

## Penrith Business Improvement District Board Meeting Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
**Time:** 5.30pm  
**Location:** 4Eden, Duke Street, Penrith

### Attendees

Darren Broad (Chair)	DB	Heidi Marshall	HM
Dan Harding	DH	Jacqui Taylor	JT
Carol Grey (PTC Representative)	CG	Simon Whalley (Vice Chair)	SW
Charlie Shepherd	CS	David Whipp	DW
		Philippa Ball (recording)	PB

### 1. Apologies

Stephen Clarke (Vice Chair)  
 Jamie Redman  
 Tim Lorton

### 2. Review of questions and themes for Eden District Council

The meeting reviewed the themes and questions which have previously been identified for discussion with Eden District Council. It was noted that since the last BID board meeting EDC have submitted an application for the government High Street Fund.

### 3. Shopwatch

DB noted the Shopwatch trial period is coming up to an end. There has been a request for BID to pay for the £600 per annum funding to work with Carlisle to keep Shopwatch in Penrith. The meeting discussed the feasibility of the plan going forward and noted feedback received from levy payers. Directors has not received any positive feedback about the scheme.

The meeting unanimously voted against funding ShopWatch as it does not bring enough benefit to the levy payers.

### 4. Partnership meeting with Eden District Council

#### 4.1. C.E.O. Rose Rouse and Councillor John Owen from EDC joined the meeting

Cllr John Owen [JO] joined the meeting and introduced himself. He is the councillor for Shap ward and is responsible for Eden Development on the Exec team. DB gave a background to the BID and explained the strategic focus for the coming twelve months.

[Rose Rouse [RR] joined the meeting at 6.10pm]

Directors referred to the questions and themes for EDC, which had been circulated to all attendees prior to the meeting.

- **What do EDC see as BID's role in Penrith?**

JO commented that BID has a very important role within Penrith, as the voice of the businesses in Penrith working together with EDC. Having one board of representative people means there is a good foundation for a strong relationship.

RR presented the council plan, noting EDC are now in purdah. The whole membership of the council is up for election. This is beneficial as it means there then follows four years of stability to get work done. The plan for the next four years is in place and the draft council plan consultation finished yesterday. The incoming administration will review the plan and decide how they want to change or adapt the plan before they adopt it. Many programmes have been underway for a number of years, namely prosperity in the economy, health wellbeing and a good home and the Council operating slick and having a good customer service focus.

- **Enterprise: EDC plans for Penrith**

RR commented on a recent speech from Duncan Selby (Public Health England) when he stated that people need a job (income), a home and a friend. This is what the council plan is looking to deliver: jobs; decent homes; heating for your home; being healthy; helping people come together so they are not lonely. Partnership working is an important part of delivering the plan. The fact Penrith has 2 bids shows that people really care about the town.

EDC are working in partnership with Lancaster University around placemaking, creating "ecosystems". Their expert from Loughborough University visited EDC to discuss the town and the challenges faced. They were pleasantly surprised at how good Penrith is, particularly in terms of having lots of people in town and lots of independent shops. The consensus is that Penrith is doing well compared to other towns. Having a high proportion of local businesses has fared well for the town.

RR continued that the message being received at EDC is that the volume of shops of previous years is never coming back. There needs to be a new plan with an experience economy – hairdresser, food emporium, cultural events to attract people into the town centre. 'Culture' as an experience is getting endorsed by a number of town centre experts. There is a need to reinvent towns as exciting places to live and work. People's idea of how and when to shop has changed and people now shop online and look for experiences to draw themselves into the town.

It was agreed that there is a need for a mix of town centre attractions, but this needs to include strong independent businesses.

- **EDC's expression of interest to the High Street fund.**

RR noted she is unsure how well Penrith will fair in the funding, however the initial expression of interest has been submitted. There are definitely significant things to do to improve the town. For example, resolving empty units and improving navigation around the town. Also, the walking routes from the station to the town needs improvement, perhaps using the park as a route into the town. There is a need to open up routes to make the town more navigable.

It was noted that the strategy for improving the town should not be affected by whether the funding is awarded or not. The strategy needs to remain constant.

- **How are EDC working to address empty units in Penrith?**

The meeting agreed that there is a need for a business district to remain in the middle of town.

RR agreed there is a need for a fundamental look at the council's strategy for empty units. Clarence Dock in Leeds was given as an example. The area has been regenerated so shops have different types of businesses in them and new public realm spaces. The area is thriving and inviting. Shop units has been shared with professional businesses such as designers and PR agencies, restaurants, non-retail spaces and pop up shops and other shared space units. In Penrith, feedback has been received from consulting businesses that the only available office space for them is either above a shop or out of town. There is a demand for high quality office space in town. Usage classes will be developed and reviewed by the council. This is high on the priority list for the council. It has been highlighted as an issue on the engagement from the masterplan.

It was stated that existing independent businesses already in the town need support to help them to continue operating in Penrith.

RR noted there is a large catchment area for Penrith. The town has a service area of up to 15 miles, which is large for the size of town.

RR noted that the economic development office approach potential retailers to promote the empty units in the town. For example, Nandos has been raised as a 'like to have' business in Penrith. Keswick are keen to get Vietnamese street food in place. It was agreed that there is a need to create a market for businesses to want to come to Penrith.

RR commented that there are a number of positive opportunities for the town. One example is hotel chains interested in Penrith. The A66 / M6 crossroads is a beneficial location for a number of sectors. Discussions have taken place for a Visitor Centre in Penrith for both the Yorkshire Dales National Park and Lake District National Park. Discussions are ongoing regarding this project. People and groups are proactively approaching the council to show their interest in Penrith.

RR noted there will also be a need for updates and changes to attract foreign visitors. For example, at a presentation with the Chinese Consul from Manchester it was noted that Chinese tourists expect to be able to pay with a phone, not by credit card. The infrastructure needs to be set up to attract this audience. The presentation, which promoted the Lake District, and had Chinese voiceover, mentioned Penrith on a number of occasions. Also, another way to attract more visitors is to become a film location. It was also noted that there are a number of foreign students studying in the North West, most of whom have a vast social media network and they are connecting with new audiences back home.

The meeting questioned how to get people who stay at local hotels to shop and visit in Penrith.

RR replied that recent hotel models are for a hotel which does not have a restaurant. Traditionally, the restaurant is the least profitable part of the hotel and as a result, new developments are being proposed without on site restaurants. This will be of benefit to Penrith.

The meeting discussed if it would be beneficial to have the Planning and Economic Development (Assistant Director), Oliver Shimell, at future board meetings. It was agreed this could be reviewed and proposed for a future meeting.

The meeting asked when BID would become involved in the decision-making process for new developments, to ensure all groups are working together for the benefit of the town. For example, if a new hotel came to town it would be useful for all interested parties to become involved at an early stage.

RR suggested that, after the election, there could be a strategic partnership group formed to promote partnership working. It was noted that there is already a Town Working Party in place, including representation from EDC, CCC, PTC, Chamber of Trade and BID. However, it is important to try and ensure the attendees at the meeting have authority to discuss strategy projects and where possible autonomy to make operational decisions.

- **What are EDC's plans for event funding in Penrith (increase or decrease)?**

JO noted the event funding budget has increased from £23k to £25k. EDC are looking at a 3 year package for event funding. The decision depends what happens after the elections, but EDC will look for a package. RR noted it is difficult to answer because it is a question for the incoming administration.

RR's personal opinion is that events are important for making a town unique and vibrant. Visitors might not spend money on the day, but it encourages people to come back to the town in the weeks and months afterwards. Events make Penrith a vibrant place; community pride increases and events brings people together.

DH noted that the town infrastructure needs improving to enhance events and questioned if there is there any fund to help with this expenditure. RR replied that the High Street Fund would be the most suitable fund and suggested sending a proposal to EDC which includes all costings. One example would be to have power installed in the town centre, removing the need for generators. It was agreed that funding would be a conversation for after the election.

- **How can we work together strategically?**

RR agreed there is a need to have key stakeholders together to look at the main areas of the town. This group should include a range of stakeholders. The meeting discussed the Penrith Town Working Party, which has now met twice and has the next meeting planned for April. The group will need to develop proposals to report back and ask for funding and permissions from the relevant councils.

RR stated that EDC has just restructured. Details can be found on the council website. There is now an emerging council plan. The aim of the new structure is to be more outward facing. Historically, risk management was a very high priority. Moving forward, the council wants to shift focus. They are currently recruiting a Director of People and Place. This will be a crucial role, shifting the focus and approach of the people in the council. The new director will be outward looking and will be the contact who will be responsible for speaking to BID. Hopefully there will be a positive change.

JO agreed there has been a seed change since the restructure. Everyone is working in partnership to deliver the plan.

- How can we work together to address perceived parking problems?

Parking for Penrith Town needs to be address. One example was given where there are 70 staff in one town centre business. It is difficult for those staff to park at a reasonable price in town. They park in residential areas which annoys residents. There is currently a 3 year waiting list for parking permits. Paying for parking costs £4.80 per day. It is currently £350 per annum for a year's permit. There is no public transport to support these local workers. Other examples were given where volunteers have had to give up volunteering in shops because they can't afford to pay to park in town.

RR agreed parking is a big issue for the town and there is a need for a strategic approach for parking. RR agreed there is a need to change how EDC see parking. This will be taken back to the council. There are a number of approaches being reviewed and these need to come together to form a strategic approach.

[RR, JO and DW left the meeting at 19:06]

## **5. Any Other Business**

### **5.1. Breakfast meetings organised by Chamber**

HM noted there are 3 breakfast meetings being planned in the town which may be interesting to levy payers. Three specific topics over three meetings. Details can be found on the Chamber Facebook page.

### **5.2. Proposed new structure for the board meeting**

DB proposed a new structure for board meetings, with a standard agenda and an improved board pack.

Apologies include votes

- Apologies
- Matters arising
- Chairman's report
- Treasurers Report
- Project Updates
- Funding requests
- A.O.B.

The meeting agreed to implement this new structure. In addition, if apologies are given and there is a key point for voting, the director who will be absent can email their vote prior to the meeting.

### **5.3. Review of Training Audit (SW)**

The meeting discussed the training audit presented by SW. The provision of training was discussed in detail including why training was organised by BID in the first place.

A high percentage of businesses in town to do attend the training, despite a range of marketing approached. It was agreed that testimonials should be written for courses attended, highlighting the benefits.

SW presented his Proposals for the future:

“My proposal moving forward is, we use Phil to gather requirements from Levy Payers, when she is out, also we ask them to send in training requests. Once we have a number for a course, we commission a course.

We also instigate **Social Media Socials**, two hours 5.30 -7.30 a friendly introduction to Social Media. We can run this in small groups, with someone paid about £50 to host the session, £50 for overheads/drinks and £50 paid to a local expert. I have started this within EVAN we had 8 at an intro to MailChimp last week, and have dates already set for April 18<sup>th</sup>; May 16<sup>th</sup> and June 13<sup>th</sup>. We are happy to open this up to all comers.

I will host. If the BID could cover the cost £150 an event, we could probably satisfy a lot of local need, have a good social and get good vibes going! I propose we pilot this £450 for the 3 events and then review in July.”

The meeting agreed to fund the trial the social media workshops. £450 for 3 social media drop in sessions. This was agreed by unanimous vote.

It was agreed that the full day training courses should be subsidised in future, rather than being completely free to levy payer. However, this will have an added administration time in collecting the monies and debt chasing.

Action: DH to approach web designer about having a paypal payment system on the BID website to take subsidy payment.

The meeting were undecided if the payment should be £35 per delegate to cover the course materials, or a percentage of the overall course cost. This is to be discussed further at the next meeting.

The meeting discussed if it would be possible for larger businesses to share in house training with other businesses in town. Again, this will be discussed at a future meeting in more detail.

The next meeting will take place at 5.30pm on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at Ullswater House

The meeting was adjourned at 19:55 by Darren Broad.

Minutes submitted by: Philippa Ball, Penrith BID Administrator / Manager

Approved by: Darren Broad

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.