

Harrow Town Centre Forum

Notes of the informal meeting of the Harrow Town Centre Forum held at the Management Suite, St Ann's Shopping Centre, Harrow Town Centre on Thursday 26 July 2012.

Present:

Councillor Sue Anderson
Howard Bluston

Councillor Simon Williams
Anthony Wood

Jeff Jackson (Chairman)

Officers

Louise Baxter, Mark Billington, Carly Brown, Lindsay Coulson, Rachel Jenman and Andy Stubbs

1. Quorum/Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from PC Daniel Brown, Darren Harman, Sergeant Pullen, Bernard Segal and Gary Stevenson. It was noted that the quorum for the meeting was six and that the meeting was therefore inquorate.

It was agreed to hold an informal discussion of the business on the agenda.

2. Minutes

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2012 would be approved at the next meeting.

A Forum Member commented that an amendment was required to minute 63;

'That it be noted that the Harrow Town Centre Bid Company Limited accounts to end March 2012 had been finalised.'

3. Declarations of Interest

Agenda Items 5 and 6 – Business Improvement District Development Programme Update and Shadow BID Board Membership – Representation and Key Players

Councillor Simon Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he owned a business on Station Road.

4. Matters Arising

In response to a question as to whether the promotional DVD about the Town Centre had been uploaded to YouTube it was suggested that the matter be discussed after the informal meeting. It was suggested that the short version could be shown at the next meeting but that it was available to view on the Council's website.

The Forum supported the DVD being shown at the next meeting.

5. Outer London Fund Round 2 Grant and Project Update

An officer tabled a document which provided the Forum with an update on Round 2 of the Outer London Fund Programme. The officer advised that:

- The contract had been agreed with the GLA and it would be a legal document once signed. The town centre would benefit from £3 million in the next two years.
- Events - Various events had taken place, such as a continental market on 29-30 June and there would be a Music Festival and Showtime event on 2 August. The Olympic Torch Relay had taken place on 25 July and approximately 20,000 people had been in Station Road. A market was being considered to coincide with the Christmas light switch on.
- St Ann's Road and Havelock Place - David Kohn Architects had been appointed to prepare the detailed design proposals. The consultation event would take place on Saturday 11 August and either the preceding Thursday or Friday. A letter would be sent to businesses to make them aware of the event and information placed on the Council's website. There would be a stall during the consultation displaying the concept design. People would be asked to fill in comment cards and be directed to the website. It was anticipated that work would commence in September and that there would not be any bus diversions.
- Kymberley Road, College Road and Station Road - There would be a public consultation on the proposals later in the year. The connection between Havelock Place and College Road to improve footfall was still a strategic aim.
- Lowlands Recreation Ground – The recruitment of the design team was out to tender and, to date 27 firms had registered an interest. There would be a shortlist of 5 and an expert panel would consider the applications.
- Roxborough Bridge Underpass – The work was now underway.
- “St Johns Square” (Lyon Road/St Johns Road) – The planning application for the redevelopment of Lyon House and Equitable House had been approved in principle. The application included a new area of public realm and the creation of a public realm “square”. The detailed design would be developed once the Section 106 legal agreement had been completed.
- Kodak Site – An outline planning application, including various uses, had been approved subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement.

In response to a question, the officers advised that flyers for the Music Festival and Showtime event had been prepared and a wider distribution would be considered. An example of the flyer was tabled at the meeting. An email alert from the website would be sent on Monday.

6. Business Improvement District Development Programme Update

An officer tabled a document which updated the Forum on the Business Improvement District Development Programme. The officer advised that:

- Two new members of staff had been recruited, Louise Baxter, Town Centre Officer and Rachel Jenman who would be responsible for the BID promotion and marketing

- Time was needed to update the business database but any additional contact information on tenants or landlords from shopping centres would be welcome.
- A suggested BID area had been identified as detailed on the map. The area would include 500 hereditaments.

The Forum Members made the following comments on the outline BID area, which would be used as a basis for discussions with businesses:

- The underpass was going to be upgraded and tenders for the work were currently being sought.
- Consideration should be given to extending the BID area to Hindes Road to include Tesco and the cinema. In addition, Halfords and the restaurants in the area could be included. Gold's Gym and Peterborough Bridge did not perhaps create the most desirable impression of Harrow.
- There were no retail premises and only 4 businesses to the west of the BID area, near Headstone Road.
- There should be discussions with officers in the Business Rates Department to determine if any businesses in the BID area had not paid their rates.

The officers made comments including the following;

- Businesses could become voluntary members of the BID but the main activities would be targeted in the defined area of the BID.
- Any extension of the BID area could result in more money if the BID was successful and it was possible that, in the future, a more pragmatic approach to the area could be adopted. It was possible that the area could be amended but only with the agreement of a BID Board and its members. The vote to agree to establishing a BID would be on a proposed programme of set objectives, activities and outputs. Any new entrant to the BID area would at the very least require a vote by the BID board.
- The consultation could include options for the BID area, one would be current proposed area and the other would be a larger area. The consequences and implications of both options could be explained as part of the consultation documentation.
- The retail component of the Lyon Road planning application was small.
- The additional suggested areas for inclusion would be investigated and discussions with the businesses would take place. The businesses would evaluate what benefits they would derive from different potential BID boundaries.

The officer advised that;

- There had been an analysis of the 500 businesses and approximately £260,000 would be raised from a 1% levy of rateable value. Businesses with a rateable value under £5,000 had been excluded. The 1% levy could be reviewed and there might be a different levy applied for businesses which rented premises in managed spaces, for example shopping centres.

- Other boroughs did pursue those businesses which had not paid the levy and there would need to be discussions with regard to who would chase any unpaid levy if the BID was successful. A levy was the only equitable, sustainable mechanism which was business led to collect contributions.
- At present, a property owner could be a voluntary member.
- There could be legislative restrictions, such as the Data Protection Act, on the information which could be accessed with regard to payment of business rates and this would be checked with the council's legal officers.

The officer tabled a collated programme of other London BIDs which included the key objectives and main activities.

The Forum Members made the following comments;

- It would be useful to know the membership of each current London BID in terms of the number of large and small businesses, the community and the involvement of the council.
- Harrow Town Centre was unique as it had two large shopping centres which attracted people to the area but first impressions could be improved.

In response to questions from the Forum Members, the officers made the following comments;

- The Fitzrovia BID was the most recent and some BIDs, such as Kingston, had been established in 2005 and were in their second term.
- The BID activities showed the common and successful themes. The key issues would be similar but local, unique themes for Harrow Town Centre would be identified.
- Concerns about transport issues could be raised during the consultations.

An officer summarised the discussion on the Business Improvement District Programme Update and made the following comments;

- The consultation on the BID would include the two options and the revenue potentials of each.
- The revenue information relevant to the threshold would be prepared for a future meeting of the Forum as it would be useful in relation to the small businesses.
- The consultation documents and material needed to be clear and it was crucial that the database was correct to avoid a challenge.

7. Shadow BID Board Membership – Representation and Key Players

An officer introduced the item explaining that the Shadow Board needed to be representative and asked if there were any other organisations which should be included.

The Members of the Forum then made the following comments;

- Representatives from the hospitality industry as well as the night time economy such as the cinema could be invited.
- The shadow BID Board membership should comprise of a mixture of large and small businesses.
- Businesses which were dependent on the success of the town centre should be represented.
- The minutes of the Forum could be circulated to tenants of two shopping centres asking for their comments which could then be reported at the next meeting.

An officer responded to the points of the Forum Members and made the following comments;

- A shadow BID board needed to be established and should include the major rate payers and those organisations which benefited from the Town Centre.
- There would be a finite number of members and letters of invitation would need to be drafted and sent.

A Member of the Forum requested a copy of the Memorandum of Articles of Understanding and the Harrow Town Centre Manager agreed to provide this.

8. Lunchtime Workshop to Identify Key Issues for Initial BID Consultation (date to be confirmed)

An officer introduced the item and raised the issue of whether the workshop should be held before or after the Shadow BID Board had been formed. The Members of Forum suggested that it should take place soon.

An officer advised that the original date of Wednesday 1 August was too soon and that an alternative date would be sought in mid to late August.

9. Other Updates

The Chairman tabled a paper from the Police and made the following comments;

- Action was being taken to address shoplifting in St Ann's Shopping Centre.
- There had been a reduction in anti-social behaviour in the High Street.
- There would a larger Police presence during the Olympics which would mainly be for events.
- The town link radio was transferring from an analogue signal to a digital one and had caused some problems in the short term.
- The Police continued to be proactive despite a drop in their numbers

The Chair commented that improvements could be made regarding marketing and there should be a closer working relationship between the council and the marketing managers of the Shopping Centres.

An officer advised that details of the antiques market would be circulated to retailers and requested that any marketing ideas be forwarded to the officers.

It was suggested that the marketing managers should be given the contact details of the Council's communications officers.

An officer advised the Forum in relation to the internal marketing within the Council and outlined the mechanisms available. It was explained that one of the key campaigns was economic growth and that social media was used.

A Member of the Forum suggested that an advertisement board could be situated in the town centre to display information and publicise upcoming events. It was suggested that this and additional CCTV could be included in the BID.

Olympic Torch Relay

It was noted that the Olympic Torch Relay had been extremely successful and attended by thousands of people.

10. Any Other Business

The Chair asked if Fitz Gym had CCTV coverage and an officer agreed to look into this matter.

A Forum Member drew attention to out of date advertisement on the information board in St Ann's Shopping Centre. In response to a question, the Chair indicated that St Ann's would be able to accommodate the carol singers from Welldon Activity Group but would need to know the date.

A Member of the Forum asked if any sub-groups would be established, for example a marketing sub-group. The Chair commented that any marketing ideas could be sent direct to him and he would pass them on to the relevant people.

The Chair advised that a replacement for the Reverend Bob Gardiner from Churches Together in Harrow had not been appointed yet but that the representative should be from a church in the town centre.

11. Date of Next Meeting

4.00pm on 25 October 2012