

**BedfordBID Board Meeting 110**

Monday 4th July 2022 @ 4:30pm,

Bedford Swan Hotel

**Directors attended:**

Christina Rowe BedfordBID

Sam Laycock (Chair) The Harpur Centre

Amanda Olliver The Body Shop

Charles Royden Bedford Borough Council

Dave Roffey The Bedford College Group

Greg Warwick Jeeves

Dean Thompson The Bedford Swan Hotel

**Also attended:**

Eleanor Karklas Bedford Borough Council

Patrick Lyons Bedford Borough Council

**Apologies**:

Shaun Barnett Leaders Lettings

Anthony Moliterno Mayfair

Samantha Hunt Inspector, Bedfordshire Community Policing Team

**1/4. CHAIR’S WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair opened the meeting with a warm welcome to guests and thanked everyone for their attendance.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING. ITEMS FOR AOB**

The Directors approved the minutes of the last meeting.

**3. TO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS**

No applications received.

**4. DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS UPDATE**

A special mention and acknowledgement were given to new recruit Annalie Meher (Marketing Manager job share) for her excellent start in joining BedfordBID and achievements to date.

Further to the last reported item update, Town Centre and Castle Ward’s Bedfordshire Police priorities setting forum, The Director of Operations has met with Inspector Sam Hunt and discovered that a bid is being presented to the Executive Team on Friday 8th July for a police town centre unit. It was agreed for BedfordBID to provide evidence to support the bid.

Despite the shortness of time, evidence and feedback was coordinated demonstrating the significant strength of feeling by the town centre businesses and support required. A member of the Board also reported an observation from staff that they too could not believe how much shop lifting was being reported on the retail radio network; “it’s everywhere.”

With high levels of stock losses, the Community Safety Partnership’s Operational Delivery Group (ODG) are also looking to find connections to organised crime in the town centre.

The idea of a dedicated PC has been rejected as a guaranteed dedicated presence could not be assured. Additionally, with the lack of evidence of success for how a similar scheme to that at Luton, where the Enforcement Officers have an expanded role, makes this also unrealistic to look at a similar scheme for Bedford.

This generated discussions from Directors regarding the seriousness of frequency, damage, and severity of town centre retail crime issues.

**ACTIONS:**   
**The Director of Operations to** **contact the Chief Constable and invite him to a Board meeting to discuss issues.**   
***N.B Owing to the subsequent announcement of the the CC’s pending retirement, we await confirmation of a new contact.***

The Chair drew to the attention of the Directors the item update concerning the sad loss of Graham Mabbutt. The Directors were also reminded of the forthcoming Town Centre Big Spruce Up on Tuesday 19th July 9.30-10.30am.

Directors acknowledged the “pleasure” it was not to hear the skateboarders at Silver Street and Harpur Square noting it is now easier for the localised professional sector to conduct their own business with clients.

**5. TO RECEIVE UPDATE FROM PATRICK LYONS, MANAGER FOR THE BEDFORD TOWN DEAL, BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL.**

Having secured an allocation of £22.6m funding, Bedford Borough Council is required to work through comprehensive business case development and assurance processes to enable drawdown of funding.

These requirements are set out by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as part of their Stage 2 guidance of the Towns Fund. Stage 2 of the Towns Fund process focusses on the development of business cases for each of the projects, required to be completed before the end of June 2022.

This stage of activity is to ensure Bedford Borough Council work with government to demonstrate the feasibility, viability, and value for money of their projects.

The business case for the Midland Road Shopfront Improvement Scheme Project is to be approved by the Town Team Board this summer. The Midland Road shopfront improvement scheme is designed to improve the key gateway from the railway station into the town centre by investing in shopfront improvements along the Midland Road route. This coincides with the Midland Road Public Realm project designed to reduce the carriageway width of Midland Road to improve the walking route and public realm and achieve a vibrant corridor.

The reduction in the width of the road will still allow large vehicles to pass each other safely but also enable pavements to be widened along this route. Trees will be planted on the widened pavement to improve the urban environment, subject to any constraints from underground services and drainage. Street furniture and lighting will also be provided. The first element of the scheme (covered by a separate Towns Fund business case) will improve the appearance of the Midland Road shopfronts. The project will provide grants for up to 36 premises on Midland Road to enhance the quality of buildings on the route. Consultations with localised businesses and residents commences in September.

The business case has also been prepared for the element of Transporting Bedford 2030 which involves the reconfiguration of the Greyfriars Junction improvements ensuring greater accessibility and safer movements for cyclists and pedestrians, accelerating a local development scheme and relieving pinch points on the transport network. All proposals have gone through “traffic management reviews” and no delays expected. Prebend Street will be a relief road.

The Greyfriars project will reduce the size of the road layout to unlock land for intensified development at the former police station site and provide enhancements to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure at the junction. The existing large roundabout will be converted into a signal-controlled junction and new cycle lanes as well as new pedestrian crossings will be implemented.

**6. TO RECEIVE UPDATE FROM ELEANOR KARKLAS, MANAGER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT, BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL, ON HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE AND CULTURE PROGRAMME**

The Manager for Economic Growth and Development provided a brief update on HSHAZ (High Street Heritage Action Zones) progress. Blue Monk scaffolding will be dismantled this week. The former Goldings unit is now ‘on board’ with the new shopfront being constructed off site.

An application has been received for The Medic Clinic and are now working with All Ears.

Posters promoting the HSHAZ Walking Heritage Tour will be in place at the former Shapes unit for the weekend of the River Festival and when the unit has been let, the posters will be relocated elsewhere on High Street.

The state of the Mercy In Action unit remains a concern with attempts to engage with the landlord fruitless.

The former Oxfam unit on High Street is part of HSHAZ and await further details along with a scheme that could work with stakeholders of the former Debenhams unit.

A member of the Board commented that foot flow in that area had dropped by over 30% since Debenhams had closed.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will provide £2.3m to spend on up to 51 interventions covering communities and place, people and skills and supporting local businesses. These will be capital and revenue projects which boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector.

The Economic Growth Team are currently working on allocations and delivery timescales of the projects which will be over a period between 2022 and 2025.

**8. OPEN DISCUSSION – TOWN CENTRE CONVERSATION; BUSINESS FEEDBACK/UPDATES**

It was noted that work on the tower block at The Bedford College Group has started in earnest with scaffolding to be erected soonest which was due to be hoarded for the River Festival weekend.

The Bedford Swan was again congratulated for winning the 2022 'Best Hotel' category in the Muddy Stilettos Awards.

**9. AOB –** No AOB was presented.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 7th November @ 4.30pm

Meeting closed 5.55pm.