



## **What is a BID?**

A BID is a Business Improvement District. It is a defined geographical area – in this case the whole town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells from the Lower Pantiles up to the top of Mount Ephraim and the end of Camden Road. It would encompass the entire town centre.

A Business Improvement District is a business-led, business-funded partnership, formed via a ballot to improve a defined area to benefit its members. A BID lasts for 5 years and then businesses are consulted again about whether they want to continue as a BID for a further 5 year period. BID projects are always in addition to local authority services, not replacements for them. The aims of a BID are:

- To allow businesses to decide and direct what they want for the area
- To allow businesses to be represented and have a voice in issues affecting the area
- Invest BID levy funds to benefit businesses in the BID area
- Deliver tangible benefits to local businesses
- To be equitable and sustainable

## **History of BIDs**

The first UK BID was Kingston upon Thames in Surrey nearly 20 years ago. Since then, more than 300 other towns and areas have gone through the BID process. There is no blueprint or 'one size fits all' specification. BIDs are very individual, taking direction from the business community in their own area.

More than 70% of BIDs are successful at their first ballot. At the end of their 5 year period, more than 90% get voted in again for a second period – BIDs have a successful track record of delivering exactly what their local businesses want. Other UK towns that have achieved BID status are: Guildford, Winchester, Canterbury, Hastings, Bournemouth, Southampton, and Nottingham.

## **What Would A BID deliver for Royal Tunbridge Wells?**

The answer is very simple – businesses tell the BID what the priorities are. An initial Feasibility Study found that events, tourism, footfall, parking and safety and security were all highlighted



as core priorities for Royal Tunbridge Wells. We are now consulting more widely to confirm the initial findings and dig deeper into these subjects. This second phase consultation will involve 50% of the towns' businesses. You can participate in that survey by [clicking here](#)

### **Why Does Royal Tunbridge Wells Need a BID?**

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together is currently funded by a small number of businesses who agreed to fund a town centre management partnership for 3 years. Their generosity and vision for the town's future is appreciated.

The 3 year period comes to an end in April 2019 and if Royal Tunbridge Wells wants to continue to have a town centre partnership to service businesses, promote the town and drive business initiatives forwards, then it needs to be sustainably funded. The only model that can do this is a Business Improvement District.

### **How Would a Royal Tunbridge Wells BID Work?**

A group of businesses came together in 2016 to form Royal Tunbridge Wells Together, a Community Interest Company. If a BID Ballot is successful and a Yes vote is secured, Royal Tunbridge Wells Together would become the BID company in Tunbridge Wells.

The Board of the BID company would consist of business people and would be elected by businesses. The Business Plan that will be launched in September 2018 will outline the scope and plans for the next 5 years in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Total transparency is essential so all minutes would be published (as happens now) the BID company would be meeting targets and benchmarks that the Board would set and annual reporting would take place. Accountability, transparency, responsibility and value for money is vital.

### **The Process**

When the second survey is complete, we will use the findings to create a fully costed Business Plan, showing businesses exactly how the BID levy income will be spent throughout the 5 year period. We will launch this Business Plan in September 2018 and have conversations with businesses across the town centre area, explaining how a BID will work. We really do want our local business community to engage in this process, take an interest in the future of our lovely town and work towards having a thriving, vibrant and busy regional centre.



### **The Levy**

A BID levy is calculated on the rateable value of a business's premises. In technical parlance, each individual business premises is called a hereditament. We will aim not to use any technical jargon at all so this is the last time you will see the word hereditament used!

A business's rateable value is not the sum of a rates bill, it is a rateable value of the property, assessed by the Government's Valuation Office which is clearly shown on a business rates bill. The levy in BIDs is usually between 1-2% of the rateable value.

Each individual town has flexibility over setting exclusions, caps on the amount of levy payable and the entry and top levels paid. The aim is to have a fair and equitable system. We will be publishing all this detail in our Business Plan in September but we are very clear that the level needs to be proportionate and reasonable.

### **The Ballot**

A BID requires the businesses to vote. This means that each business will receive a ballot paper in the post, you need to tick the relevant box and then post it through a slot in a ballot box in the town hall. Postal votes will be available too. For Royal Tunbridge Wells to win a yes vote and become a Business Improvement District, we would need to win more than 50% of the turn out and also, more than 50% of votes of businesses by rateable value. This double lock is in place to ensure that the views of all businesses are represented. The view of a small business is as important as the views of a larger business. Again, it is equitable.

### **Any Questions**

We hope that this page has answered any questions you might have but if you do have more queries, then please, ask us. Either email us by [clicking here](#) or call Royal Tunbridge Wells Together on 01892 531985.