

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic and Community Regeneration Cabinet Board

23 October 2015

Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration - S.Brennan

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: Neath North

Neath Business Improvement District

Purpose of Report

1. To update members on progress of the development of a Business Improvement District (BID) in Neath Town Centre

Background

2. A BID is a mechanism that has been recognised as being successful in bringing local businesses and other stakeholders together with the aim of improving their trading environment and enhancing their profitability. The Welsh Government is supporting the development of additional BIDs in Wales, as a key component of its commitment to encourage economic development and to deliver its new regeneration framework, Vibrant and Viable Places.
3. A BID delivers a sustainable financial model to a defined geographical area of a town, city, commercial district or tourism and visitor area, where businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements, in addition to those delivered by statutory authorities. BIDs are developed, managed and paid for by the commercial sector by means of a BID levy. They are often a partnership arrangement through which the local business community and the statutory authorities can take forward projects and activities which will benefit the local economy.

4. Businesses that are subject to the levy, as set out in the proposals, vote in a ballot. This determines whether the scheme goes ahead. A successful vote is one that has a simple majority both in votes cast and in rateable value of votes cast. Each business entitled to vote in a Business Improvement District ballot is allowed one vote in respect of each property occupied or (if unoccupied) owned by them in the geographical area of the Business Improvement District.
5. Once the Business Improvement District is in operation the levy is charged on all businesses within the Business Improvement District area (regardless of whether or how that business voted in the ballot).
6. The maximum period that a Business Improvement District levy can be charged is for 5 years. Once the term is completed the Business Improvement District will automatically cease. If the Business Improvement District Company wants to continue its activities it must hold a new ballot
7. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council successfully bid for funding of £25,000 from Welsh Government which is being used to appoint a consultant to work with the Local Authority and local business community to develop the BID concept, aims, vision and outline implementation strategy.
8. The Means Ltd were appointed in April 2014 to guide and advise the local partnership and provide the necessary support to give the prospective BID the best possible chance for success.
9. A BID in Neath town centre could help build on work already being undertaken to enhance the trading environment and further develop partnership working between the public, private and thirds sectors. Neath has a vibrant centre with a growing independent retail scene. It would help sustain recent progress and provide significant enhancements in terms of the visitor experience, promotional activities and the active involvement of the business community.
10. The outline aims and objectives would be to develop and promote Neath as a distinctive visitor destination that is safe during the day and night. Improving gateways, such as parking options, would also provide a focus as would a concerted effort to work in partnership with other local bodies to develop a co-ordinated approach to tackling issues facing the trading environment.

11. A steering group made up of a cross-section of business representatives has been established to lead the process under the name 'Neath Inspired'.
12. Consultants have visited each and every potential levy payer within the BID area and have also held a number of events in order to gather opinions on issues that are important to businesses in the town centre area and views on measures to improve trading conditions. From this consultation, a BID proposal has been drawn up (attached).
13. If a Yes vote is achieved, an independent, not-for-profit company will be established, known as Neath Inspired Ltd. This will continue to be led by the private sector – by a board of directors who represent the businesses in Neath town centre and by theme groups also drawn from local businesses, who will meet to oversee specific projects in the programme's three main strands.
14. A Baseline Agreement between the BID and NPTCBC is currently being drawn up which specifies the current level of service provision in the area. This will ensure that any services the BID provides are additional.
15. An Operating Agreement between the BID and NPTCBC will be entered into governing how the BID levy monies are collected and administered and passed over to the BID.
16. The ballot date is set as Thursday 19th November 2015. Ballot papers will be sent to every hereditament within the BID area 28 days prior to this date and businesses must return their ballot paper by post. The ballot will be run by the Electoral Services Team within NPTCBC.

Financial Implications

17. Funding of £25,000 has been awarded for the appointment of consultants to lead the development phase.
18. As owners of property within the BID boundary, NPTCBC would be required to contribute towards the BID fund should a 'Yes' vote be achieved.

Sustainability Appraisal

19. A BID in Neath would support the Authority's sustainability agenda in the following ways:
 - Economic Prosperity – promoting the attractiveness of Neath as a retail centre.

Background Papers

20. Summary of BID arrangements (attached)
BID Proposal (attached)

Officer Contact

21. Gemma Nesbitt
Neath Town Centre Manager and Property Grants Officer
Tel. No. 01639 686413
E-mail g.m.nesbitt@npt.gov.uk