

**CABINET  
19 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Hitchin, Letchworth, and Royston Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) Renewal

REPORT OF: The Economic Development Officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Keith Hoskins – Executive Member for Enterprise and Arts

COUNCIL PRIORITY: A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 To obtain Cabinet's endorsement of proposals to progress to renewal ballots for the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1. Consider the BID renewal proposals for Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston, appended in A, B and C and instructs the Returning Officer to hold the BID renewal Ballots;
- 2.2. Delegate the Council's voting rights in the BID renewal process to the Service Director – Customers.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. The Council is under a legal duty to comply with the BID arrangements under section 44 of the Local Government Act 2003 ("the Act"). This includes compliance with the Act and The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended) ("the Regulations") in respect of receipt of any BID renewal.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Given the legal requirements to consider BID proposals under the Regulations, none is considered appropriate.

**5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 5.1. Consultation has been undertaken by the respective BID Managers, steering groups and their member bodies, business representatives and town centre retailers.

## **6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report contains recommendations on a key decision which was added to the Forward Plan on 10th June 2023.

## **7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1. The concept of BIDS was introduced through Part IV of the Act and is further governed by The Regulations 2004/2443. The legislation provides for BID proposals to be made to a relevant Billing authority and, subject to meeting certain Regulation requirements<sup>1</sup>, for this to be put to a ballot of relevant non-domestic ratepayers to be liable for the BID levy described in the BID proposals on the establishment or renewal of a BID, within a defined business area.
- 7.2. The BID, once established or renewed, has the power to levy an additional charge on Business Rate Payers within that BID area for the purpose of funding projects within the BID area. The purpose of the funding must be set out in the BID Proposal, which is to include a 'business plan', consultation (with those who are liable to the proposed BID levy), the financial management arrangements for the BID body, and arrangements for periodically providing the relevant billing authority with information on the finances of the BID.
- 7.3. For the purposes of BID proposals (including renewals) Members are asked to note that there are three relevant organisations/people that are required to fulfil certain roles and responsibilities in relation to the BID application. These organisations/people are as follows:
1. The BID Proposer;
  2. The Billing Authority;
  3. The Ballot Holder.
- 7.4. The BID Proposer is obliged to draw up the BID proposal, the Billing Authority is obliged to consider the proposal and determine whether the BID proposal is in conflict with any of its policies and the Ballot Holder is (subject to compliance with Regulation requirements) obliged to run a ballot process in which all of the business ratepayers within the BID proposal area (as at the date the notice of ballot is published) are entitled vote.
- 7.5. Within the attached 2023 proposals for Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston BID renewals, the current BID companies are the BID Proposer, the Council is the Billing Authority and the Council's Returning Officer in respect of elections is the Ballot Holder.
- 7.6. The Authority's support in helping to sustain and continue BIDs within its towns is seen as very positive and whilst it increases costs to businesses marginally, the benefits to the local business community are immeasurable. The ongoing work and support of the BIDs have also contributed significantly to an increase in footfall within the towns and provide a wealth of events that boost social value within the District.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulations 4, 5 & Schedule 1 Proposal sent to the relevant Billing Authority (consultation, business plan and financial management arrangements, and notice in writing requesting the Billing Authority to instruct the Ballot Holder to hold the BID ballot, evidence of sufficiency of funds

- 7.7. The Council, as the Billing Authority, must be satisfied that the projects detailed in each of the BID proposals are not in conflict with its own adopted objectives or existing strategies, rather than to carry out a detailed analysis of the whole 'business plan' document. Earlier sample and draft versions of the proposal documents appended at A, B and C were received by the Council from the Royston BID on 16th July 2023 and forwarded onto the relevant Service Directors and Managers. The Letchworth and Hitchin BID Outline Proposals were received on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023 respectively and subsequently circulated. Therefore, it is important to note that there has been limited time to consider these latter proposals. Cabinet will be updated with any comments at the meeting, where applicable.
- 7.8. Officers from all relevant services have reviewed and provided comment in regard to the alignment of aspirations to existing strategies and for future proposals.
- 7.9. Where a Billing Authority is of the view that the BID renewal proposals conflict with a policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the Authority, it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving the proposals, notify the BID proposer or BID body in writing explaining the nature of that conflict<sup>2</sup>. There is also a potential ability for the Billing Authority to veto any proposal but only under specific statutory circumstances set out in the Act and Regulations.
- 7.10. There is general agreement that the proposals and business plans attached as Appendices A, B and C are in accordance with both existing and known planned works for all three towns.

## **8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1. The Council is required to demonstrate a significant degree of involvement in this process, and across a range of its services, with the following responsibilities:
- a. Each BID Proposal that complies with the Regulations must be considered by the Billing Authority to ensure that it is not in direct conflict with any of the Council's own adopted policies.
  - b. The BID Proposals are to be self-funding, i.e. paid for from the levy as collected, and may include paying for enhancements (the 'additionality' element) to services already provided by the Council.
  - c. Government Guidance<sup>3</sup> suggests that the most successful BIDs were those who have established close and positive engagement with the local authority, and the Government appears to encourage this using Service Level or Baseline Agreements between the Council and the BID Organisations (although at this stage it is not mandatory). Such Agreements, if formalised, would also recognise and monitor the 'additionality' the BID funding brings over the five year BID term. Baseline Agreements are currently being considered by the NHC Legal Department.
  - d. The Billing Authority is required to instruct the Returning Officer to conduct the ballot, with one vote assigned per business rate payer unit, subject to any exemptions that the BID companies agree, within the defined area of their BIDs.

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<sup>2</sup> Regulation 4(4) of the Regulations

<sup>3</sup> DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015 DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015

- e. The Billing Authority has the right of Veto under s51 of the Act and Regulation 12 after the ballot if it conflicts with Policy adopted by the Authority; or would bring significant disproportionate financial burden.
- f. If the BID proposals are approved by the relevant business rates payers (see below and legal implications), the Billing Authority must bill, collect, enforce, and account for the BID Levy. Under the Regulations, the Council can charge for elements of this service but has opted not to do so for the existing BIDs; the same principles will apply to this renewal. (See financial implications below).
- g. The only entities exempt from the BID Levy are public libraries, religious organisations, public toilets, magistrates' courts, individual single parking spaces, communication masts, advertising hoardings and Police/fire/ambulance stations.
- h. For the Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, and Royston BID renewals, NHC is of course entitled to vote and would continue to pay additional charges for its own car parks; for property which the Council leases out within each of the BID boundaries, it is for lessees to pay the additional charge.
- i. Charitable organisations will not be exempt from the BID Levy, unless they can demonstrate that their presence in each town is by way of 'head office' or direct delivery, i.e. the giving of information or physical support, rather than as a 'trading' or commercial entity – such as a charity shop.

8.2. The Bid ballot can only succeed if it can meet two tests (a and b) which are;

- a. A simple majority of those who vote must register a 'Yes' AND
- b. The aggregate of the rateable value of those that vote 'Yes' must be greater than that of those that vote 'No'

These are not exclusive since both tests must be achieved. The system is intended to ensure that there is a degree of parity in a town centre populated by larger multi-nationals and smaller, specialist shops.

The BID ballot is statutory and binding and will apply to all businesses inside the BID areas regardless of whether they intend to vote and how they might vote. The ballot is a postal ballot and this time the whole process has been outsourced to an external company, Civica.

8.3. The Council's Revenues Team has reviewed the proposed BID areas contained within the business plans and has been able to identify the commercial properties which lie within each of the respective the BID area, and their rateable value. A review of the contact for each business has also been undertaken by the BIDs to ascertain the appropriate person to whom the ballot paper will be addressed, and the vote cast on behalf of their company, as many businesses have changed hands during the past five years.

8.4. Maps denoting the BID areas are included within the proposals documents as Appendices A, B and C to this report.

8.5. The BIDs renewal proposal and business plans are attached at Appendices A, B and C.

8.6. Hitchin BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

**“VIBRANT**

**SUMMER DISPLAYS**

We will organise a wide variety of floral displays across the town centre and erect the bunting during the summer season in various locations.

**WINTER DISPLAYS**

We will organise the town centre festive lighting displays and Christmas tree in the Market Place. The 25 static floral displays will be replanted and maintained over the winter months.

**TOWN CENTRE EVENTS**

We will enhance and adapt the town centre annual events programme. Focusing on business support and footfall to maximise the benefit to the local business community.

**TRAILS AND ACTIVITIES**

Looking at the wider town centre, we will deliver a number of trails and family friendly activities to spread footfall and highlight businesses on the periphery of the Hitchin BID area.

**CLEAN AND SAFE**

**THE DAY RANGER TEAM**

The Rangers undertake vital work behind the scenes to ensure the town centre remains a clean and safe environment for businesses and visitors to enjoy. They operate 6 days a week working with a wide variety of local businesses. The Rangers are one of the most valued assets which we will be continuing into the new 5-year BID term.

**NIGHT RANGERS**

The BID will continue to fund the Night Rangers on Friday and Saturday nights from 10pm to 3am. They play an important role in public realm security as well as assisting the public and reporting issues.

**OUR CLEANER TOWN**

We will continue to remove graffiti using specialist equipment as well as taking down flyposting. There will be chewing gum and deep cleaning carried out in the main streets in the town centre and new initiatives introduced such as the cigarette ballot bins.

## **CRIME REDUCTION**

The BID will continue to work alongside the Police and Councils to reduce crime. We will facilitate PubWatch, the ShopWatch WhatsApp group and continue to offer businesses radio links. Our extended CCTV and the anti-shoplifting measures undertaken by the BID will ensure Hitchin remains a safe place for the day and evening economy.

## **PROMOTED**

### **HITCHIN INFORMATION**

The Information Centre is a valued asset in our community. It provides a place for local residents to obtain information, Hitchin gifts and tickets. The BID will work alongside Hitchin Initiative to jointly fund its existence.

### **TOWN TOURISM**

Using the newly developed Destination Management Plan, the BID will continue to strategically promote Hitchin as a destination. We will work on raising the profile of the town and develop the experience economy.

### **PUBLICATIONS & PROMOTIONS**

The BID will continue to produce publications to promote the town centre, its businesses and attractions. We will maintain the lamppost banner flags and work on new promotions activities.

### **ONLINE PROMOTION**

We will continue to develop the towns online presence through the new VisitHitchin website, online advertising and social media activities.

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT**

### **CARDBOARD & COFFEE RECYCLING SCHEME**

We will continue to provide all businesses with free cardboard, paper and coffee grounds recycling using our dedicated Recycling Ranger team. Our Rangers collect from over 200 businesses per week and recycle over 300 tons of cardboard and coffee per year.

### **H-TOWN POUNDS**

The BID will continue to support the H-Town Pounds scheme which is aimed at promoting local spend in over 80 independent businesses.

### **BUSINESS REPRESENTATION**

We will remain the collective business voice on key issues. The BID will lobby for and represent business ensuring Hitchin gets the investment and backing it needs.

## HITCHIN REGENERATION

The BID will form a new group to look at short and long-term projects in the town as well as new income streams. This will allow an expansion of the projects we deliver as well as new investment opportunities and improvements.

## TRAINING OUR TOWN

The BID will deliver a series of statutory and marketing training to equip businesses with the skills and knowledge to thrive and prosper.

### 8.7 Letchworth GC BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

#### **Aims and Objectives – 2024 – 2029.**

The proposal is to keep the 3 broad objectives for the next 5 years, with different underpinning aims. The main focus of the aims is to concentrate on those that the BID has direct responsibility for but also some that the BID can influence by working with partners.

The 3 objectives are:

- **Lively and well promoted.** – *To create a place which is lively and has a strong sense of identity and awareness.*
- **Welcoming, attractive and accessible.** – *To provide a welcoming, attractive and easily accessible environment for customers, visitors, workers and residents to explore and enjoy.*
- **Businesses working together.** – *To 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.*

#### **Objective 1 – Lively and Well promoted.**

- Annual calendar of events.
- Regular campaigns and street entertainment.
- Develop shop local promotional opportunities and loyalty schemes.
- Increase awareness of Letchworth as a business destination, including events, shopping experience and visitor attractions.
- Work with others to define and promote the brands of Letchworth and Love Letchworth.
- Work with others to develop the night-time economy.

Performance Indicators.

- *Footfall data.*
- *Regular surveys.*
- *Social media feedback.*
- *Event attendance numbers and feedback.*
- *Website analytics.*
- *Number of businesses actively involved in BID activity.*

- *Loyalty scheme sign ups.*
- *Car park statistics.*

**Objective 2 – Welcoming, attractive, and accessible.**

- Ensure that the BID planters are of the highest quality.
- Lead a partnership group responsibility for the remaining town centre planters.
- Lead on a town centre crime and anti-social behaviour group.
- Be a central partner in the Town Centre Recovery group and associated planning group to improve signage, car parking opportunities and shop fronts.
- Work with landlords and their agents to improve the shop fronts and reduce shop vacancies.

Performance Indicators.

- *Survey and general feedback for planters and the general street scene.*
- *Monthly crime and ASB data.*
- *Survey data and statistics from car parking data.*

**Objective 3 – Businesses working together.**

- Development of the web site and social media outlets to promote Letchworth and the BID businesses.
- To run regular shop local campaigns and events to improve the business opportunities.
- Develop further communication opportunities with and between businesses e.g. social media, newsletters, networking meetings.
- Offer a wide selection of courses for BID businesses to improve their business capabilities.
- Develop and manage projects to reduce business overheads and promote sustainability. E.g. cardboard recycling.
- Encourage and support 3<sup>rd</sup> party events and campaigns managed by BID businesses.
- Work with landlords to encourage and influence them to maintain and improve shop fronts and fill vacant premises.

Performance Indicators.

- *Website and social media analytics.*
- *Footfall data.*
- *Shop vacancy levels.*
- *Business and customer surveys.*
- *Networking meeting attendance figures.*

8.8 Royston BID Renewal – Summary of Vision and Objectives

The Royston BID Plans to continue their activities such as :

- Free after 3 parking,
- Christmas and other street decorations
- Street Deep Cleaning and pigeon proofing of streets



And augment them with:

- More Summer decorations and events
- Digital Signage with free advertising for local businesses
- Footfall and other localised statistics to help businesses make decisions
- Signage in the Industrial Area
- Shop Safe App for consumers
- Youth Employment Scheme
- Training programmes for business
- Police Partnership
- Quarterly Member Networking Events
- Sponsorship of local organisations and events
- Royston First Business Awards Scheme

8.9 The BID proposals in their current format have been agreed by the respective BID Steering groups, and therefore the intention is that they will ultimately form the document on which votes will be sought.

8.10 Each BID has proposed the geographic area it wishes the BID to cover for the next 5-year term:

8.10.1. Hitchin BID have proposed an expansion of the BID area to cover the current BID geography and the areas of Butts Close and Walsworth Road to the Verulam Rd / Highbury Rd Roundabout.

8.10.2. Letchworth Garden City BID wish retain the current BID geography.

8.10.3. Royston BID propose to retain the existing BID geography less the area to the north-east of Melbourn St and Kneesworth St/Lower King St.

8.10.4. Each BID Proposal must define the percentage of rateable value to be used to calculate the BID Levy.

8.10.5. Hitchin's existing BID levy is currently set at 1.85% plus inflation. It is proposed that as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, the levy will increase to 2.2%. Businesses newly incorporated in the BID area will be on 1.5% and 1 business on Queen Street will remain on 1.2% which equates to an annual amount of £260k.

8.10.6. Letchworth's existing BID levy is currently set at 2.0% plus inflation. It is proposed that the levy remains at 2% plus inflation for the next 5-year period. This equates to annual income of £204k in Year 1 of the next 5-year period.

8.10.7. Royston's existing BID levy is currently set at 1.5% plus inflation. It is proposed that the levy will increase to 1.75% for the next 5-year period which equates to an annual amount of £229k.

9 **TIMETABLE FOR BID RENEWAL** - The Regulations underpinning the development of Business Improvements (statutory instrument – Business Improvement Districts 2004 – No 244) lay down a very specific timetable for progressing to ballot.

9.1. At least 84 days before the Day of Ballot - Notice given in writing, by the BID proposer to the billing authority (NHDC) and the Secretary of State of the intention to request a ballot.

9.2. NHDC Cabinet to consider progress to Ballot.

- 9.3. Publication of Notice of Ballot (At least 42 days before day of ballot). This will be posted on NHDC's website and mailed to all eligible voters by Civica.
- 9.4. Eligible voters will also be sent a request to confirm their voter details and an application form to appoint a proxy if they wish.
- 9.5. Ballot packs issued to hereditaments entitled 28 days prior to day of Ballot.
- 9.6. Last date for proxy appointment 10 days prior to day of Ballot.
- 9.7. Issue of replacements after 5pm on 4<sup>th</sup> day before day of Ballot.
- 9.8. Day of ballot (day 28 of the ballot period)
- 9.9. Any last-minute sealed votes not posted to Civica by day of ballot can be handed in at the Council Offices, North Hertfordshire District Council, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3JF up until 5.00pm on the third last working day before the relevant Ballot Day. These will be verified and sent onto Civica for inclusion.
- 9.10. Declaration and Results Announced the working day after Ballot Day.
- 9.11. Exact timetables of each BID can be found within the attached Appendix D.

## **10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 BID arrangements are not to come into force unless proposals for the arrangements are approved by a ballot of the non-domestic ratepayers in the proposed BID are that are subject to the levy, having followed the provisions in the Regulations, as per section 49, and section 54 of the Act. The BID approvals are then not regarded as approved by a ballot unless (1) the majority of persons voting in the ballot have voted in favour of the BID proposals; and (2) the aggregate of the rateable values of each hereditament in respect of which a person voting in the ballot has voted in favour of the BID proposals exceed those in the same positing voting against the proposal; as per section 50 of the Act.
- 10.2 The Billing Authority is required by law to conduct the renewal Ballot and to administer the BID billing, collection, enforcement and accounting if the ballot is successful, in accordance with Part IV of the Local Government Act 2003 (The Act). This is further governed by the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 (The Regulations).
- 10.3 Regulations 4, 5 and Schedule 1 set out what a BID proposal must include. The Regulations state that a valid BID proposal, including renewal, must contain the following information:-
  - 10.3.1 a statement of the works or services to be provided, the name of who will provide them (the name of the BID body) and the type of body the provider is (whether a local authority, a company under the control of the authority, a limited company or a partnership);
  - 10.3.2 a statement of the existing baseline services (if any) provided by the relevant billing authority or other public authority;

- 10.3.3 a description of the geographical area (including a map showing that area) in which the proposed BID arrangements are to have effect;
- 10.3.4 a statement of whether all non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area or specified class of them are to be liable to the BID levy, an explanation of how the amount of the BID levy to be levied is to be calculated and an explanation of whether any of the costs incurred in developing the BID proposals, holding of the ballot or implementing the BID are to be recovered through the BID levy;
- 10.3.5 a statement of the specified class of non-domestic ratepayer (if any) for which and the level at which any relief from the BID levy is to apply;
- 10.3.6 a statement of whether the BID arrangements may be altered without an alteration ballot and, if so, which aspects of the BID arrangements may be altered in this way;
- 10.3.7 a statement of the duration of the BID arrangements; and a statement of the commencement date of the BID arrangements.
- 10.4 As indicated in the report, the Act and Regulations also require a Billing Authority, to determine whether BID proposals conflict with a policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the authority (whether or not the authority is under a statutory duty to prepare such document).
- 10.5 The Council, as Billing Authority, may in prescribed circumstances, veto the proposals within such period from the date of the ballot, and must give notice to those entitled to vote in the ballot, detailing reasons and right of the appeal (and sent a copy of the notice to the Secretary of State), as per the requirements of section 51 of the Act. The Billing Authority can only do so, having considered a number of factors (including although not limited to level of support in the ballot), if the BID arrangements are likely to:
- 10.5.1 (a) to conflict to a material extent with any policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the authority (whether or not the authority is under a statutory duty to prepare such document); or
- 10.5.2 (b) to be a significantly disproportionate financial burden on any person or class of persons (as compared to the other non-domestic ratepayers in the geographical area of the BID) and–
- 10.5.3 (i) that burden is caused by the manipulation of the geographical area of the BID or by the structure of the BID levy; and
- 10.5.4 (ii) that burden is inequitable.
- 10.6 The Council is entitled to vote in the ballot relating to the attached BIDs renewals proposal. In the past this was the previous Service Director for Customers, and it is recommended that this delegation be renewed as per recommendation 2.3.
- 10.7 Otherwise, the legal requirements are contained within the body of the report.

## **11 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Council's additional financial responsibilities fall into four categories;
- The cost of running / outsourcing the ballot
  - Administration costs
  - The cost of the council's own BID levy on its town centre premises and land holdings
  - Any additional costs incurred by agreed additional works of the Authority in regard to events and car parking etc.

11.2 All expenditure incurred by the Returning Officer in relation to holding the BID ballots are funded by the Council as the relevant billing authority.

11.3 Where the number of persons voting in the ballot who have voted in favour of the ballot is less than 20% of the number of persons entitled to vote and:

- the proposals are not approved in the ballot; or
- the Secretary of State issues a notice declaring the ballot void

The Council may require the BID proposer or the BID body to pay the costs for arranging and holding the ballot (this includes the expenses properly incurred by the Returning Officer). The Council may recover this amount as a civil debt due to it.

11.4 The Returning Officer may appoint by writing one or more persons to discharge all or any of their functions relating to the running of a BID election. It is common for the delivery of BID ballots to be sub-contracted to an external supplier with suitable expertise rather than delivered through the local authority's Electoral Services Team.

11.5 Civica Election Services (CES) have been given delegated authority to discharge functions connected with the BID ballots and have quoted the following (excluding VAT): Hitchin (£5,660), Letchworth (£3,920) and Royston (£2,735). This is not the definite amount as there are variables that will affect the final costs which are not yet known such as the number of eligible hereditaments to be balloted, the number of ballots returned (as this is a postal ballot only), outgoing postage impacted by the size/weight of the BID document, set up costs for the design of the BID documents.

11.6 In addition, were either of the Ballots to vote for rejection, where the turnout is less than 20%. In this instance, the Council can seek to recover its costs from the BID organisation. The BID Board have been made aware of this small risk and understand that sufficient budget will be set aside as a contingency were this to be the case.

11.7 The annual administrative costs per property are de-minimus as this is largely an automated process, which is already being carried out for the three existing BID areas.

11.8 As the Council itself pays business rates, it will also have a liability to pay the BID Levy for those properties in which it is in rateable occupation, as it does now. Under the current BID arrangements this equates to:

- £6,961 pa re Hitchin BID
- £6,545 pa re Letchworth BID
- £1,905 pa re Royston BID

The Council's liability under the renewal proposals will be advised at the meeting.

11.9 The BID Business Plans refer to the respective BID activities / proposals which if progressed during the new BID term will be in addition to the existing services provided by NHC, not a replacement. The Council also needs to satisfy itself that the BID activities as proposed do not rely in any part on additional services or contributions from NHC (other than the BID levy) over and above resources already committed.

## **12. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 Should the recommendations be approved, as the Council bears no additional financial responsibility for any debts, and the final decision to progress to ballot is that of the BID organisation, the main risk remaining for the authority is that it may be perceived this is an additional sum levied by and retained by the Council, especially so in times of austerity. It must therefore be explicit in promotional material that whilst the Council is responsible for collection, it is not responsible for spending and that all of the money collected passes to the BID company.
- 12.2 Each year, Officers review the risks relating to the Council's involvement in all three BIDs, via the Risk Register. Currently, Officers have assessed the BIDs as being low risk in respect of both impact and likelihood.

## **13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 13.2 The areas over which the BID companies seek to levy this additional rate is determined by them in consultation with local businesses, and does include all sizes and types of businesses, from multi-nationals to sole traders. The exclusion of certain premises, including those used for faith purposes, removes any additional burden which could be incurred by them, especially as it is questionable what additional benefits they could secure by additional footfall or use of the town in the evening. The BID initiatives seek to indirectly support the aim to foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.

## **14. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 12.

## **15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the activities of this report.

## **16. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 16.1 Relevant service areas have been made aware of the intention for all three BIDs of to seek renewal of their existing BID arrangements and have made relevant arrangements to resource review of the business plans, and for outsource the running of the postal ballot itself, as not to conflict with other work commitments.

## **17. APPENDICES**

17.1 This report contains the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Hitchin BID Renewal Business Plan 2024 - 2029
- Appendix B – Letchworth BID Renewal Proposal & Business Plan 2024 – 2029
- Appendix C – Royston BID Renewal Proposal & Business Plan 2024 - 2029

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## **19. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 19.1 The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004 & DCLG Business Improvement Districts Guidance And Best Practice March 2015  
[Business Improvement Districts: guidance and best practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## Appendices

### A Hitchin BID Draft Prospectus



Business Plan  
2024-29 - Final Aug 2

### B Letchworth Garden City BID Draft Prospectus



Business Plan 2023  
V2.0.pdf

### C Royston BID Draft prospectus



Royston First  
Business Plan 2023 6.



## D Election Timetable

Royston have chosen 2<sup>nd</sup> November – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 as their Ballot Period. The timetables is as follows:

Day	Action	Date
44	Suggested Despatch of Notification of Ballot	Tuesday 17 October 2023
42	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Notification of Ballot</i>	<i>Thursday 19 October 2023</i>
30	Suggested Despatch of ballot papers	Tuesday 31 October 2023
28	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Despatch of Ballot Papers</i>	<i>Thursday 2 November 2023</i>
10	Latest Date to Appoint Proxy	Monday 20 November 2023
5	Latest Date to Cancel Proxy	Saturday 25 November 2023
4	Issue Of Replacements	Friday 24 November 2023
0	Close of Ballot	Thursday 30 November 2023
-1	Issue of Result by 5pm	Friday 1 December 2023

Hitchin and Letchworth have chosen 9<sup>th</sup> November - 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 as their Ballot Period. The timetables are as follows:

Day	Action	Date
44	Suggested Despatch of Notification of Ballot	Tuesday 24 October 2023
42	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Notification of Ballot</i>	<i>Thursday 26 October 2023</i>
30	Suggested Despatch of ballot papers	Tuesday 7 November 2023
28	<i>Statutory (Latest) Date: Despatch of Ballot Papers</i>	<i>Thursday 9 November 2023</i>
10	Latest Date to Appoint Proxy	Monday 27 November 2023

5	Latest Date to Cancel Proxy	Saturday 2 December 2023
4	Issue Of Replacements	Friday 1 December 2023
0	Close of Ballot	Thursday 7 December 2023
-1	Issue of Result by 5pm	Friday 8 December 2023