

Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: Friary & St Nicolas and Holy Trinity

Report of Joint Strategic Director of Place

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Experience Guildford: Business Improvement District (BID) Ballot

Executive Summary

Experience Guildford was first successfully voted in by ballot in October 2012. All eligible businesses within the Business Improvement District (BID) area were issued with postal ballot papers and asked whether they were in a favour of Guildford becoming a BID. For the ballot to have been successful, two conditions had to be met – the first was that more than 50% of the businesses that voted had to be in favour in terms of number. The second condition was that of those that voted 'yes', they had to have a greater total Rateable Value than the businesses which voted 'no'.

Experience Guildford's first term commenced in 2013 and with strong support the BID was renewed at ballot again in 2017. The current term will come to an end on 31 January 2023, at which time all activities will cease if they do not renew. The attached briefing note gives further background to the BID history and the BID renewal.

The next BID renewal ballot will take place in October 2022. Guildford Borough Council has 27 properties subject to business rates in the BID area and therefore has 27 votes in the ballot. The BID levy of 1%, raises up to £600,000 per annum. This report seeks support from the Executive to cast the Council's votes in favour of the BID renewal.

Recommendation to Executive:

That the Executive agrees:

- (1) To endorse the Experience Guildford BID Business Plan 2023-28, as set out in Appendix 2 to this report.
- (2) To use the Council's 27 votes to vote in favour of the proposal to renew the experience Guildford Business Improvement District (BID) for Guildford town centre for 2023-2028.
- (3) To delegate the decision to vote in the BID ballot to the Leader of the Council.
- (4) To note the Council's business rates levy of £38,289 per annum for 2023-28, to be accommodated within the existing overall budget.

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

To secure the long-term economic prosperity of the Town Centre and to continue the effective management partnership developed over the previous 10 years.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication?

No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report seeks approval from the Executive to vote in favour of the BID re-ballot and to delegate the authority to cast the vote to the Leader of the Council. The Executive is also asked to note the £38,289 per annum budget for the BID levy for 2023-18.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 This proposal will support the Council's Corporate Plan theme of 'Homes and Jobs', specifically the priorities to revive Guildford town centre to unlock its full potential, create employment opportunities through regeneration and support our business community and attract new inward investment.

3. Background

- 3.1 The attached briefing note at Appendix 1 sets out the background to BIDS and the history of Experience Guildford.
- 3.2 Appendix 2 is the experience Guildford Business Plan 2023-2028 that will form the basis of the 2022 re-ballot for the Experience Guildford BID. The postal ballot will take place between 29 September and 27 October 2022.

4. Consultations

- 4.1 The Strategy & Resources Executive Advisory Board received a presentation from the BID Chief Executive on 13 June 2022 and was asked to review the Draft Business Plan and to comment and make appropriate contributions to the consultation process.
- 4.2 The Lead Councillor for Economy, Customer Service & Heritage, Councillor John Redpath, has been consulted, as has Councillor Tom Hunt who is the Councillor representative on the BID board, along with the Strategic Services Director who also has a seat on the BID Board.

5. Key Risks

- 5.1 If the Council were not to vote in favour of the BID renewal and the continuation of a sustainable solution to town centre management, Guildford's position as one of the premier shopping destinations in the south-east could be eroded, along with the Council's reputation.
- 5.2 There is also a risk that if the BID were to cease there would be an expectation that the Council would pick up the work and activity of the BID which it would be unable to do as it would not have the resources or budget to step into the areas that the BID funds. This could lead to further reputational damage.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Council has 27 properties in the BID area. The BID levy for these properties is £38,289. The Bid levy is included in the overall budget for Business Rates across the Council. The Council has a budget of £2.997million for business rates in 2022-23. The cost of running the BID ballot and collecting the business rate levy will be met by the BID

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications other than the formal decision to vote in the ballot.

8. Human Resource Implications

- 8.1 The organisation of the formal postal ballot rests with the Electoral Services team, although this is outsourced to Civica Election Services. The responsibility for collecting the business rate levy falls to the Council and the Finance team are prepared up to do this.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

9.1 There is no need for an equalities impact assessment as the proposal increases participation and involvement of the wider community

10. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

10.1 No such implications apply.

11. Executive Advisory Board comments

11.1 Strategy and Resource EAB on 13 June 2022 received a presentation from the Experience Guildford Chief Executive. The EAB's comments from that meeting are attached at Appendix 3.

12. Summary of Options

12.1 Option 1: to vote in favour of the BID renewal, this is the recommended option for the reasons outlined in this report.

12.2 Option 2: to vote against the renewal of the BID.

13. Conclusion

13.1 Supporting the BID renewal will enable the Council to continue its commitment to the Town Centre and the partnership approach which has been developed over the last 10 years.

14. Background Papers

None

15. Appendices

Appendix 1: BID Briefing note 2022

Appendix 2: EXPERIENCE Guildford BID re-ballot Business Plan 2022

Appendix 3: Extract from Strategy & Resources Executive Advisory Board minute 13 June 2022