

# BID bulletin

Coventry City Centre Business Improvement District **Enriching our city**

Spring 08

## Happy New Year! Good news stories on capital developments

The city centre starts 2008 in a stronger position than it has been for many years. The master plan for the Friargate development, based around the railway station, is due for publication at Easter. This will create a major office complex within walking distance of the city centre. Already a national brand is close to confirming the first major letting in this scheme, and an announcement should be made in the Spring.

Meanwhile, the Severn Trent headquarters development starts on site in May. This project will generate more than 2,200 jobs and is expected to benefit the local economy by £14million per annum.

The Council intends to link all of the master plans, for the Swanswell development, the city centre retail developments, Friargate, and a major expansion by Coventry University, into one spatial plan which should be made public by September.



In addition Belgrade Plaza Phase 2 is now on site and will deliver a 5 Star Radisson Edwardian hotel by 2009. It will also include a budget hotel, a casino and a variety of prestigious leisure brands including a sister branch of the Metro Bars in Birmingham and Solihull.

The student population remains an important driver for retail and leisure investment and it is therefore extremely good news that both Coventry and Warwick Universities, based in the city, are promoting ambitious expansion plans.

These long range investments will benefit all city centre businesses within the next decade. Already the Council are reporting increased development enquiries as the agreements so far are made public.



## BID Renewal vote

After 3 years the current BID requires renewal by March 2008 and ballot papers will be sent out in late January. The article on the inner pages explains how this will affect your business but as a refresher, here is why our BID is considered one of the most successful in the UK

### Best Value for money

We are the only BID in the UK who charges less than 1% of rateable value. (Businesses in Rugby are charged over 4%)

### Extra projects- not basics

Because CV One already runs more basic services than other cities we didn't need to use BID funds for core services like on-street Customer Service staff or Christmas Lights.

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### **Introducing new ideas**

Our BID has enabled pioneering new projects as diverse as Evening Ambassadors, hot jet street cleaning, and a state of the art retail crime initiative and radio network. These initiatives are regularly used as benchmarks, and copied, by other towns and cities.

### **Intense campaigning**

Because we set aside £226,000 of BID funds to promote the City Centre we have a generic marketing programme that is the envy of most cities. The scale of this enables us to negotiate excellent rates with local and regional media.

### **Lifestyle magazine**

We have the best quality and widest distribution of any BID publication in our "Feel Alive" magazine.

### **Representing the BID membership**

We have negotiated with key partners such as the City Council to ensure the collective voice of BID members is heard. Notable examples are the objection to the Ricoh Arena Phase 2 Retail development, plus the promotion of free parking and ban on road works during the key Christmas trading period.

### **Including everyone**

We have always supported small as well as large BID members. As well as promoting the entry of major new brands like Primark and IKEA, we work on a day to day basis with small owner managed businesses. In 2007 this included time and money spent to help the diverse South City Traders group to rebrand and promote itself.

### **Raising Coventry's profile**

We have used £90,000 of BID funds every year to improve greening within the city centre. This has gained us Gold awards in Britain in Bloom for 2005, 2006 and 2007, plus the award for the best park to Greyfriars Green in 2006.



## **New for Christmas 2007**

Although not funded by the BID, CVOne's Winter Festival was deliberately designed to maximise footfall and support the membership in the vital Christmas period

After initial trials in 2006 the fairground and Christmas Market were bigger and better in 2007. As the icing on the Christmas cake, a new open air Ice Rink was located in Millennium Place.



## **Crime and Cleansing Figures**

Comparing figures for 2004, the year before the BID launched, and achievements in 2007, shows really significant improvements in both these areas. We also know from our regular market research that perceptions of both cleanliness and crime are very important to visitors in influencing how they feel about the city centre. Cleansing scores, using the national Encams standards, show a rise of over 17% in 3 years. This is from a base of 70% to nearly 88% at current levels.

In terms of overall crime in the city centre, data shows this has dropped by a massive 23% during the three years the BID has been running so far.

## **Welcome**

Andy Talbot, Centre Manager for West Orchards is the new BID Chair

Wendy Lord from Newsome Vaughan, Solicitors, and Claire O'Neill from BHS have joined the BID Sub- Committee

Mark Dixon has replaced Paul Chalmers as Centre Manager for Lower Precinct

Richard Ansell is the new Store Director for IKEA, and has also joined the Board of CV One

# BID Renewal Vote – What it means for you

## The Background

Currently, if you are on the mailing list for this Newsletter, you are one of the 550 customer-facing businesses that belong to the Coventry City Centre Business Improvement District.

This BID was voted in by a substantial majority of you in Spring 2005 and is due for renewal on 1st April 2008. It funds important projects to promote business and raise the profile of the City Centre. As a result, for the three years it has run so far, we have managed to sustain business vitality despite various strong competitive threats. Taken together, this increased competition had threatened to diminish footfall in the city centre by up to 12% which would have been disastrous.

To fund these extra projects the BID collects an additional 0.9% levy based on the rateable value of individual premises. This levy is a statutory charge, like business rates, once a majority vote is obtained. The levy is collected by Coventry City Council, acting on behalf of CVOne who independently manage the BID. Any queries or debt chasing follow the same procedures as for Business Rates.

## What happens next?

In the middle of January you will receive a Notice of Ballot. This is just a legal requirement to inform you that a vote is going to be held and what the arrangements are. Then in late January you will receive an envelope with a distinctive blue flash. This contains the ballot paper, a return envelope for posting your vote, and a statement explaining the BID and the ballot arrangements.

You can post your vote at any time from receipt of the ballot papers, but the deadline is 28th February. Any votes not received by then cannot be counted. The result will be public on February 29th.

If you require a proxy vote, an application for this must be received by 18th February, and there are also arrangements for replacing lost or spoiled ballot papers. If you need advice on any technical aspect of the vote please contact Dave Mooney at CV One on 024 7660 7051.

## What happens if the vote is successful?

There will be automatic continuity from 1st April 2008 until 31st March 2013 for all the projects and services laid out in the Business Plan. The full Business Plan is available for inspection by going on [www.coventrybids.co.uk](http://www.coventrybids.co.uk), then using the index on left hand side click on BID Renewal Vote 2008-2013 and then click on Business Plan. This is a long and detailed document but the Executive Summary will give you most of the main points. Under the Renewal Vote the levy will remain at 0.9%, adjusted for RPI inflation, for the full 5 years. This is the lowest BID levy in the U.K.

## What happens if the vote fails?

The projects and services funded by the BID are all at risk.

Some examples of the potential consequences are shown here;

- City centre marketing to the value of £226,000 per annum non-pay, including the Christmas campaign, disappears
- City centre planting cut back to pre-2005 levels. Britain in Bloom entry in jeopardy
- Benefits of creating a comprehensive retail radio network are destroyed; the cost of stores rejoining as individuals goes up significantly
- Streetscape and water feature maintenance and graffiti removal go back to skeleton levels, as 80% of maintenance staff time is currently funded by the BID
- No ability to acquire or renew state of the art cleansing equipment
- No Evening Ambassadors Team to support the nighttime economy and improve perceptions of safety
- No annual consumer surveys enabling members to understand visitor perceptions and track improvements
- No "Feel Alive" lifestyle publication promoting the city centre to over 100,000 homes three times a year
- No ad hoc project support for independent businesses

Please vote "Yes" in February to renew the Business Improvement District. It's one of the most important elements in keeping our City Centre competitive for the next 5 years.





## What the City Centre BID has achieved so far

All activities funded by the BID have been chosen to improve the appearance and safety of the city centre and to promote the businesses that trade there. There are huge benefits in taking a group approach. We can benefit from economies of scale, in the production of print materials and media buying at discount, for instance. We can also deliver central services and equipment that no individual business could afford to underwrite, such as the Evening Ambassadors Team and the state of the art cleansing and radio equipment we have bought.

An additional £90,000 has been spent each year on **greening**. This has enabled richer planting schemes, improved the quality of containers and extended seasonal colour. We have won a Regional Gold Award in Britain in Bloom each year of the BID, and Greyfriars Green also won the award for the best park in the UK. The BID funded consumer surveys show our visitors are increasingly impressed with the appearance of the city centre. Historically this had always been one of our weak points.

Major improvements to **cleanliness levels** have continued through the success of the BID's two state of the art cleansing machines, the £71,000 Schmidt Hotjet deep cleanser and the Trafalgar. These machines tackle chewing gum and cigarette ends respectively, and have made a dramatic difference to the appearance of the paved pedestrianised areas. Against ENCAM nationally accepted standards we have moved from a score of only 63 in

2003 and 70 in 2004 pre-BID, to nearly 88 in 2007. Our Maintenance Team, funded through the BID, has ensured zero tolerance of graffiti and a high standard of maintenance for street furniture and water features.

Visitor **safety perceptions** have again stayed stable through the continued presence of our high levels of on street customer service teams, including the BID-funded Evening Ambassadors. Retail and general crime prevention initiatives continue based on close working relationships with both the Police and the Council. The BID also supports a state of the art retail radio system, available to all members, which forms a key component in crime prevention and is still the envy of other city centres

An extended **Christmas marketing** campaign was both well recognised (by 69% of all respondents in 2006) and, in a third of cases, proved to have specifically encouraged Christmas shopping visits. (The successful "Godiva" artwork was repeated in 2007, allowing cost savings to purchase even more TV airtime including prime time slots). Every year of the BID so far, following successful negotiation on behalf of BID members with the Council, we have been able to promote free shoppers' parking at Christmas.

In terms of **generic city centre marketing** we have continued to introduce even further improvements to the quality, number of pages and print run of the quarterly glossy magazine "Feel Alive", which from our research is read by 350,000 potential visitors per issue.

**Additional consumer survey** work funded by the BID enables us to prove where change is taking place. A key success has been establishing accurate 24 hour **footfall measurement** through purchase of the first city centre camera count system in the UK. We now have full year comparative data which proved for instance that Coventry increased its footfall by 2% in 2006, whereas the West Midlands and the U.K. actually fell by 6% and 5% respectively.

Finally, on behalf of all BID members, CV One continues to promote the importance of the city centre to the local economy. We constantly **lobby key agencies** such as the City Council on the importance of attracting increased footfall. This will continue to be essential in the light of growing local and regional competition, and a very challenging national environment for all retail, leisure and service businesses. One powerful example is that, partly as a result of a strong case presented on behalf of BID members, the Council's Planning Committee has not automatically given permission for the planning application for Ricoh Arena Retail Phase 2, and is reviewing the Council's strategic position on retail development.