32nd Board Meeting of
Fleet Business Improvement District (BID) Company Limited

Held on Tuesday 27th October 2020 at 17:30 by teleconference

Attendees:

Bruce Bulgin (BB)	Chair & levy payer director
Chris Chessell (CC)	Levy payer director
Ian Fuell (IF)	Levy payer director
Tyler Harman (TH)	Levy payer director (part of meeting)
David Moll (DM)	Levy payer director
Emma Molyneux (EM)	Vice chair and levy payer director
Tim Neale (TN)	Levy payer director (part of meeting)
Alan Oliver (AO)	Director Hart District Council (HDC)
Bob Schofield (BS)	Director Fleet Town Council (FTC)
Tracey Shrimpton (TS)	BID Management, Sixth Sense Marketing

1a Welcome, apologies and conflicts of interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

1b Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. **Action: TS** to publish on BID website.

3 Update from the Chair and Board discussion

With the challenges facing the high street, pedestrianisation is not an end in itself and in its current format in Fleet it is flawed. There is uncertainty over the duration of the temporary pedestrianisation of Fleet Road and this project has generated a lot of negativity, particularly on social media as well as verbal abuse of the event manager and BID Directors while in Fleet.

Hart District Council commissioned Matt Baker to undertake a review of the impact of pedestrianisation on businesses in Fleet:

- The consultation did not find conclusive evidence that the pedestrianisation scheme was “destroying the high street” with many businesses reporting favourable trade.

- There was a sizeable and diverse group, across all sectors and of different sizes, from startups to major high street names who want the scheme to succeed.
- All of the biggest anchors on the high street, reporting the highest volume of sales, were either in favour or neutral.
- The most common reason that businesses opposed the scheme was a strong dislike at how the changes were implemented.
- A summary and link to the report is here https://findyourfleet.org/independent-report-on-the-impact-of-fleet-road-pedestrianisation-on-businesses-in-fleet-published/
- Matt Baker is presenting to levy payers, councillors and other interested parties on 12th November.

In discussions with businesses, none have put forward any ideas as to what can be done to revitalise retail – other than continuing to do the same. As COVID-19 is likely to mean more vacant retail units, doing the same is unlikely to be sufficient to bring about the change that Fleet needs.

Hart is regularly voted as being one of the most desirable places to live in the UK and average levels of per-capital wealth and income are much in excess of averages throughout the UK. Therefore, Fleet should be a good place to do business. Regeneration in Fleet has been discussed for many years. There are proposals for the civic campus redevelopment. Should this be looked at in isolation or should it be part of a wider regeneration process?

AO gave an update on the council's position and mitigations in place to manage issues such as delivery access for businesses.

As a non political organisation representing businesses and creating an environment which enables businesses to thrive, the BID is continuing discussions with major landlords in the town, councillors and others interested in Fleet being able to reflect how high streets are changing and reflecting the needs of the local demographic.

AO left the meeting.

Project Updates

Events update (EM)

- EM has been overseeing Gem Events who are planning, organising and delivering the events programme. The plan has had to be flexible to allow for last minute cancellations, such as the half term activity due to weather and changes in government guidance. The weekday events planned in half term (pumpkin carving, wreath making and supporting entertainment) have been cancelled. Social distancing would have been possible but some events were inside, which was felt to be inappropriate with changing government guidance and the weather forecast meant that outdoor events were not possible.
- The overwhelming majority of people were supportive of the events and enjoyed them. A small minority decided to single out the BID for criticism for organising events because they were taking place in the temporary road closure. Other events took place at the same time with fewer measures to manage social distancing but they were not criticised. The targeted nature of the criticism was threatening at times, often directed in a very aggressive manner at the teenagers who were event marshals as well as event organisers.

4a Operations Committee / BID Manager's report

The Operations Committee focus has been temporary pedestrianisation.

BID Manager Report

In addition to supporting the Ops committee, the Focus has been on:

- Covid-19 Recovery: Posters and hand sanitiser is still available with businesses continuing to order.
- A consumer survey is underway to understand consumer shopping intentions for Christmas. Initial findings are that 58% consumers will do most of their Christmas shopping online this year and 34% people have already started Christmas shopping. Findings are being shared with businesses to help them plan. 66% people say that they use websites to get inspiration so we will create a Christmas gift guide on the website. A summary of the results has been shared with businesses.
- Fleet BID's website appeared in over 38,900 searches in September (down from August when many searches related to Eat Out to Help Out). Year on year the number of searches Fleet BID has appeared in has increased by 295%. Fleet BID now appears on page 1 of Google for more search terms and many businesses.
- 28-day Facebook reach was 26,002 with 126 new page likes. There were 8,308 Twitter impressions with 14 new Twitter followers. Fleet BID has 442 followers on Instagram.
- The Mi Rewards Loyalty programme has been launched to businesses and will be launched to consumers on 1st November. The scheme is simple to use, enabling debit and credit cards to be used as a loyalty card, rather than a separate card or app. The sign up process for businesses is simple, with no additional training or hardware required. The data reporting will provide information enabling businesses to understand more about their customers, and the impact of promotions and other marketing activity.
- In March the BID Manager met with Venture Security to scope the benefits and cost of a Town Ranger. A bid has been submitted to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for this pilot.
- Hart Lions are organising a Christmas trail and the BID will support through sponsorship of the prize.

Business changes

- Hart Travel in Fleet has closed following the owner, Toucan Travel, going into administration, Carsons have closed and Peacocks are expected to close.
- Clip n Climb (in the Hart Shopping Centres) are preparing to open and the BID Manager has met with them to help promote them.

4b Finance

- Fleet BID is still awaiting information from Hart District Council so that the BID can receive the BID levy collected by the council on behalf of the BID.
- Cashflow continues to be monitored closely and expenditure statements will be provided going forward.

5 AOB

No AOB items.

Next meeting: Tuesday 15th December