

Public Document Pack

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

TUESDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No Item

12. **HITCHIN, LETCHWORTH AND ROYSTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) RENEWALS** (Pages 3 - 30)

A revision to the Letchworth Garden City BID Prospectus. Pg 3-27

Agenda No Item

12. **HITCHIN, LETCHWORTH AND ROYSTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) RENEWALS** (Pages 3 - 30)

An amendment and correction to the report of the Economic Development Officer. Pg 29-30

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Letchworth Garden City
Business Improvement District (BID)
Proposal and Business Plan
2024 – 2029

Table of Contents

1. Foreword.
2. What is a Business Improvement District.
3. Letchworth BID – the last 5 years.
4. Where will Letchworth BID operate.
5. The research and consultation process.
6. Vision and objectives.
7. Organisation, Resources and Finances.
8. Letchworth Budget and Finances.
9. BID Levy Criteria for Letchworth BID.
10. Risk Analysis.
11. Final Thoughts.

Letchworth Business Improvement District (BID) Proposal and Business Plan 2024 – 2029

1. Foreword

Message from the Manager of the Letchworth BID

For the last ten years Letchworth Garden City town centre has enjoyed the benefits of a Business Improvement District. This has resulted in an additional £2 million being spent to improve the business opportunities in our town.

It has been a challenging past few years, particularly with the COVID pandemic, but the BID team has risen to the challenge with some outstanding examples of how they have supported the business community in Letchworth. The current team is no different, demonstrating a real passion to support each and every business in the BID area.

The BID is justifiably proud of the range and variety of events and campaigns, the Christmas Lights, the beautiful planters, marketing, and training opportunities provided to businesses. However, it has been much more than that.

The BID is proving to be a real force for good in the town, reaching out and supporting hard to reach businesses, helping to drive initiatives such as enhanced town centre signage and sustainability projects, developing the new town centre website and being a voice for the businesses through improved communication links.

As we come to the end of the current cycle it is time for the businesses to decide whether to vote for the BID. They will decide whether to retain the services and support of the BID team or rely on other organisations and businesses to provide the wide range of events and initiatives described above.

In short, if the businesses vote 'No', by majority, all those opportunities, events, services and support will stop on 31st March 2024. At that point there will be no collective voice and budget to deliver any priorities identified by businesses. In short, businesses will be left to face the challenges and uncertainties of the future alone.

This business plan aims to prove that the BID is worth investing in. It demonstrates that, by working together, with investment from all the businesses and organisations in the BID and the positive community spirit that Letchworth has in bounds, real difference can be made to the town centre.

We already have a town centre to be proud of, complemented by the open spaces and community organisations within walking distance. By voting to keep the BID the businesses will be making a very positive statement that we can always do better and help make a town centre that everyone is proud to visit, live and work in.

Richard Harbon
Letchworth BID Manager

Current BID Board Members

The BID Company, the Letchworth Garden City Business Improvement District Limited, is the body which has proposed the BID for the purposes of the BID Statutory Provisions and is responsible for the implementation of the BID plan. The membership of the board of the company is open to all businesses in the BID area.

The current members of the BID Board are:

Name	Business Name
Maureen Davison (Chair)	Just For Me
Harry Williams (Director)	Vutie Beets
Punit Shah (Director)	Cooks Boutique
Nigel Walters	Morrisons
Cllr Daniel Allen	North Hertfordshire Council
Graham Fisher	LGC Heritage Foundation (CEO)
Jack Philbin	Garden Square Shopping Centre
Aminta Gagnon	We Do Yoga
Savannah Joyce	Arena Tavern
Julia Bothick	Joules
Richard Harbon	Love Letchworth BID
Suzy Holding	Best Before Cafe
Ali Ribchester	Tutti Frutti

2. What is a Business Improvement District.

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a precisely defined geographical area within which the businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to enhance their trading environment.

BIDs were enabled by parliament through the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. Since their inception over 350 BIDs have been approved by business communities in England and Wales and have been proven to be a powerful tool to enhance the trading environment of town centres.

The lifetime of a BID is prescribed by regulations and is set at no more than 5 years. At the end of the BID period businesses within the BID area are offered the opportunity to vote whether they want the BID to remain.

The purpose of the BID is to provide new or extended works and services or environmental enhancements within the BID area, funded via a BID levy charge. All services/improvements will be additional to those already provided by North Herts Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

The Vote

To succeed the ballot must pass two tests.

- A majority vote of those who vote.

- The aggregate rateable value of those who vote 'Yes' must be greater than those who vote 'No'.

The persons entitled to vote, and are liable for the BID levy, are the ratepayers of non-domestic premises in the BID, which meet the levy criteria.

The Ballot Holder for the BID vote is North Herts Council's Service Director, Customers. Details of voting procedures and how you can confirm persons entitled to vote can be found by contacting Letchworth Garden City BID on 01462 486999 or BID@LoveLetchworth.com.

Alteration of Arrangements

The BID, its boundaries, business plan and the levy percentage cannot be altered without an alteration ballot. The BID Board can adjust projects and spending as they feel appropriate, provided the basic tenets and budgets are not compromised.

There are no plans to make any alterations to the current BID area or levy percentage.

The Levy

A levy of 2% of rateable value is proposed for all businesses irrespective of their rateable value and which fall within the levy criteria laid down in Section 10.

The levy arrangement will generate around £1million of ring-fenced funding over the 5 years life of the BID and will also help lever in additional income. This money will be used to fund projects identified in the business plan. See Section 9 for more detail.

Duration of the BID arrangements.

Subject to the successful ballot in December 2023 the arrangements for the Letchworth BID and associated business plan will operate for 5 years from 1st April 2024. This can be extended in 2029, subject to a renewal ballot.

Ballot Timescales

Action	Due Date
Notification to the Secretary of State and Billing Authority of the intention to hold a ballot to renew the BID.	3 rd July 2023
North Herts Council Meeting to discuss BID Business Plan.	19 th September 2023
Notification of the ballot letter to be sent out.	24 th October 2023
Despatch of ballot papers.	7 th November 2023
Latest date to appoint Proxy.	27 th November 2023
Close of ballot.	7 th December 2023
Ballot papers counted.	8 th December 2023
Result of ballot will be declared shortly after.	

3. Letchworth BID – the last 5 years.

Ten years ago, the Letchworth Business Improvement District was established by businesses in the town to address the increasing challenges faced by many small towns and high streets across the country. Five years ago, the BID was re-elected with support from over 85% of those who voted.

Many of the challenges reported in the prospectus of 5 years ago remain today. There is still a threat of recession, competition from the internet and neighbouring towns and many businesses still feel isolated. The challenges that COVID presented to the business opportunities have only added to this uncertainty.

In response the Letchworth BID has risen to the challenge providing a wide range of events, campaigns and opportunities to individual businesses and the wider town to maximise their opportunities to succeed.

The current team has at its heart the mantra that it will listen and respond to the needs and ideas and businesses in the BID and to invest their money in projects and initiatives that they have identified as priorities.

Below are just some of the initiatives undertaken during the last term of 5 years. Without the BID and businesses working together and providing the funding, none of these activities would have been possible.

- An annual respected programme of events generating increased footfall and repeat visits. For example, The Coronation, Christmas Lights, Food and Drink.
- An imaginative range of campaigns to provide continued interest in local shops. For example, Halloween, Easter Trail and FiverFest.
- Generation of commercial revenue from events enabling continued investment and sponsorship.
- Introduction of the new Love Letchworth branding, bringing a clearer, more professional narrative for the town centre.
- Provision of a wide range of free training opportunities for businesses empowering them to better help themselves.
- Provision of the Christmas Lights and associated Christmas events.
- Wide ranging support to businesses during COVID through communication, PPE support, sign posting to grants and business opportunities and restarting events.
- Development of a new town centre website to further advertise businesses, events, and opportunities.
- Promotion and sharing of best practice through networking events.
- Promotion of businesses and organisations to a wider audience by recruiting a dedicated marketing manager and maximising every publicity opportunity.
- Responsible for the beautiful planters in the town centre which have significantly enhanced the street scene.

In addition, the BID team has demonstrated how important working together at a strategic level is by playing a major role in:

- The Town Centre Recovery Group.
- The Letchworth Sustainability Travel Group.
- The rebranding of Letchworth Garden City project.

The BID team has learnt several lessons along the way:

- The BID represents each and every business in the BID area. Connecting with and listening to these businesses is paramount in making sure the BID does the right thing for the town.
- Events can bring increased footfall to the town, but this does not mean increased trading for all the shops. Frequency and type of event must be balanced.
- Working together is the only way that we will ever be successful in facing current and future challenges. Whether that's businesses, individuals, organisations, and agencies.

Finally, the current BID team has also demonstrated the importance of being an Ambassador for the town centre and all the businesses therein. This has been, primarily, in its involvement in the ongoing fraud investigation and by putting in place processes and practices to make sure the issues faced by the previous BID team can never happen again.

4. Partnership Working.

Letchworth Garden City has a unique heritage, as the first garden city, upon which it can develop and grow. It is a town full of opportunities, which is within easy reach of large audiences and business markets and has unique features to North Herts such as a railway station actually in the town centre.

In order to take advantage of the great opportunities that exist, it is essential that the BID works with the full range of partners to raise the town's profile, improve the appeal to visitors and make it a great location for people to live, visit and work and for businesses to expand and invest.

There are already strong links with North Herts Council with an agreed protocol, 'BID Operating Agreement with North Hertfordshire District Council'. This document needs a review but most of the agreements and policies within are as relevant today as they were when it was agreed.

The BID works closely with Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation in a range of initiatives. The Heritage Foundation is a unique and very positive asset for the town that has the experience and influence to continue to make a significant difference in the town centre.

Letchworth is also lucky to have a whole range of very proactive independent businesses who are already making a significant difference to Letchworth. For example, the Wynd.

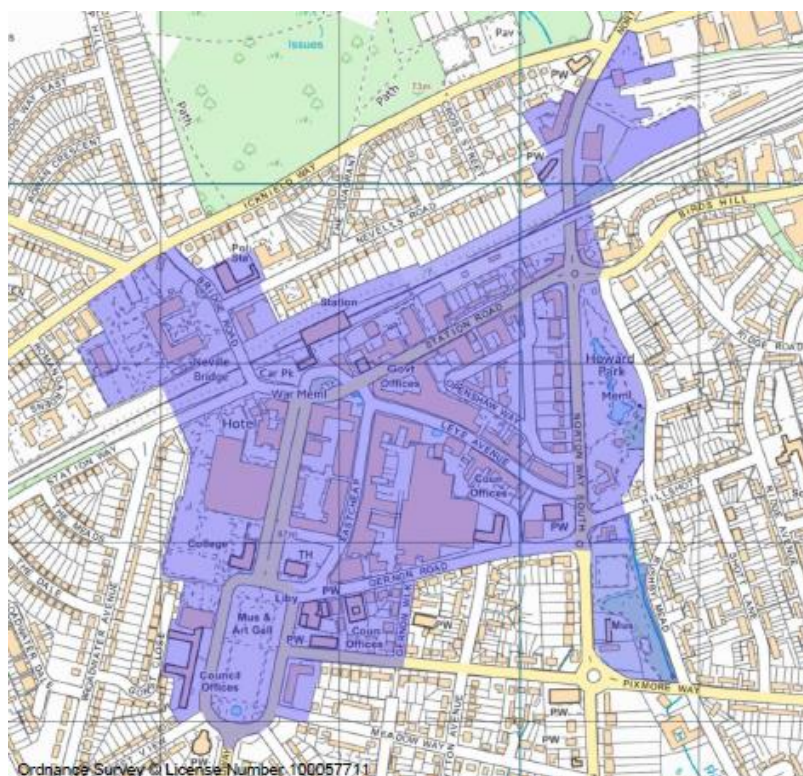
In addition, Letchworth has a range of other partners that can help to make a huge difference to the town centre. For example, the Festival Committee. They are already bringing vibrancy and helping to improve the trading environment.

Finally, Letchworth has a very can-do wide range of communities who care passionately about the environment that they live in. Many are already involved in volunteering for organisations such as the Heritage Foundation. Handled correctly there is clearly scope for them to get involved in developing our town centre.

Though the role of the BID is not to assume the responsibilities of many of those referred to above, it does have a major role in bringing all these partners together and influencing them to carry out their responsibilities in the town centre. It is essential, in this challenging trading environment that we maximise all the opportunities for partnership working.

5. The Proposed BID Area.

The highlighted area represents the full extent of the proposed BID Area for 2024 – 2029.



Letchworth BID Area

A full list of the streets within the BID area is shown below. The BID covers all non-domestic rated properties within this area. This includes all banks, building societies, car parks, council facilities, restaurants, clubs and pubs, estate agents, leisure operators, charities, recruitment agencies, retail and health and beauty outlets, office based businesses and organisations, and transport and transport agents and all other non-domestic hereditaments are included within the BID area.

The BID area includes any smaller business areas located off these roads or streets that are located within the boundary of the BID area and any other road or street, even if they are not listed, as below, and will include any new road or street which is developed or created during the life of the BID, which is within the BID area.

The roads and streets within the BID area include:

- Arena Parade.
- Bridge Road.
- Broadway (Station Place to West View/South View).
- Central Approach.
- Commerce Way.
- Eastcheap.
- Gernon Rd.
- Gernon Walk (West side only).
- Howard Park Corner.
- Leys Avenue.
- Norton Way North (From Station Rd to Icknield Way).
- Norton Way South (From Station Rd to Pixmore Way).
- Openshaw Way.
- Rowland Way.
- Station Forecourt.
- Station Place.
- Station Rd.
- The Arcade.
- The Wynd.

6. The research and consultation process.

Over the last 12 months extensive research and consultation has taken place across a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that this business plan truly reflects the views and priorities of the businesses in the BID area as well as the perceptions of those who visit, work, and reside in the area.

The research carried out includes:

- All the businesses in the BID area received a BID survey seeking their opinions on a variety of issues.
- Over 90% of the businesses in the BID have received at least one personal visit from a member of the BID team to discuss the BID.
- Over 50% of businesses returned a completed survey.
- All businesses in the BID area who operated in the night-time economy were also encouraged to complete a specific survey based on the NTE.
- In 2022 'People and Places' conducted a thorough survey of businesses, visitors, and residents of the town centre as part of the Town Centre Recovery Strategy.
- The BID has managed a series of breakfast and evening events inviting all businesses in the BID area to share their views on priorities and budget setting.
- There has been regular contact with all the businesses in the BID area via social media and email, including seeking views on and the activities organised by the BID.

- The BID Manager has made personal visits to over 90% of the businesses in the BID, held drop in events at the hard-to-reach locations and offered drop-in clinics and 1 2 1 meetings.
- The BID has regular communication with businesses and organisations via the BID newsletter.
- The BID organises regular press releases in the local paper promoting events, campaigns, and the BID.

The results of all this research and consultation have been analysed and used to develop the objectives for this business plan. If you require more information on the data collected, please contact the BID team.

7. Vision and Objectives.

Following consultation and research with the businesses in the BID area and a wide range of customers, the following priorities and objectives have been proposed for the next five years. They will commence on 1st April 2024.

The Vision

Through this business led programme of investment the vision is for Letchworth Garden City town centre to be:

- A 21st century Garden City which is connected and engaged with its business community, residents, and visitors.
- A vibrant 'Go To' place with a sense of common purpose which is attractive and appealing for everyone who lives, works, visits, and does business in Letchworth Garden City.
- A place which is lively, has strong sense of identity and awareness and is recognised locally, nationally, and internationally.

Objectives

1. TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS LIVELY AND WELL PROMOTED

Letchworth BID will work to create a town centre which is lively and has a strong sense of identity that is attractive to customers and by doing so increases the business opportunities.

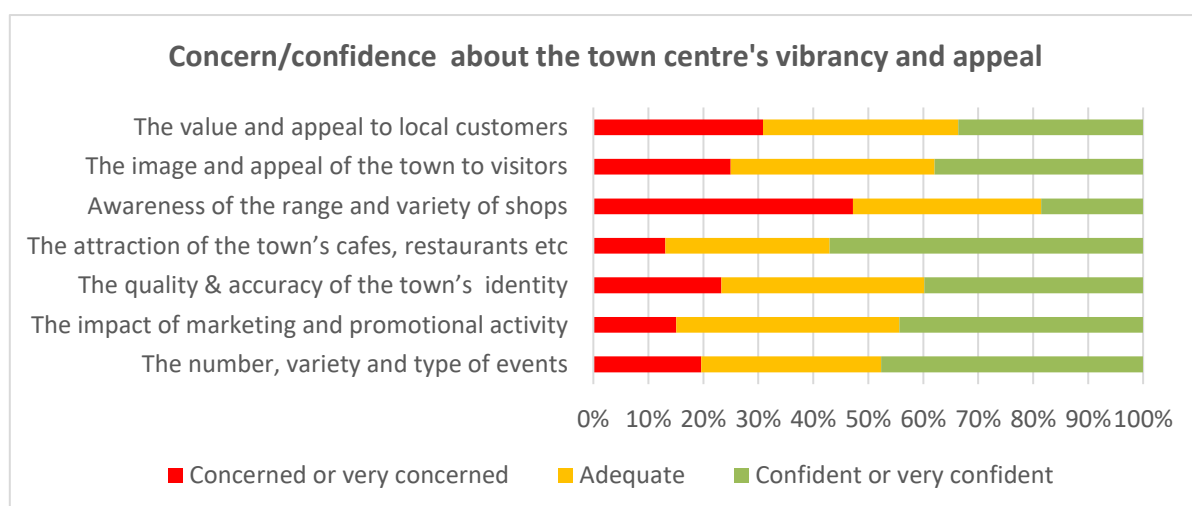
Budget – An initial budget of £101,500 in year 1 increasing to £134,441 in year 5.

People & Places Consultation

We know from recent research that the top priorities for businesses are the promotion of the town through events, better marketing, and digital promotion of its positive aspects. We want to continue to put on a series of high-quality events and maximise the marketing opportunities to make the town centre an attractive place for people to visit and do business.

- When users were asked if they would recommend a visit to Letchworth town centre, more than two-thirds (68%) of users said yes.
- Customers gave a high priority to the use of social media for insights about businesses, products, and places to eat (59%), followed by direct updates from favoured businesses (53%).
- Customers were slightly positive about the existing online identity of the town centre (37%) and gave high importance to the regular use of social media to promote their business and engage with customers (72%), followed by web site creation and management (67%).
- Future priorities included improving the digital promotion of the town alongside traditional methods. Customers stated that an effective broadband connection (73%) and good digital phone network coverage (68%) were important to their future performance.

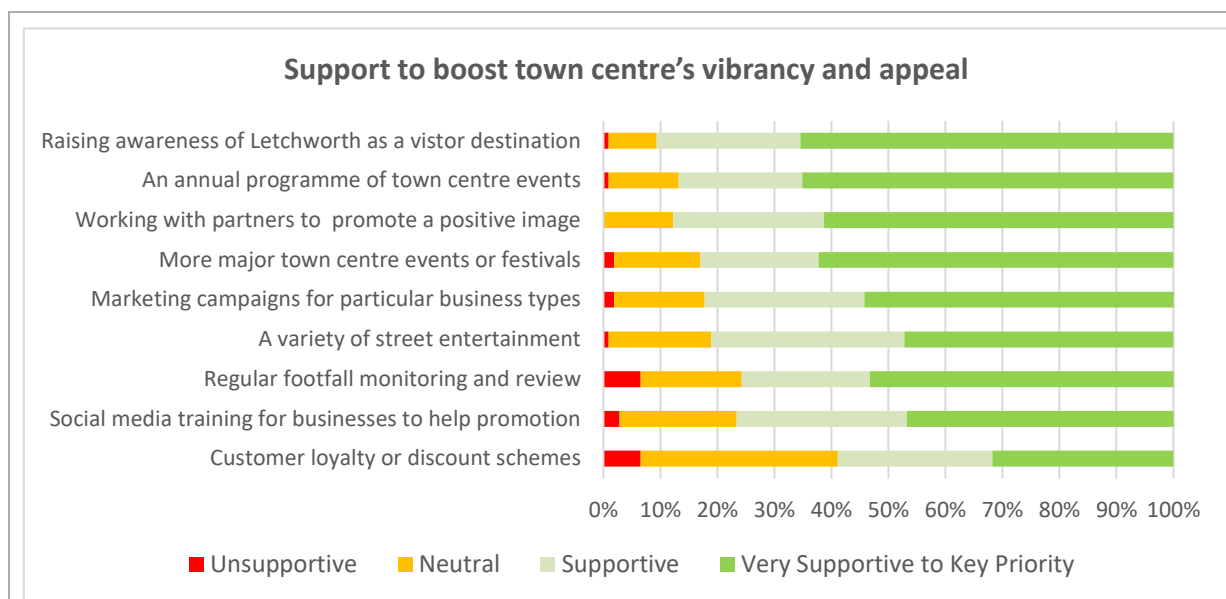
Letchworth BID Business Survey



When we surveyed businesses this summer, they expressed their confidence about the range and variety of events in the town centre. They were confident or very confident about the impact that effective marketing and promotion could have on the town centre business (84%) and the attraction of the town centres cafes and restaurants (87%).

Businesses expressed their greatest concern to us about range and variety of shops, with nearly half (47%) concerned or very concerned. Over 30% of the businesses also expressed their concern about the value and appeal of Letchworth to local customers. Businesses also had a very mixed response to the quality and accuracy of the town centre identity.

Businesses said working together was crucial in developing and promoting a positive brand and image for Letchworth (88%).



In our summer survey of future priorities for the work of the BID, businesses supported an annual calendar of events and campaigns to increase the vibrancy and footfall in the town centre (69%). This included over 82% of respondents supporting or setting as a priority more town centre events and festivals.

Businesses also highlighted the need to focus on marketing for events, particular campaigns and businesses with over 80% being supportive or setting as a priority. In addition businesses were very supportive of a variety of street entertainment (72%).

Proposed Activities

From our understanding of customers' perceptions about the quality and number of events and the need to promote and market the positive aspects of the town centre, and listening this summer to businesses' priorities for improving the identity and awareness of the town centre to do business, Letchworth BID propose to undertake the following activities.

Delivery

- Organise and provide support to an annual calendar of high quality events, campaigns and street entertainment working with North Herts Council Safety Advisory Team, where applicable.
- Lead on the introduction of shop local promotional opportunities and loyalty schemes.
- Maximise marketing and promotional opportunities of the town centre and the events therein through the wide range of media outlets.

Influence

- Contributing to future planning strategy to help shape the future of the town centre through groups such as the Town Centre Recovery Group.
- Working closely with Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation and Garden Square to have a partnership approach to publicity and marketing of the town centre.
- Play a central role in the development of the wider Letchworth Garden City branding.
- Work with a range of partners to develop the business opportunities of the night time economy in the town centre including promoting an active Pub Watch scheme.

Measuring and monitoring results

We are keen to understand and show the impact of the BID's activities in creating a town centre environment which is lively and well promoted. That is why Letchworth BID will be working with its partners to measure, monitor and share how creating a town centre which is lively and has a strong sense of identity, that is attractive to customers, will increase the business opportunities.

In simple terms we will be tracking the contribution of high quality events and campaigns and greater focus on marketing and promoting the positive aspects of the town centre will increase the number of happy faces in our town centre! We will do this by measuring and monitoring:

- The introduction of and management of an annual calendar of events and campaigns and the feedback and footfall data from these events.
- Feedback from Tracking changes in footfall and foot-flow across the town centre.
- Website analytics.
- Data obtained from other sources such as car parks, loyalty schemes.
- Regular surveys.

2. TO PROVIDE A WELCOMING, ATTRACTIVE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT

Love Letchworth BID will work to ensure that the town centre continues to provide a welcoming, attractive, and easily accessible environment that draws customers into and around the town centre so that they can make full use of its businesses.

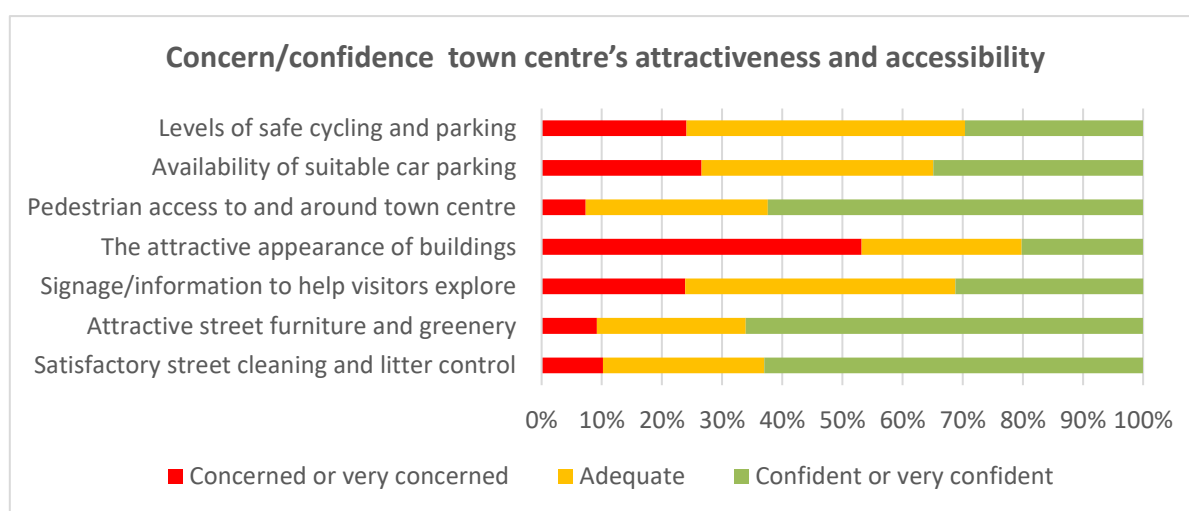
Budget – An initial budget of £40,600 in year 1 increasing to £54,344 in year 5.

People & Places Consultation

We know from recent research that customers and businesses already greatly value Letchworth's town centre environment and accessibility as a key strength. We want to help meet customers' aspirations for it to become even more attractive to spend time in and move around.

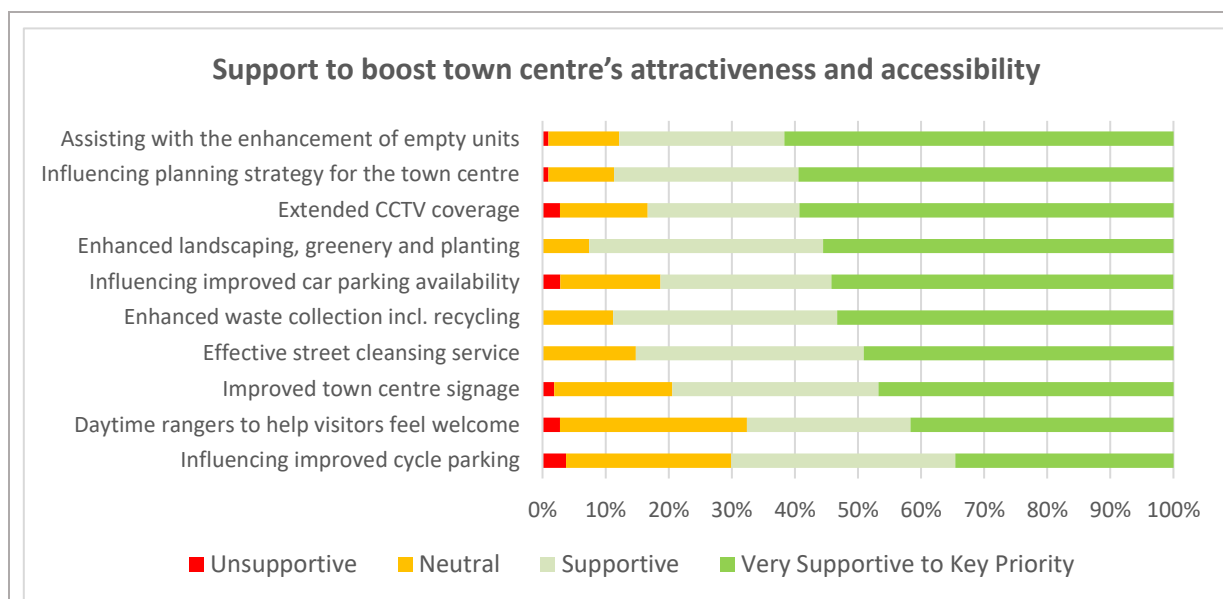
- Customers were very positive about pedestrian access (84%), convenience (83%), cleanliness (75%), public spaces (74%), outdoor seating for hospitality (70%), physical appearance (66%) and the built heritage (64%) of the town centre.
- From the responses to the survey, businesses were positive about the town's public spaces (78%), pedestrian access (76%), cleanliness (74%), outdoor seating for hospitality (65%), safety (61%) and physical appearance (50%).
- The broad theme of appearance and accessibility received a significant number of comments from customers as future priorities, with appearance, greenspace, public outdoor seating, and requests to retain outdoor seating for hospitality prominent with these.

Letchworth BID Business Survey



When we surveyed businesses this summer, they expressed their confidence about how the town centre environment continues to be looked after. They were confident or very confident about the attractiveness of street furniture and greenery (66%), street cleaning and litter control (63%) and standards of pedestrian access to and around town centre (62%).

Businesses expressed their greatest concern to us about maintaining the attractive appearance of the town centre's buildings, including empty shops, with over half (53%), being either concerned or very concerned about this. Businesses also expressed a mix of concern and confidence about aspects of the journey to and around town, including the availability of parking; levels of safe cycling; and signage and information that can help visitors explore the centre.



In our summer survey of future priorities for our work, businesses backed maintaining a strong focus on the town centre's attractiveness and accessibility with support received for all suggested measures from over 70% of respondents.

In particular, over half of businesses were very supportive or gave a high priority to enhancing empty business units; influencing the town centre planning strategy; extended CCTV coverage; enhanced landscaping, greenery and planting; influencing improved car parking availability and enhanced waste collection including recycling.

Proposed Activities

From our understanding of customers' perceptions about the quality of the town centre environment, and listening this summer to businesses' priorities for maintaining and enhancing its impact, Love Letchworth BID propose to undertake the following activities.

Delivery

- Take a leading role in looking after and enhancing landscaping, greenery and planting across the town centre.
- Maintaining and extending the operation of CCTV cameras across the town centre to help address anti-social behaviour and crime.
- Coordinating an enhanced business waste collection service including recycling.

Influence

- Enhancing the appearance of town centre buildings, including empty business units by working closely with landlords and other partners.
- Contributing to future planning strategy to help shape the long-term appearance and role of the town centre.
- Working closely with the Council and other car park operators to review and improve parking performance and perceptions for different types of users.
- Helping to shape how people are able to travel actively to and around the town centre, including through improved cycling facilities and better orientation for pedestrians.

Measuring and monitoring results

We are keen to understand and show the impact of the BID's activities on providing a welcoming, attractive and easily accessible environment for customers and businesses. That is why Love Letchworth BID will be working with its partners to measure, monitor and share how an enhanced environment is successful in attracting customers into and around the town centre so that they can make full use its businesses.

In simple terms we will be tracking the contribution of a high quality environemt to increasing the number of happy faces in the our town centre! We will do this by measuring and monitoring:

- Improved perceptions of the attractiveness and accessibility of the town centre measured through surveys of visitors and businesses.
- Tracking changes in footfall and foot-flow across the town centre

3. TO REPRESENT THE COLLECTIVE VOICE OF BUSINESSES IN THE TOWN CENTRE

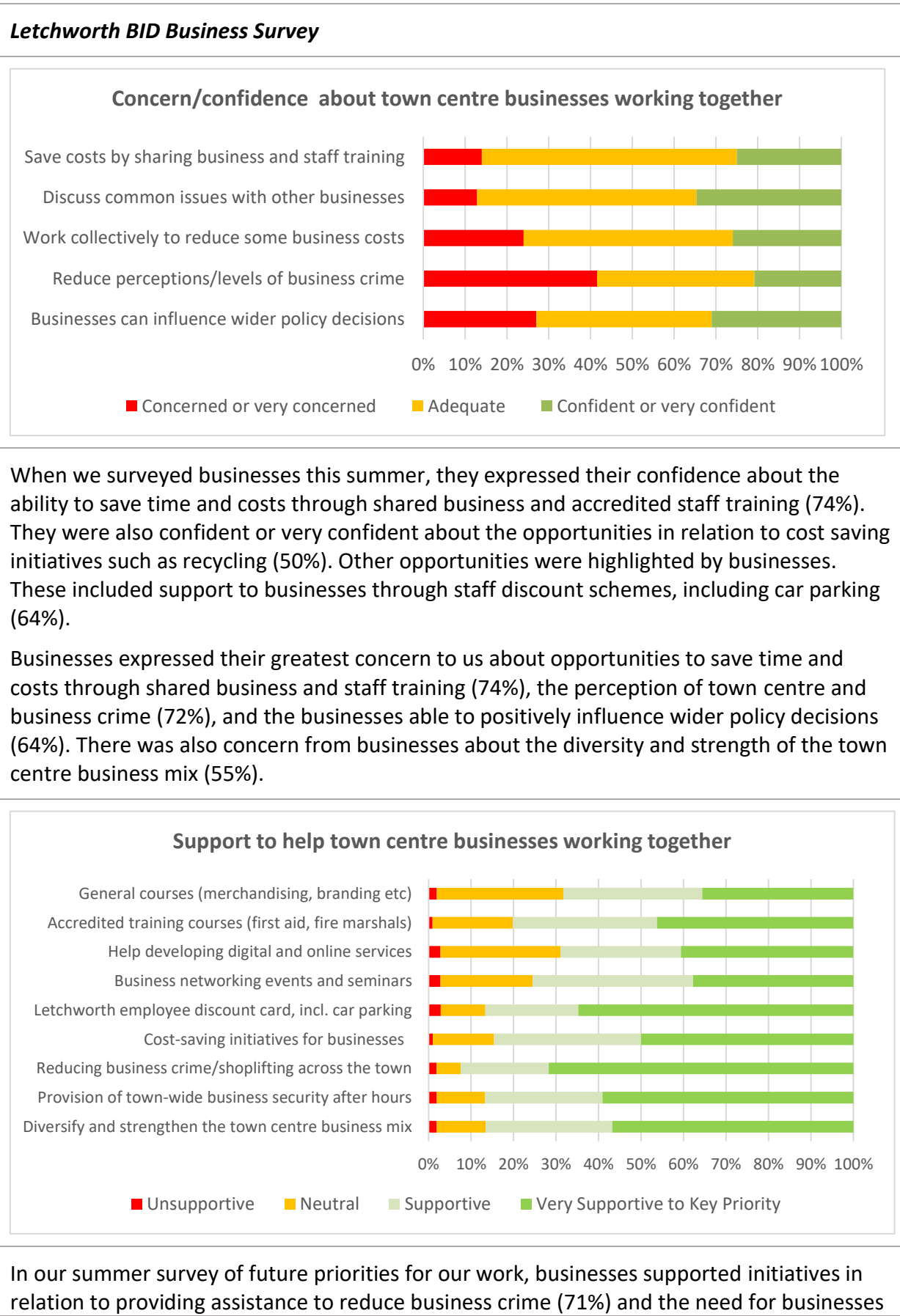
Letchworth BID will represent the collective voice of businesses in the town centre to ensure that it continues to develop into a great place to do business and meets the needs of those who visit, live, work, or do business in Letchworth.

Budget – An initial budget of £47,773 in year 1 increasing to £60,816 in year 5.

People & Places Consultation

We know from recent research that it will remain a priority for the BID to engage with, understand and address businesses' needs as well as working with them as key assets in promoting a refreshed identity and brand for the Garden City.

- *Customers were very positive about Letchworth's cafes and restaurants (80%), health services (67%), grocery retail (66%), customer service (61%), independent shops (51%), banks (50%) and the night-time economy (39%).*
- *When businesses were asked about their perceptions of the Letchworth's trading environment, they were most positive about the town's cafes & restaurants (77%), the benefits of outdoor seating for hospitality (65%) and potential for local customers (48%).*
- *Future priorities highlighted by businesses and customers included the promotion of the town through events (24%), the need to manage aspects of the town centre business mix (19%), parking management and promoting other means of travel (18%). A moderately prominent future priority for customers included extending pedestrianisation for the town centre.*



to have a greater say in positively influencing wider policy decisions in the town centre (64%).

Businesses also highlighted the need to explore wider opportunities in providing support to businesses in relation to cost saving, accredited staff training, networking opportunities and working collectively.

Proposed Activities

From our understanding of customers' perceptions about how well the BID represents the collective voice of the businesses in the town centre, and listening to businesses' priorities, Letchworth BID propose to undertake the following activities.

Delivery

- Provide support to businesses through a range of initiatives including accredited training, the collection of cardboard and admin support (posters, banners etc).
- Take a leading role in the communication to and between businesses through a range of opportunities including the website, social media, networking events and newsletters.
- Be the voice of businesses in the wider town centre meetings such as the Town Centre Recovery Group and Sustainable Travel Group.
- Take a leading role in exploring opportunities for businesses to reduce overheads by working and seeking services collectively.

Influence

- Working closely with the North Herts Community Safety Partnership, and Garden Square to develop a partnership approach to preventing crime and the fear of crime in the town centre.
- Encourage and support businesses to improve their business offer with resources and guidance. For example, business led events.

Measuring and monitoring results

We are keen to understand and show the impact of the BID's activities on creating a town centre environment where businesses work closer together. That is why Letchworth BID will be working with its partners to measure, monitor and share how creating a town centre environment where businesses do work collectively to improve their own opportunities to increase trading.

In simple terms we will be tracking the contribution of improved joined up communication between businesses and the provision of a range of initiatives to reduce overheads, crime levels and working collectively to improve the trading environment. We will do this by measuring and monitoring:

- Regular contact with and surveys of businesses.
- Feedback from Tracking changes in footfall and foot-flow across the town centre.
- Website analytics.
- Crime and ASB data from the Police.
- Data obtained from other sources such as car parks, loyalty schemes.

8. Organisation, Resources and Finances.

The preparation of the business plan has been managed by the BID Manager and the BID Board, which is made up of a cross section of businesses and organisations from across the BID, together with a representative from North Herts Council and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation.

Letchworth Garden City BID Ltd is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. It is legally and operationally responsible to the businesses in the BID area for all the BID activities and acts on their behalf.

The Board is responsible for the governance and the management structure of the BID company. All businesses within the BID are encouraged to be actively involved in the BID and associated working groups to represent the levy payers.

The main role of the Board is to represent and safeguard the interests of BID levy payers by ensuring that the business operates in line with the BID business plan, is professional and offers consistent value for money in line with its targets.

All roles on the Board are voluntary and are undertaken with a commitment to represent the interests of all businesses in the BID area.

Partnership working is seen as essential to build the business community in the area and ensure that skills, experience and resources available for delivery of the BID business plan are enhanced and deliver best value.

The Letchworth BIDs financial accounts and governance arrangements will be independently scrutinised annually, and the effectiveness of the measures undertaken will be gauged by key performance indicators, including footfall, surveys, analytics and retail data as identified in this plan.

There will be an annual report providing details of activities and performance of the BID against the business plan objectives.

There will be an Annual General Meeting at which all BID members will be invited to attend and vote and at which the Board, activities of the BID and the accounts will be reviewed.

9. Letchworth Budget and Finances.

The BID Manager and Board have put together a very positive and proactive budget plan for the next five years based on the extensively researched objectives. In doing so their focus has been on the following main aims:

1. Proactively using the money provided by the businesses, supporters, and sponsors to maximise business opportunities in the BID area.
2. To develop opportunities with the wider business community in Letchworth Garden City to raise funds to further increase the benefits to businesses.
3. Reduce overheads whenever and wherever possible.

In doing so the BID Manager and Board have had an eye on the past but with a clear vision to the future to put in transparent and robust processes to ensure that BID finances are managed with due diligence.

The below table shows the proposed 5-year budget plan. There is a much more detailed plan available upon request.

Letchworth Bid 5-year Budget:		2024-2029	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Income								
Bid Levy Revenue			204000	214200	244910	254706	264894	1182710
Heritage Foundation			30000	30600	31212	31836	32473	156121
Sponsorship and Sales			36900	37638	38390.76	39158.58	39941.75	192029.09
Other Funding source			17000	17340	17687	18041	18402	88470
Total Income			287900	299778	332199.76	343741.58	355710.75	1619330.09
Expenditure								
Objective 1 Lively and Promoted			101500	107600	120692.31	139896.84	134441.91	604131.06
Objective 2 Welcoming,attractive and accessible.			40600	42437	51028.76	26722.95	54344.87	215133.58
Objective 3 Businesses working together			47773	49753.46	58491.6	73094.99	60816.6	289929.65
Central Management Costs . Administration,Office.			90027	91827.54	93664.09	95537.34	97448.12	468504.09
Levy Collection Costs	Additional costs							0
Contingency			8000	8160	8323	8489.46	8659.25	41631.71
Total Expenditure			287900	299778	332199.76	343741.58	355710.75	1619330.09
Accrual for Renewal								
		Year 2 and 3 a 5% was added for Inflation going down to 4% for year 4 & 5.						

Notes:

1. The BID levy revenue includes a 2% per annum increase due to inflation.
2. We are grateful to Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for their ongoing support of £30k per annum.
3. We are committed to obtaining further funding through sponsorship and sales, for example income generated at our events.
4. Other funding sources including voluntary contributions and donations and grants will be exploited.
5. The budget set for the objectives includes part or whole of some of the staff wages.
6. Central management costs include part or whole of some of the wages and the office costs.

The indicative costs to businesses based on a 2% levy are as follows:

Rateable Value	Annual @ 2%	Weekly cost	Daily cost
£2,000	£40	£0.77	£0.11
£6,000	£120	£2.31	£0.33
£12,000	£240	£4.62	£0.66
£25,000	£500	£9.62	£1.37
£75,000	£1,500	£28.85	£4.11
£150,000	£3,000	£57.69	£8.22
£350,000	£7,000	£134.62	£19.18

Cost of the BID Proposals and re-ballot

The costs incurred in undertaking the research and developing the BID business case and proposal have been met by the Letchworth BID. However, the majority of the work has been conducted by the BID team. This has led to savings of nearly £15k.

The costs associated with the ballot are being met by North Herts Council, for which we give our sincere thanks.

Sources of Additional Funding

The BID is committed to seeking additional funding from a variety of sources to increase the benefits that can be delivered to the businesses. These will include:

1. Grants, where the criteria match the aims of the business plan.
2. Voluntary contributions and donations from businesses and organisations outside the BID area.
3. Sponsorship opportunities at events or for services and projects undertaken by the BID. For example, planters.

The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation has proven its commitment to supporting the BID and creating a strong collective voice representing business interest in the town. To this end the LGCHF has pledged to support the BID with an additional £30,000 per annum over and above any levy payments it will pay from its property liability.

The BID is grateful for this contribution and recognises that it will be essential to demonstrate that all income from all sources is spent effectively and there are measures in place to demonstrate the benefits derived from meeting the objectives set.

Governance and management of the BID budget.

The BID Board has the responsibility to oversee the management of the BID budget. To that end they have delegated responsibility of the day-to-day management of the budget to the BID Manager, overseen by a BID Director. There are a set of clear rules to be used for each financial transaction. These include:

1. 3 sets of quotes for every purchase.
2. Purchase order allocated to each purchase.
3. The BID Manager will review each purchase and then reviewed by the BID Director.
4. Clear budget sheets for every event/campaign.

The budget is a standing item at the Board meetings.

10. BID Levy Criteria for Letchworth BID.

Each BID has the responsibility to establish its own BID levy rules. These rules have been set with reference to the following relevant legislation – Part 4 of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.

The main rules are as follows:

- The BID levy will be charged on all hereditaments listed in the local Non-Domestic Rating List located within the BID area, irrespective as to how a business has voted in the BID ballot. North Herts Council collect the levy. The Letchworth BID will invoice North Herts Council for the levy collected.
- The BID has a lifetime of a maximum of 5 years, whereupon a formal ballot will take place to decide its future.
- All businesses within the BID area will be entitled to vote for the BID proposal in a 28-day postal ballot which will commence on 9th November 2023 and close at 5pm on 7th December 2023. The result will be announced on 8th December 2023.
- If successful at the ballot, the BID will continue to operate and will commence a new 5-year term on 1st April 2024.
- The levy amounts for rate payers of business premises will be applied as follows:
 1. The BID levy will be 2% of the 2023 rateable value shown on the Local Authority's NNDR billing system for each defined business within the BID area.
 2. The levy will be due from businesses or individuals who are liable to pay the business rates, including those who have liability for unoccupied properties or anyone who occupies a non-domestic property but receives or claims business rate relief other than those who are exempt.
- The liable person is the ratepayer liable for occupied or unoccupied premises. North Herts Council will be responsible for the imposition, administration, collection, recovery, and application of the BID levy. The Council will also be responsible for any enforcement action that may be appropriate in case of non-payment of the levy.
- There may be an annual inflationary increase in all levy charges for the duration of the BID, not including the first year of the BID cycle.
- The BID financial year will start on 1st April. The BID charge is a daily charge based on rateable value and is to be paid in full in advance due on 1st April. Businesses that cease to have liability for business rates during the year will be entitled to a refund for the remainder of the year provided they apply to North Herts Council in writing.

11. Risk Analysis.

The responsibilities of the BID Company.

The Letchworth Garden City BID Company has a mandate from all the businesses in the BID area to deliver the BID Business Plan. This is a significant responsibility which has an influence over the trading environment and commercial prosperity of Letchworth Garden City, the businesses in the town and the livelihoods of the staff who rely on the businesses for a living. Having a vibrant enjoyable town centre also has a direct impact on the desirability of Letchworth Garden City as a place to live, visit and work.

It is important, therefore, to articulate some of the external and internal issues that have a direct bearing on the ability of the BID to trade successfully, as well as highlight the consequences of not voting in favour of renewing the BID and associated business plan.

BIDs in other places

There are over 300 BIDs across the country proving their commercial value and improving the trading environments. Many are in their third term with an increasing share of the votes because of the return on investment.

Most of the towns in Hertfordshire and neighbouring counties now have BIDs and are showing their worth by improving the vibrancy and trading environment. Though not necessarily competitors due to the unique aspect of Letchworth they are a draw for customers across our area. By not retaining the BID in Letchworth we are risking diminishing the attractiveness of the town for these customers in this very competitive market.

The Importance of Voting ‘Yes’

Over the last 10 years the Letchworth BID has proven to be very successful in delivering on a number of projects and initiatives to support the business opportunities in Letchworth town centre. All of these are over and above what services our key partners in North Herts Council and the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation provide.

If the businesses in the BID want to retain all the benefits and opportunities described in section 3 and the collective voice of business that the BID brings then they will need to have a majority vote of ‘Yes’, by number and rateable value.

If the businesses vote ‘No’, by majority, all those opportunities, events, services and support will stop on 31st March 2024. At that point there will be no collective voice and budget to deliver any priorities identified by businesses. In short, businesses will be left to face the challenges and uncertainties of the future alone.

Collaborating with key partners

The BID cannot deliver on all the priorities of the town centre alone. To maximise the opportunities in the BID area and deliver value for money the BID has to work with individuals, businesses, property owners, organisations, the Heritage Foundation and statutory agencies.

Working more efficiently and effectively and with the wide range of partners must be a priority in this business plan for the next 5 years if we are to deliver on the objectives in this prospectus. However, the over-riding principle of the BID should remain. That is, the services and benefits provided by the BID are over and above those provided by the other agencies.

Financial Management

The BID is a unique mechanism which combines solid business support with a compulsory scheme which creates benefit for all on an equitable basis. It also guarantees constant cashflow to deliver the projects and priorities identified by the businesses. It provides a platform for the BID company to control costs, plan over the longer term and rise to the challenges and expectations of its businesses.

Following the financial irregularities of the previous BID, there are now robust processes in place to ensure that each and every financial transaction made is scrutinised and accounted for. The BID will also continue to produce an annual budget sheet, monthly management

accounts and financial forecasts for the information of the Board. Independently scrutinised accounts will be produced each year, made available to all contributors and the local authority and filed at Companies House in the normal way.

In addition, the BID team is continually seeking opportunities to reduce overheads. For example, office services such broadband, event management including the Christmas lights and rents such as the barn.

There are, also, no plans to rely upon bank or other support other than the levy and so there is no risk of financial in security.

The BID is VAT registered to ensure that the tax can be reclaimed on expenditure, and this is robustly followed up. It also benefits from mutual trading status meaning it is exempt from Corporation Tax liability.

Finally, one of the aims of the next term is to explore opportunities in the charitable sector. As the BID is a limited company, it cannot become a charity but there are other opportunities the BID will explore.

12. Final thoughts.

It is a privilege to be the BID Manager of our wonderful town centre, working in partnership with businesses, organisations, and the community to help make it a vibrant and attractive place to do business.

The BID provides us with an opportunity to forge even stronger links between these partners to deliver on projects to support the hard-working businesses in the BID.

The trading environment of towns and cities in the UK is changing rapidly. The BID is key to ensuring that Letchworth Garden City does not get left behind but takes advantage of its unique position and great sense of community.

This plan gives a clear direction for the next 5 years with the sole aim of helping make Letchworth an outstanding place to do business now and in the future. I urge you to get involved and work in partnership for the future of the town. By voting 'Yes' in the forthcoming ballot you will send out a clear message about helping to make Letchworth town centre fit for the years ahead.

Richard Harbon
Letchworth BID Manager

Acknowledgments

The Letchworth BID would like to thank the following for their assistance in preparing this business plan:

North Herts Council
Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation
Chris Wade – People & Places

Further information

For more information about the BID or to discuss any aspect of this business plan please contact Richard Harbon, BID Manager on richard@loveleitchworth.com or 01462 486999

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Agenda Item 12

Hitchin, Letchworth, and Royston Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) Renewal

REPORT OF: The Economic Development Officer

Amendments and corrections to the report

Paragraph 9.9

Any last-minute sealed votes not posted to Civica can be handed in at the Council Offices, North Hertfordshire District Council, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3JF until 5.00pm on the **day of the respective ballot**. These will **then be sent by courier to Civica for processing.**"

Paragraph 9.10

Ballot papers will be counted the day following Ballot Day and the result of the ballot will be announced shortly after."

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