

ACTON BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) FEASIBILITY STUDY

INFORMATION SHEET

Background

Following the success of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) for Ealing Broadway and West Ealing, Ealing Council have secured funding to explore the viability of the creation of a BID in Acton. Revive & Thrive, in partnership with Ealing Council are carrying out a Feasibility Study to establish if a BID would be viable. This information sheet is one of a series of ways in which we will be asking businesses in Acton for their views on this and we hope that it answers a few initial questions about what a BID might do for the area.

What is a BID?

A Business Improvement District or BID is a defined area within which the local business community work together and invest collectively in new projects and services that they have prioritised to address opportunities and problems that affect their businesses, staff and customers.

They are generally governed by a board made up of BID levy payers who represent the BID area, which means that businesses have a local voice - and can decide and direct what they want for their town, city or high street.

Does there need to be business support for a BID?

BIDs are business-led and business-funded partnerships, so it is vitally important we assess the views of as many businesses as possible. Any BID is subject to a vote of all eligible businesses within the area and so we will be surveying the views of Acton businesses over the coming weeks to establish if a BID should be proposed for the area.

How could a BID help my business?

There are nearly 300 BIDs operating across the UK, mainly in town or city centres. There are some in industrial areas and others which cover mixed business areas. Benefits they bring include:

- BID levy money is ring-fenced for use only in the BID area. Businesses decide and direct what they want for the area
- A town centre manager is appointed to engage and promote business needs, including event management and co-ordination to attract visitors to the area
- Business cost reduction, as well as reduced crime and joint procurement initiatives
- Help in dealing with Local Council, the police and other public bodies
- Increased footfall and improvements in staff retention
- Promotion and branding of the area to attract new customers
- Facilitated networking opportunities with the area and neighbouring businesses

Every penny raised would be accounted for and spent on helping the BID to deliver the projects the businesses have voted to support. Clear commitments are made and targets set to deliver businesses priorities for the district.

What type of projects might be considered?

This will depend entirely on the results of the consultation with businesses. Many other BIDs focus upon:

- Marketing and promotion of their town or city centre
- Major town or city centre events
- Improvements to the town or city centre streetscene
- Initiatives to improve business security and to reduce business overheads

As part of a business survey, businesses will be encouraged to put forward ideas for projects. BIDs also play a key role in representing their business communities – particularly with the Police, the Local Authority and other public-sector bodies.

How are BIDs funded and set up?

A BID is funded by businesses paying a small proportion of their business Rateable Value towards the BID. This money is ring-fenced for use only in the BID area, unlike Business Rates which go to and are re-distributed by Government nationally. A BID can only be formed after extensive consultation and a ballot of businesses on a detailed Business Plan.

How much would it cost my business and how much money would be raised?

If the business community votes for a BID company to be implemented in Acton, all eligible businesses in that area will pay the set levy amount. The amount will be decided as part of the feasibility study and will depend on the projects that business want to see delivered in Acton. The typical BID levy is approximately 1.25% of the rateable value of the business premises. So if the rateable value of a business is £20,000, the levy amount would be £250.00 per year. Other local BIDs as a guide generate typically between £175,000 and £350,000 per year.

Shouldn't the Council be delivering all of these activities and projects?

The BID cannot be used to replace existing Ealing Council services. Everything that the BID Company delivers will be new or additional work. This is carefully controlled through a legally-binding Baseline Services Agreement that sets out what the Council will deliver.

How can charging businesses more money help them in a climate where they are already struggling?

Most businesses recognise they have limited control over how they can improve their business and the trading environment of the area, such as the customer experience in Acton, parking issues, management of the street, vacant shops, perception of crime and a lack of promotional opportunities in the area. A BID company would provide control and a financial mechanism to allow the business community to improve their area.

Where would the BID operate?

This question would need to be considered as part of the feasibility study, we need to assess the level of local support from businesses to be situated within a possible BID area. The potential BID boundary remains open to consultation.

Would all businesses be liable to pay the BID levy?

This varies by BID area, in principle, any business with a rateable value that is situated inside of the BID area could be liable to pay the BID levy. In many BID areas, there are minimum exemption levels, which means very small businesses would not be liable to pay the levy (they can make a voluntary contribution). Equally, some larger businesses may have their levy liabilities capped.

Most BIDs include charity retail businesses, some will discount the levy rates for them, this can also apply to businesses that have management arrangements, for example shopping centres or industrial estates.

What are the timescales?

The current proposals are for a Feasibility Study finished by August 2017, to give an indication of whether or not a BID proposal could be pursued.

If the Study is positive further extensive consultation with all businesses would take place, resulting in a business plan you vote on. The ballot would probably be in February–March 2018 and the BID would only start if the majority of businesses voted to support it.

How long would the BID last?

The maximum term for any BID is five years, at the end of which the BID Company would seek a further five-year term via a renewal ballot. Nationally most BIDs are renewed at the end of their current term (Ealing Broadway has had a BID for over 9 years, renewed last in 2015).

How can I give you my views?

Establishing if a BID for Acton is wanted, and what projects it might deliver can only happen with feedback from you and many other businesses in the area.

Initially you can do this by completing our survey: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/actonbid or by contacting the project manager, Matthew Powell of Revive & Thrive, by email at: matthew@reviveandthrive.co.uk or by phone on: 07967 395621.

We will be hosting an open business networking event on Monday 24th July 2017, from 6.30pm to 8pm at The Everyone Active Acton Centre, High Street, W3 6NE.

You can also check the websites for other BIDs in the Borough to see what they are doing to improve their areas:

www.inwestealing.co.uk

www.makeitealing.co.uk