

## **Report of the Strategic Director - Place to the meeting of Executive to be held on July 7th**

---

**Subject:**

**BV**

**Keighley Business Improvement District**

**Summary statement:**

The report deals with the proposed Council arrangements to enable the achievement, by Keighley Business Improvement District, of a second five year term.

---

Steve Hartley  
Strategic Director - Place

Report Contact: Paul North  
Phone: (07582 107873)  
E-mail: [paul.north@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:paul.north@bradford.gov.uk)

**Portfolio:**

**Regeneration Planning and Transport**

**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Regeneration and Environment**

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Council arrangements are necessary to enable the Keighley BID company to pursue a second five year term for the Keighley Business Improvement District, which promotes the businesses and commercial life of Keighley Town Centre. This follows a successful first term of achievement and innovation which is appreciated.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Keighley Business Improvement District (Keighley BID) is in the final year of its five year term, which runs to the end of December 2020.
- The BID is formed of, and supports, Keighley town centre businesses. It does this through using an additional levy on top of the regular business rate which is collected by the Council and passed on to the BID company. The levy is to be spent within the eligible area, at the direction of those businesses, through a dedicated company. Over £1.1m was raised via the levy in the first term. Businesses are expected to benefit from the Business Improvement District's activity which is generally viewed as an investment rather than a burden.
- There are currently 261 Business Improvement Districts in England. The places they support have bought into the offer that Business Improvement Districts can provide commercial assistance for Businesses and many BIDS are on their second or even third term. They are invaluable in focussing local business activity and countering online sales.
- A new Business Plan for the coming five year term will be part of Keighley's documentation to inform a renewal ballot.
- The Council was a key partner in the original development of Keighley BID, which was driven by the private sector, and has a seat on the Board through the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transport. This is appropriate as the Council is required to collect the levy, following a successful ballot. The Council is also liable for business rates on its property holdings within the eligible area and subject to the levy where it applies.
- The activity of all three BIDS (Keighley, Bradford and Ilkley) that operate within the Bradford District, contribute to the delivery of the Economic Strategy. All three BIDS have been active in adapting to the very difficult circumstances faced by businesses as a result of lockdown and have shown great flexibility in working to support businesses manage and survive the crisis.
- 2.2 All BIDS are ordinarily expected, within the legal framework under which they operate, to seek a further term, or terminate at the end of their mandate which is provided by a secret ballot of all eligible businesses within the BID area.
- Executive backed the establishment of the Keighley BID through a report, December 2014, Doc AJ. Subsequently two further BIDS have been approved, via ballot, within the District; in Bradford City Centre (approved 2018) and in Ilkley (in 2019).
- 2.3 Keighley BID, as the first to operate within Bradford District, is the first to seek a renewal ballot. Keighley BID's activity has established it as a key part of Keighley's town centre economy with a wide ranging programme of revenue activity. Information on the types of activity delivered can be found at Appendix A. and the BID's website <http://discoverkeighley.co.uk/keighley-bid>

- 2.4. Ordinarily a BID would ballot in the final quarter of its term with the expectation of a seamless follow on, providing continuity of staffing and operation. The intention was to seek a ballot during October of 2020 with a positive outcome anticipated for the start of a second term on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

If the BID renewal ballot is unsuccessful, the BID's activity would end and the company that runs the activity will be wound up. It should be noted that the company is not required to be wound up, but without a levy there would be a fundamental challenge to its existence. A successful ballot is one that achieves over 50% of the votes from eligible businesses and secondly over 50% of the total rateable value.

- 2.5 The steps the Council needs to take are:

- Arrangements with Keighley BID, via the Council's Electoral Services for a renewal ballot.
- Confirmation of who will cast the Council's votes in the proposed ballot.
- A revisiting of the existing Memorandum of Understanding and Operations Agreement between the Council and the BID Company, which sets out the terms under which the mechanics of the Business Improvement District operate. This covers the operational arrangements with Business Rates and Finance. A review is necessary as there have been new considerations/developments since the original sign off that can usefully be incorporated.
- We must also revisit the existing Baseline Agreement which states the level of service Bradford Council provides within the eligible area. Such clarity is useful as the BID should deliver additional benefits. BIDS are not set up to replace Council/Public sector services.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all businesses and BIDS across the country. There are a number of BIDS with terms that expire in 2020. The Government has made legal provision for such BIDS to extend their term for a further quarter to allow for business recovery following the peak of the virus, with some return to a more stable economy prior to businesses being requested to vote in a ballot. In Keighley's case this would mean that the term would be extended until the end of March 2021. The Government believes that BIDS can be valuable in assisting in the recovery through being flexible and responding to business need as it develops.
- 3.2 Government has raised the threshold at which some businesses begin paying business rates in view of the pandemic. Businesses in the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors, with a rateable value of less than £51,000, do not have to pay business rates for the 2020 to 2021 tax year, but this relief does not apply to how business improvement levy rates are set. This sector makes up a large percentage of Keighley BID levy payers. The degree to which businesses will recover and how quickly is at this point unknown, however recovery is likely to be patchy, with the lockdown having increased further the use of online shopping. It is acknowledged that if the lockdown is extended beyond current expectations or there is an upturn in

virus cases once initial lockdown is released, then the expectations above will be affected.

- 3.3 In the budget, the Government announced a fundamental review of business rates which was expected to report in the autumn of 2020, however, this has now been deferred and will not take place in 2021 but revert to 2022.
- 3.4 The lock-down has meant that Keighley BID's schedule of consultation, preparation of a new Business Plan and agreement of the ballot documentation has been affected as businesses have either been concentrating on dealing with the impact of the lockdown, have been closed or very busy. Input from local businesses is essential in planning for the coming five years.

Govt. has announced a one off extension of a quarter to BID terms in this situation through the Coronavirus Act 2020 (S. 79 – Extension of BID Arrangements: England).

Whatever the circumstances regarding the virus, the Council needs to fulfil its part of the process. Economic Development has provided a co-ordinating function for the Council's side of preparations.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 Each BID within Bradford District pays a contribution to the costs of the software used to run the levy system and (with other BIDS) the staff that manage the collection process within Business Rates.  
The BID will pay the fees associated with the Electoral Services ballot process – this is a secret postal ballot. To date, the BID has taken advantage of Council premises in Keighley at 68B North Street for accommodation. This is expected to continue whilst the premises are available.

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 Given the performance of Keighley BID over the first term, the Council can feel confident that the commercial centre of Keighley has been well served with opportunities for businesses to benefit both directly and indirectly from the activity. Business Improvement Districts are no longer an unknown quantity.

The arrangements for the Council's representation, via the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration Planning and Transportation having a seat on the BID board, appears to have worked well, although the growth of BIDS has increased the workload of the Portfolio Holder. Economic Development continues to play a facilitating role for BIDS. The BID has been advised of relevant Council activity at appropriate times and the BID has been able to provide valuable feedback from business to assist Council service issues.

Ultimately Keighley's businesses will decide if the BID will be able to serve for a second term. Across the country renewal ballots are usually successful with a higher approval rating, although we are presently not in normal times.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 The timing of the ballot has been discussed with the Council's Electoral Services team. The BID would like to hold the ballot as close to the end of March as possible to gain the maximum recovery time, post lockdown, for businesses. The Council's Electoral Services team are statutorily required to deliver a number of electoral processes. It is not yet clear from Government the extent of that workload and how this will affect the timing of the BID ballot. It may be that Electoral Services cannot conduct and conclude the ballot after the end of February as a result of these statutory processes and postponed ballots. When there is definitive Government guidance on the elections to be held, the appropriate arrangements will be made.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

- 7.1.1 The Council is not proposing to withdraw any service, but rather promote the health of town centre businesses in Keighley. The report explains changes to timing and process and illustrates the success of Keighley BID to date, at a time when many approaches to stimulate recovery will be needed.  
Ultimately businesses will decide if this is the kind of mechanism that they think can help. Business Improvement Districts operate within a legal framework that uses democratic principles to determine how businesses can work together to take collective action.  
If the BID is not returned then the free to all Wi-Fi system running across the town centre will likely fail as it operates through a partnership between the Council and the BID. Continuation would be dependent on the businesses identifying this as a priority for continued funding.  
This facility enables wide access to digital content and services for town centre visitors.

### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.2.1 There are no sustainability implications.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

- 7.3.1 The assistance provided by a further term will encourage economic activity within and around Keighley, with a consequence for greenhouse gas emissions, however, the future regarding travel volumes, with the rise in working at home, is currently very speculative. Activity is not always detrimental - in the first term the BID ran a programme of energy saving initiatives that benefitted local businesses. These activities have subsequently been adopted by other BIDS.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.4.1 Whilst the future programme for the next five years is still in development, the current term has seen the supply of digital radios to retailers to tackle the incidence of shop-lifting and fuel theft. Many of the town's retailers have joined the scheme which has led to good connections between businesses and assistance to the Police.

## **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

7.5.1 There are no human rights implications

## **7.6 TRADE UNION**

7.6.1 There are no implications for Trades Unions.

## **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

7.7.1 Whilst the Keighley Central Ward is the ward which covers most of the town centre, the impact of the BID's work has wide reaching effects drawing footfall from within and outside Keighley and the District.

## **7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

7.8.1 There are no implications

## **7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

7.9.1 The BID will confirm, through a revised Memorandum of Understanding and Operations Agreement with the Council, current responses to legislation re privacy and data.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 There are no restrictions on the publication of this document.

## **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 a) Ballot The Keighley BID Board has agreed that the option for extension to the BID's term of a further quarter, provided by the Government under the Coronavirus Act will be used, with the ballot for the second term being postponed until the first quarter of 2021 and would appreciate the Council assisting in delivering on this change.

b) Levy The BID is expected, by Government, to levy additional funds during this additional quarter. The BID is currently exploring how this might be done with regard to business revival. The Government has further backed this approach nationally by providing funds to cover operating costs (circa £11,500 for each BID) affected by the impact of the virus.

c) Council support The Council's response is one that reflects the difficult situation which is being managed. We have amended original expectations to accommodate the changes wherever possible.

d) If virus cases increase following the anticipated relaxation of the lockdown, then the expectations described here will change and a national response to combat the virus will again be expected to impact on the process and likelihood of a successful renewal ballot.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommended -**

- 10.1 That provision is made, with the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Services unit, to hold a ballot of eligible businesses for a future term for Keighley Business Improvement District, to be held before the end of March 2021.**
- 10.2 In the event that virus cases increase and a further delay arises, the ballot should take place as soon as is reasonably practicable subject to Government further extending the first term.**
- 10.3. That the Strategic Director - Corporate Resources be authorised to vote in the ballot on the Council's behalf with respect to relevant property holdings within the BID area.**
- 10.4 That a revision of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Council and Keighley BID be progressed by the Director of Finance to support the anticipated ballot process.**
- 10.5 That the revised Baseline Study on existing Council service delivery within the eligible area, is prepared to support the anticipated ballot process.**
- 10.6 That changes to the expected term of Keighley BID be noted.**

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 11.1 Appendix A – First term achievements**

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 12.1 Keighley Business Improvement District – Executive report December 2014, Doc AJ.**
- 12.2 Memorandum of understanding for the provision of services within the Keighley Business Improvement District 2015.**
- 12.3 The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004**
- 12.4 Coronavirus Act 2020**

## **Appendix A First Term Achievements – provided by Keighley BID**

Keighley BID brings together public and private sector resources with the aim of enhancing the vitality and commercial viability of the town centre of Keighley. Since 2015, we have established a wide network of participants and have consulted extensively with residents and businesses. We have a detailed understanding of the town centre in which we operate, its heritage, where we are now and where we wish to be in future. Records for the last complete year, ending December 2019, show a total of 7,562 individual interactions with businesses covering a wide range of issues, questions and offers. These include everything from requests to share information on social media to technical questions about business rates.

Keighley BID currently employs 2 full time and 1 part time member of staff. The current Business Plan prioritises 4 main themes as shown below with details of some of the key projects and success stories:

### **Marketing & Promotion**

- Regular events
  - As a key driver of footfall, we have invested in a calendar of events throughout the year at key trading times. The most popular and largest events being the indoor beach – Keighley by the Sea (funded by the National Lottery in 2019) and the ever popular Christmas Lights Switch On events.
- Free Public WiFi
  - In partnership with Bradford Council, we have provided comprehensive free WiFi to the visitors of Keighley town centre throughout the BID area. This system is also a footfall traffic counting solution used to assess pedestrian movements and the benefits of public events.
- Cavendish Sound System
  - Keighley BID has invested in a fully licenced sound system for use underneath the street-long canopy of Cavendish Street. This provides a daytime music service to our visitors and businesses, together with a number of rotational business advertisements also produced by the BID.
- Business Photography
  - We retain the services of a local professional photographer to keep our stock of images of local businesses, their services, offers and teams up to date. Images are shared with the businesses for their own use on websites, marketing and social media.
- Social Media
  - A great deal of time and resource has been invested into ensuring our social media profile reaches out to as much of the local population and beyond as possible. Our total social media reach for 2019 was well over 2m. Social media is the principal medium for attracting visitors to events with over 25% coming from outside the town.

### **Safety & Security**

- Townlink Radio
  - One of the earliest projects of Keighley BID was to tender for an up to date digital system more suited to the current needs of businesses. There are currently 125 businesses with access to this radio system.



- DISC Scheme
  - DISC is a secure, online information sharing resource for businesses to upload details of offences and individuals to watch. The system can track incidents and frequency of street drinking, graffiti and anti-social behaviour.

## **Backing Business**

- Keighley Business Club organises 2 main lunchtime networking events per year.
  - These are a chance for our local office and professional sector businesses to network, invite their clients and staff and listen to presentations from industry leaders. Generally hosted by Harry Gration, the networking events have included speakers from the Bank of England, Timothy Taylor's and the LEP. Keighley Business Connect Magazine  
This twice annual glossy magazine promotes positive news stories from the BID area. Hard copies are distributed to 1,000 local businesses with an online version available on our website.
- Keighley Independents Campaign
  - The twice annual campaign, supported by most independent businesses in the town, offers significant voucher prizes to be spent with participating retailers, fully funded by the BID.
- Savings Consultancy
  - Partnership with Meercat Associates (National BID Buying Group) has seen our local businesses benefit from well over £100,000 of savings on business costs using the combined buying power of over 200 BIDs across the UK.
- Keighley Business Awards
  - We have provided headline sponsorship for the prestigious Keighley & Airedale Business Awards since 2016.

## **Ease of Access**

- New & Refurbished Signage
  - We have fully reviewed public signage in pedestrian footfall areas and refurbished or provided new signage, which is now well used and attractive.
- Town Centre Guides
  - 2 guides are produced periodically by Keighley BID – Town Centre Guide and Food & Drink Guide. These are distributed across the town centre and beyond.
- Enhanced Christmas Lighting
  - We provide an enhanced lighting display, in addition to the lighting already provided by the council on Low Street and Cavendish Street. This will be extended further in 2020 to include areas of North Street.
- Visitor Parking
  - Free parking is provided for visitors to the town centre at key trading times in association with the Airedale Shopping Centre.
- Member Parking
  - Discounted and subsidised parking is made available to businesses in the Keighley BID area at Scott Street and the Multi-storey car park.
- Floral Displays
  - Since 2016, Keighley BID has funded the planting scheme on North Street and Cavendish Street.