

Newport Now Business Improvement District

Board Meeting 4pm, Thursday, January 18, 2024

Conference Room, Riverfront Theatre

Meeting notes for publication

1. Welcome – and introducing Chris Catford from Kingsway Centre

- ZB welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Chris Catford, who was attending as a representative of Niall Leighton-Boyce, the new lease owner of the Kingsway Centre. KW had been in touch with NL-B, who is keen to continue Kingsway's positive relationship with the BID but was unable to attend due to being out of the country. CC gave the Board an overview of new owners' plans for Kingsway and the desire to make the centre sustainable. CC stayed for the entire Board meeting as NL-B is keen to hear more about the work being done by the BID.

2. In attendance: Zep Bellavia (Chair, Bellavia & Associates), Kevin Ward (Manager), Dan Smith (M4 Property Consultants), Gavin Horton (Horton's Lounge), Ian Lamsdale (Newport City Radio), Tracey Stokes (Belle Femme), Nikki Marshall (Newport Arcade), Nicky Vignoli (The Newporters), Jane Mudd (Newport City Council).

Also in attendance: Matthew Tribbeck (Newport City Council), Chris Catford (Kingsway Centre).

Apologies for absence: Alan Edwards (Vacara's), Robin Hall (Kymin), Richard Ellis (Treasurer, Ellis Lloyd Jones), Steve Corten (Pub Watch), Catherine McNamara (Liverton Opticians).

3. Declarations of interest

- DS (re agenda item 7).
- See agenda item 14 re Register of Interests for directors.

4. Approval of minutes of last meeting

- Approved.

5. Finance update

- Cash in bank in the BID's current account as of last night is £42,595.
- This total includes £16,500 in grant funding for the Night Ambassadors project. An update on this project is included later in this report.
- Therefore, the 'actual' balance is £26,095. Forecast was £24,629.

- Levy collection for 23/24 to date is £169,555 – or 97% of the total levy bill for the year. However, the collection total includes levy payments from previous years. Levy owed for 23/34 actually stands at £26,673 – therefore actual collection for the current year is £148,044 or 85%.
- Income for 23/24 to date is £252,861 and expenditure to date is £284,456. Again, bear in mind expenditure includes grant-funded projects. Taking those out, gives us an expenditure of £210,569.
- The current cashflow forecast, which now includes actuals for Q3, is that we will end the year with a closing bank balance of £9.1k in reserve. This is an £8k reduction in the previous forecast, which reflects Countdown to Christmas coming in at £6k above budget and KW's return to working four days a week at the request of the Board.
- KW and RE will work on the 24/25 budget over the next few weeks in order to present to Board at our next meeting on March 21.

6. Renewal ballot

- Our renewal ballot will be taking place in November.
- Mirroring the process we followed in 2019, it is planned to invite agencies/consultants to tender for the renewal campaign in March, with presentations to the Board and a decision made in April. The campaign will run from May until the end of November, with the ballot taking place during November.
- KW has written a tender document based on the document we sent to agencies and consultants in 2019.
- For the last renewal campaign, we formed a small working group of Board members and KW who met more regularly than the Board but reported in full to Board meetings. This group had delegated powers to interview agencies/consultants and make an appointment for the campaign. The Board approved this approach for the 2024 renewal campaign and KW will seek volunteers for the working group via email in the next week or so.
- Our AGM/open meeting is due in March (last year's was March 30). The 22/23 accounts have now been filed at Companies House and published on our website. This meeting will be a good opportunity for a 'soft launch' for the renewal campaign, with at least one more open meeting later in the year to launch the 2025-30 business plan. KW will look at dates and venues for March in consultation with ZB and report back to Board via email.

7. Events/footfall update

- Small Business Saturday took place on Saturday, December 2. We expanded our gift card giveaway with the help of some funding from the council, meaning we handed out more than £2,700 to members of the public to spend in the city centre.
- Forthcoming events in Newport include the City of Newport Half Marathon, on Sunday, March 3, organised as usual by St David's Hospice. We were not able to sponsor the event this year, but we are helping to promote it.
- The Newport Wales Marathon takes place on Sunday, April 28. This year there will be a half marathon and a 10k as well as the marathon (the only one in Wales). All races have a starting route that includes parts of the city centre and there are substantial opportunities for businesses to benefit from the tens of thousands of visitors who will be here on the day – offers, early opening etc.
- We are looking at whether we can access SPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) funding for next year's Countdown to Christmas event, and also how High Street can be more involved in the event following representations from businesses there.
- The new events website for Newport - <https://whatsoncityofnewport.co.uk/> - has been launched by the council. There is an easy-to-use submission button for anyone staging events in the city.
- City centre footfall for the final quarter of 2023 was 47% above 2022, and 12.6% above the same quarter in 2019 (ie pre-Covid). Footfall for Wales for the same periods was down 5.4% and 13.1%, and for the UK 0% and down 13.5%. Our press release about footfall versus 2019 gained front page coverage in the local press in the run-up to Christmas.
- City centre footfall for 2023 as a whole was 32.2% up on 2022. In Wales it was up 2.2% and in the UK up 2.9%. Against 2019 for the full year, Newport was up 5.8%. In Wales it was down 13.1% and in the UK down 13.5%.
- DS asked if there were any plans to increase the number of footfall counters. MT said the council had looked at GPS solution but not now going ahead. DS said footfall counters which recorded movement as well as numbers of people were more relevant.
- SP said Friars Walk also uses Springboard at various locations in the centre. Footfall was an indicator of the number of people who can be converted to customers. Footfall is up at Friars Walk but trade is down.
- CC said his experience was that events benefitted the food & beverages sector but not so much retail.

- ZB highlighted the importance of events that attracted families with children. There was a debate over how such events can be planned and delivered.
- NM said Newport Arcade will have seven independent markets this year. There were five last year and all tenants benefited from the events.
- KW made reference to a calendar of events that will be forwarded to Board members, and the large numbers of people who will be in the city centre over the next few weekends, particularly in relation to Newport County AFC matches against Wrexham, Manchester United and Swindon Town, plus a pro-Palestine march.
- IL said Newport City Radio was running a Love Live Music awards event in June, with a venue to be announced.

8. DS project update

- DS said he had been in contact with 14 potential occupiers. Looking primarily at local and regional businesses, and at alternative users (ie leisure).
- DS is talking with paddle tennis occupiers interested in coming to Newport if suitable venues can be found.
- DS said he had spoken to one or two nationals but little interest at the moment.
- Food and drink operators showing interest despite restaurant trade closures.
- SP gave an update on Friars Walk. The NHS vaccination centre has been extended at the former Debenhams for a couple of months.
- VX3 moving into the former Damaged Society unit with a Newport County AFC and Dragons RFC store, opening on January 22. CC confirmed this means the County shop in Kingsway will be closing.
- Cosmo is open in the former Karen's Diner unit.

9. Ambassadors (Day and Night) update

- Funding for the Night Ambassadors via the grant from the Home Office's Safer Streets fund ran out at the end of November.
- As reported to the Board previously, in partnership with the council, we have been awarded £16,500 via the Police & Crime Commissioner to extend the service to the end of March. This funding has been received and included extra shifts over the Christmas and New Year period.

- KW has provided the council with a full breakdown of statistics for the Night Ambassadors service to date, which highlights the value of the service to the city centre's night time economy and our various partners.
- In partnership with the council, we will be submitting a further funding application to the PCC. If successful, this would extend the service for 12 months from next April. This will be important both for the Purple Flag application and the BID's renewal campaign.
- KW met Safestyle management before Christmas to discuss concerns over the lack of consistent staffing of the daytime service. This has improved to an extent, but there is still work to be done to stabilise the staffing – ideally to two regular Ambassadors with one or two others acting as relief and holiday cover.
- Board members were aware of a spate of commercial burglaries during the last month. Where possible, the Ambassadors have visited these premises for a welfare check and to promote the Business Against Crime Partnership.

10. Vicinity/Loyal Free update

- The app is currently promoting 164 businesses – 26 via deals and 143 via events listings and trails.
- To date, there have been 8,916 interactions with the app, 3,182 interactions with the trails, and 1,558 deal redemptions.
- The Board agreed at its last meeting to progress with a new version of the app that will be branded entirely as Newport Now. There is no additional cost for the design and build of this. KW has a meeting with Vicinity to progress timescales next week.

11. Gift Card update

- Total gift card sales for 2023 were £3,930 (115 cards). This compares to total sales in 2022 of £2,410.
- The gift card project costs us £2,880 a year; so sales exceeded costs in 2023.

12. Savings Advisory Service

- PSP will next be in Newport next Monday (22nd) and we have been promoting this on our social media, website and emails.
- In total, the project has identified £102,600 in savings for levy payers since it was relaunched in late 2021, with £57,600 savings realised by businesses.

13. Purple Flag

- A Purple Flag group has now been put together and will meet on a monthly basis to ensure all actions are being taken in a timely fashion ahead of each year's submission.

- The group will meet next month to self-assess the nighttime economy ahead of our resubmission for Purple Flag status.
- Around 95% of the application process was completed by KW in the autumn so we are well placed for this year's resubmission.

14. BID Foundation accreditation

- A reminder that as members of the trade body the BID Foundation, we have been encouraged to apply for full accreditation by the end of February.
- We already meet or partially meet 9 of the 11 required standards. These are to have the following easily accessible for all levy payers:
 - Staff contact details (met)
 - Business Plan (met)
 - Ballot result (met)
 - Governance structure (partially met - need to add in the process for election to the board)
 - Board of directors with photos and the organisation or sector they represent (met)
 - Board meeting minutes (met)
 - How to feedback to/contact the BID (met)
 - Annual billing leaflet (partially met - needs to be uploaded to the website)
 - Annual accounts (met)
- The two we do not meet are having a register of interests for directors, and a procurement policy.
- KW has designed a template for the register of interests for approval at this meeting ahead of it being forwarded to all directors tomorrow. Please return by close of play next Thursday. Approved by the Board.
- The register of interests will become a standing item on the agenda for board meetings and updated when necessary. The register will be published on the BID website in the 'Resources' section.
- KW has designed a procurement policy in line with best practice employed by other BIDs. This will need approval by the board at today's meeting. Once approved, it will be published on the BID website in the 'Resources' section. Approved by the Board.
- Accreditation will provide us with a quality kite mark, and be helpful for the renewal campaign next year; particularly when dealing with national head offices.

15. AOB

- KW attended the first ‘townhall’ meeting of Homewards, the project launched by the Prince and Princess of Wales’ Royal Foundation with the aim of ending homelessness in the UK. Newport is one of six locations in the UK where the project is being run – the others being Lambeth, Bournemouth, Aberdeen, Sheffield and Northern Ireland. Businesses will have a key role to play in the project and KW has agreed to represent the BID on the Homewards Coalition in Newport, and to recommend key businesses and individuals that could join the project.
- EE’s head office has been in touch with a series of queries regarding how its levy benefits businesses and the wider community in Newport. It would appear this is a UK-wide communication. KW has responded to all queries. EE has indicated it will be supportive of all BID renewals across the UK.
- ZB, DS, RH and KW met with the council’s Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Matthew Evans and fellow Conservative member Councillor Chris Reeks, prior to the Board meeting following an article in the Argus that clearly showed the BID was still being used as something of a political football following the appointment of the city centre manager, and a lack of understanding of the BID’s role. The meeting was positive and will hopefully draw a line under the issue of the BID being referred to on matters it has no involvement in or control over.
- The levy payers’ database project with USW MBA Global students is ongoing. They have developed a Google Form for data collection from levy payers. We will be publishing this on our website and socials next week. We included an article about the project in our December newsletter.
- We have approved a Shopfront Improvement Grant of £675 for Coco’s Bar on High Street.
- JM said the council’s budget consultation was taking place at the moment and urged Board members and levy payers to make their views known.
- IL said a new Newport City Radio website was being launched in March, DAB is still on cards before July, and the station has moved its base to the Corn Exchange from The Neon. He said Maindee Festival would be taking place on July 6.
- GH asked if the BID could purchase community shares in the Corn Exchange. KW to check and report back.
- DS said he was talking to the NHS regarding the introduction of a GP surgery/dentist practice into city centre, given the increased residential developments.

16. Date of next Board meeting

- Thursday, March 21, at 4pm at the Riverfront Theatre. Dates for the next 12 months were emailed to Board members earlier this week. They are:
- May 16
- July 18
- September 19
- November 21
- January 16
- The conference room at the Riverfront has been booked for all dates.