

Mid Term Review of the Strabane BID



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1. Background

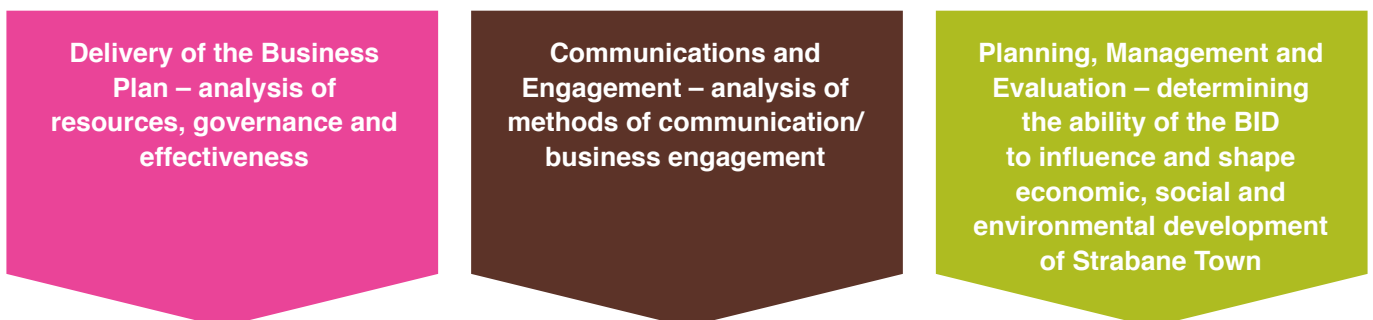
On 1st July 2014 the Department for Social Development brought into effect the Business Improvement Districts (BID) Regulations (Northern Ireland). In 2016 the decision was taken to propose a BID for Strabane. In a subsequent vote there was an overwhelming number of ballots placed in favour of a BID in the area. As a result the Strabane BID Company was established and a BID levy of 1.5% was imposed on each business within the BID catchment area.

2. Context

Full Circle Management Solutions Ltd, was commissioned by Derry City & Strabane District Council [DCSDC] to conduct a Mid-Term Review of the Strabane BID Company in July 2019. The review involved the following key stages:



The aim of the Mid-Term Review was to provide an overview of the performance of the BID as follows:



OUTPUT

Findings and Recommendations – Future delivery of the business plan and resources

3. Delivery of the Business Plan

A crucial measure of the success of the Strabane BID was its ability to deliver the Business Plan established in 2016 for the five years of the Strabane BID. The Business plan outlines four key themes under which a series of goals were outlined. The sections below presents a summary of the achievement towards each of these goals to date.

Theme 1: Promotion: Marketing and Events Increase local loyalty and footfall

Goal	Status	Deliverables
Budget (5 Years): £202,500 Annual Budget: £40,500	Projected Spend: £81,000 Actual Spend: £81,919	
Creating an entertainment programme of regular events for both the daytime and night time economy	Range of activities supported over last 2 years	- Christmas Fayre: 2016, 2017 and 2018 - Strajamba: 2017, 2018 and 2019 - St Patrick's Day: 2017, 2018 and 2019
Incentivising and rewarding local shopping to help people of Strabane to 'fall back in love' with their town	Introduced the Strabane Gift Card	- £11,000 Gift Card sales to date - 41 Businesses have Gift Cards redeemed - One Retailer has £ 1,100 in sales from the Gift Card
Pro actively Marketing Strabane to visitors & potential investors	Pro actively marketed to visitors. No evidence of marketing to potential investors.	- In Strabane website (to be launched in August 2019) - Visitor Map developed for In Strabane Website - Social Media activity re. Gift Card and Events - Christmas marketing campaign including billboards, press advertising and radio - Collaboration with Strabane Town Forum and Strabane Chamber re. production of Investment video for new website
Work with key organisations such as Tourism NI, The Arts Council & DfC	No progress on this element	

Conclusions:

- Events were well received however there is scope for significant improvement and there is a clear need for evaluation.
- Advertising has been effective with Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) of 22.3K Euro for 'Strabane BID' (August 18- present); AVE figure for 'Strajamba' alone 21.8K Euro.

Theme 2: Welcome: Access and Experience Improve accessibility to the town

Goal	Status	Deliverables
Budget (5 Years): £180,000 Annual Budget: £36,000	Projected Spend : £72,000 Actual Spend: £17,608	
Developing the Parking offer and incentives for shoppers to visit the town	No evidence of progress	4th July
Developing initiatives to encourage passing visitors / tourists to stop off in Strabane to eat, shop or enjoy our cultural offering	No evidence of progress	Map
Improve access and links from Bus Depot, Retail Park and town centre area	No evidence of progress	
Improving the visitor experience and increasing footfall	Investment in town centre aesthetics	Street dressing re. bunting and 70 no. planters/ floral displays (£9,308)
Reducing the number of empty shops	No evidence of progress	
Improve town centre safety from daytime through to night time economy	Investment to deter Anti-Social Behaviour	Security Gates installed 5no. CCTV Cameras installed

Conclusions:

- Whilst it is understood that occupancy has been increasing there is a lack of information surrounding baseline data.
- Progress has been made around improving the visitor experience and increasing footfall however baseline data is unavailable to fully understand impact from BID interventions.
- The Strabane BID Company was responsible for investment in security gates and CCTV. Anecdotally this has reduced anti-social behaviour in this area. While baseline data is available it is too early to accurately assess impact of this intervention.

Theme 3: Reducing Costs & Support

Goal	Status	Deliverables
Budget (5 Years): £45,000 Annual Budget: £9,000	Projected: £18,000 Actual: £1,495.28	
Investigate opportunities to save you money	Negotiations with service providers	- Appointment of Bank of Ireland as preferred Merchant Service provider - Currently being scoped: waste management and broadband provision
Provide Advice & Networking	Training & Networking Opportunities	- Collaboration with Councils Business Development team to deliver workshops on: GDPR, Social Media and Delivering the Perfect Pitch - 6 training events on Age/Dementia Awareness across 2018. - Business breakfast and information events delivered - Collaboration with Strabane Town Forum to deliver "Online Programme" (Sept.19)
Lobby with a collective voice	No evidence of progress	
Attract additional funding into Strabane	No evidence of progress	

Conclusions:

- Whilst there were a range of formal and informal engagements there was poor attendance.
- It was highlighted during the public workshop that Advice and Networking events could be communicated better to the members as many were unaware of their existence.

Theme 4: Innovation – Creative Spirit

Goal	Status	Deliverables
Budget (5 Years) : £22,500 Annual Budget: £4,500	No evidence of progress	
Capitalise on any opportunities that arise over the next 5 years	No evidence of progress	

4. Communications and Engagement

Conclusions

- Throughout the period of the BID's existence there have been concerns raised by stakeholders as to the success of the communication and engagement.
- Since the outset, the Strabane BID Company has communicated through a variety of media however the compelling feedback is that this has not been effective in reaching its target audience.
- There is also an onus on the BID Levy members to engage more with the Strabane BID Company. This has been generally low over the BID term to date, with poor attendance levels at seminars and information events etc.
- The overwhelming feedback from the business community is that the BID would benefit from a office location based in the town centre.

5. Planning, Management & Evaluation

Conclusions:

- From a review of Board minutes it is clear that there has been a strong core of members that have consistently attended Board meetings over the years.
- Board members are aware of skills gaps, sector and geographical representation across the Board members and are open to ensuring that these gaps are filled.
- There have been 7 occasions in the last 2 years that Board meetings have had insufficient attendees to create a quorum.
- The strategic direction of the board has been impacted by the need to ensure a sustainable revenue stream.
- A lack of both quantitative and qualitative feedback on the progress of the Strabane BID Company has led to an overall reduction in confidence regarding the delivery of the Business Plan.

6. Review Recommendations

Review Finding: Delivery of Business Plan

Recommendations	Implementation Timeframe
<p>It is recommended that the Budget allocated against each of the four themes is re-profiled and a delivery action plan developed as follows:</p> <p>Access and Improvements - 20%</p> <p>Business Support - 20%</p> <p>Arts, Culture and Events - 20% (No more than £5k expenditure on one single event) - Additional fund raising would be required to invest more.</p> <p>Marketing and Promotion - 40%</p> <p>Any material change would be subject to consultation with the wider BID Membership.</p>	<p>Development of Revised Action Plan complete by end of September 2019</p>
<p>It is recommended that the BID Company agree a series of measurable Key Performance Indicators which will be reported to the BID membership quarterly and reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>KPI's agreed and published within Revised Action Plan by end of September 2019</p>
<p>It is recommended that the BID Company facilitate increased Levy Payer/ Membership engagement in Business Plan Delivery. Commenced and Ongoing</p>	<p>Formal Membership Engagement Forum to be held by end of September 2019</p>

Review Finding: Communication & Engagement

Recommendations	Implementation Timeframe
<p>It is recommended that a BID/Town Centre Management Office is established within the Town Centre.</p>	<p>Weekly Clinics commenced on 31 July 2019. Full time office operational by November 2019</p>
<p>It is recommended that a Town Centre BID Manager is recruited through a public recruitment campaign for an initial 2 year period to deliver the BID Business Plan. This post will be co-funded by Derry City and Strabane District and the Strabane BID. The Post Holder will be accountable to the Strabane BID Company and its membership. The Post Holder will be employed by Derry City and Strabane District Council.</p>	<p>Subject to approval by DCSDC in September 2019. Public Recruitment campaign in October 2019 Selection and Interviews in November 2019 Appointment by January 2020.</p>

Recommendations	Implementation Timeframe
<p>It is recommended that a series of formal Member Engagement Activities are established as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A quarterly Member Engagement Forum held within the BID area. This will be open to all members and those from outside the BID area to engage with the Strabane BID Company. - A bi-monthly E-zine distributed to all members by post, email, and on the BID Website. - An AGM to be held each December, following the conclusion of the BID year. The first AGM is to be held in December 2019. - Text messaging service 	<p>Membership Engagement forum to be held in late September 2019 and then Quarterly AGM to be held in December 2019 Bi-Monthly e-zine published by end of September 2019.</p>
<p>It is recommended that the Strabane BID Company develop an Online Marketing and Social Media Engagement Plan with clearly defined Key Performance Indicators.</p>	<p>Developed by end of September 2019</p>

Review Finding: Planning, Management & Evaluation

Recommendations	Implementation Timeframe
<p>It is recommended that the Strabane BID Company publicly recruits a minimum of 5 new Directors with the following competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Director with Senior Leadership of a large business 1 Director with Arts and Culture expertise 1 Director with Legal expertise 1 Director with Marketing expertise 1 Director with Finance expertise <p>It should not be a requirement to be based within the BID area to join the board. Board recruitment will be based on merit, experience and a willingness to deliver on behalf of the BID</p>	<p>Public Recruitment in August 2019</p> <p>Appointed by September 2019</p>
<p>It is recommended that the BID Board establishes a number of Board Sub-Groups drawing in support from the wider BID Membership as follows:</p> <p>Membership Engagement Group - This group will encompass representation from four geographic zones within the BID area. A representative will be nominated from each area as a contact point, advocate and representative of the BID. The MEG will provide a vital feedback loop in relation to BID plans and member issues.</p> <p>Arts, Culture and Events Group - This group will recruit participants to develop and deliver a range of arts, culture and events throughout the year.</p> <p>Marketing and Promotion Group - This group will recruit participants to assist in the development of ongoing marketing and promotion of the BID area.</p> <p>Finance and Fundraising Group - This group will have an oversight responsibility in relation to the financial management of the BID. It will also be tasked with maximising revenue from outside the BID area and the traditional levy payer income, including sponsorship.</p>	<p>Commence establishment of groups in September 2019.</p>
<p>It is recommended that the BID board sets a minimum target for levy collection for years 3, 4 and 5 to ensure effective delivery of the Business Plan.</p>	<p>September 2019</p>

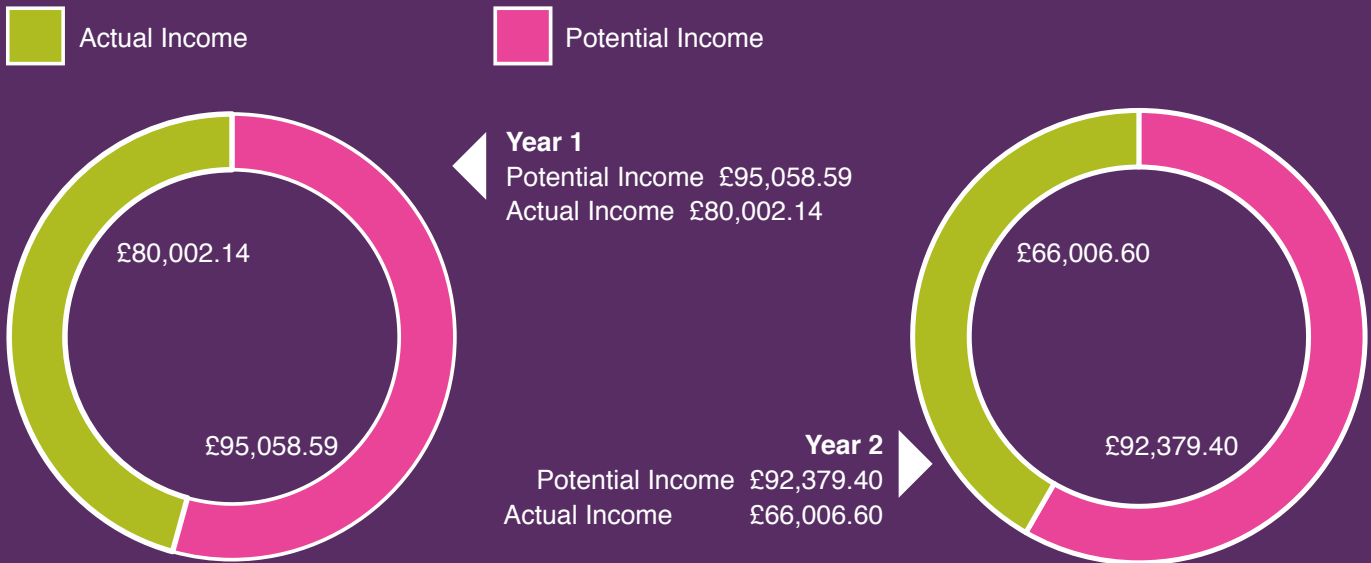
Recommendations	Implementation Timeframe
<p>It is recommended that the BID board ensures that Evaluation and Feedback are focused on the following areas:</p> <p>Satisfaction/Customer Feedback tool to be available on the BID Website as a real-time scorecard.</p> <p>KPI monitoring and reporting in order to assess Board and BID Manager performance.</p> <p>Info graphics that are easy to understand and give high quality updates on performance, status and plans for the benefit of all stakeholders.</p> <p>Evaluation of all events in order to understand customer satisfaction, performance against objectives, impact, benefits, lessons learned and areas for improvement.</p>	<p>September 2019</p>

Your BID Levy Matters

It is vitally important that BID members pay their Levy. The BID Company relies on the collection of this revenue to be able to deliver for Strabane Town. Your levy will allow the BID Company to focus on delivering on the recommendations outlined in the review. In addition to payment being a legal obligation, your Levy will allow you to access the following benefits:

- Free Participation in the In-Strabane Gift Card
- Free Participation in the In-Strabane Gift Card Promotion Campaign
- Free Participation Seasonal Marketing Campaigns
- Feature your business in a bespoke Social Media Campaign
- Free Business Mentoring in Finance, Marketing, Legal and Sales
- Free Town Centre Management services
- Networking and Business to Business Opportunities
- Membership of the BID Member Engagement Forums and Sub-Groups

The Levy collection for Year 3 has commenced. If you are unsure how to pay or if you have an outstanding balance you want to discuss, please contact Gemma Scarlett on 028 71253 253 or by email: info@bidinstrabane.org



A full copy of the Mid Term Review of the Strabane BID Company is available on the In Strabane Website – News Section
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