

COUNCIL
13TH NOVEMBER, 2019

Carmarthen Business Improvement District (BID)

Executive Board Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council:

- Support the ‘Carmarthen BID Company’ to enable it to hold a formal ballot on whether or not the town’s rateable businesses wish to operate the Carmarthen Business Improvement District (BID) for an initial term of 5 years;
- agrees its position in respect of support for the principle of the BID and voting in respect of its 15 affected Council owned rateable properties within the BID zone (estimated annual levy charge of £20,061 plus inflation at 2% pa);
- agrees the principle of undertaking the BID levy collection as detailed in the Operational Agreement on behalf of the Carmarthen BID Company, at no charge to the BID for the first 5 year term;
- approves the attached Statement of Baseline services to the BID company;
- nominates a member representative to sit on the BID Company Board;
- agrees to manage at no fee the BID ballot process on behalf of the Carmarthen BID Company.

Reasons:

The Carmarthen BID through its levy would generate approximately £847,000 over the initial five-year term of the BID, to invest in projects and services to benefit businesses in Carmarthen.

The BID steering group, following extensive consultation with businesses within the BID boundary, propose that the BID will focus on four areas of activity:

1. Improving business profitability
2. Improve the profile of the town
3. Improve the parking experience
4. Improve the look of the town

This focus will promote and support the town centre economy by increasing footfall and spend in the town centre and improving the vibrancy of the town

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted: N/A

Exec Board Decision Required	YES
Council Decision Required	YES

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Councillor Emlyn Dole / Cllr David Jenkins

Directorate: Chief Executives

Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carmarthen Business Improvement District (BID)

BACKGROUND

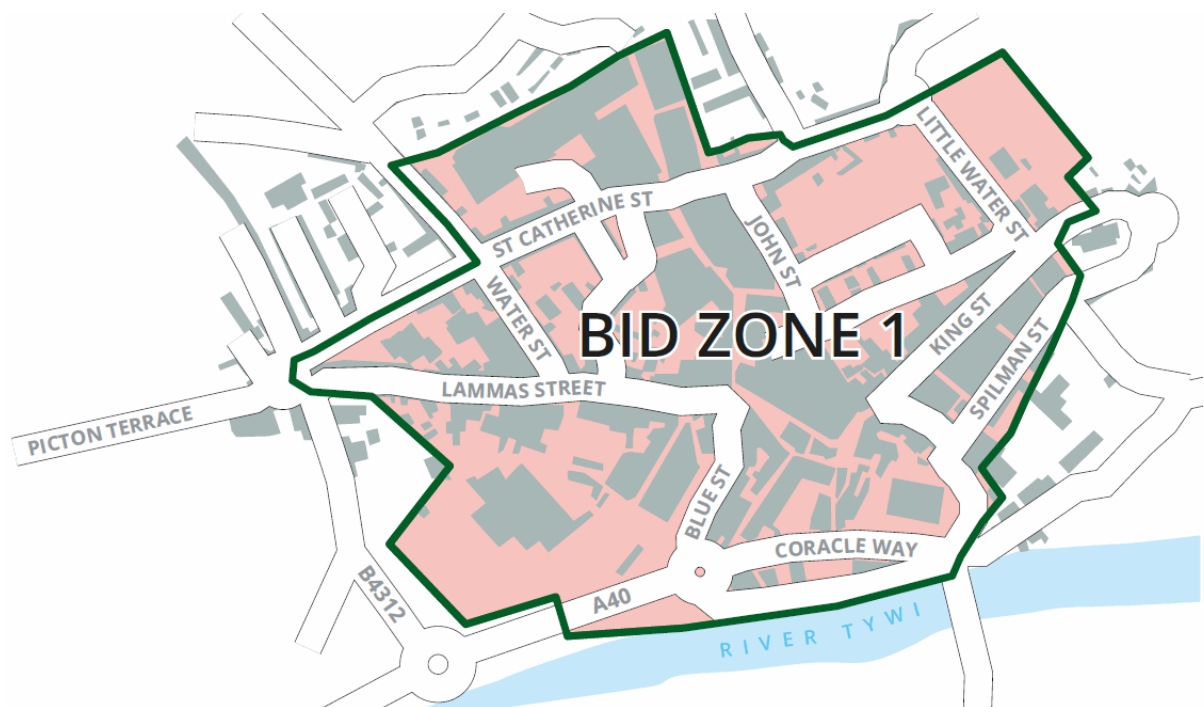
A BID is a business-led and funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. It is a specific area, where businesses work together and invest in agreed services, projects and special events.

The BID is financed by a levy made on the rateable value of a commercial property.

In March 2017, 190 Carmarthen businesses were consulted about the town centre and prospects for a BID. There was a second opportunity to comment and make suggestions via a drop-in session in November 2017. The consultations sought to establish whether businesses would support the introduction of a BID and opinion was overwhelmingly positive. A detailed 'proposal for a Business Improvement District in Carmarthen' has been developed (copy attached Appendix A), which provides specific detail on the proposals. The following section provides a summary of the aims, pledges and project ideas:

THE PROPOSAL

The proposed Carmarthen BID area detailed below proposes to apply a levy rate of 1.5% towards the rateable value of a commercial property within the BID boundary, this is applicable to all properties with a rateable value of over £6000 and 80% discount for non-retail charity property is proposed.



Through its levy it is estimated that Carmarthen BID would generate an income of around £165,000 per year, or £847,000 over the five-year term (inflation at 2% pa) to invest in projects and services to benefit businesses within the defined area.

What will the BID do?

The BID proposal makes four pledges:

1. Improve business profitability:

Supporting businesses in the BID area to become even more successful by increasing their profitability. The BID will support businesses to reduce their bottom line costs through, for example, a collective / centralised purchasing programme, and will deliver a range of schemes and initiatives to improve business performance and thereby increasing turnover and profitability.

2. Improve the profile of the town:

Promoting Carmarthen as a great place to visit for heritage and culture, entertainment, shopping and learning. This is a fantastic opportunity for the business community to directly influence how the town is promoted. The BID will also help to ensure a “croeso cynnes” for those visiting and spending time in the town centre.

3. Improve the parking experience:

The BID will strive to improve the parking experience for members of the public and BID members by reducing costs to incentivise consumers to visit the town more often.

4. Improve the look of the town:

This closely interrelates with the other pledges and is geared towards the same goal of increasing footfall and improving the vibrancy of the town. It will make the town an even better place to live and work, helping to drive increased footfall and attract businesses to invest in the town.

The BID proposes to focus on these four areas of activity. In addition a proportion of the budget will be ring fenced for supporting projects being developed and delivered by other local organisations, which fit with the aims and objectives of the BID.

How will it operate?

A company limited by guarantee has been established and a board of directors will serve voluntarily on the BID Board, this will include a nominated member representative from Carmarthenshire County Council.

A BID Manager will be employed by the BID Board, initially on a part time basis, to deliver the activities of the BID. The post will be funded from the BID levy. The BID Manager will be the key point of contact for BID member businesses.

The BID will produce a detailed action plan with quarterly milestones, which will be monitored quarterly and evaluated annually. Once the BID is established members will be able to influence the focus of the BID in order to best suit the changing needs of the town centre.

The Ballot

In order to successfully start a BID, it is necessary for eligible businesses to vote on paying the additional levy, with the proposed ballot scheduled to take place in Autumn/ Winter 2019. To be successful the vote must meet two tests: more than 50% of votes cast must be in favour of the BID and the ‘yes’ vote must represent more than 50% of the aggregate rateable value of votes cast.

COUNTY COUNCIL CONSIDERATIONS

The County Council needs to give due consideration to a number of key elements of the BID proposal. These are detailed as follows:

The BID Baseline Agreement

The 'BID Baseline Agreement' (Appendix b attached) provides a statement of Carmarthenshire County Council's current service provision in Carmarthen Town Centre. The baseline services in the agreement includes: Street cleaning, refuse collection, highways maintenance, street lighting, Christmas lighting, drainage, public conveniences, grass cutting and landscape maintenance, public realm asset management, fly tipping and fly posting / graffiti removal.

The Carmarthen BID will only be allowed to use levy to deliver additional activities over and above this level of service.

The BID baseline agreement has been developed in consultation with Highways & Transportation and Environmental Managers.

The BID Operational Agreement

The arrangements for collection of the BID levy are detailed within the '**BID Operational Agreement**' (Appendix C – Copy attached). The document sets out the Council's option to raise a charge for the administration of the scheme, however as the collection software and licences have been purchased to implement the Llanelli BID levy collection and no charge is made for the collection of the Llanelli BID levy, agreement is sought to undertake the collection at no charge for the first Carmarthen BID term (five years).

Arrangements for the collection of the BID levy have been developed in consultation with Local Taxation Team leader and Head of Financial Services.

Property Levy Schedule

The levy of 1.5% towards the rateable value of a commercial property within the BID boundary, is applicable to all properties within the BID Boundary with a rateable value of over £6000. Fifteen Carmarthenshire County Council properties are affected with an estimated annual levy charge of £20,061 plus inflation at 2% pa. A list of CCC properties affected is detailed within the '**CCC Property Levy Schedule**' (Appendix D – Copy attached)

CMT will need to consider whether this revenue implication is to be funded by the facilitating departments (Economic Development, Environment, Leisure, Education and Highways) or by a Growth bid for 2020/21.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- Support the 'Carmarthen BID Company' to enable it to hold a formal ballot on whether or not the town's rateable businesses wish to operate the Carmarthen Business Improvement District (BID) for an initial term of 5 years;
- agrees its position in respect of support for the principle of the BID and voting in respect of its 15 affected rateable properties within the BID zone (estimated annual levy charge of £20,061 plus inflation at 2% pa);
- agrees the principle of undertaking the BID levy collection as detailed in the Operational agreement on behalf of the Carmarthen BID Company, at no charge to the BID for the first 5 year term;
- approves the attached Statement of Baseline services to the BID company;
- nominates a member representative to sit on the BID Company Board;
- agrees to manage at no fee the BID ballot process on behalf of the Carmarthen BID Company.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Jason Jones

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities YES	Legal YES	Finance YES	ICT YES	Risk Management Issues YES	Staffing Implications YES	Physical Assets NONE
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Policy, Crime, Disorder and Equalities: The project supports Carmarthenshire County Council's Transformations Strategy which identifies six key transformational projects, including the transformation of Carmarthen Town. The Carmarthen BID will play a key role in the Transformation of Carmarthen Town.

The proposed project is aligned to the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in terms of taking action to safeguard the local economy of Carmarthen for future generations. The five ways of working and the sustainable development principle has been considered when developing the proposal (Long Term, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration, & Involvement).

The Carmarthen BID company will aim to improve the vibrancy and viability of Carmarthen town and where possible will engage with Dyfed Powys Police as a stakeholder in the town.

Legal: As part of a BID it is standard practice for the BID group to put in place operational and baseline services agreements with the Council. The operational agreements set out the terms of the agreement in relation to the operation of the BID including collection responsibilities. The baseline services agreement sets out the Council's current service provision as the BID group cannot use BID levy to replace existing council services. All affected departments have been consulted and agreed on the baseline services agreement and both the draft Baseline Services and Operational agreements have been reviewed by Legal.

Finance: The Council is currently liable for 15 rateable properties within the BID boundaries with a combined potential annual BID levy charge of £20,061 pa (2% inflation pa). CMT will need to consider whether this revenue implication is to be funded by the facilitating department or by a Growth bid for 20/21. Whilst the BID collections software was purchased as part of the Llanelli BID, there will be cost implications on the Council in respect of the levy collection via business rates. These costs will, however, be minimised by synchronising collections with the annual business rates. There is a clause in the operational agreement to enable the charge to be passed onto the BID group. The Carmarthen BID group have, however, requested that there is no charge made on the BID company for the first 5 year term, or for a similar period to that applied by the Council to the Llanelli BID, subject to Carmarthen BID Group agreeing that the collection period be synchronised with annual business rate collection dates.

There will be a further cost implication on the authority in respect of undertaking the ballot with regard to printing & staff costs (notionally £1500). Agreement is sought to run the ballot for this 5 year term at no cost to the Carmarthen BID.

ICT: Collection software and licences in place as they are being used in the Llanelli BID. These systems will be used to collect levy in Carmarthen.

Risk Management: If the Carmarthen BID proposal is not progressed then the Council's ability to fully deliver on one of its key regeneration aims - the transformation of Carmarthen town centre - is affected.

Staffing: Whilst there are no additional staffing requests to support the delivery of the BID the Council will need to commit existing staffing resources to:

- Collect the levy on behalf of the BID group;
- Assist with the ballot;
- Representative of the Council will be required to sit on the BID Company Board

Physical Assets:

None - the BID company office will be located within the zone at a commercial premises to be agreed

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below.

Signed: Jason Jones

Head of Regeneration

1. Scrutiny Committee

N/A

2. Local Member(s)

The following members have been consulted and support the BID in principle:

Cllr. Gareth John
Cllr. Alun Lenny
Cllr. Elwyn Williams
Cllr. Peter Hughes Griffiths
Cllr. Ken Lloyd
Cllr. Emlyn Schiavone

3. Community / Town Council

Town Council has been consulted directly by the BID group and via The Town Regeneration Forum.

4. Relevant Partners

The Carmarthen Town Regeneration Forum have been fully consulted on proposals

5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

None

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection