**BedfordBID update and AGM Review 2021/22 headlines**
During the past months, team changes, recruitment, training and ‘bedding in’ has dominated **internal operations**. Two BedfordBID Champions plus a full-time marketing manager are now making a significant difference already within the group. A dedicated BACP accredited EAP providing counselling and psychotherapy services has also been arranged to help maintain a healthy mindset.

B2B database contacts are now up to date with just a few follow up emails and GDPR confirmations required. This has been imperative to re-establish and maintain productive **business engagement**. Businesses are also now being visited regularly and the reporting of graffiti and issues relating to public realm areas are back to standard. Between October and December, a total of **85 reports** were completed including 42 for graffiti, 30 fly tipping, 8 street cleaning and 5 for damaged power boxes, all of which the Council have resolved. The hot spot for fly tipping is now under consideration for dedicated CCTV.

**The marketing effort** has got off to a flying start with free editorial content (provided by BedfordBID) in special features (*samples of BedsLife, T&C, Resident and Bedford Borough Bulletin*). New content has been regularly broadcast through SM platforms promoting businesses including a brand-new Christmas late night event at the Howard Centre. Features with BBC have included Radio 4’s You and Yours plus an online ‘feature’ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-59571287> which was well balanced and mainly positive (managed content). Slide presentation available.

**A new Christmas Hub** <https://www.lovebedford.co.uk/christmas.php> was created for the Love Bedford website, where all details were updated with offers and events from businesses as well as entries to the BedfordBID competitions (see Christmas window dressing competition link). Pre-printed posters were provided to businesses for **onsite** promotion.

**Consumer database** mailing list has grown and online following increased across all areas of IM, FB and Twitter to 23,975 (+750). Penetration of the 20-minute drive time continues to be a key focus. New **B2B contacts** have been secured/added to the database.

BedfordBID organised the **ever-popular Cairngorm Reindeer** at Harpur Square as well as face painting and balloon artistry at the Howard Centre. This was complemented by the delicious festive fare independently coordinated by Riverside’s EAT Feast organisers on 5th December.

The BID team also worked closely with Bedford Borough Council’s comms promoting the Artisan Market courtesy of MadeinBedford as well as assisting to reduce damage limitation in the current climate including the sensitive decision regarding a Christmas late night launch/firework display.

The vinyls at former Debenhams and Beales further demonstrates the **strength in the relationship with the Council’s teams** which required critical communications with property owners and planning support. The endorsement from the Council of BID’s application to the Town Priority Fund committee was also a critical factor in its approval. The Council also facilitated formal approvals for the town band licencing along with the acts arranged by BID for 5th December.

Over the course of the High Street works, the Council provided regular updates for BID to keep businesses informed together with parking guidance and more recently, the **PSPO consultation** in relation to addressing issues around skateboarding in town centre.

The BID has continued to **represent business’ interests** at the newly formed Enhanced Partnership Board (National bus strategy; Bus Back Better) and Bus Service Improvement Plan and the High Street Heritage Action Zone Partnership Board and workgroup.

The Christmas tree **additional lights at Mill Street**, new for 2021, funded by Town Centre Priority Fund and coordinated by BedfordBID, will be reviewed for 2022 to try and ensure that all businesses are switching on for throughout the day with BedfordBID assisting regarding additional electrical assistance as necessary.

The Love Bedford Town Centre **voucher scheme membership** was overhauled with the issuing of new window stickers in preparation of the post-Christmas redemption period. This also provides ease of identification to coincide with the dedicated SM and DM campaign to highlight those businesses participating. **Over £3600** of vouchers was processed over the pre-Christmas period.

Showing the love for Bedford Town Centre keeping it local is further demonstrated by top ups for both **Gallone’s and Michael R Peters** who kindly provide a retail outlet for sales. Currently there are 290 members, over 70% are independent.

Virtually all the online voucher purchases **opted-in** to receive further information from BedfordBID about the town.

In October, the National Pubwatch recognised excellence and commitment at an awards event at the House of Lords with **BedSafe**, the Bedford Pubwatch, awarded the top accolade – the **National Pubwatch Award 2021.**

The judges commended the social responsibility of the BedSafe scheme and its very **active engagement with the team at the local Business Improvement District (BID)** who with its support, the scheme has implemented a number of good practice initiatives to improve its communication processes and the safety of customers and staff. For example, through BID funding, door staff are employed to deal specifically with street drinkers and beggars.

BedfordBID also supported the **Tap and Donate** successful launched at the end of November as planned with financial assistance for contactless donation and point-of-sale marketing and advice generally.

In December, BedfordBID worked with industry groups including the BID Foundation, British BIDs, ATCM, British Beer & Pub Association, UKHospitality, Night Time Industries Association and others, to send a **letter to the PM and Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for urgent assistance** for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sector. BID produced dedicated SM content for NYEve available on line.

Between 13th December and Christmas Eve, **Operation Bless** resulted in the arresting of 11 individuals within town centre for various different offences ranging from Thefts, Breach of CPN, Robbery, Theft from motor vehicles, Burglary and possession of drugs etc. Two stop searches were also conducted along with a number of community engagements provide crime prevention advice and utilised both covert and overt patrols to reduce retail thefts.

With the support of BedfordBID, a **CBO was obtained** on a persistent offender which was a huge success and BeBAC reports were used to aid the police in the CBO case alongside a written statement from the BID.  Earlier in the year we also had success with a CBO banning another individual from the town centre for aggressive begging. Again BeBAC reports, and a written statement were issued as part of the case.

Of note is the **progression Operation Highgate** has made in the individuals attending. The meetings combined with the group focused on the Bus station and now incorporate several other partner agencies (including Sarah Steven’s team, bus station representatives, local councillors and council street cleansing and property management). There have also been representatives for the PCC and Festus himself attend the meeting.

The **BID night team** are reporting that the police presence has been positive, but Covid has definitely had an impact on the Christmas season, Xmas eve with Exec Club, Empire, The Flute and the Standard closed. Only Vogue, The Rose, Barley Mow where busy most venues closed early.

The street beggars had been active but minimal during the Xmas period when mostly under 25s are out in town who don't give money to them.

Foot flow cameras have now been reinstated following a decommissioning during the High Street works.

**Looking ahead for 2022 …**Subject to BID levy status, strategic priorities identified by the BID Board – roles & responsibilities, vacant units, and communication together. Operationally …
 Voucher scheme makeover to reduce the heavy admin and resource commitment.
 BeBAC roll out and Retail RadioLink & Exclusion scheme audits.
 Roll out of EAP service to BID businesses.
 Launch of new CRM and Love Bedford website with interactive map. The former will improve
 functionality and streamline updating processes.
 Review of mobile devices for team for greater efficiency of communication and content.
 Review of Voluntary Contribution scheme.
 Review Mill Street additional Christmas lights for greater effectiveness.
 Support the communication of HSHAZ programme on High Street.
 Produce and publish events calendar with highlights for businesses including:-

 Platinum Jubilee with the additional bank holiday on Friday 3rd June and the spring bank holiday
 which is usually at the end of May, will be on Thursday 2nd June instead, creating a four-day
 weekend for some.

River Festival and sponsorship of High Street event

SpectaculArts – Good Friday visual arts, Sunday 3rd July Italian Festival, August Jamaican Indie and September Asian Festival and currently published is …

Upcoming Events 2021 – 2024

February 2022: Hindu Holi Festival

March 25th and 26th 2022: TBC

Summer 2022/23: Bedford Pride

2022: John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress 350 Year Anniversary, 28th August

September 2023/24: John Bunyan Festival

July 2023: SpectaculArts Festival