

## **Business Improvement Districts**

A Business Improvement District (BID) is an established concept operating in many town and cities across the U.K. A BID is a not for profit company formed within a defined geographical area and delivers a programme of agreed actions set out in an approved business plan. The business plan might include projects supporting access and visitor facilities, safety, security and cleanliness, marketing and promotional activities.

The BID is formed following a vote of all eligible businesses liable for business rates within the BID area and will generate sufficient funding to implement the business plan. In formulating the scope of the business plan and the thresholds for inclusion in the BID, once approved through a ballot, all business rate payers will contribute within the defined area. This levy is currently 1% of rateable value.

The BID will run for five years after which another ballot must be held if the BID is to continue.

The Local Government Act 2003 empowered local councils to be able to be involved in the administrative framework for a ballot to create a BID, to be a financial stakeholder for a BID and to accommodate the additional rates levy.

## **'Experience Guildford'**

In June 2012, the Executive resolved to support the creation of a BID in Guildford and to become a stakeholder. The Leader of the Council votes in the BID ballot.

The main benefits of a BID to the Council were defined as follows:

- an open and accountable partnership
- an ability to plan long term as the funding would last for five years
- an equitable share of the BID costs amongst all eligible businesses
- a distinction between the Council's base line services and enhanced services to encourage economic prosperity for Guildford
- increased scope for sustainable economic development through inward investment
- enhanced infrastructure investment

'Experience Guildford' has been operating as a retail and leisure BID in Guildford town centre since early 2013.

'Experience Guildford' regularly monitors the health of the retail sector - looking at footfall and occupancy rates. In addition, it has delivered many projects in accordance with the business plan as prescribed by the businesses in 2012. The project areas are:

- Marketing, promotions and events
- Safe, clean and welcoming
- Business support

- Car parking and access

In accordance with these areas and in discussion with stakeholders, 'Experience Guildford' has delivered many initiatives including, but not exclusively:

- Guildford on Sea beach
- Customer Service Awards
- Best Bar None Awards
- Independents' Month
- Free training, cost savings for levy payers
- Town Rangers
- Business Crime Reduction Partnership
- Additional pedestrian signage
- Additional Christmas lights
- Additional hanging baskets.

More information about 'Experience Guildford initiatives can be found on the website at the following link

<http://experienceguildford.co.uk>

The BID is reaching the end of the first five-year term and in October the stakeholders of the BID will go to ballot to determine the renewal of the BID company from February 2018 – January 2023.

The Draft Plan is based on the stakeholder survey taken in late 2016 and is out for consultation with the levy payers until the beginning of June.

The Borough, Economy and Infrastructure Executive Advisory Board is asked to review the Draft Business Plan and to comment and make appropriate contributions to the consultation process.

The Draft Business Plan for 2018-2023 can be also be viewed on the website at the following link

<http://experienceguildford.co.uk/ballot-2017/>