



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
TOGETHER
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

RTW Together Business Improvement District

Minutes – 6 November 2023 – Town Hall, Month Pleasant Road, TN1 1RS

In attendance: Alex Greig (AG), Clare Waller (CW), Hilary Smith (HS), Jenny Kitchen (JK), Joseph Oates (JO), Justine Rutland (RT), Nicola Paffard (NP), Peter Allinson (PA), Suzie Lewis (SL)

Apologies: Alex Green (AJG), Alexia Taylor (AT), Richard Simm (RS)

Guests: Bob Watts (BW) – Creative Tunbridge Wells, Lee Colyer – TWBC, Mark Williams (MW) – Rivington Hart

1. **Welcome** by Alex Greig
2. **Minutes from last meeting:** Approved. HS – council colleagues would like to attend BID training courses and not run any courses.
3. **Any conflicts of interest:** None
4. **BID Director Report**

Accessibility

- **Streetscene -Graffiti removal:** should BID explain to businesses how they should remove graffiti themselves as well as BID removing it? Could BID supply kit to levy payers? Concerns over strength of products used and need for safety equipment. Some graffiti easily removed however others very difficult – bus shelters. AJG comments in Board report about using volunteers – maybe community service.
- **High Street Plans:** 2 consultations have taken place. One at Geography for High Street hospitality venues and the other at Hoopers for the rest of High Street businesses. There was general support and good input to the architects.

ACTION: SL to let HS know which bus shelters have graffiti on them. HS will discuss with bus companies who are responsible for graffiti removal.

ACTION: HS to check if Terry Hughes has any graffiti kits that could be used.

ACTION: SL to discuss use of volunteers with AJG

Better Town

- **AI Seminar:** Request for board members to use their connections, especially in professional services, to promote the event. There is scope for 150 attendees.

Staff & HR

- **British BIDS conference:** HS, SL & JR attended. To get a 'yes' vote, ask what it will take to get a 'yes' vote, levy payers need to be shown value. Tesco for example examine each individual case. Huge emphasis by nationals on recruitment, safety of staff and crime reduction. Very important we have the correct contacts for sending business plans to – not the liable parties.

ACTION: SL meeting with British BIDS to collate national contact information

ACTION: HS will share British BIDS conference notes

Reballot

- **Wording in Business Plan:** regarding inflationary increases in levy. We need to watch the wording to ensure levy payers do not misinterpret any increases i.e., a 5% increase does not mean that levy will increase from 1.301% to 6.301% but rather a 5% increase on 1.301%. Final decisions on levy will be made in December. Finance sub-committee will make a recommendation for approval. BID must ensure it is delivering and making Tunbridge Wells is a better place to live and work.
5. **Amplify:** Jenny Kitchen Amplify – presentation sent directly to board members.
 6. **Creative Tunbridge Wells:** Bob Watts spoke about creative Tunbridge Wells – Appendix 1
 7. **Finance Report:** Currently £410,297 in the bank, year end cash balance approximated to be £54k. Levy income figure, including some previous years collection, £428,553. There is £39,164 in the re-ballot budget. Total costs YTD are £312,362 with £250,000 firmed commitments. Budget allocated but not yet confirmed is £144,226 (confirmed commitments detailed on the budget summary). With all bad debts write offs that were been processed up to board meeting date, the most the BID can receive in outstanding levy is another £48,000.
 8. **RVP Developments:** Mark founder of Rivington Hart (RH) joined the meeting. TWBC has bought RVP and is working with Rivington Hart to rectify decline over last 6 years. Immediate changes:
 - running costs have been cut from day one, so tenants receiving smaller service charges bill without reducing service. Looking to re-energise ELY court with is now fully under offer and hoping to be open pre-Christmas. Tesla cars coming into RVP. Rivington reaching out to all stakeholders in town to bring retailers and improve centre. Good engagement with Fenwick, discussing long-term proposals.
 - Increase activity with occupiers on short term basis.
 - Ensure turnover of occupiers increases. Occupiers will stay longer and pay more rent.
 - Looking to improve carparks so charging and maintenance getting brought together.

- Medium term - Food court (now called Palm Court): not looking great, looking at other uses. Leisure is an obvious one – what is deliverable? Talking to occupiers as well as cinema and leisure operators.

- Question: What is the structure of management and governance?
 Answer: RH accountable to council, underneath is Knight Frank as property managers who employ centre staff. Centre staff deal with public and day-to-day operational issues that are escalated to Knight Frank and then Rivington. Decisions & response rates happen rapidly. There is a cross party investment advisory panel which RH report back to monthly with monthly dashboard of progress made.
- Question: Timescales?
 Answer: Short-term key is stabilisation.
 Medium-term strategy: Old BHS out with RH control but in the loop. Good occupiers want to move in, but M&G still needs to agree deal.
 Examining occupier demand for the town. Letting agents are Craddick and Knight Frank – seeing positive effects of this already – to see what the level of demand is and how this can be brought forward. Engaged with the leisure side already – by Jan/Feb – knowing demand from occupiers – will put together small development team to accommodate it.
 Marketing & PR being reviewed not on all timescales.
 Ely court – 2024 exercise in terms of what is the long-term suitability of that space.
 Long-term 5 years, medium 2-3 years.
- Question: What is RH's plan to involve the whole town?
 Answer: Already met with Target Follow. Good relationship. Marketing is engaging in trying to bring outside visitors into the town. Fundamentally want to promote town as a whole and work with BID on wider marketing and working as good neighbours.
- Question: What does the future of top end of Tunbridge Wells look like to RH?
 Answer: There is demand, people want to come into town, especially the top part. It can and must be made better, it cannot be left as it is.
- Question: What types of leisure are RH looking at? Is culture on the agenda?
 Answer: This will be demand led and commercial focused. Boutique cinemas, competitive leisure (mini-bowling, axe throwing, family orientated, evening), better food and beverage.
- Question: How do you plan on taking input from other stakeholders? i.e., the BID
 Answer: Centre manager day-to-day general contact and anything strategic contact RH direct – on site once every fortnight.
- Question: Have milestones been set for the project and if yes what are they?
 Answer: Financial milestones set out, clear 5-year business plan with financials, measured on a quarterly basis, and non-financial activities set out in the business plan – 100-day plan – JR chairs the committee which scrutinises this.
- Question: What is the retail strategy? What type of shops in a couple of years? Household names v independent shops?
 Answer: Ely Court area – independents

Palm Court area – predominately leisure
Remainder – mass market middle retail, trying to get national occupiers. Around Fenwick, keep quality.

Question: What can the BID do to help RH achieve goals and targets?

Answer: Tell any occupiers that have not got the message that RH are open for business; RH are approachable and will give quick decisions and if negative an explanation why. Work with Nicky to ensure marketing budgets are used efficiently and economically by combining resources. Learning ROI after events. Increasing turnover/spend is the most important.

Question: Will RVP and RH continue to support Amplify?

Answer: Yes

9. AOB: None. JR TWBC - summary sent in addition to minutes.

Appendix 1

Creative Tunbridge Wells

Creative Tunbridge Wells is the Cultural Compact for Tunbridge Wells, brought into being by TWBC, KCC and RTW with support from ACE and ukSPF.

These have been set up in varying shapes and sizes across the country but mostly for cities or large areas. Lots of synergy with BID in terms of scope and working processes. Collective action but outside of the local and regional government structures. Great PODCAST here on the Cultural Compact initiative:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-developer-podcast/id1444547110?i=1000615684063>

We are an initiative that is designed to support, champion and connect the Creative Sector.

Generally CTW works in three different ways:

1. Convening Power or Cultural Catalyst - Bringing together existing organisations or projects to help them grow and share good practice. Championing the sector and its activities in the town. Sector Specific projects which will be developed with the sector but key focus on skills.
2. Lobbying on behalf of the sector and helping to set strategy - Cultural Placemaking, Infrastructure, Town Centre Plan etc.
3. Places and Spaces - Meanwhile Use projects for empty shops or tricky sites, input into the RVP, Southborough HUB

Launching fully in January, I am busy shaping the programme right now but a few projects coming into focus:

Creative Freelancers CPD programme
Work experience in the creative sector
Working with community organisations like the fringe, lantern parade etc.
Creative Volunteer Bank
Digital Project with the Councils Event Management Page

You can reach me on Bob@CreativeTW.com