

Business Improvement Districts (BID)

A BID is where businesses come together and decide what additional improvements they want to make to their town. They decide what it will cost them, as well as how these improvements and projects will be managed and delivered. BIDs are funded by the businesses that benefit from them, and the money is ringfenced so it can only be spent in the BID area, and on projects that they have agreed to in the Business Plan. Since BIDs were first introduced to the UK as part of a pilot scheme in 2005, more than 150 BIDs have successfully been established. BIDs last for 5 years, and after this the businesses must hold another ballot if they wish for a BID to continue.

BIDs are not for profit companies formed within a defined geographical area that deliver 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.

The Guildford BID

Experience Guildford was successfully voted in by ballot in October 2012. All eligible businesses within the BID area were issued with ballot papers and simply 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. The result was 83% voting yes by number and 91% voting yes by Rateable Value.

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. Therefore, they needed to develop a new business plan that will be subject to a vote in October 2022. During the first half of 2022 they communicated with levy payers regarding this process, as part of this they issued a survey so that they could ensure that they are clear about what they do well, what they can improve on and what new things levy payers want them to deliver for the next 5 years. They also held a number of BID renewal workshops. The Council’s, Strategy & Resources Executive Advisory Board received a presentation from the BID CEO and was

asked to review the Draft Business Plan and to comment and make appropriate contributions to the consultation process.

The BID levy of 1%, raises up to £600,000 per annum and has been bolstered further by grants and other income of over £50,000.

Further Background Information

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 also regularly monitor the health of the retail sector, looking at footfall and occupancy rates.

The 2018-2023 Business Plan set out some key themes under which all the BIDs work has been carried out.

- Promoting Guildford and organising events to build upon its reach and appeal
- Enhancing the cleanliness and safety of the town
- Improving the parking and access in the town
- Providing business support for BID members

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

<http://experienceguildford.co.uk .com>

The Draft Business Plan for 2023-2028 can also be viewed on the website at the following link:

<https://www.experienceguildford.com/about-experience-guildford/ballot-2022/>