

Minutes of AGM Weymouth BID Ltd

At the Ocean Room, Weymouth Pavilion

Thursday 26 January 2017

Those present at the meeting.

Full set of attendees has been provided by registration at the door.

Press representation

A Dorset Echo representative.

Weymouth BID Ltd – Board Members

Chair – Steve Newstead – Wetherspoons (SN)

Emma Cogan – Dorset Burger Company (EC)

Tamsin Mutton McKnight – Merlin Entertainments Ltd (TM)

Cllr James Farquharson – Weymouth & Portland Borough Council representative (JF)

Apologies received from:

Julia Cohen – Weymouth College and Director of Weymouth BID Ltd

Tamsin Mutton McKnight – Merlin Entertainments Ltd (TM)

Simon Newport – First Buses and Director of Weymouth BID Ltd

Cllr Jason Osborne

Sue Roper – Rembrandt Hotel and Director of Weymouth BID Ltd

Treasurer – Tim Williams – Wilko (TW)

Minutes taken by Natalie-anne Simons.

The meeting was video recorded for the purpose of accuracy of proceedings.

The meeting was audio recorded for the purposes of minute taking only by Natalie-anne Simons.

Signs were displayed on the entry doors that the meeting would be recorded.

Welcome

The meeting was opened by Chair Steve Newstead at 18.07pm.

Steve Newstead introduced himself as the Chair of Weymouth BID Limited. He advised the attendees that this was the Annual General Meeting (AGM). However he explained that the business accounts would not be presented at this meeting but would be discussed in detail at a meeting in March 2017. He advised that the accounts would be available on the Weymouth BID Limited website tomorrow (Friday 27 January 2017). Steve Newstead also offered the choice for Levy Payers to contact the BID directly if they wanted to discuss the accounts.

Steve Newstead introduced Nigel Reed (NR) as the Weymouth BID Manager and handed over to him to present a review of 2016 and plans for 2017.

Nigel Reed confirmed his position as Manager of the Weymouth BID. Nigel stated that the original ballot to vote in the Weymouth BID was based on the Business Plan and that every decision that is made is based upon the 5 year Business Plan. Nigel reminded the audience that the Business Plan is available on-line to view.

Background to the BID Power Point Presentation (NR):-

Business Plan

1. Beating Seasonality

The purpose of the BID is to try and extend the season in Weymouth. September is now a month full of events. A number of new events have been funded by the BID in the last 3 years. Waterfest Weymouth, Freaky Streets, Scallywags Saturday, Out Loud, FEAST and Weymouth's BIG Christmas. They are branded events with their own logos that are now beginning to be recognised. By far the biggest event/project is BIG Christmas. This is a month long campaign promoting retail at Christmas and reminding people that Weymouth is open all season. The larger events such as BIG Christmas, February half-term and Easter are generally run by and funded by the BID. The smaller events are generally organised by people who have approached the BID for support with funding. We would like to receive more applications to the BID Board for people who would like to run their own events. An example of this is the Weymouth Leviathan. People come to us with an idea and if it has merit it goes to the Board and if it fits in with the Business Plan and delivers a benefit that it normally to do with seasonality and increased footfall.

1b - Out of season marketing

This is what we have been working on for the past 3 years. We have done on line campaigns. There is a target 2 hour drive to Weymouth that people are prepared to do out of season. In the summer people will drive further. It is possible to target certain groups by for example age so. Niche markets are a better target they tend to have more money to spend and national trends are stating that is the sort of holiday maker that we are looking for out of season visitors. Weymouth is very well located for niche markets.

1c - Retail activity

One of items on the plan was to increase retail activity. This is difficult because over the years, there has been a changing high street with more internet shopping. We attempted a farmers market that was run once a month. It is the type of thing that takes time to become successful and the operator who ran it was not willing to continue any longer. It is still an item in the business plan and there is still the wish to push the idea of a market in the town because Markets create interest and bring people. People need an experience.

We also attend Trade Shows to try and advertise Weymouth. Feedback has always been that once people visit Weymouth they like it and return and the message needs to go out that it is worth visiting.

2. Improving the customer experience.

2b - Customer Service Training

Once people are here we want them to have a good experience and this is on the plan. We have offered **free social media training** to Levy Payers on facebook, Twitter, Trip Advisor because this is all part of customer service and helps get the message over. There is other training if people want it but we started with this. Bournemouth has online ambassador training which you can do with your staff to pick up new customer service skills

2c – Weyfarers

On the plan is the aim to create a Weyfarer Programme which we did. One of the most successful roles of the Weyfarers has been welcoming cruise ships. 30,000 people coming into Portland this year. Feedback is that 40% of those will come into Weymouth town centre. 14,000 come into the town. When questioned Portland Port like the Weyfarers meeting the shuttle busses at Brewers Quay where they drop the passengers off. The BID is going to focus a bit more on that this year. Lots of shops have adapted and take Euros and Dollars.

3. Visitor Information

3a – Website

Important part of what we do. How do you get information to visitors? A lot of investment has gone into the social media and the 'We are Weymouth' website which was launched in 2014. The 'Weymouth BID' website is the business side and 'We are Weymouth' website is the vehicle for promoting Weymouth and the beach and area more widely. Our figures show that visitor sessions have increased 110% from 2015. 1.2 million pages were viewed on the website last year. On average people look at 5 pages on the site. If they are coming to an event they are looking for accommodation. If they have accommodation they want to look at what to do.

There has been a big increase in the shopping area of the website. We looked at website optimisation and realised that people looking at the site were starting to look at the shopping pages and we wanted to link it to 'Shopping by the Sea as the focus of the promotion.

Using Facebook we have seen an 80% increase in 'likes' from 2015-2016. More people are looking at Weymouth and wanting to come here. We compare ourselves with other sites to see where we are and what is working. An example is that if you put up a picture of Weymouth, the beach or the harbour, lots of people 'like' it and lots of people share it and you can reach thousands of people that way.

3b – Car Park Information Machines

It was in the Business Plan bring in this machines and there was £50,000 allocated to do this. We did not do this because at the time the Local Authority were going to put new machines in and you do not want to pay for something that is already being done however slowly. WPBC not have good car park information and information is limited. We looked alternatives and we are still looking. Another example is Wi-Fi, we do not have town centre WiFi as the moment there is discussion about getting it in place because at the back end of WiFi you can collect data. Conversations are happening with the Local Authority and Dorset County Council about this.

4. Making Weymouth A Great Night Out

4a – Street Harmony

Making Weymouth a great night out was in the Business Plan so we work with some of those organisation to increase Street Harmony.

Best Bar None Scheme Pubwatch Radios, Shopwraps

We have helped with contributions to some of these scheme such as money towards upgrading the Pubwatch radios. Shopwraps are used to get messages out about the events programme and map of the area.

We work with partners and the Police on a regular basis to try and improve street harmony.

4b – Early Doors

There is a lull in trading between 5.00pm and 9.00pm and we wanted to try and encourage shop staff and others to stay in town and use the facilities. We looked at various discount schemes to encourage commerce in this time period but could not find anything that was quite suitable. We looked at Apps to see if there was something we could use. Though this was in the Business Plan this is something we do not think we will be able to achieve without businesses actively opening later.

4c – Show Me the Way Home

Was in in the plan as a way to get people out of the town when they want to go home. We have not done much with that but one thing we did was to fund some late busses on last New Year's Eve with First Busses and the feedback that we have got so far is that that worked well. First Group think that it will be viable as a regular service. It is felt new signage will help with this.

5. BID Evaluation

5a - Surveys

This is quite important we have to find a way to evaluate whether what we are doing is effective. One of the ways is surveys. We have not done a lot but, we put a few out and asked people to fill them in. The best time is Christmas. This year 12% of people answered back which was about 120 people of which 60% were levy payers. Through the Multiple Retailers Forum we ask how businesses are doing. The Multiple Retailers evolved from the Health High Street Programme and we have regular meetings with the Multiples which is useful because they all talk with each other about what they are doing. This year was the first year that they tried to co-ordinate their Christmas opening hours. They have a WhatsApp group and talk amongst themselves. They share with the BID how they are trading. With regard to Christmas many of them said that they were very flat up to Christmas but after Boxing Day it just went crazy this was shared at the forum.

5b – Customer Surveys

We have not done many customer surveys but there are other people that do. We got lots of feedback from Bournemouth University on customer surveys for this area. They ask what people like about the place. Also South West Tourist do that and so do Haven. We meeting with Haven as they are on the Tourism Partnership Group and Haven feedback what their customers like and what they want. Haven's customer like Weymouth and the first time visitor tends to repeat visit.

5c – Monthly Car Park Surveys

That is what was included in the Business Plan but the car park information available is not good enough to be of value to use and we use other sources. We use Springboard who are a national company and we put in footfall cameras so we could see the numbers of people coming in. They can be controversial as they do not count people they count movement. But what we are finding is that now we have figures for 2016 and 2017 (weekly and monthly figures are on the BID website) we can compare those and we can see we have an increased footfall. The results follow the trend of holidays and increase for half terms, Easter and summer. The busiest day last year was Carnival day. So those cameras do match the actual activities that we have.

We have decided to try something else and have gone to another company Noggin we are on a three months trial. Little black boxes sit in the front windows of shops and they count phones as they go past. They are currently in four locations around the town, Dorset Lettings; Treds; Pandora and Charlbury Corner Stores. They log phones once a day as they come into Weymouth and not again until your next visit. It will run from last December to February and it calculates how many people are around. What we are trying to learn from this is which way people go, where they go and where they come in from. When this is added to the Springboard information this can give us a good picture of movement and visits in the town. They cost about £25 per month per unit. They are good for events because you can move them to new locations if you need to. The information gathered is completely anonymous. This is a very modern method of collecting data and when we have looked at the possibility of town wide WiFi this is one of the benefits of having people log onto your service is you have their data. You will be able to pinpoint how long someone spends in a certain area.

6. Levy Payer Opportunities.

This is one we always get asked, what do we do for Levy Payers that helps them and their business?

Free Press - for those that get involved in competitions. For example, Dorset Lettings were our Gold Sponsor for Christmas they got free press coverage because we do a promotion. They also had a nice banner around the Christmas tree as part of their sponsorship.

Sponsorship- we offer the opportunity for business to get a higher profile at some of our events and activities. We advertise that out to people. We have learnt which type of sponsorship works for which type of business and we are getting better at analysing the benefit to the sponsors.

Subsidised Advertising – For example at Christmas Wessex FM and Newsquest (The Echo) give a 50% discount to Levy Payers of which we cover half of it to allow you to advertise on the Radio or in the press for half price. The first year there was a poor take up of this opportunity but this year it has been very popular and lots of people took it. We also tried a voucher book this Christmas which we may try again. For a lot of people the radio is the most popular one.

Promotion at Trade Shows – we promote the area we sometimes take information for certain businesses and sometimes generic for lots of businesses.

Town Trails – things like the Halloween Trail and the Easter Trail and businesses get involved in that and the activity is walking past them.

Trade Pitch – people are not really aware that we have a trade pitch in the town centre that business can book and use. It is not for selling from but is for promotion. People like Sky use the trade stand and take the details of people who might be interested in their service. We have tried to encourage local business to use this and we will continue to do so. Bluebird Coaches who are a Levy Payer have come and used the stand.

Link with Local Groups – There are many things that the BID does not have control over such as the High Street, Licencing or Car Parks so we have to work in partnership. Now that we are into year 4 a lot more people are engaging with us and understanding what we do that has taken a while because we started from scratch and organisations did not know who we were.

We now have relationships with Pubwatch, Shopwatch, Night Time Economy, Tourism Partnership (this includes ourselves and holiday camps, the Pavilion, the Council, Sealife), The Business Leaders Group with a mix of people like Portland Port and Sunseeker, they may not attend forums but they are interested in hearing about what is going on. Also the Police and Local and County Councils. There are other local groups that we keep in touch with to see what they are doing for example, Weymouth and Portland Chamber of Commerce; Art Groups; Weymouth College; Charity Organisations; Hoteliers.

PLANS FOR 2017/2018

February

Outdoor Adventure and Leisure Show at Excel, London. We went last year to promote Weymouth, supported by Weymouth and Portland BC and Dorset County Council who put some funding in as well as some of the adventure activities people. This is a huge show sponsored by The Telegraph with a big cycling element as well as rock climbing and other outdoor events. Visitors there are younger people with a high spend and they love Weymouth. Weymouth and Portland is seen as a major rock climbing area which is a reasonable distance from London. We did not realise this until we met with the guys visiting that stand. We took that information and looked at our website and ways of promoting rock climbing.

Weymouth College has funding for free business training. For example you can do a 2 hour free barista course at college. There is a wide range of business courses that Levy Payers can sign up for.

March

Weyfarer Programme revamp. We need to focus on the cruise visitors and day trips.

Maps of Weymouth – everyone needs a map and we are looking at the accessibility of maps. We are looking for funding for a Heritage map.

Improve the look and feel of the town – we repainted some of the fingerposts in town last year because they were looking tatty. That was a partnership project, partly funded by the local authority

and partly by the BID. Because we actioned the work it got carried out much quicker than if we had waited for the local authority.

Income Generation/match funding grants. Everyone believes that there are lots of grants about but do not always realise the amount of paperwork involved with applying for these. This year we have someone who is looking at a number of grants for us. One is to do with Heritage and trails around the harbour grants of £5,000 - £10,000. We are also looking at some bigger grants that won't happen this year but some of these grants are for amounts from £200,000 – £400,000.

Waste Disposal – there has been lots of talk about this. Locally there are a number of suppliers not all operating at the same times, rubbish is put out last thing in the evening and stays out all night until morning collections and is subject to abuse. Other BID area have employed a single bulk contract. We are also looking at waste food disposal and cardboard disposal. Finding a way of recycling a bit more. It will not be a quick project. For example Bath do it but it took them 3 years to get the contract right.

Shop Watch – getting more shops involved because this helps with safety in the town.

Focus on Independents – ‘Shopping by the Sea’ we have some great independent shops which need to be plugged.

Tourist information points – is in there as a concept. Perhaps a kiosk in the summer on the front.

2018 BID Renewal

This BID is on a 5 year plan and finishes on 31st August 2018. To renew the BID we have a legal requirement to start the process now. Other local BIDs have been renewed. Dorchester was voted in for another 5 years. Poole started their BID this year.

The initial process is some business engagement meetings with Levy Payers to see what the BID can support you with and what your opinion is. We need to identify who is the actual Levy Payer and who has the vote.

Then we start to put together a Business Plan for the next 5 years with what we have learnt from Levy Payers. The Plan should come from the Business Community it should reflect what the community want the BID to do in the next 5 years.

Between now and May 2018 we have to go through a consultation, create a business plan and inform the Secretary of State that we are going to ballot and then call the ballot.

Final Business Plan will be produced around October/November 2017. We could change the BID area and the levy. All sorts of things could change and this would be part of the consultation.

Larger companies send someone to interview the BID Manager to check the plan before casting their vote.

OPEN FORUM – Lead by Steve Newstead

SN: What is the appetite for WiFi? There is no cost to the community?

Q: If there was free WiFi in town would it be detrimental to those business who currently offer free WiFi to attract customers.

SN : I do not have the answer to that but from people he has spoken to in other towns it is very beneficial as you can find your target market.

SN: There is a signage scheme that has been put together that we contributed to.

Q. Re WiFi it would be better for the BID to join with the local authorities to lobby for 4G and 5G mobile services for the area because that is what people rely on.

SN: The company we have looked at for WiFi is call Elephant WiFi and they have a website you can look at and give us feedback. Feedback from other BIDS is that the data is useful to levy payers.

NR: It is not just the provision of WiFi it is the data capture and people moving round.

SN: We are also looking at television advertising we met with Sky and they have very competitive rates for advertising Weymouth. If there was an interest for it, a video would be made and would be shown from October. It would be very targeted and you could pick out who you advertised to. Same sort of cost as radio advertising but you would be able to measure the impact.

SN: Re the town centre touch and feel and the vagrancy. Please report this to the Police on their website. With regard to waste other BIDs have managed to work with the likes of McDonalds and other large retailers and get the waste disposal down by 30%. The more people who sign up to something like this the greater the cost benefits.

SN: If there is anything you would like to discuss with me please contact me by email or visit me in the William Henry.

Q: Query about the planning for the next BID, leading up to current BID there was a steering group formed. Will a steering group be formed this time and will levy payers be able to join it?

SN: First of all through consultation we have to establish if there is a demand for another BID and after that a steering group will be formed. Those interested should make contact.

Q: Is this an AGM or not, why are there no minutes of the last AGM and why are the accounts not being presented?

SN: Unfortunately the Treasurer, could not be here tonight and I do not feel confident about answering any questions you might have about the figures. The account will be put on the website tomorrow. If you would like to become a director the forms have been on the website since the BID started. Levy Payers can also become members of the BID Company but no one has taken this up.

Q: Looking at the monthly footfall figures for December in the headlines gives a figure of 3 million for 2016 as opposed to 4 million for 2015, why is this?

SN: I will get back to you about this.

Q: What has happened to the Levy Payer forums there has not been one since August?

NR: We had three forums and attendance has been 16 the first and second one and about 12 the third. We tried to think of another way and we are thinking of an open evening where people can drop in.

Q: There was supposed to be a forum in a week's time but there is no information about it and it has disappeared.

NR: Forums are not the only way to contact us. An office was put in the middle of town so that people could pop in and talk to us.

SN: In March we will share the figures for Christmas. We know the ice rink had a 100% increase in use. 5000 used the ice rink in December.

Q: I represent a holiday camp and I have been to a lot of these meetings and everything is so much about the town centre. Can there be an item on the agenda for the next meeting where we can talk about Weymouth as a bigger picture what can we do especially with signage to go further out of the town.

Q: I am on the Nothe Parade on the other side of the harbour and I don't feel there is any benefit from the BID for me.

SN: The We Are Weymouth website gets a huge number of visitors and you can list your details and events for free there.

NR: Regarding the holiday camps, we are very aware that the signage is very poor. Which is why we did the survey to see what was needed. With regard to the website, people look at the website and like what they see then start to look for somewhere to stay and I am sure that the holiday parks get that benefit from the website. There are a number of events that Weymouth puts on and which are on the website and if you talk to accommodation providers they say they are full. The BID's role is to improve the environment to encourage more visitors and business take the opportunities this brings. Some people in the town centre feel that all the events go on around the harbour and the people round the harbour feel all the events go on in the town centre.

Q: I take your point but all we ever wanted was to be clean with no vagrancy and good signposts pointing in the right direction.

SN: When you sit down with the Police they say none of it ever gets reported. It is hard to get local authority to take responsibility for anything in the town centre. Initiatives that the BID supported like the drink awareness over Christmas and the buses out of town worked really well. These problems you mention like the drunks on the seafront need to be reported and no one is reporting them.

Q: Do you believe that the sum of money that the BID invested in breathalysers I heard £10,000 but I may be wrong. Has had a real effect on drunkenness?

SN: It was £5000 and there was a 15% reduction in alcohol related crime. I am not sure if they directly made the difference but maybe the advertising and the heightened awareness has because something caused the 15% reduction. This is just one of the tools in the arsenal of things that have to be tried to deal with the problem of drunkenness. It was put into the Business Plan to make the night time economy stronger and make sure everyone is happy in the evening. A report was done by Exeter University with the data collected that that information can go to help get funding because it is evidence that something has an impact. You need to have information, reports and data to get funding to move things forward. That is why we want to go for a Purple Flag ([Link](#) to Purple Flag website) because when Bournemouth got their Purple Flag they recorded an increase in their vibrancy and income to business.

SN: There are two problem times in the day for the town. The change from retail daytime trade to evening trade and the early morning period and the Police are aware of those times. We put in £5000 for the scheme and they put in £15,000.

Q: There was plan for the Clipper on St Thomas Street discussed at a previous forum to make it into a safe place, what happened to that?

SN: The problem is a Northern Ireland Pension Trust own the building and they are not interested to helping. They want £120,000 a year for someone to go into the building and it is falling apart so there are no interested parties. The safe place is on hold at the moment because it takes quite a large investment of time and the ambulance service would have to provide people to man it. We are now looking at different alternatives.

The meeting ended