

BIDDING FOR BRIDGEND EVENT – Thursday 20th November 2014, Carnegie House.

The evening began with a speech from Rotimi Adegoke, chair for the steering group meetings, who welcomed attendees and provided background information on the role of the steering group and of his personal journey towards supporting the BID.

He also introduced, members from *The means*; the marketing consultancy company who carried out Bridgend's BID feasibility study and thanked Bridgend's Town Centre Manager, Rhiannon Kingsley, for her support throughout the whole process, including in notifying town businesses of the *Bidding for Bridgend* event and serving as a link between the BID Steering Group - and the council - and also with Welsh Government representatives.

See details of opening speech transcript below:

BID is an Acronym for Business Improvement District.

Who makes up the Bridgend BID Steering group? The BID Steering Group is **business led**, comprising of a group of individuals from Bridgend's independent and non-independent businesses, covering various sectors; including professionals, hair and beauty, food, retail and others. The Steering Group was formed, following a BID presentation by Swansea's BID members, to, the Bridgend Traders Forum, 12 months ago.

This led to continued BID discussions within the Traders Forum. These discussions eventually resulting in an application being submitted - on behalf of the Traders Forum, by Rhiannon Kingsley, - our Town Centre Manager, for a BID feasibility grant from the Welsh Government; this was a competitive process. Luckily, Bridgend was one of the nine areas in Wales, to be awarded the grant. Our feasibility grant came to £25,000 total, of which, our local Bridgend council had to put in 20% of this total, £5,000.

The purpose of the Bridgend BID Steering Group has been to;

- learn the pros and cons of having a BID
- make sure Bridgend businesses are provided with accurate BID information, allowing you all to make an accurate informed decision at ballot.
- find out how feasible a Bridgend BID would be,
- learn what level of support a BID would have in town,
- and to let you know why we believe, a WELL, run Business Improvement District, would be a good idea for Bridgend.

Today we'll bring you up to date on Bridgend's BID process and, provide you with details, on how to remain updated.

Hopefully some of you, will want to bring your skill-sets to the table becoming actively committed and involved; a successful and WELL, run Business Improvement District will require a wide range of your, collective skills, from abilities of - listening and responding appropriately, accounting, procurement skills, legal skills, crime prevention, advertising and communications, ability to be very critical, - to, understanding structures within local and national governments.

On each of your tables, you should have at least one member of the BID steering group sat amongst you.

Some of you may be surprised to hear that many members of the BID Steering Group, haven't always seen the positive potentials, of having a Bridgend Business Improvement District. Quite the contrary, many initial views were very critical and sceptical to start with.

When I heard, Swansea BID members, were going to give a BID presentation to the Bridgend Traders Forum, I thought, I'd better do some research of my own beforehand. If I'm honest, their subsequent presentation didn't do much to persuade me in favour.

My personal journey involved lots of internet research, as well as ringing and speaking to BID members from several, random locations.

Let's take Brighton BID - The Brighton BID manager gave examples of the benefits members had gained from their resulting bulk buying powers, in turn, resulting in savings for their town businesses on, - insurance, utilities and legal advice services; these savings often being greater than and therefore nullifying, their levy costs.

Other benefits he mentioned, which cannot be so easily priced, were;

- the increased power their businesses gained, from having a collective voice
- they also achieved much better communications with their council.

At the time of our conversation, Brighton were going through their second BID term, which had begun in approximately 2011; they gained even more businesses voting to be on board, compared with their preceding, first term.

Similarly, when I spoke to Bristol Broadmeads BID, they were going through their third term, which again had achieved even more votes, when compared to their second term ballot.

The Bristol Broadmeads member shared with me, the pros and cons of their BID. One big concern being, the potentially shifting fine line between what the council was responsible for.

We, in the Bridgend BID steering group understand how critical it is to have a good and very clear, baseline agreement with the council from the start if a BID was to be formed. Whilst protecting our business interests, it is also important for us to have a good, understanding and communicative, relationship with the council. You'll hear more about baseline agreements later.

Other BID areas I spoke to in Bristol included Clifton, Bedminster and Gloucester Road.

Outside of Bristol I also spoke to other BID members from, Rugby, Newbury, Newquay, Swansea and Merthyr. Speaking with the various Businesses in these areas, I admit, not all members were positive towards a BID. Some mentioned, they hadn't seen any benefits. However, overall, the feedbacks I received were very positive.

A company in Newbury mentioned that his business had benefited from their street wardens, clearing, the heroin dealers on his street corner; I can imagine what some of you may be thinking to this, so I'll quickly say, I have no idea why the local police hadn't successfully achieved this; possibly there may have been a collaborative effort with the police.

He also mentioned their *Newbury BID advertising partnership*, with the local radio station, which for him meant, that radio advertising was now, within his financial reach.

Without going on, after weighing everything up, my overall conclusion was and still is, that a well-run Bridgend Business Improvement District, has to be more beneficial than sticking with old unsuccessful routines and trying nothing new.

How many years do we continue sitting, complaining and waiting for others to solve, what are in the end, our problems, that we, have to live with?

A Business Improvement District provides a means for us to take some ownership, which is not the same as relinquishing others of their responsibilities.

Even large multinational companies up and down the county, with all their commercial know how, see the benefits of paying large sums of money into Business Improvement Districts; in such instances, often making up a noticeable proportion of the total BIDs income, to the disproportionate advantage of the greater number of small, often independent, businesses within the BID.

I asked myself, do I really want to simply sit and watch as, Llanelli, Pontypridd, Neath, Abergavenny, all competing with us for business, continue to push towards securing their own BIDs? Swansea and Merthyr already have BIDs.

Finally, using a very short example, much close to home; speaking with Ann, a florist in Merthyr, she was initially extremely anti, their BID; from what I recall, seeing the BID levy, as just another means for the council to get more money out of businesses. Now, Ann proudly puts herself forward as one of their BIDs biggest champions, proclaiming the benefits she believes it has brought to her business and the town.

To close this opening, I'd like us all to remember one important thing throughout the rest of this event. That is, whatever our chosen method is; whatever we believe as being correct; we all have one thing in common - **we are all on the same side,**
BIDDING FOR A BETTER BRIDGEND.

Thank you!