

REPORT FOR: HARROW TOWN CENTRE FORUM

Date of Meeting: Thursday 25 November 2010

Subject: Update on the Harrow Business Improvement District (BID)

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Section 1 – Summary

This report sets out the Town Centre Forum's support to the establishment of a Harrow Business Improvement District (BID).

Recommendations:

The Forum is requested to:

- Maintain the Forum's support for the development of a Business Improvement District in Harrow Town Centre
- support the Shadow Board's proposal to appoint a BID Development officer
- support the use of the money from the Travis Perkins/Neptune Point development towards the appointment of the BID Development Officer
- agree to use the remaining Town Centre Forum budget to fund the publication of material related to the BID including the Business Plan.

Section 2 – Report

Following a decision of the Harrow Town Centre Forum in October 2006, the Council has been working with businesses in Harrow Town Centre towards establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) in the Town Centre.

As reported at the September Ordinary meeting of the Forum, currently, the BID development process is on hold due to a number of both national and local issues including the perceived fragile trading environment.

BID Development: Proposed Next Steps

The shadow BID board has considered various options to promote the concept of a BID in Harrow Town Centre.

The Board concluded that the BID Company should employ a BID Development Officer for a 6 month period to promote the idea of a BID to the businesses, at the end of which period, a ballot would be held.

The advantage of this approach is that the BID Development Officer would be a representative of the BID Company. This would give the BID Development Officer a degree of independence and an advantage over Council officers when trying to promote the BID concept to the town centre businesses.

The cost of employing someone with BID Development experience would be around £21,000 for a period of 24 weeks on a part time basis (at 2.5 days per week). This would allow ample time for the BID message to reach all of the businesses in the town centre.

Council officers would support the BID Development Officer in working with the Council especially in relation to the securing of Service Level Agreements, the voting process and obtaining any formal Council approvals prior to the ballot.

The Shadow BID Board will continue to meet to monitor BID support from within the business community and will appoint the BID Development Officer at an appropriate time.

If it was decided to progress towards a vote, the Town Centre Forum would be informed at a formal meeting of the Forum.

Funding

As part of the “Unilateral Undertaking” for the Travis Perkins/Neptune Point proposals, the development will contribute £25,000 “towards the cost of town centre management initiatives” in the Town Centre. It should be noted that this money will only become available “on commencement of development”.

There is around £12,000 left in the Town Centre Forum budget.

It is proposed that the £25,000 from the Travis Perkins/Neptune Point development is used to employ the BID Development Officer while the Town Centre Forum budget is used to pay for the production of promotional material including the final Business Plan.

Section 3 – Recommendation

It is recommended that the Harrow Town Centre Forum agree to:

- support the development of a BID through the appointment of a BID Development officer
- support the use of the money from the Travis Perkins development towards the appointment of the BID Development Officer
- use the remaining Town Centre Forum budget to fund the publication of material related to the BID including the Business Plan.

Section 4 – Legal and Financial Implications

None

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: David Sklair, Regeneration Project Manager, 020 8736 6084

Background Papers: Nil

APPENDIX 1:

What is a Business Improvement District?

A **Business Improvement District (BID)** is a partnership arrangement through which the local business community, the local authority and other statutory service providers can implement plans and improvement projects that directly benefit their area. The improvements must be in addition to services already provided by the local authority.

These proposals must be agreed upon by a majority of ratepayers in the BID area before they can be enacted. The cost of the proposal is met by a supplement on the rate bills of the businesses within the BID area along with other voluntary contributions.

All businesses that pay the supplement levy are entitled to a vote in a ballot conducted by the local authority to determine if the BID proposal should go ahead.

A formal company is set up to organise the BID and to agree how the money that is collected is spent. Usually a Board is established to develop and approve the proposal and business plan and monitor these proposals following a successful vote.

The legislation on Business Improvement Districts requires that the mandate for a BID is renewed at least every five years.