



Bury St Edmunds Area Working Party 19 July 2011

Bid4Bury update

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Working Party with regard to the progress made by Bid4Bury in delivering its business plan.**

2. Background

- 2.1 A Business Improvement District (BID) is an established national initiative whereby local businesses/stakeholders within a defined area vote upon whether they wish to contribute an additional element of their business rates towards their own defined priorities. For example, the levy is usually between 1% and 2%, handed to the independent BID company which allocates it towards the agreed provision of additional services in the area such as additional security provision, additional litter/graffiti control, marketing/promotion initiatives. These services must be in addition to those already being delivered by St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Constabulary.
- 2.2 In Autumn 2009, 465 businesses in Bury St Edmunds town centre were given the opportunity to vote for or against the establishment of a BID in Bury St Edmunds. Following a positive result at the count on 1 December 2009 the BID named Bid4Bury was formed.
- 2.3 From 1 April 2010, all of the businesses within the defined BID area with a rateable value of £10,000 and greater were obliged to pay 1.75% of their rateable value each year for the following 5 years. This funding must be used to deliver the Bid4Bury Business Plan, which was similar to a manifesto, in that it set out the intentions of the company prior to the election.
- 2.4 Bid4Bury has a board of 14 directors including 9 representing the town centre businesses covering a range of sectors including retail, evening economy, professional services, and education. There are two members of staff, the Chief Executive and his assistant and four Street Rangers employed through the Ipswich Central, the Bid Company for Ipswich.
- 2.5 Bid4Bury has been in existence now for 15 months and is demonstrating its benefits to those businesses, including the Borough Council, that contribute towards the bid. In February 2011, the Chief Executive and his assistant were appointed. With these key appointments in place the bid has really begun to make a difference for its businesses and the town in general.

3. Business Plan

3.1 The Bid4Bury Business Plan includes six main project areas:-

- (i) marketing (the town as a whole);
- (ii) safety and Security;
- (iii) Christmas season (festive lights and events);
- (iv) environment;
- (v) events; and
- (vi) business support.

3.2 The marketing element of the Business Plan is afforded the greatest priority and a significant amount of resource. This is a key function of Bid4Bury as it recognises that marketing on a town-wide scale would not be possible by individual business or even groups of businesses. Bid4Bury has engaged Cubiqdesign, a creative design agency to develop a marketing campaign for Bury St Edmunds and more details about what this includes, and how the Borough Council can become involved will be available at the next meeting of the Working Party.

3.3 There is no doubt that compared to many other towns, Bury St Edmunds is a safe place in which to shop, live or run a business. However, like most places there is always a small element of undesirable behaviour that can have the effect of discouraging people from visiting. Bid4Bury has a contract with Ipswich Central to provide four street rangers whose role is to provide a presence on the streets to help and assist anyone visiting the town or to help any of the businesses who may need assistance. Much of this work is ambassadorial but every now and then the Street Rangers are required to assist with Police matters or casualties in the town centre.

3.4 The Street Rangers provide the daily contact with the Bid4Bury businesses and act as a two-way conduit of information. The four rangers are based geographically within the town which has been split into notional quarters for this purpose. They are able to report upon environmental matters; issues of health & safety; crime and security; unauthorised activities (fly posting, people with clipboards, vagrants); and new shops and enterprises. In addition to the Street Rangers, Bid4Bury has worked in partnership with the company Shopsafe to upgrade all of the town link radios from analogue to digital. This system provides the ability for all shops to be linked to each other and the Police and helps mitigate against shoplifting and nuisance behaviour.

3.5 The provision of Christmas lights in our town centre and in town centres across the nation has frequently been an issue found in the headlines of our local and national media. There were several towns and cities last year that did not have any town-wide Christmas light displays. Bid4Bury was able to provide an enhanced display for Christmas 2010 and also organised the switch-on event, late night shopping Thursdays; and the Charity Night market. The plans for Christmas 2011 are even more ambitious with a considerable capital investment to ensure all of the parts of the bid area are covered by festive lighting and to combine the switch on and charity night events into one much more entertaining event. The ambition is to attract people into the town to showcase our businesses and to create a memorable Christmas atmosphere.

- 3.6 The aims of the environment element of the Business Plan are to add to the activities of the Borough Council and others to make the town an even more attractive place to visit. Bid4Bury has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Borough Council with regard to Waste and Street Scene Services. This enables Bid4Bury to use this agreement to commission additional activities, if desired, over and above the agreed level of cleansing. The Street Rangers have been trained in graffiti removal and can provide a quick response to any issues that may crop up overnight. All four rangers have the powers necessary to enable them to issue on the spot fines for people spotted dropping litter in the bid area. Bid4Bury has contributed to the costs of three new waste bins for Cornhill and St Andrews Street North and has provided businesses with cigarette receptacles in the "hot spot" parts of the town.
- 3.7 Bid4Bury has commissioned Bury in Bloom to provide hanging baskets in Risbygate Street, St John's Street, Brentgovel Street and new basket trees for Cornhill and the Market Place. The commitment to additional floral displays is for 2011 and the remaining years of the bid term (ending 2015).
- 3.8 Town centres need to be more than just a collection of different retail outlets; they need to provide entertainment and excitement. Organising events in the town centre is a good way to attract visitors and shoppers provided the events are well organised and carefully structured. Bid4Bury has worked with the St John's Street traders, Churchgate Association; and Risbygate Street traders to help organise their street fayres – in particular helping with expertise regarding road closures, licences etc. and contributing funds.
- 3.9 Bid4Bury has inherited some events such as Charity Night, Christmas lights switch on; and the Flower & Continental Market. The aim is to make all of these events bigger and better than in previous years. In 2011 the Flower & Continental Market was renamed Whitsun Fayre and the event included free pitches for town centre businesses and an animal petting area, in addition to the wide range of food and plant stalls. The event was extremely well attended and was particularly well received by those traders who took the opportunity to stock the market stalls as well as their own shops. In addition to existing events, Bid4Bury has looked to bring new events to this town. In 2011 Bid4Bury organised a Royal Wedding Treasure Hunt involving the Royal Wedding items being placed in certain shop windows meaning that participants needed to look in lots of shop windows to locate the items and complete an entry form identifying the location of each item.
- 3.10 With regard to business support, Bid4Bury has provided the following opportunities to its businesses:-
- (i) discounts on utility costs;
 - (ii) discounts on membership of the Federation of Small Businesses, the benefits of which include a 'legal hotline';
 - (iii) advertising deals with a variety of local media organisations for example Etc Magazine; East Anglian Daily Times (EADT); Best of Bury; Mercury; Heart Radio; Velvet Magazine; and Suffolk Magazine;
 - (iv) free website link from the Visit Bury website;

- (v) networking meetings; and
 - (vi) tailored leaflet identifying business support courses e.g. 'Finding and Keeping Customers' and the bursary available to contribute towards the costs of attendance.
- 3.11 The Bid4Bury approach is to market the town far and wide to encourage people to visit, and once they are here they will be treated to an enjoyable experience in a clean, safe and very beautiful town.

4. Summary

4.1 Bid4Bury was voted for by the businesses in the Town Centre and came into being in April 2010 for a five year term. The Business Plan focuses on six key areas which work in concert to ensure that visitors/shoppers are attracted to the town; once here, their experience is pleasant with well trained/supported staff and the Town Centre is clean, bright, attractive, safe and easy to access.

4.2 Bid4Bury has taken a significant step forward to change the perception of the company in the town and most notably with the levy paying businesses.

5. Recommendation

5.1 The Working Party is requested to **NOTE** the progress of Bid4Bury.

For further information, please contact:-

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