

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, July 20, 2023

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Agenda

- 1. In attendance:** Zep Bellavia (Bellavia & Associates, Chair), Kevin Ward (BID Manager), Tracy Stokes (Belle Femme), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Robin Hall (Kymin), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Catherine McNamara (Liverton Opticians), Simon Pullen (Friars Walk, via video link)

Also in attendance: Matthew Tribbeck (Newport City Council, via video link)

Apologies for absence: Nicola Marshall (Newport Arcade), Steve Corten (Pub Watch), Jane Mudd (Newport City Council), Alan Edwards (Vacaras), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge), Richard Ellis (Ellis Lloyd Jones, treasurer).

2. Declarations of interest

- DS (re agenda item 7)

3. Approval of minutes of last meeting

- Approved.

4. Finance update

- KW reported that cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £8,156. All payments up to date. The next £20,400 monthly instalment of the levy is due next week. Therefore, balance at the end of July will be £28,556. Forecast was £26,790.
- Cash in bank in the BID's savings account as of last night is £55,317. This represents the £52,908 grant from the Home Office for the Night Ambassador service (minus the first 11 months costs), and the £50,000 Transforming Towns grant for the dressing of long-term vacant shop fronts (minus the cost of the first four phases). The money stays in the savings account to ensure it is ringfenced.
- Levy collection for 23/24 to date is £104k – or 59% of the total levy bill for the year. Businesses that owe levy from 20/21 onwards have paid a further £24k since the last Board meeting. In total, £134k remains outstanding since 20/21. Enforcement action continues against non-payers as the levy is a statutory payment. ZB suggested KW

circulate a list of non-payers to Board members so they could see if they had individual contacts they could speak to and encourage payment. KW to action.

- Income for 23/24 to date is £87,611 and expenditure to date is £79,436.
- The current cashflow forecast, which now includes first quarter actuals, is that we will end the year with a reserve of £16.2k.

5. Events update

- KW reported Newport was the Wales host of National Armed Forces Day on June 24. While the weather meant some displays were cancelled, the event still generated a significant additional footfall for the city centre.
- We are again sponsoring the Big Splash festival on July 22 & 23, with the Newport Now Zone in Commercial Street, High Street and Cambrian Road. A trail featuring all the festival zones and shows is now live on our city centre app.
- Other events benefitting from BID sponsorship include Pride in the Port in September and the Food & Drink Festival in October, which is expanded to three days this year, and Newport Rising in November.
- This year's Countdown to Christmas is confirmed for Saturday, November 18. We are now offering 'event partner' sponsorships to organisations in the city. Friars Walk has confirmed its sponsorship.

6. DS project update

- DS said there was currently more interest in offices than retail. Hairdresser in Chartist Tower has opened. The former Iceland unit at Clarence Place is under offer. The former Mojo restaurant on Clarence Place has new owners and is to reopen as Bar & Boujee.
- DS is working with developers regarding under-utilised buildings in Commercial Street, including the former H Samuel unit (back for sale by auction).
- The Admiral building on Queensway is up for sale with Admiral lease still in place.
- There followed a lengthy discussion around footfall, retail closures, changing consumer habits, anti-social behaviour, general perceptions of the city centre and whether they mirrored reality, increasing number of independent openings, improvements to both Newport and Market arcades, and the need for the city centre to have an identity/brand.
- SP said Friars Walk was seeing a distinct difference between retail & leisure sector. Challenging time & interest tends to be from smaller retailers on short-term deals.

- ZB suggested a session with just this on the agenda. CM suggested a public survey to understand what people want in the city centre.
- MT said city centre masterplan was in the process of being refreshed, particularly as it was written pre-Covid. Welsh Government has a 'town centre first' policy for development. Shown the city centre can host major events that provide footfall. Need to identify what we need to invest in, and what is no longer relevant.
- MT said offer had been made to successful candidate for city centre manager role with intention of having them in post by the end of August. ZB said he would like them to attend the next Board meeting.
- MT said a number of city centre projects were proposed for funding via the Shared Prosperity Fund (the fund intended to replace EU funding). £27m available to Newport. One includes urban greening and the potential for a 'pocket park' in the city centre. KW to circulate document to Board members.
- ZB said part of future developments should be the promotion of existing businesses. MT said it was important to highlight the different offer for the city centre compared to out of town retail parks.
- IL suggested removing Debenhams branding from exterior of Friars Walk. SP said cost was an issue as well as what replaces it.
- NV said Newport Bus was offering £5 day rate for two adults & up to three children. Suggested BID should promote. KW to action.

7. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- One of our Street Ambassadors was assaulted by a prolific shoplifter and a prosecution is taking place. Ambassadors have now been instructed not to pursue shoplifters, however they will continue to assist stores in detaining suspects.
- Our Night Ambassadors service, funded by Safer Streets, continues to be popular with the public, licensees, police and council. They are providing an outstanding service every weekend, and both the police and council have praised the intelligence they are providing in their reports.
- The current funding for the Night Ambassadors will run out in November. In partnership with the council, we are submitting a funding application to the PCC. If successful, this would extend the service for a further 6 months. In partnership with the council, we are

submitting a funding application via the Safer Streets fund. If successful, this would extend the service for 18 months from next April.

8. Loyal Free update

- The app is currently promoting 154 businesses – 19 via deals and 135 via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 6,286 interactions with the app, 2,390 interactions with the trails, 363 competition entries, and 975 deal redemptions.
- Free use of the app has been offered to Pride in the Port, the Food & Drink Festival and Newport Rising as part of our sponsorships.

9. Gift Card update

- Gift card sales to the end of June were disappointing after a good start to the first quarter of the year; with a total of £750 from 33 cards sold. This represents a decrease of 71% in cards and 55% in cash sales compared to the same period last year.
- KW and DS have provided USW with a project brief for its MBA students to grow gift card sales. The intention is for this project to start in the early autumn.

10. Savings Advisory Service

- The most recent quarterly visit last week saw service providers Place Support Partnership visit Bar Piazza, Gallery 57, Bar Amber, Efes Grill and Regis Recruitment.
- PSP has identified significant agency savings for Bar Piazza.
- In total, the project has delivered £77,000 in savings across 40 businesses since it was relaunched in late 2021.

11. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre.

12. AOB

- Following suggestion from DS at the last Board meeting, we have provided USW with two project briefs for their MBA students – one to grow gift card sales and the other to build a complete database of levy payer contacts.
- Footfall in the city centre for both May and June was above the same months in 2019. This is the first time we have been ahead of the pre-Covid period, and puts us ahead of both the Welsh and UK trends. This is encouraging but clearly needs to be replicated across a number of months to show there is real recovery.
- NV said she did a sponsored walk last week for a cancer charity and if anyone would like to sponsor the links are on her social media. KW to circulate to Board.