

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, December 5, 2024

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Meeting Notes for Publication

Agenda

1. **Welcome** – ZB welcomed Rachel Phillips to her first Board meeting.
2. **In attendance:** Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Robin Hall (Kymin Financial Planners), Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones, Treasurer), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Rachel Phillips (RJ Phillips Interiors), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Cath Macnamara (Liverton Opticians), Kevin Ward (BID Manager).
Also in attendance: Matt Tribbeck (Newport City Council).
Apologies for absence: Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Councillor James Clarke (Newport City Council).
Not in attendance: Simon Pullen (Friars Walk), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge).
3. **Declarations of interests for Register of Interests**
 - IL declared an interest in Countdown to Christmas as Newport City Radio was contracted to host the stage.
4. **Approval of minutes of last meeting**
 - Approved.
5. **Ballot for 3rd term update**
 - The ballot for a 3rd term was successful, with an increased majority and turnout compared to 2019.
 - Yes by number was 76.2% (64% in 2019) and Yes by rateable value was 85.9% (73% in 2019). Turnout was 26% (22% in 2019).
 - 160 businesses voted, with 122 voting Yes. This compared to 138 and 88 respectively in 2019.
 - The total RV of businesses that voted was £4.3m, with the combined Yes vote totalling £3.7m. This compared to £3.1m and £2.3m respectively in 2019.

- This year's ballot campaign was run entirely in-house. The total external cost of the ballot campaign to Newport Now was £1,088 (printing costs). This compares to £24,096 in 2019 when we employed consultants to deliver the ballot campaign.
- The BID's 3rd term begins officially on April 1 next year and runs until March 31, 2030.
- The next steps are for the baseline services and operating agreement to be signed. These are currently with the council's legal team.
- A reminder that the BID levy will increase by 0.25% to 1.5% (1.25% for managed shopping centres) from April. This was included in the Business Plan and represents the first levy increase since the BID began operations in 2015.
- The Board thanked KW for his hard work on the ballot campaign, and for delivering such an outstanding result.

6. Finance update

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account is £45,689 with all payments up to date. Please note that we have received our Shared Prosperity Fund funding in full for the Urban Beach (£39,400), for Countdown to Christmas (£40,000), and the Christmas markets (£15,000). We have received 50% of the funding for the pop-up shops project (£17,500) and will be invoicing for the remaining 50% this month.
- With full payment made to the Urban Beach and Christmas market providers and 50% to the Countdown to Christmas providers, and rental paid to Kingsway for the first 6 months of the pop-up project, the cash in bank includes £28,746 In ring-fenced grant funding.
- Therefore, the 'real' cash in bank is £16,943. When this month's levy payment is received, this will be £31,943.
- Cashflow forecast for December end was a closing bank balance of £33,259.
- Levy collection for 24/25 to date stands at £150,000 or 89% of the total levy bill for the year. Court summons will be issued before the end of the year for non-payers.
- Total income for 24/25 to date is £316,768 and expenditure is £271,079.
- We have invoiced for £12,500 + VAT in levy this month. That represents everything remaining in the levy pot to date. Hopefully, we will receive further payments in the new year once summons are issued. However, our cashflow forecast for the year assumed levy payments of £17,000 + VAT in December and January. So we could be £21,500 + VAT short of forecast, which would make year-end difficult.

7. External funding update

- A reminder that we applied successfully this year for grants from the Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The full £36,000 grant for the Night Ambassadors scheme has been received by the council from the PCC. We continue to invoice for this at a monthly rate of £3,300 (November payment awaited).
- The Shared Prosperity Fund grants are for three city centre events during the year.
- £40,000 for this year's Countdown to Christmas event – full grant received and full payment made.
- £39,400 to bring an urban beach into John Frost Square for the month of August. Full grant received and full payment made.
- £15,000 to bring a Christmas street market into High Street for the month of December. Full grant received and full payment made.
- £35,000 to deliver two pop-up shops in the Kingsway centre between October and March. 50% of grant received with remainder expected this month.
- Green Top Markets are delivering the Christmas markets. These are confirmed for every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from December 5 to 22 and will be in the Westgate Square area. The aim is to have at least 20 stalls each day. The markets will be open from 11am to 4pm. We have placed a large banner on the exterior of the former Clark's shop in Commercial Street, advertising both the market and Winter Wonderland.
- Pop-up project: We have rented two units in Kingsway. Rent for the first 6 months has been paid on both. One is currently occupied by Utility Warehouse and the other by Kash Crafts, who make handmade Kashmiri gifts. The latter is likely to be there until Christmas. There are also tenants lined up for the new year. DS is looking at putting some window vinyls on the units. DS and M4PC continue to manage the project.
- Countdown to Christmas took place on November 16. Newport City Radio hosted the event and our main musical guest was pop star Gareth Gates with local music legend Benji Webbe switching on the lights. We also had fairground rides on the riverfront and in High Street, face painters in Kingsway and Friars Walk, and costume characters roaming the streets. Footfall figures show there were at least 12,000 additional people in the city centre compared to an average Saturday this year. This was almost 3,000 more than last year. The general feedback was that the event was the best we have staged.

- The UK government has confirmed the Shared Prosperity Fund will continue for 2025-26 and this is described as a 'transition year'. It is as yet unclear who will be administering the grants locally. Our aim will be to take advantage of SPF again next year. KW will update the board as more information becomes available.

8. Events/footfall update

- For the first 11 months of 2024, footfall in the city centre was 2.1% up on last year. This compares to footfall in Wales being down 3.9% and in the UK down 0.9% for the same period versus 2023.
- Since the last Board meeting, the city centre has been the venue for the Food Festival, Countdown to Christmas and Winter Wonderland. The Food Festival was sponsored by the BID.
- Other major events through the rest of the year:
- Winter Wonderland, until January 5.
- Christmas street markets, December 5-22 (Thurs/Fri/Sat/Sun) in Westgate Square.
- Small Business Saturday, December 7.
- Free parking on Saturdays until December 28.

11. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- Following the successful ballot, we will now start the process of applying for a further year's funding for the Night Ambassadors from the Police & Crime Commissioner. The council has asked for a different reporting regime for Night Ambassadors statistics and we have provided this for Q2 reporting.
- The daytime Street Ambassadors have been invaluable during the ballot campaign. We are benefitting from having two regular Ambassadors in place over the last few months, and they now have good rapport with businesses and provide an excellent level of intelligence for the police and other authorities.

12. City centre app update

- The Newport Now app is currently promoting 168 businesses – 35 via deals and the remainder via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 11,817 interactions with the app, 3,516 interactions with the trails, and 2,442 deal redemptions. The app has 1,192 registered users in the Newport area.

13. Gift Card update

- Since the last Board meeting, there has been a considerable uptake on gift cards with cards worth £3,910 sold. This gives us total sales for the calendar year to date of £4,545.

- A total of 143 gift cards have been sold this calendar year to date.
- During the period since the last Board meeting, £527 worth of cards have been spent in the city centre. Year to date, £1,539 worth of cards have been spent.

14. Savings Advisory Service

- The team from PSP were in Newport on November 22 and met Geek Retreat, Queen's Hotel, Red Lion, the Lamb, Coffee Thirst and Salt & Pepper Tavern. While they have gathered data from some of these businesses, the remainder have advised they will send to PSP over the next few weeks. The data that has been gathered is being reviewed over the course of this month and therefore there are no additional savings from November's activity, though that will change in January/February.
- Total savings identified for levy payers to date remains at £106,949, with £61,143 savings realised by businesses.

15. AOB

- Since the last board meeting, as well as meetings referred to in agenda items KW has attending meetings with: Newport City Council's new destination development manager, NCC Placemaking Plan Steering Group, NCC SPF team, Homewards Project, NCC Safer Places sub-group, Eden Gate, Gwent Police, Arena Projects, Newport Bus, Everton Smith, Newport Business Against Crime Partnership, Newport County AFC, Rodney Parade, Green Top Markets, Pub Watch, and recorded podcasts with Newport City Radio and Business News Wales.
- We have received and approved Shopfront Improvement Grant applications since the last board meeting from Queen's (new beauty parlour in Kingsway), Cosy Living (Kingsway), Legacy Lounge (High Street), Fire & Ice (Cambrian Road) and LLL Wellness Club (riverfront). The budgeted grants pot is now exhausted, and KW will issue a communications next week to say applications are now closed and will re-open in May.
- SP has indicated he wishes to step down from the board due to changes in his role at Friars Walk and has proposed that FW manager Emily Grimes replace him. KW suggested we follow the same process as with RP and that EG be co-opted for the remainder of the financial year. There will then be board elections at the AGM in the new year. This was agreed unanimously.
- ZB said Mabs Noor had expressed an interest in joining the Board. TS suggested someone from Kingsway should be on the Board. KW explained there would be comms

to all BID levy payers in the new year, giving a date and venue for the AGM and explaining the process for standing for the Board.

- MT gave an updated on the Placemaking Plan for the city centre. There was a public consultation on the day of Countdown to Christmas. 60 Big Ideas, the result of substantial consultations with stakeholders and the public, is now the subject of an online survey. MT said the Placemaking Plan team was keen to engage with Board members individually and he would propose a date for this.
- There was a lengthy discussion around tenures for city centre residential units.
- NV and TS represented the BID at this year's Remembrance Sunday parade. KW said he would ensure the invitation for next year's parade went to Board members earlier, and it was agreed to purchase a wreath to be laid at the Cenotaph.

16. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, January 16, at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre.