

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, January 16, 2025

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Meeting Notes for Publication

Agenda

1. **Welcome** – ZB welcomed EG to her first Board meeting.
2. **In attendance:** Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Councillor James Clarke (Newport City Council), Emily Grimes (Friars Walk), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Rachel Phillips (RJ Phillips Interiors), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Robin Hall (Kymin Finance), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones, Treasurer), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters).
Apologies for absence: Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Matt Tribbeck (Newport City Council).
Not in attendance: Cath Macnamara (Liverton Opticians), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge).
3. **Declarations of interests for Register of Interests**
 - DS re the pop-up shops project.
4. **Approval of minutes of last meeting**
 - Approved via email after last meeting.
5. **Draft budget/cashflow forecast for 25/26**
 - KW & RE presented this to the Board.
 - Estimated total potential levy income for the year is £209,000 – this is £40,000 more than this year due to the 0.25% increase in levy percentage, but still considerably below pre-2022 levels.
 - In building the draft budget and cashflow for 25/26, we have assumed a levy collection rate of 90%.
 - The key changes in the budget compared to the current year are increased fees for management and PR services (fixed for 5 years), increased hours and fees for the daytime Ambassadors service, and spreading the levy income across the full year rather than 10 months.
 - The draft budget forecasts a surplus of just under £11,000 – in line with the 25-30 Business Plan.

- The budget and cashflow does not include any external grant funding.
- The Board approved the draft budget and cashflow.

6. Finance update for 24/25

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £51,179 with all payments up to date, including for Countdown to Christmas and the Christmas markets.
- We have now received 100% of the funding for the pop-up shops project and have paid 50% of the rental to Kingsway for the shop units.
- The cash in bank includes £26,000 in ring-fenced grant funding.
- Therefore, the 'real' cash in bank is £25,179, with a further levy payment of £7,200 and fireworks sponsorship from Friars Walk to be received.
- We should therefore end January with £35,379 in the bank. Forecast was £41,613 (this assumed levy payments of £20,400 in December and January whereas they will actually be £15,000 and £7,200 respectively).
- Levy collection for 24/25 to date stands at £156,000 or 92% of the total levy bill for the year. Court summons were issued by the council at the end of December for non-payers. This has resulted in a further £6,000 paid since our last Board meeting.
- Assuming no further levy income and no unexpected costs, we should end the financial year with approximately £2,000 in the bank. Forecast was £8,800. This may improve if we receive further levy payments and there may be a VAT rebate for Q3.
- Total income (including external grant funding) for 24/25 to date is £356,529 and expenditure is £305,175.

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 grant for the Night Ambassadors scheme has been received by the council from the PCC. We continue to invoice for this monthly rate. We have begun the application process for renewed funding from April.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund grants are for...
- Countdown to Christmas event – full grant received and spent.
- Urban Beach. Full grant received and spent.
- Christmas street markets. Full grant received and spent.
- Two pop-up shops in the Kingsway centre between October and March. Full grant received.

- The Christmas markets were successful on the days they were open, with good footfall and traders happy with custom. However, we were only able to open the market on 5 of the planned 12 days. The remaining days were cancelled due to the weather conditions, including a rare 'red' weather warning on the opening weekend. We are looking at an alternative to gazebos for this year. All costs were still incurred as staff had been booked and paid, and costs for materials, gazebos, posters etc had been paid. On the days it was open, we proved there is demand for a Christmas market.
- Pop-up project: (Update received from DS) Next week in addition to Kash Kraft we will have Utility Warehouse and Deeja Designs, the following week Single Parent Wellbeing will be swapping with UW. Then we have Signed Shirts and Andy Quelch (artist) hoping to move in during February. A firm of independent financial advisors looking to come in at some point and Utility Warehouse coming back where there is opportunity. Kash Kraft has been a success. Their takings at Kingsway are such that they are interested in potentially securing something long term with Kingsway or elsewhere in the city centre.
- The UK government has confirmed the Shared Prosperity Fund will continue for 2025-26 and this is described as a 'transition year'. The information provided to us to date by the council's SPF Board is that the three events funded this year are likely to be repeated in 25/26. KW will update the board as more information becomes available.
- JC said he would be disappointed if the three BID events were not funded in the forthcoming year.

8. Events/footfall update

- City centre footfall for 2024 as a whole was 2.6% up on 2023. This compares to footfall in Wales being down 3.7% and in the UK down 0.7% for 2024 versus 2023.
- KW said our footfall performance continues to be a great story for us to tell.
- Countdown to Christmas, Winter Wonderland and free parking on Saturdays all played a part in December footfall being up 7.3% year on year – compared to a decrease of 2.3% across Wales and a 0.5% increase across the UK.
- A major events stakeholders' group has been set up by the council. KW attended the first meeting on behalf of the BID with representatives from Newport Live, Celtic Manor and Rodney Parade. Other organisations will be joining the group. The aim is to have a coordinated approach to major events to ensure all benefits are maximised.
- We have been approached by the organisers of a proposed Sea Shanty Festival, planned for the end of May to take place across multiple venues in the city centre and featuring

around 40 bands. This follows a similar successful event held in Barry last year. KW has agreed £500 in sponsorship for the event.

- Forthcoming events: Lunar New Year (Friars Walk and the Riverfront, February 1, 10am-5pm); City of Newport Half Marathon (March 2), Newport Music Trail (Various city centre venues, March 28 & 29), Newport Marathon Festival (April 13).

11. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- The process of applying for a further year's funding for the Night Ambassadors from the Police & Crime Commissioner has begun. We have provided the council and PCC with the Q3 report for the service. The figures shows the service is continuing to play an invaluable part in enhancing the weekend experience in the city centre, and supporting the public, police and licensees.
- The daytime Street Ambassadors continue to have a 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 12,109 interactions with the app, 3,528 interactions with the trails, and 2,509 deal redemptions. The app has 1,215 registered users in the Newport area.
- KW is meeting Rodney Parade next week to take them through the app process so they can use it as an additional way of communicating with their customers. Celtic Manor has also shown considerable interest in using the app but would need to become voluntary levy payers to do so.

13. Gift Card update

- A further £855 of gift cards were sold between the last Board meeting and the end of December.
- This gave us total sales for 2024 of £5,400 (157 cards). This was the second highest annual sales total since the scheme launched in 2017, only bettered by the launch year.
- During the period since the last Board meeting, £855.84 worth of cards have been spent in the city centre. For 2024 as a whole, £2,330 worth of cards were spent.

14. AGM & open meeting

- We are required to hold an AGM before the end of March, at which the annual accounts (already published) are presented and, as the BID's second term is ending, all Board members (other than the council's appointee) must stand down.

- All current Board members are able to put themselves forward for election to the 'BID3' Board.
- It is proposed that the AGM and open meeting takes place on Thursday, March 20, at the Mercure Hotel.
- Assuming approval of this date and venue by the Board, KW will organise. This will include formal notice of the AGM, and communication to levy payers informing them of the process for putting themselves forward as a Board candidate.
- The formal notice has to be published no later than 28 days before the AGM.
- Nominations for election to the Board must be received 14 days before the AGM.

15. AOB

- Since the last board meeting, as well as meetings referred to in agenda items KW has attending meetings with: NCC Placemaking Plan Steering Group, NCC SPF team, Homewards Project, Clwb Ffoto in Newport Arcade, Cllr James Clarke.
- Sin City comic books and gaming store has announced it is moving from Friars Walk to Kingsway.
- Newport Gaming Centre has opened in Commercial Street (opposite the Chartist statues), moving from its previous premises on Stow Hill.
- Deichmann is closing its Commercial Street store.
- Pure Pets has opened on Commercial Street, moving from its previous premises in Newport Market.
- WH Smith has announced it is closing its Commercial Street store. It is seeking to sell all its remaining 'high street' stores across the UK as it continues its strategy of concentrating on transport hubs.
- Live music venue Le Pub, on High Street, has secured its future after the charity the Music Venues Trust bought the building's freehold.
- JC said the Placemaking Plan is nearing completion. It will include a combination of 'quick wins' and longer-term strategies.
- JC is doing a city centre walkabout with the police next Tuesday. KW offered to include Ambassadors.
- TS asked JC whether there was any possibility of one or two hours free parking in council car parks. JC said there was a considerable cost implication but he would raise it with the relevant Cabinet member. RP said it had an adverse effect on businesses at her end of the city centre. NV said perhaps Godfrey Road should have been included.

16. Date of next Board meeting, and remaining meetings this year

- Thursday, March 20 (proposed AGM and open meeting)
- Thursday, May 15
- Thursday, July 17
- Thursday, September 18 (proposed open meeting)
- Thursday, November 20