

Penrith Business Improvement District Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday 19th January 2020

Time: 5:30 pm

Location: Microsoft Teams video call

Philippa Ball, BID Administrator / Manager (recording) - PB

Stuart Bell, Accountant with Dodd and Co - SB

Darren Broad, Argos (Chair) – DB

Carol Grey, Penrith Town Council (PTC Representative) – CG

Dan Harding, Foundry 34 and Angel Lane Chippie (Vice Chair) - DH

Simon Whalley, Eden Valley Artistic Network – SW

David Whipp, Starfruit - DW

Sarah Mossop, Sassy Nix - SM

Minutes

1. Apologies

Charlie Shepherd, Rotary Club of Penrith – CS [voting via email]

Celia Atkinson, M&S - CA

2. Matters Arising

2.1. Feedback from ShopAppy

At the last meeting ShopAppy presented their web offering to the board. Following that briefing, the following feedback and questions was raised by directors:

- They say it supports local trade but what about the hospitality sector? On questioning businesses in other towns, most restaurants / cafe's / takeaways say it does not generate the business required to justify the cost. Not many people would use it to order a coffee / sandwich.
- What is the longevity of ShopAppy? Would they not agree that the website is 'filling the gap' now whilst the country is mainly using click and collect business, but as the country starts to open up in the future, would customers not return back to stores?
- ShopAppy comes from a business point of view. Has there been any market research done by Shop Appy to identify if there is a need for the website in Penrith?
- I run a digital business and customers require usage of the app to however it fits their lives / shopping habits. Why does the software only work from a web base and not mobile platforms?
- How much time does a business have to invest monthly to keep their details up to date to justify the spend?
- How does Shop Appy help the high street when, by its very nature, it is encouraging people to shop online.
- The cost of £12.000 to BID for the first year means that to break even, Penrith would need 50 businesses signed up from starting month. Whose time is invested to get those 50 businesses, Bid or Shop Appy?
- Who markets the website to the community? What's in the package for this?
- Would Shop Appy be open to a test period (6 months) to test if viable for businesses? If viable, then businesses sign up for an 18 month period?

The meeting discussed how ShopAppy could benefit the businesses in Penrith and the potential issues:

- Time taken to implement the offering may be better spend strengthening our current projects, e.g. the Independent Shops Guide, Discover Penrith website, video guides to shops, links with other offerings.
- Concern over relevance of the app for the Penrith community. Persuading business owners to onboard is only part of the battle – also important to get customers familiar with the website.
- Directors questioned if it would be better to invest the money in supporting businesses we already have with offerings we already have – marketing training, marketing support, grants for new projects etc.
- There may be other platforms which would be beneficial to the businesses. For example Maybe: <https://www.maybetech.com/> Directors can view free webinars at <https://www.maybetech.com/maybe-webinars/>

Directors decided ShopAppy was not a viable offering for Penrith at this time, given the time and financial commitment which would be required to make it a successful project.

Action: PB to have a secondary meeting with ShopAppy. Project will not be taken any further at this time, but may be review in 12 months time.

Action: Other support/offerings to be investigated. For example:

- Independent Shops guide (Eden Graphics)
- Discover Penrith offering (website and social media).
- Building the individual business profiles in town (eg sharing videos of the shop owners to create a 'Virtual Penrith').

2.2. Future Visions for Penrith – Strategic Thinking

PB noted Penrith BID has a Strategic Plan and a COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Both need to be reviewed and reworked in light of the global pandemic. In addition, there is a feeling of distance and isolation among some levy payers during this third lockdown. There is a need to consult with levy payers: what vision for Penrith do the business owners have, and what projects do they think BID should focus on for the remainder of this BID term to achieve that vision. As well as the ongoing COVID-19 support, there is a need to promote strategic thinking for business in Penrith beyond the pandemic. The meeting discussed this assertion, noting the following points:

- There may be other stakeholders with whom BID should be working. For example, the Avanti WestCoast development is currently focused on promoting other stations in Cumbria. Stakeholders are meeting with Avanti to promote Penrith and ask for more prominence be given to Penrith station and links to the wider Eden Valley. Also, BID could have stronger links with Penrith Chamber.
- There are a number of businesses who are worried about their short-term survival (making it through to March).
- For those businesses who do survive past March, there needs to be a plan to drive change and support business development for Penrith.
- CG updated the meeting on the Borderlands project, the accountable body will be Cumbria County Council who have commissioned External Consultants to work with town's across the county to look at a holistic vision for each chosen town and provide a view for the future. They will work with partners and stakeholders to consider projects that will add to the economy of Penrith and bring people and jobs to the area, they will also consider branding and Covid-19 recovery. Further information is available at <https://www.borderlandsgrowth.com/>. BID will be kept up to date via the Town Working Group.
- The Town Marketing Group is also ongoing and will be focusing on Marketing the town post Covid.
- Informal webinars / round table chats etc could inform levy payers and include them in discussions. Cumbria LEP advertise these as 'fireside chats'. The meetings would be a way of sharing best practice, helping decrease isolation amongst business owners and engaging the businesses in ongoing developments. The meetings could be short, regular updates and conversation. Invitations could be specifically targeted at certain businesses in town to ensure a range of sectors are included.

There are potentially two projects which could run concurrently: One looking at business survival for the next 2 to 3 months (“How are you? How can the BID help?”), the other a wider plan for the future of Penrith (“What’s the Future Looking Like?”)

Action: BID to lead on setting up some online conversations among business owners.

3. Financial Update

3.1. Stuart Bell to provide latest Financial review

SB presented the updated Profit and Loss for the year to date. Please refer to the report for further information. Two new rows have been added to the report:

- **Committed Expenditure:** Agreed and committed spending
- **Other Estimated Expenditure:** Spending discussed but does not have a finalised agreed quote.

SB worked through the specific project spending.

- The Levy project has a £2,500 contingency fund for the year.
- Overall, the budget is £10,206 underspent available to spend or carry forward.

The meeting discussed the greening budget and SM will review costs (including repairs and renewal to planters) with DW.

Hanging basket sales were cancelled in 2020 and DW sold the spare plants on behalf of BID. This money has not been added to the greening budget.

Action: DW to confirm total value of sales from the pallets of plants sold via Starfruits. PB to invoice accordingly.

4. Chairman’s Report

DB presented his report as part of section 2.2

5. Projects Update

5.1. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response

PB is providing ongoing telephone and email support to businesses in response to the pandemic. The effects of lockdown 3 are being felt across the town and the short-term future seems bleak. Directors discussed how it may be possible to provide additional support to businesses. At present, some professional services have offered their advice free of charge to levy payers in need. It may be possible to expand this network of support. In addition, it may be possible to provide additional support via guest speakers at the fireside webinars, eg financial support available.

Action: PB to investigate providing funding to professional services which can be offered for free to levy payers.

5.2. Christmas

The 2020 Christmas Lights project has been completed.

Action: PB to plan a project debrief for March.

5.3. Greening

DW noted full set of plants have been ordered for 2021. There is one final order DW is looking to make and he asked for confirmation that the project should proceed as planned. Cumbria in Bloom and Britain in Bloom will be run separately and are based on community schemes. Penrith will not enter as a town.

Action: DW to proceed with greening project as planned.

Action: PB to put in a funding request to PTC for the greening.

6. Funding Requests

6.1. PubWatch

PubWatch have requested funding for the insurance element of their scheme. This is a £72.80 funding request to take the payment up to May. A new policy will then be started, in line with ShopWatch. Directors voted unanimously to fund the insurance.

Action: PB to liaise with police to fund PubWatch insurance.

7. AOB

7.1. Ideas and Suggestions standing order on

SM has suggested a new standing agenda item, which will allow for the introduction and discussion of new ideas and suggestions for the board. All directors agreed.

Action: PB to add an 'Ideas and Suggestions' standing agenda item.

7.2. Campervan hard standing

It was noted that government are looking to change legislation on places where it is permitted to park campervans for overnight stays. This has been an issue raised by BID directors in the past. At present the legislation is for village halls and pubs, but PB will keep in contact with local tourism stakeholders to see if the situation changes.

7.3. Website listings

PB confirmed that non levy payers within the rough 3 mile radius of Penrith can get a website listing either by joining BID (1% of business rates fee annually of £40 min payment) or by paying a £50 one off listing fee.

Meeting adjourned at 19:20 pm

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

Approved by: Darren Broad

Signature:



Date of next meetings: Tuesday 16th February at 5.30pm on Teams