



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

**Business & Retail Networking Forum Minutes**  
**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2008 2:00-3:30pm**  
**Britannia Hotel**

Chairman- Andy Talbot - Centre Manager, West Orchards and  
Chair of the BID Sub-Committee

**1. Introduction from Andy Talbot the BID Chairman.**

Andy welcomed everyone and then ran through the meeting's Agenda and thanked Heather Thomas, General Manager for the use of the Britannia as the meeting venue. Andy expressed his concerns to the meeting about Coventry's footfall across both West Orchards and the City Centre as a whole which was falling below the national average. The worry was that closed retail frontages were turning customers away. Andy added that the Master plan would be a great step in the future, but action was needed now for a short term solution. He then handed over to Ian Woodall, Engagement Manager for the City Regeneration Services.

**2. Retail training opportunities - Ian Woodall, Engagement Manager, City Regeneration Services.**

Ian began by introducing us to the employment & skills benefits that his team offer to support employers with recruitment and training.

Their recruitment network is as follows:

- In Coventry and Warwickshire they have forged a sound and productive partnership known as the Recruitment Network to take forward the skills and employment agenda.
- They are collaborating to offer access to learning and appropriate support to enable individuals to develop the skills they need to gain sustainable employment.
- They also enable employers to recruit more effectively and develop the skills of their staff.

The offers are available at no cost to the retailers and consist of the following:

Pre Employment Support

Customised support for major recruitment programmes

- Job scoping
- Individual skills assessments
- Bespoke pre-recruitment training programmes

- Access to a database of local people seeking employment
- The opportunity to try out prospective candidates' suitability
- Advice on the local labour market

### Post Employment Support

Customised support for major recruitment programmes

- Support may be available in return for employing from priority customer groups
- Additional services are available to aid with the retention of new staff
- Post employment support through Train to Gain to develop new and existing workforce
- Business support services (such as business planning, financial and marketing advice), networking and business to business events

### Additional Support

- Support to promote diversity and develop work/life balance policies and procedures
- Advice and guidance with redundancy issues
- Support to implement new employment legislation
- Advice and support when employing people with disabilities

### Retail Training

- Bespoke Customer Service Training;
- Not Just NVQs;
- Package Tailored to suit business need;
- Used as a foundation for corporate retail training;
- Short and long courses;
- Flexible venues.

Ian then introduced his colleague Sharon Lindop to talk more about the activities available to employers for a small cost:

- One to one support
- Provision of information, advice and guidance
- A range of workshops and seminars on legislation and topics related to improving business performance.
- Tool Kits and guides
- Coventry & Warwickshire Employer of Choice Awards

Harry Balmer of the Chamber of Commerce then added a statement of support for the scheme;

For further information call Ian on 02476 833191 or e-mail [Ian.Woodall@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Woodall@coventry.gov.uk)

### **3. City Centre Police issues – update by Nigel Pagdin, City Centre Neighbourhood Sergeant**

Nigel explained that crime has fallen again in the first few months of 2008, and went on to give a case in point. A burglar who targeted two office blocks in the City Centre on the same evening had since been caught and was now serving four years in prison this person alone accounted for 5% of crime. The figures for April, May and June were as follows:

- April – down 6%
- May – down 6%
- June – down 2%

He then introduced Sharon Bent who would be leading one of the Neighbourhood teams specific to different areas of Coventry. There would be three teams operating in the City Centre itself.

Policing would now go through to midnight each weekday night, and 04:00am on weekends. £28,000 from the City Council had been used to fund Operation Frenetic in the Sky Dome area. Any drunken offence taking place would now lead to an automatic drug test, and anyone testing positive for drug abuse would then be referred for mandatory drug withdrawal treatment. These individuals would then be banned for three months from licensed areas of the City, and the aim was to get Pubwatch on board to implement these bans.

Shoplifting in Coventry was rising; Nigel planned to target those individuals known to the Police.

Perry Pericleous from Club Release mentioned that stolen items were being sold on or at the rear of his premises and he was forced to move the individuals out each time. Nigel agreed to talk to Perry after the meeting to discuss ways of keeping the perpetrators on site until the Police arrive.

Another question was raised by Heather Thomas, General Manager of the Britannia Hotel about the lack of Police presence in the Hill Top area next to their building. The hotel management had reported drug dealings by and to under 18's on a number of occasions. Nigel assured Heather that implementing the new teams in the City Centre should deter the dealers by increasing the Policing in the area.

The issue of begging and rough sleepers was raised, Nigel was aware that both had become an issue in certain areas of the City Centre and the Canal Basin but he assured the meeting that a number of persistent offenders had been taken to court.

### **4. City Centre Development, Paul Beesley, Team Leader – Property Development, City Centre Development Directorate.**

Paul firstly explained that he had been delayed as he had come straight from a meeting which if fruitful would bring a couple of hundred jobs to Coventry, another example of a business continuing to show confidence in the City.

Phase One of the Ironmonger Square development was now underway with work nearly completed on the two way traffic system for Trinity Street. The temporary structure for the Primark delivery tunnel under Ironmonger Row is now in place. The steel reinforcement work on the base course of this section of road would be finished next week however the final date of completion was as yet unknown until the problem was fully understood and rectified. Perry from Club Release raised the issue about the loss of on street parking in the Burges and surrounding area and how it would affect his business. At this stage Paul was unsure as to how the repair work and proposed development would affect on street parking but assured him that he would speak to colleagues and ask them to update businesses in the area.

The Travelodge that will replace the Leofric Hotel was due for completion in Spring 2009. Paul also mentioned that Jerde's Master Plan would be available for viewing in September and would be presented at the next Business and Retail Forum meeting in October.

Work on the new Tesco Express in Market Way South was well underway and the opening was expected to be late August. Bankfield House on New Union Street was also going through a major refurbishment and when completed provide a retail unit on the ground floor and six floors of office space. Discussions with a hotel chain were still ongoing for the Millennium View and hopefully a good news story could be announced at the next meeting, work had also now started on Belgrade Square as part of the Belgrade Plaza development. Paul also reported on new jobs being created in Coventry with Jaguar's announcement of 600 vacancies and the development at Ansty this was in addition to the Curriculum and Qualifications Board creating 650 jobs at the Butts. The Severn Trent site would see two more weeks of archaeological digging before the main building work commenced ready to open with 1700 new jobs in the City Centre Autumn 2010.

The issue of tables, chairs and A-Boards on the streets of Coventry City Centre was being looked into and it was hoped that a decision would be made by Christmas as to whether licenses would be required for the use of land in front of retail units.

A question was raised about St John the Baptist Church, they felt forgotten and wondered why they were not featured on the finger posts alongside Spon Street, Paul agreed that the heritage of St John's should be treasured and would look into their inclusion on the boards and other signage and campaigns.

#### **5. Business Improvement District (BID), Shirley Kent, Head of Commercial Development CV One Ltd**

Shirley mentioned that the Greyfriars Walk launch took place successfully on June 28th and that The Phoenix Quarter (involving Priory Place and Millennium Place) was planning a similar launch to follow suit. The re-launch of the Farmers Market was also proving very successful, and their new position in Market Way was very popular with the traders. Market research was being carried out at every market since the re-launch in May and will be reviewed in October.

She then introduced Mark Dwyer who had been appointed as the BID Liaison Executive. He would be meeting with all the businesses in turn and would act as a contact point and offer any support needed with the radio systems.

Shirley went on to say that although February and March had been a very difficult time, the last few weeks have finally seen an increase in footfall which brings us back in line to the national average with is nevertheless 3% down on last year, reflecting the economic downturn.

She also confirmed that the BID website had been updated to include details of the BID Committee membership and the minutes from each Business and Retail Forum meeting.

Looking ahead to Christmas, the “Feel Alive” issue was the most popular of the year, so all members should sign up now to ensure inclusion if they wished to advertise.

The Britain in Bloom judging panel were in Coventry today, and it was noted that a portion of the BID monies had contributed as agreed to fund the additional floral planting.

It was highlighted that the number of void units in the City Centre had risen to 50 in July 2008, which is a significant increase from the low point of November 2005, where it had been just 15 units. However, the Apple Store would be moving into West Orchards, Virgin Media into the Upper Precinct with a Funky Accessories store into Sherbourne Arcade. Planning applications had also been submitted for variable usages for the former ‘What Everyone Wants’ store on Corporation Street with a view to a mixed use unit.

#### 6. Date of next meeting

This would be Tuesday 21 October 2008 at 2pm, the venue to be confirmed with the next Agenda.



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