to collect the levies on their behalf.

The 2017 Business Rates listing will be used to calculate the BID levies for the 5-year term as this was the recommendation received from British BIDs. It's worth noting that if the Worthing BID had continued to use the current VOA listing for its levy payments the amount of income generated by the BID would have reduced by 27% based on the 2023 revaluations. Many BIDs are now having to re-evaluate what can be delivered and

In-Swindon is the first to announce it will cease trading on 31st March 2023, as it can no longer deliver the business plan it committed to whilst remaining solvent.

Many BIDs are noticing that turnout rates at ballot are lower than they would like and at a recent meeting, with the Department for Levelling up, a plea has been made to try and find time on the legislative agenda for a review of the Business Improvement Legislation to allow for electronic voting.

The relationship between the Worthing BID and Worthing Borough Council

During the Overview & Scrutiny review it was noted that relations between both organisations could be improved. The good news is that there have been some positive moves to collaborate more, and the relationship is strengthening all the time. Communications have improved with more information being shared between both organisations. There are also regular BID monitoring meetings in place to review the BID levy collections and to ensure a seamless transition from Term 3 of the BID to Term 4. The Worthing Town Centre BID meet monthly and Officer and Member representatives attend these meetings. The Council updates are now being sent out to attendees in advance so that questions can be raised but the Worthing Town Centre BID meeting focus remains on the delivery of the BID business plan. Below are some projects that the BID is currently collaborating with the Council on:

Worthing Festival (10th – 18th June)

The Worthing Town Centre BID has allocated £4,000 to support the first Worthing Festival; after discussions with Cllr Rita Garner this will be used for a stage for the weekend of 10th / 11th June. A stage, PA system and compere have been booked and this will be offered to acts that have indicated they would like to be involved. The PA systems may need to be upgraded depending on the acts and budget will be available for this.

Montague Place Permanent Scheme

The Worthing BID attended the consultation event on 23rd January where ideas were developed for the permanent regeneration scheme for Montague Place. The Worthing BID have offered to help with Town Centre businesses engagement during the upcoming consultation once the potential schemes have been finalised.

Walkabouts

The Worthing BID were represented on the Town Centre walkabout held on the 21st February, Following on from this the Warwick Street deep clean was moved forward and the private area by McDonalds will also be cleaned with permission of Cayuga the owners.

Foldable Map

The Worthing BID launched its credit card sized foldable map in 2022 which proved to be very popular with 10,000 distributed, through businesses, to residents and visitors during the year. This is now due to be updated and is currently being designed; the 2023 version is a joint project between the Worthing BID and Time for Worthing.

Seafront Planting.

The Worthing Town Centre BID were asked by Cllr Vicki Wells if it would be able to take the Seafront Planting competition back for 2023; however, given the changes at the Town Centre

Initiative the committee felt this couldn't be done but stated they would be open to an approach in 2024.

BID - Financial Year 2023/24

The projects and initiatives in the Business Plan will be delivered; and these will be monitored during the Worthing Town Centre BID meetings.

After 20 years at the Worthing TCI, and the Worthing Town Centre BID, Sharon Clarke will be leaving on 31st May 2023. The new CEO, Kelly Davies, has been appointed to take over and will be joining the BID on 13th March. There will be a training and handover period before Sharon leaves ensuring continuity for the BID team and BID levy payers. Kelly has a varied background including public sector roles, the voluntary sector and owning her own business; she is also a Worthing resident with a passion for the town. The current BID team will be supporting Kelly as she settles into her new role.

Summary

This report gives an update on the Worthing Town Centre BID, the achievements, improved working relations with the Council and changes within the organisation. As this will be an annual report it would be good to receive feedback on how this report can develop for future years.

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