

Minutes of AGM Weymouth BID Ltd

At the Ocean Room, Weymouth Pavilion

Thurs 14th January 2016

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)

Treasurer – Tim Williams – Wilco (TW)

Louise Cox – the Modern Barbers (LC)

Tamsin Mutton McKnight – Merlin Entertainments Ltd (TM)

Cllr Mike Byatt – Weymouth & Portland Borough Council representative (MB)

Apologies received from:

Cllr Jason Osborne

Ian Jefferis – Weyprint Director of Weymouth BID Ltd

Simon Newport – First Buses and Director of Weymouth BID Ltd

Minutes taken by Anna-Maria Geare

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 Anna-Maria Geare

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

All attendees were invited to sign up for the weekly newsletter from Weymouth BID Ltd at the door

Information on each seat included a copy of the Echo Briefing - BID newspaper.

Agendas were available but all levy payers had been sent the agenda information by email to their registered email address prior to the meeting.

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by Chair Steve Newstead at 18.04.

Info on the role Steve has undertaken: voted by the BID board following resignation of the previous Vice & Chair after last AGM. Confirmed that all BID board members are unpaid and work to make Weymouth a better place for the levy payers.

That is the aim of the BID. His role is not to run the BID day to day but to understand the 5 year plan and how it works.

Nigel Reed runs the BID as BID Manager and operations day to day. Nigel implements the projects agreed by the Board and manages the day to day operation of the BID.

The Business Plan has always been to increase footfall in the town and increase business in the town which is the main objective of the BID. The BID are open to ideas on projects that fit within the plan and would like any levy payer to be involved.

SN invited levy payers to join as directors – Online form to join up.

Acknowledged that everyone makes mistakes and we need to learn from it and look forward to achieving the plan

Asked for everyone to treat each other with respect in order to achieve things. Be polite. BID is to create investment in Weymouth over 5 years. SN then outlined how the BID has got to where it is today through an 18 month journey.

NR Background to the BID powerpoint: outlined 18 months' work by a dedicated steering group from 11 September 2015 to create steering group and get the BID to ballot (May 2013). Met with prospective levy payers to create a business plan to get the YES vote. Showed a picture of the BID levy payer area outlining border. All businesses with a rateable value over £6,000 within the area pay a levy of 1.5% which means there is a minimum levy of £90.

Wide range of levy payers – 550 levy payers

Showed a breakdown of levy payers and payment by sector. This will be made available to people online.

Out of the 550 levy payers 244 businesses (44%) pay between £90 and £175 per year – 10% of the total levy.

ACHIEVEMENTS so far since ballot (SN)

Created the '**We are Weymouth**' brand – outlined this brand and encouraged levy payers to include this in their letter heads, wraps, shop fronts and advertising. Example of Weyline / Portland taxis branding shown which BID can provide.

We are Weymouth – Challenge Weymouth – international branding.

Video then shown of the We are Weymouth brand and how it has been used within **Challenge Weymouth** international triathlon. We have ironman coming to Weymouth this year which will be supported by BID.

Out of town marketing: Feb 2014 / Feb 2015 within 2 hours travel time of Weymouth.

Trade shows

SN requested levy payers put their businesses onto the visitor website for advertising.

200,000 readers in Weymouth & Southampton seeing the adverts.

Southampton & Bristol train stations poster sites and West Quay

Competitions online

10,000 emails within Bristol & Southampton areas

Radio advertising in Hants & Bristol

Online adverts too

Niche activity advertising – RSPB, Falconry because of their repeat business.

Online & mobile apps on all platforms

2,000 newsletter subscribers

10,000 FaceBook fans – 11241 in Dec 2105

Visitor website stats seen Dec 2015, 18,000 looked at the website. 6% increase in traffic.

200,000 reaches of the We are Weymouth brand in Dec 2015

EVENTS

Waterfest – Sept 15

Out Loud – June (in cooperation with Lions) in 2016 this will be extending into the evening too

Feast – Oct/ Nov food festival to increase footfall

Pirate Festival & Trail - Easter

Freaky Streets & Trail – Oct half term

Christmas – 2,500 skated on rink in Dec 15

Footfall cameras now in the town– statistics seen and a 52.8% change before the Outloud festival to the week of the festival showing we have increased footfall during events. Cameras are set up on Argos, Nationwide and Treds.

NR said we can now compare this year to last and analysed the information received which is useful.

All levy payers can access the footfall figures – corporates and police ask for them. Encouraged levy payers to use them for their own marketing and analysis.

Plans for 2016

SN outlined that the BID will:

- Building on successful events
- Continue promotion of Weymouth
- Look at “Rangers” on the Street
- Focus on Cruise Ship Passengers

Signage

Provide a report on pedestrian signage in Weymouth those at the meeting agreed signage should be improved.

NR – outlined background for need to improve signage. Portas Pilot funding placed in BID account – it came from the government not the levy payers. Decided this was to be used to research pedestrian signage.

The firm engaged has already done Edinburgh, Norwich, Nottingham, Chatham and others. Report undertaken last week. This report will be made available to all levy payers.

The report aims to show the current signage and suggested improvements around the main gateways into the Town.

In addition suggestions on encouraging movement around the Town by providing signage that informs on reasons to visit an area and the distance in time.

Night Time Economy

SN: Continue to work on ‘Best Bar None’ – national Pub Award based on policies and procedures – this couldn’t have been done without funding from the BID. Licencing dept and Pubwatch asked for this funding which was approved by the BID.

Purple Flag – security, car parks, beach and town are good – this increases footfall and income - quality assurance standards.

Parking initiatives

This was in the plan but unfortunately unable to do this because the council see it as a revenue stream. **SN** gave his opinion on parking issues in the town.

NR: Reduce energy and waste link – this can save levy payers money on these - CM Energy do energy. A link on BID website to do this. A Weymouth Hotel saved £40,000 a year.

SN confirmed there will be social media training opportunities available which will be on the BID website soon. Encouraged levy payers to log on and get involved.

SN How we communicate

Extend 1-2-1 meetings from the ones in the service industries undertaken by Barrie Huett. Encouraged all levy payers to turn up at the office and discuss their concerns. It is a open door policy.

Will undertake a quarterly forum.

Weekly e newsletter – 500 people at the moment. 250 open it.

Paper newsletter.

Monthly Echo briefing.

Website – encouraged levy payers to look at it.

NR B2B website: Information site for the BID. Said this needs to be improved and updated. It had lost its focus due to BID focussing on the We are Weymouth branding.

Social media via twitter and facebook.

Meetings with local groups – laid out the 9 groups BID meets with and how the BID interacts: Pubwatch, Coastal Communities, Tourism Partnership, Police, Local & County Council, Weymouth & Portland Chamber of Commerce, Art groups, Weymouth College, Lions/Rotary and other charities.

SN outlined the directors and operations team – shown on PowerPoint. Confirmed directors are not paid with no expenses or recompense in order to rectify any misunderstandings.

Operations team who are paid: Nigel (BID manager), Alex, Ann, Julie (does the BID marketing), Paul Mills (operations manager).

Accounts Tim Williams – Wilko. (TW)

Outlined his role as treasurer – original steering group member and wanted a resurgence of the town and to work together as a retail business.

Year 2 accounts: from last year £110k surplus which seemed to not give good value for money but it was needed at the time to establish foundations –e.g. putting in footfall cameras, setting up website.

Year 2 to build on what is there already and to introduce new project streams in order to deliver the 5 year plan. Reiterated that it is a 5 year plan not a quick fix. Acknowledged some areas should have started earlier.

All costs came in within budget. They make a point of reviewing all costs for events put on and ensure it delivers what was expected. If not, the situation is reviewed and amendments made for the future and review service quality achieved from it.

Accounts were on website last week. Year end is July but BID budgets to end of Aug since the levy is due 1st Sept annually. The funds take some time to come in but BID needs to operate pending funds arriving.

Submit accounts under the small company regime as per the Companies Act 2006 by Albert Goodman. Year to July 2015 which is available on the website shows income of £322,228. 96.5% income came from BID Levy payers. Events and projects expenses £275,826. This includes the event costs outlined plus website and marketing costs associated with them in order to bring more people into Weymouth. More details are on p 13 of accounts.

£46,462 gross surplus – 40% of original levy income. Previous year was 63% so the BID is now better value for money. Admin £96,308 more details on p 14 of accounts - £50,630 employer costs , £13,180 establishment costs (rent rates etc) and £32,240 (e.g. telephone and general admin costs and Bad debts) BAD debt £17,588. Operating deficit just short of £50k. Reserve £62,503 of funds that allow us to continue to operate awaiting next BID levy.

NR proposed changes to BID.

Currently only 4 members of the BID. This is not as intended. This is due to the change in the way the company was set up on the steering group as a not for profit operating limited company operated NR (Basepoint), Barrie Huett (Albert Goodman), Brett Sharman (Debenhams), Craig Dunkersley (Sea life).

This needs to be amended to balance and reflect the 550 BID levy payers which will happen with the changes. Legal advice has recommended these changes.

Also have directors who run the company and make decisions operationally. The directors discuss the projects that come in / decide on the projects to be undertaken then the operations team implement those decisions. Acknowledged we need to engage more with BID levy payers through this system.

Acknowledged that the BID needs more directors. Every BID levy payer can apply to be a BID director. This can be done online or see NR in the office.

Q&A Forum commenced at 18.51

SN confirmed that some questions had already been sent in.

TW read first question – **Who owns Weymouth BID Ltd?**

TW outlined the purpose of the BID and levy. He feels no one owns the BID – everyone can utilise the increased footfall. Collectively utilise the increased footfall to benefit their business. A Not For Profit organisation limited by guarantee. Not all decisions would please everyone – which would be the same if the reverse decision were made. Ultimately the directors take strategic decisions to deliver the business plan, increase footfall into the town then it is over to the individual businesses to capture that increased footfall and turn into increased business.

Qu 2: 'Please clarify the £17,500 bad debts written off in 2015 against £5,000 in the previous year'.

TW explained that on Sept 1st invoices are issued. Prior to their issuing the BID get a list of current trading businesses from council and operations team get details checked so try to

pre-empt chasing of invisible money up front. Process: invoice, reminder, final reminder, letter before action, court summons and debt recovery. This debt recovery is discussed with the debt liaison management group from the Council and all cases are discussed individually. At this point the directors make a decision on what to do about that money.

Acknowledges the BID have been very slow off the mark to follow up this process so a lot of the bad debts were hungover from 2014. 2015 had a more streamlined process to get monies in quicker.

Still chasing 2 debts from year 1. 7 debts outstanding for year 2.

11/1/16: 116 levies remain unpaid. 85% collected now which is the same level as at this time last year.

Qu3: 'The underlying main query is that £100k was spent on project management in 2015 in addition to £50k of staffing costs some of which must be associated with project management. Surely spending 50% of our money overseeing what is being done rather than being spent on doing is not good value for our money'.

TW advised that the reasons these figures look like they do is the way the accounts are processed. The header on the accounts under which RLA project management it is not about making sure someone is checking whether a project is being delivered. Our contracted costs with RLA were £11,500 in 2015 not the £96k in the figures which are the events, trade shows, campaigns.

RLA were not good value for money – they were an excellent creative agency and were great in the set up but very expensive looking forward.

They were given 3 months' notice and a tender process for a new support Company was advertised to support the Website and Social Media Campaigns. The new Company is Key Multimedia

Second Point is that the budgets heads were too top line. So in year 3 have introduced sub budgets so can see each event and how each one has been costed e.g. staff, overheads. To ensure good value for money for each event or project.

Is this an AGM for Levy Payers and if so why is there no opportunity to vote?

NR answered

This is a meeting of Weymouth BID Ltd where Levy Payers are invited to attend for the Company to report on its activities.

The Company is set up with a Board of Directors working to an Articles of Association working on behalf of Levy Payers.

Levy Payers can either be Directors if spaces are available and in addition changes will be made to allow Levy Payers to apply to become members of the Company.

Based on this structure Levy Payers are not required to vote at this meeting. If Levy payers apply to become members then this Group would require a separate AGM with voting rights that would cover the Accounts and Activities of the Company.

Are all Salaries covered in that section of the Accounts as it appears low for the number of Staff?

Why are these figures not listed individually for each member of Staff?

TW said Salaries cover the BID Manager, Communications and Media Co-ordinator and Administrator, There is no requirement as a Company to list these separately.

TW added that Events and Festivals included within the cost Project Management and Labour costs in addition to Salaries and this would include a percentage of Out Sourced Contracts.

TW had referred to this in a previous question referring to £100k project Management.

Was the Christmas Lighting Up Ceremony Event seen as a success?

NR

A mixed reaction to the event whilst it was well attended it is clear that Late Night Shopping is no longer the focus for people. The changes to peoples shopping habits and the increasing use of the Internet has made late night shopping less of an attractive requirement.

The attempt to change to a Friday probably increased numbers but only to come to the event not to shop. There were a limited number of stalls and these were concentrated in St Thomas Street and New Bond Street.

Very few shops dressed up in a Victorian theme and little activity was supported elsewhere in the town.

December 2015

TW analysis for Dec footfall received that last year 770k this year 810k for the same week (week with 4th Dec in it). The following week – flat - this didn't bring people in which the BID will learn from it. Last weekend before Christmas Outloud 810k last year 870k this year.

How accurate are the Footfall Cameras?

TW says the footfall cameras show the movement of people and is not able to provide an actual number of people only the number of movements.

The figures are consistent and numbers increase for events such as Carnival, Seafood Festival and Christmas Switch on and show consistently that Saturday is the busiest day which you would expect.

This coming year the figures will be able to compare against 2015.

What are the plans for 2016 Christmas?

NR

The figures for the BID Christmas, Survey and Costs will be available at the March Forum Meeting and this will be open for discussion.

From previous comments it is unlikely to stay with a Friday and consideration of reverting back to a Thursday or another option taking into account the changing shopping habits.

The Board will also need to consider the Ice Rink for 2016 to bring to the Forum.

How are BID decisions made?

Is it the Board of Directors who decide and then the Operations Team deliver or is it the Operations Team who decide and seek approval from the Board?

SN

It is a mixture of both.

Board Directors will often through their own business or contacts put forward ideas that have worked elsewhere. In most cases the Operational Team will be asked to find out more and report back on costs and the feasibility.

The Operations Team also come into contact regularly with different Companies and BIDs and will look at ideas and projects that have worked elsewhere or are proposed to them.

NR

The Board will also discuss the Business Plan each Year and focus on the projects that are within the plan normally in June when the Budgets are discussed for the next year of the BID.

In addition Levy Payers and others locally have come to the BID with proposals and there is a system for these to be put in front of the Board.

Meetings with other Organisations may also provide opportunities in working and funding in partnership. This would include, Police, Councils, Weymouth College and others.

TMM (Merlin Entertainments) Board Director

Acknowledged the risk and how all businesses have to do this to get better results which happens in other places in which **TMM** has knowledge.

She suggested that the way these towns solve their issues is to have a collaboration between Public and private partnerships to achieve results.

The BID is still assessing Christmas 2015 and need to review all data including footfall data which has only just come through.

Directors don't make decisions lightly and is based on best information available at the time but the important thing is to look at the information, evaluate it and then change accordingly.

The Board want to make the best decisions for Weymouth and best business environment for everyone.

Why does the BID promote areas outside of Weymouth?

NR

This referred to a comment as to why a blog on the top 10 places to visit had included West Bay.

This was actually about the Broadchurch connection which can encourage people to come here and an awareness that on social media it is about advertising the wider area to encourage a wider audience.

The vast majority of our blogs and posts promote Weymouth and Portland but by promoting to a wider audience had greatly increased the numbers of people visiting the We are Weymouth website.

How can Levy Payers influence the BID Board and Operations Team

SN

It was unclear what was meant by this as all Levy Payers can contact the BID and it was felt this was more about not listening to issues raised and dealing with them.

The successful ballot in 2013 was based on Levy Payers voting on the 5 year business plan and it was the role of the Board to implement this and for the Operational Team to deliver it.

The offer to join the Board was also raised again and businesses to join together if they had specific issues for an area. This was also why Forums were being set up for Levy Payers to attend.

One annual meeting a year would not help engage all Levy Payers.

Is the BID going to support the Carnival this Year?

SN

Confirmed £5,000 had been provided in the previous year and that this amount remained with the Carnival Committee for 2016 due to the cancellation of the Red Arrows which the money was for.

What was the BID doing to fill Vacant Shops?

SN confirmed Weymouth BID was part of the Healthy High Streets programme which provided non-financial support to Towns. This had three main purposes in its 3 year programme, increased footfall, reduction in vacant premises, reduced crime levels.

SN confirmed that this numerical figure was based on time businesses would give to working together to promote the High Street rather than hard cash. Santander / Coop/ M&S/ Boots are involved with HHS and the BID could use this initiative to get these businesses involved in the town.

The initial meetings had raised a number of issues including a lack of understanding locally as to its purpose particularly local managers of the main companies involved.

It was questioned that the Multiple Retailors were already involved in the local business community.

NR

Agreed this was true but that Healthy High Streets was looking at how the partner companies could help support the retail businesses in each town with their experience and knowledge as against community activities.

NR

Accepted that letting of premises was very much in the hands of agents and landlords and very little influence could change that.

Many of the premises in the Town are unsuitable for larger Businesses and restricted by the large number of listed buildings and planning restrictions.

Steve Newstead then closed the meeting confirming that the BID Office could be contacted by Levy Payers and He was always available to meet with Businesses.

Meeting closed at 19.56 by **SN**