

BID

Coventry City Centre
Business Improvement District
Enriching our city



Business & Retail Networking Forum Minutes Tuesday 20th January 2009 2:00-3:30pm Rooms of Coventry

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, introduced the Reverend David Mayhew, the new Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, and then outlined the meeting's Agenda.

2. Annual Survey 2008 – Report by Richard Evans, Business Strategy Manager, CV One Ltd.

Richard had compiled a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the trends in City Centre statistics, based on large random sample surveys. He highlighted the four main areas that related to BID projects:

Retail – Footfall comparisons

Before Christmas, for weeks 47-51, footfall was suppressed year on year between 2% and 10%, mirroring the national picture. Weeks 52 (2008) through to Week 2 (2009) were better than in 2008, with Coventry showing improved increases over the national average in the early part of January.

Top retailers cited as shopper destinations in the City Centre:

- Marks & Spencer – 28%
- Primark – 20%
- Coventry Market – 19%
- Wilkinson– 17%
- Boots – 15%
- Debenhams – 11%
- IKEA – 4%

In answer to a question it was noted that IKEA did not, so far, appear to have generated the extra footfall to the City Centre that had been predicted, but this had also been strongly affected by the declining retail environment seen nationally.

Crime – Police statistics and survey –based perceptions of personal safety

Shoplifting had fallen by 3%
Knife crime has fallen by 4%

Overall crime in the city centre was at its lowest level for 10 years, at almost half the rate recorded on 2000.

Moreover, from the 2008 survey, only 5% of people feel unsafe during the day and 38% during the evening. These were respectively the lowest and second lowest, levels within the whole 10 year monitoring period.

Cleansing – National scores and visitor perceptions

The cleansing score reached 13.89% for 2008. The objective set by central Government was less than 18%, so Coventry had again exceeded target.

People's perceptions and satisfaction had both risen in relation to the cleanliness of the city centre.

Marketing – Publications, Events, Christmas marketing and free Christmas car parking

Feel Alive, the Coventry City Guide and the new Days Out publication all attracted good levels of recognition.

Event attendance by the people in Coventry had more than doubled from 25% in 2003, to 55% in 2008.

The Godiva Festival was the most popular Coventry event with 36% attendance from the survey sample, followed by the Christmas Lights Switch-on at 33% and then the Farmers Market at 30%. The Chinese New Year celebration was the least attended city centre event at just 8%.

Christmas Marketing Campaign:

29% of the respondents saw the Christmas campaign, and 22% of people then shopped in Coventry City Centre as a direct result.

Christmas Parking promotion

Separate research had shown that both parking and footfall were increased significantly during the period of the free offer, making Wednesdays almost as popular as Saturdays in terms of parking usage.

3. City Centre Development - Paul Beesley, Team Leader – Property Development, City Development Directorate.

Belgrade Plaza Phase 2b

An April/May opening was planned with retail units, a budget hotel, and a casino. Three leisure units had all been pre-let; Metro Bar and Grill, Bella Italia, and Pizza Express.

Following a question from the floor Paul said that the Development Team had so far seen no decline in enquiries for budget hotel investments since the economic recession.

Additional road works would continue in Upper Well Street until February half term, involving lane but not full road closure.

The planning application for the revised residential element of Belgrade Plaza to change into student accommodation for Coventry University had now been submitted. The Radisson Hotel had experienced a delayed start on site due to the need to renegotiate external funding.

Other items

Holocaust Memorial Weekend. Coventry was hosting the national commemoration event this year, bringing in international and local visitors to the Belgrade Theatre.

The former 'What Everyone Wants' building was being converted into an Asian fusion restaurant with 250 covers and originally planned to coincide its launch date with the opening of Belgrade Plaza Phase 2b this might now be delayed.

The new Severn Trent national headquarters was on schedule to open in August 2010. MCD, the developer of the former City College building at the Butts was now seeking planning permission for additional stories to the former college building for a hotel development. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), relocating from London, were an office pre-let for this scheme, occupying later in 2009.

Coventry University were making a £150 million investment in the city. The scheme for a new Student Enterprise Building was already on site between University Square and Jordan Well, while a planning application was soon to be considered for an Engineering and Computer block near London Road.

The Burges and Ironmonger Row: The scheme for the proposed new square was under review. The cost for the £1.5 million repairs to the tunnel would take half the budget for the entire scheme. Works would still continue, and it was confirmed that the funding was the responsibility of the Council. Paul was asked to brief the Forum once proposals were known and confirmed that within 4-6 weeks the review should be complete. It was confirmed that bus routes had yet to be agreed.

The On Street parking, project was to continue, where visitors were not being charged in the evening after 7pm, aimed to encourage as many people into the city centre as possible to support the leisure sector.

It was noted that bicycle racks and new seating would be installed in Broadgate.

Paul confirmed that, assuming the Council adopted the Jerde scheme, proposals for how and when the scheme would be implemented should be clearer by June. At the moment, it is important to get the planning and detail right so that when funding comes back to the market we are ready. In answer to a question he said that it was probable that the City Arcade would be affected as the scheme developed, but that there was recognition that areas within the city were needed to facilitate small/independent/new traders. The city needed to double its retail space to support the overall catchment so there would be enough space available for a wide range of traders.

The Chairman confirmed that the BID, the Council and CV One were all trying to create a strong economy which is beneficial for all traders; however in this current climate, there was a limited amount of resources available.

He also reported that on 26th February CV One were reviewing the events programme, he would be involved in those discussions and that members should contact him with any ideas

4. City Centre Police issues – update by Brian Hornsby, City Centre Inspector.

Overall objectives Brian had been set were to keep crime on the decrease and make people feel safer. He reported that Violent Crime over the Christmas and New Year period had decreased by 30% year on year. Between October 2008 and January 2009 there had been a 3% decrease for all crime. Brian was looking to shop owners to help reduce thefts, and ‘so far so good.’

The blocking off of Spon Street in the evenings had reduced crime and has been successful, while still providing access to residents. There were major issues with the surrounding businesses concerning the parked taxis. After a full discussion Brian agreed to take forward member’s concerns through a meeting with Council officers involved with the licensing of taxis.

5. Business Improvement District (BID) update by Shirley Kent – CV One.

2009 Events Confirmed Dates:

- Holocaust Memorial Weekend– 24th-25th Jan 2009.
- Transport Museum’s Doctor Who Exhibition - from the 13th March 2009.
- Belgrade Theatre Jazz Festival – 21st-25th May 2009.
- Godiva Festival – 3rd-5th July 2009.
- Coventry Car Run Weekend – 5th-6th September 2009.

Shirley reminded members that BID funds were for big projects, including £1/4 million per year spent on generic marketing, to bring people into the city centre. The BID Committee and CV One looked across the spectrum and chose projects which would help and benefit everyone. The next meeting would include an update on retail crime prevention projects.

CV One, in partnership with the Council, had approached Advantage West Midlands for a major funding input to the “Meantime” project. This was designed to bridge the time gap before the major retail development took effect. It involved environmental improvements, events, dealing with voids, and marketing campaigns. A decision on this bid for funding was expected shortly.

It was noted that Mick Emerson, Head of Events at CV One was an expert resource if traders planned to hold any type outdoor performance/event in the city centre. He should be consulted as early as possible as he held the entertainment Licence for the city centre.

Questions from the floor on a possible CCTV camera to protect the Cathedral shop, and the status of the hoardings around the Belgrade Plaza site would be followed up.

6. Date of Next Meeting.

Tuesday 28th April 2pm-3.30pm at the Coventry Telegraph offices, Corporation Street, Coventry

