

ILKLEY BID MID-TERM REVIEW

Produced by
Heartflood Ltd

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Prepared by Heartflood Ltd for Ilkley BID 2022.

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Executive summary

Heartflood were recently commissioned to support a mid-term review for the Ilkley BID. The key components of the project included a comprehensive review of BID performance, including a survey of BID businesses in order to assess the views of BID levy-payers.

As well as the survey, the assessment included several meetings with BID staff, attendance at BID Board meetings and a review of key BID documentation to allow an analysis of progress against the current Business Plan. The main findings of the study are as follows:

1. Reasonable progress has been made against the majority of the Business Plan objectives.
2. There appear to be ongoing challenges around effective communication and management across various aspects of the BID and several improvements need to be enacted.
3. Satisfaction with the BID amongst levy-payers is generally reasonable.
4. Whilst the BID communicates reasonably well with levy-payers, there are pronounced improvements which need to be made.
5. In general terms, BID levy-payers are both reasonably aware and reasonably satisfied with the work of the Ilkley BID.

1.0 Background and project outline

Heartflood were commissioned in October 2021 to support a mid-term review of progress against the Ilkley 2019-2024 Business Improvement District (BID) Business Plan. The key components of the review, as agreed with the BID were as follows:

1. To undertake a review of BID performance.
2. To support a survey of BID businesses, with the BID to drive the required level of responses.
3. To prepare and present this report, to include key analysis and recommendations.

The project also involved investigation and analysis of all of the following relating to the BID:

- Annual report and accounts summaries, 2020 and 2021
- BID Action Plans, 2019-21 and 2020-21
- BID website
- Board meeting minutes September 2021
- Business Plan 2019-24
- Company accounts 2020-21
- Levy payer annual survey year 2
- Monthly Board reports October 2021 – February 2022

2.0 Supporting information relating to Heartflood

Heartflood can point to varied and extensive experience within the field of Place Management over the past 20 years and have considerable expertise in the field of BIDs since their introduction in the UK. Having recently supported a variety of BID work across the country and having supported the 2019 Ilkley BID ballot, it was considered that Heartflood were ideally positioned to carry out an independent review of this type.

3.0 Background information relating to Ilkley BID 2019-24

The current Ilkley BID Business Plan was approved in 2018 and received a strong mandate of support, with 81% in favour of the proposals by number and 87% in favour by rateable value. The ballot result took the BID into a first 5-year term of operation and the Business Plan focuses on the following priority areas:

- Marketing the town
- Providing one voice for businesses
- Maintaining Ilkley as an attractive place
- Supporting businesses

The plan identifies annual income and expenditure of approximately £138,000 per year over the 5-year term and pledges to ensure that the BID will:

- Help businesses to flourish
- Attract more visitors
- Work to deliver a brighter future for the town

Whilst the BID has resulted in a number of very successful projects, it has also experienced a number of key challenges, which include the following:

1. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic over the past 2 years have presented a number of pronounced issues to BID levy-payer businesses, as well as to the operation of the BID itself.
2. The BID Board has seen a relatively significant level of churn since the inception of the BID and has therefore struggled with consistency of membership and stability of operation.
3. Despite only being within the first term of operation, the BID has employed a total of 3 BID Managers and is currently operating an interim system of management.

The BID is therefore considered to require a degree of attention to ensure that more consistent and stable governance and management systems are put in place over the next 6-12 months.

4.0 Main research methodologies employed

The project employed several methods to gain the information with which to conduct the requisite analysis, and these included:

- Meetings with both the BID Manager and the Directors of the BID
- Observations from site visits to the town centre
- Desk-based research regarding the BID, primarily via online searches
- A review of key documentation, as detailed in section 5.2
- An analysis of 76 responses to a survey of BID businesses

The information gathered enabled us to gain a thorough understanding of the current operation of the BID company and our industry experience allowed us to compare current activities in Ilkley with national best-practice.

5.0 Main findings

5.1 BID meetings and conversations

Having met several times with BID staff, as well as attending Ilkley BID Board meetings, our assessment is that there does not currently appear to be very effective communication and management across various aspects of the BID, with the main themes having emerged from communication with both BID staff and Board members including the following:

- *Board members are largely too nice to challenge any projects being proposed by the BID Manager*
- *Ilkley has high expectations of everything and lots of very intelligent people with lots of time on their hands, which means all organisations are under significant scrutiny*
- *Less projects but with more publicity would seem like a better approach*
- *Need a more proactive Board structure*
- *The BID recently went through a mad time and the change of Chair didn't help*
- *The BID tries to do too much and ends up rushing from one thing to the next with little impact*
- *The Board are primarily small business owners and time poor and many of them may not think about the BID from one meeting to the next, which results in limited true engagement*

- *The Board needs to take a more strategic approach*
- *Training and mentoring may be required for the Board*
- *We need to improve the balance between the BID Manager and the Board*
- *We spent too much time on car parking*
- *Whilst excusable and with the benefit of hindsight, the award of the ARG funding was not the best outcome for the BID*

5.2 Review of documentation

With regard to the scope of the project brief, we reviewed the following BID documentation relating to the current BID term:

- Annual report and accounts summaries, 2020 and 2021
- BID Action Plans, 2019-21 and 2020-21
- BID website
- Board meeting minutes September 2021
- Business Plan 2019-24
- Company accounts 2020-21
- Levy payer annual survey year 2
- Monthly Board reports October 2021 – February 2022

Our analysis regarding the current position regarding each of the above factors is as follows:

5.2.1 Business Plan

The specific improvement projects outlined within the 2019-2024 Business Plan are as follows and we have both annotated and colour coded progress against each of these:

Business Plan improvement project	Commentary
Create a recognised brand for Ilkley that businesses can use as a promotional tool	Summer 2020 – branding exercise with levy payer involvement resulted in Discover Ilkley.
Create promotional campaigns that benefit local business across the town	Examples include It’s an Ilkley Christmas and Hidden Ilkley.
Oversee targeted digital media campaigns, including extensive social media activity	Consumer facing activity through Discover Ilkley. Needs more work to improve engagement but ongoing.
Carry out market research to identify and target new visitors for local businesses	No activity yet evident.
Develop initiatives to maximise footfall to all areas of the town	Trails created on LoyalFree app and now on Discover Ilkley app.
Work with tourism boards to develop collaborative and co-ordinated projects which better promote and benefit local businesses	Worked with Visit Bradford on a number of initiatives including Sparkling Bradford.
Be a strong voice representing Ilkley businesses to Bradford Council and other agencies on issues such as parking and work with them to find solutions	Lots of this carried out in year 1 and also represented our businesses in the many economic recovery meetings with the Council.
Represent Ilkley businesses and work with other relevant organisations within the town to lobby for improvements and investments in Ilkley	Investments for Discover Ilkley, direct investment from Bradford Council towards LoyalFree set up, plus large ARG grant awarded.

Business Plan improvement project	Commentary
Preserve the vitality of Ilkley for local businesses	No activity yet evident.
Ensure that productive links are developed with organisations such as Visit Yorkshire and West Yorkshire Combined Authority to both promote Ilkley and to gain more investment into the town	No activity yet evident.
Hold local authorities to account for maintaining streets and footpaths in a clean and safe condition	Some work done intervening when businesses have failed to get action from the Council. This isn't something which the BID has promoted as an intention when there is a system in place for people to report directly on the Council website.
Introduce new, landmark public art and floral displays	No activity yet evident.
Coordinate, create and promote an annual programme of events which support local businesses, including street entertainment and music	The BID has commissioned some music and paid for the bandstand opening recently. Also paid for music playing out of some venues at Christmas last year. The intention is to do more.
Make sure Ilkley is easily accessible for all visitors including those with disabilities	No activity yet evident.
A dedicated BID Manager to be a clear point of contact	The BID has recently appointed a new BID Project Manager, although considerable work is still required to stabilise the staffing structure.

Business Plan improvement project	Commentary
Introduce schemes that would save businesses money by group purchasing initiatives on overheads such as energy, telecoms and waste disposal	Meercat Associates were engaged in Year 1 and significant savings were identified. A project of this type should be resurrected.
Encourage public transport operators to carry out seasonal discounted promotions for local businesses	No activity yet evident.
Produce and distribute a regular newsletter to Ilkley businesses	Monthly e-newsletters were going out up until mid-2020 and have now been reinstated. Also, additional printed newsletters are distributed from time to time, with one scheduled to go out in January 2022.
Produce regular updates for businesses on the issues which are important to them and provide key performance information for the town	In addition to the newsletters, a CRM system is used to directly email businesses with relevant updates. This was used a lot during Covid with a good response. The BID are subscribed to footfall monitoring software, although this has not been used much to this point and so needs addressing.

Additional projects carried out

Given the medium-term nature of BID mandates, it is not unusual for any given BID to carry out additional activity to that outlined within their Business Plan and a major additional project relates to the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding awarded to the BID. The ARG funding comprised total funding of £320,000 which was made available to the BID by Bradford Council in August 2021. The funding was provided to cover the following three main projects until 31st March 2022:

- Digital upgrades, to include free public wifi
- Significant upgrades to the Discover Ilkley website
- Creation of augmented reality trails for the town

Whilst funding of this magnitude was very positive news and the ARG projects are considered to align reasonably with aspects of the BID Business Plan, the additional demands of the ARG projects proved to be a resource challenge for the BID and great care needs to be exercised as the BID moves forwards that a strong focus is retained on delivery of the Business Plan objectives, whilst also discharging any remaining requirements of the ARG funding.

Having reviewed the range of information available to us, we consider that reasonable progress has been made against the majority of the Business Plan objectives and recommend that the BID Board establish a clear focus that this continues at the required rate for the remainder of the BID term, with particular regard to ensuring that activity is carried out in all areas of the above table over the course of the next 2 years.

5.2.2 Action Plans

The BID produces focused annual Action Plans which we consider closely align with the Business Plan and which allow for progress to be set and tracked throughout each year. We consider that this represents good-practice in terms of distilling key projects directly from the Business Plan and ensuring that annual priorities are set from this process.

5.2.3 Newsletters

The BID emails monthly newsletters designs and also occasionally prints and distributes newsletters to all levy-payers. We suggest that these printed newsletters should be produced and distributed to levy-payers on a quarterly basis to communicate key progress against the BID Business Plan.

5.2.4 Previous surveys

As well as the survey linked to this mid-term assessment, we pleased to note that the BID had recently carried out a consultation with their businesses regarding the impact of major events carried out in Ilkley. Albeit that the sample size of 21 responses was very low, satisfaction with the BID was generally high, with 76% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the BID is making a positive difference in the town, compared to 5% who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Having carried out an analysis of the range of documentation available to us, we consider that the BID is generally focused upon the delivery of the Business Plan and has made reasonable progress against the execution of all components of it. We did however note that the following information is not currently produced by the BID and would recommend that work is undertaken to produce all of the following and to communicate these to BID levy-payers:

- Key Performance Information reports
- Consumer surveys

5.2.5 BID website

Having reviewed www.ilkeleybid.co.uk in March 2022, the site is not considered to be adequately representing the work of the BID and is considered to require attention in the following main areas:

- The ability to download the Business Plan and the 2021 Annual Report
- Updating of the **News** section, to ensure that any latest posts are within the preceding 2 weeks
- Updating of the **In the Press** section, to ensure that any latest posts are within the preceding 2 months

6.0 Business survey

The main method for gaining review information was via a survey of BID businesses and feedback was mainly captured in the form of a structured questionnaire, which gathered a number of key pieces of information. The survey was available to businesses both as a hard-copy questionnaire and as an online form and responses were also encouraged via the established BID communication channels, including social media.

The survey ran between October 2021 – March 2022 and yielded a total of 76 responses, which represents 23% of the approximately 330 BID levy-paying businesses. It is therefore considered that the survey responses form a reasonably representative sample, with the main findings as follows:

6.1 Awareness of the recent work of the BID

Awareness of recent BID activities is relatively high, with the awareness of specific projects ranging from 31% to 80% and an average awareness of 54% of the range of BID activities, as per the following table:

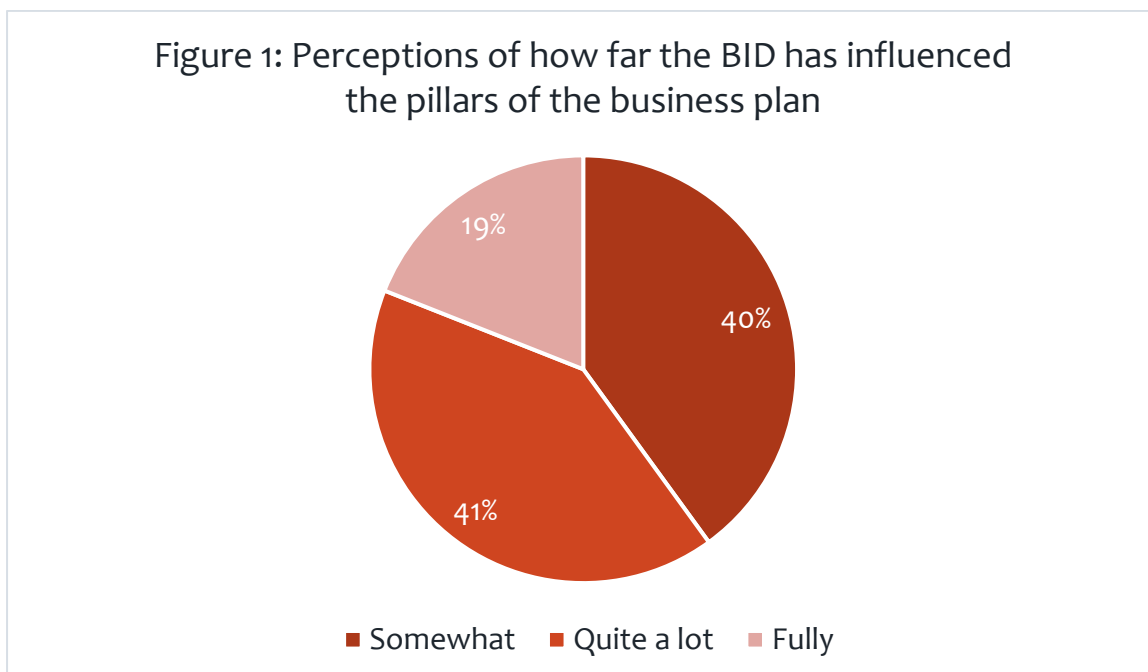
BID activity	Awareness
Creation and management of the Discover Ilkley website	80%
Representation to Bradford Council on car parking and other issues	69%
Creation of LoyalFree trails to boost footfall	68%
Promotional photography for BID businesses	68%
Delivery of Ilkley at Christmas campaigns	66%
Free meeting room hire for BID businesses	61%
Grant bidding, which recently resulted in funding of £320,000	61%
BID business promotion on social media	59%
Distribution of regular business updates	55%

BID activity	Awareness
Provision of HR support to businesses	54%
Business advertisements in the Ilkley Gazette	49%
Production of professional promotional videos for the town	48%
One to one business support, particularly during Covid	46%
Provision of e-learning in conjunction with Virtual College	44%
Delivery of the Ilkley to You campaign, including a range of advertising	38%
The Hidden Ilkley campaign for the non-retail & hospitality sector	37%
Group purchasing to reduce business overheads	32%
Provision of radios for the Ilkley Watch scheme	31%

n 71

6.2 Delivery against the Business Plan

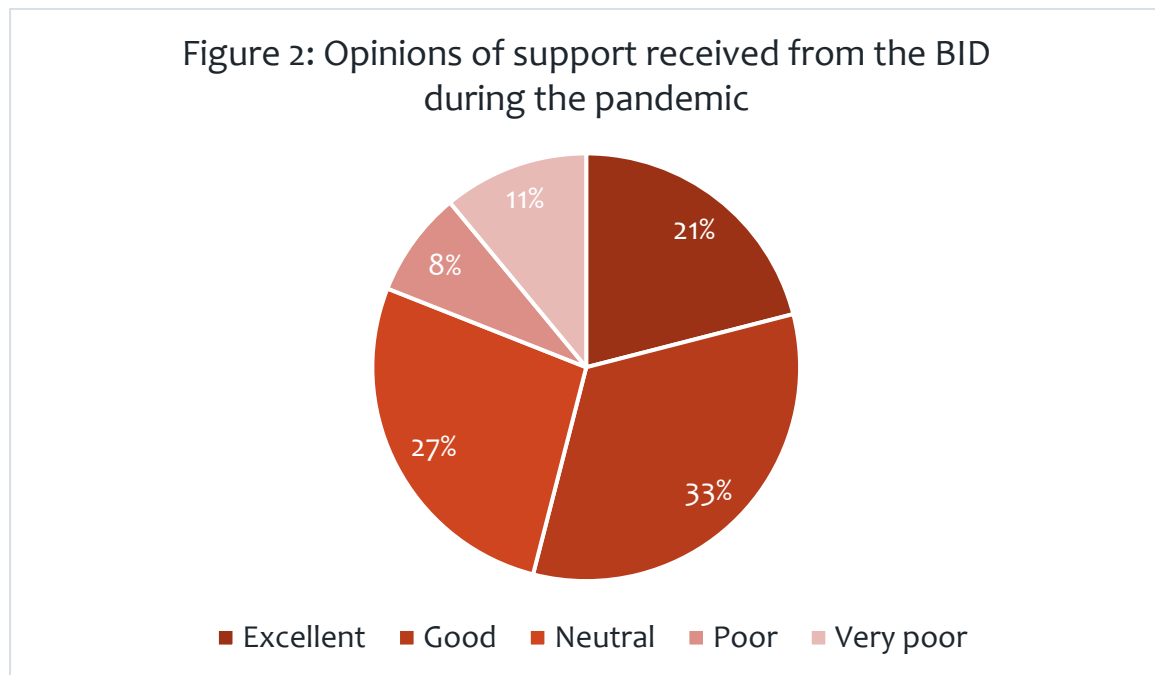
Perceptions of survey respondents of the delivery of the BID against the pillars of the Business Plan are reasonable, as demonstrated by the following:



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6.3 Support provided during the pandemic

Perceptions of survey respondents of the support provided to them by the BID during the past 2 years are relatively positive, with over half considering that support has been either excellent or good, as opposed to less than a fifth considering that support has been poor or very poor, as demonstrated by the following:



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6.4 Support for planned BID projects

Support for the projects planned by the BID is relatively, as demonstrated by the following table:

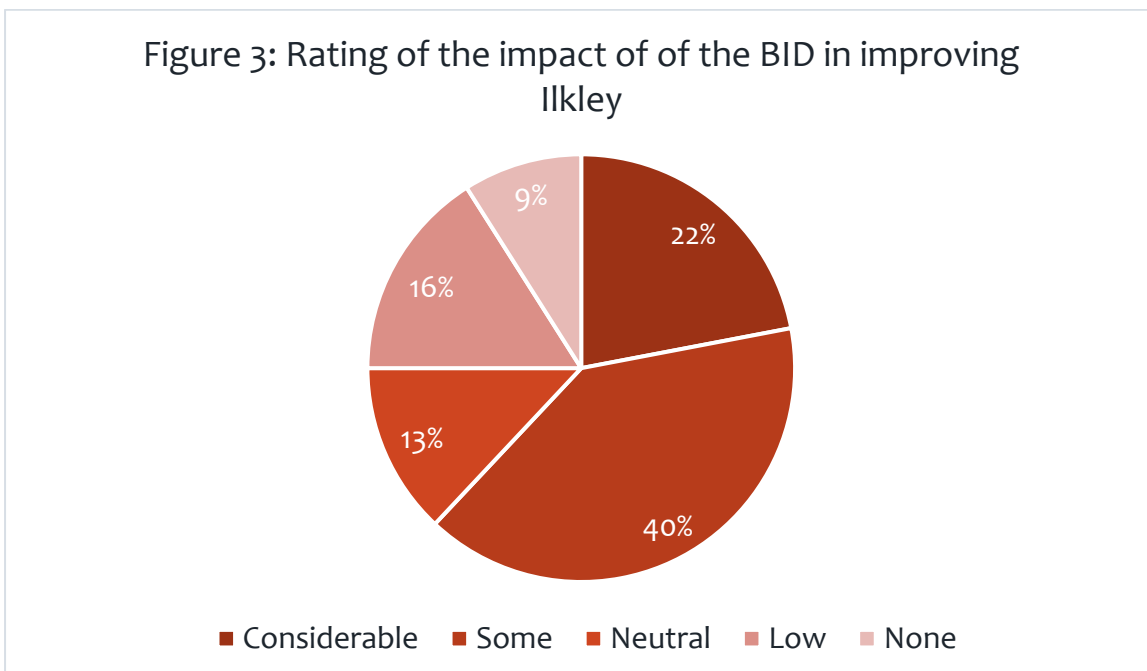
Planned BID activity	Percentage support
Liaison with tourism boards to better promote Ilkley	75%
Market research to identify and target new visitors	73%

Planned BID activity	Percentage support
Significant upgrades to the Discover Ilkley website	72%
Links with Visit Yorkshire and the Combined Authority	69%
New landmark public art and floral displays	67%
Better disabled accessibility around the town	64%
Key performance information for the town	64%
Public transport promotional discounts	59%
Further street entertainment and music	57%
Creation of augmented reality trails for the town	55%
Digital upgrades, to include free public wifi	55%

n 64

6.5 Overall perceptions of the impact of the BID

Overall perceptions of the impact of the BID in improving Ilkley are reasonable, as shown by the following:



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6.6 Suggested improvements to the operation of the BID from survey respondents

The survey provided respondents with an opportunity to provide suggested improvements to the operation of the BID or to submit any comments and a total of 23 comments were received, which are listed alphabetically as Appendix 1 of the report.

Having reviewed the findings of the survey, we consider that the range of feedback provided indicates that, in general terms, levy-payers are both reasonably aware and reasonably satisfied with the work of the Ilkley BID. A number of comments and suggestions were made by survey respondents, as shown in Appendix 1, and our recommendation is that the BID should address these as far as is possible.

7.0 Recent industry standards applied to members of The BID Foundation

As members of the Institute of Place Management, we are aware of recent guidelines which have been suggested by the BID Foundation as forming best-practice and these are to publish and keep current the following information in an easily identifiable place on their website:

Component	Observation
The contact details for the CEO/BID Manager, and all other staff funded through the BID	Present.
The current BID Business Plan	Requires the a ability to be downloaded.

Component	Observation
The most recent BID ballot result, which should include the turnout by percentage and total number of hereditaments eligible to vote, the overall percentage majority by number and by rateable value	Not evident.
The names of BID Board members and either the name of their business or the sector they represent	Present.
A mechanism or contact details for levy payers to request minutes of Board meetings	Not evident.
An explanation on how levy payers can provide feedback to the BID. For example, details of an AGM and/or other regular meetings	Not evident.
Explicit details on the BIDs governance structure, specifically how decisions are agreed and actioned	Not evident.
The annual billing leaflet sent to levy payers detailing how funds have been spent and the income received	Not evident.
An annual report detailing the BIDs achievements and its value to levy payers	2020 report present although 2021 report needs to be added.

8.0 Main conclusions

Based on the range of factors assessed during the mid-term review, we have reached the following main conclusions regarding Ilkley BID:

- Reasonable progress has been made against the majority of the Business Plan objectives
- There appear to be ongoing challenges around effective communication and management across various aspects of the BID and several improvements need to be enacted
- Satisfaction with the BID amongst levy-payers is generally reasonable
- Whilst the BID communicates reasonably well with levy-payers, there are pronounced improvements which need to be made
- In general terms, BID levy-payers are both reasonably aware and reasonably satisfied with the work of the Ilkley BID

9.0 Recommendations

Having assessed the range of information available to us via this review, we would recommend the following are carried out:

- Adjustments are made to ensure that the Board of Directors is developed, activated and supported to improve various operations of the BID
- The BID Board ensures that Business Plan projects continue at the required rate for the remainder of the BID term, including the need to ensure that activity takes place around all project areas

- Communication with levy payers is improved, including the need for the improvements to the BID website outlined in section 5.2.5, a system of printing & delivery of newsletters on a quarterly basis and more regular contact with levy-payers, including more frequent visits to their premises
- A package of key performance reporting is established and communicated
- The BID adopt the best-practice guidance outlined in section 7 of this report

Appendix 1 – Comments received from survey respondents

A CEO who lasts more than 6 months.
Allow businesses who voted against, what has just become, another meaningless tax on business to opt out to stop the Clowncil demanding money with menaces once a year for something that has no real purpose or benefit for the majority of businesses in Ilkley !
Although we support the current and proposed projects, as we are solicitors many of the planned projects do not have an impact on our profession, as they are about bringing visitors. We do benefit from campaigns to shop local and use local services.
Better communication !!
BID have a complex task to appeal to a wide range of businesses. It might be helpful to sometimes bring sector specific businesses together to explore what might work for them. Apologies if you already do this.
Consider environment and pollution in all aspects of activity and promotion. Promote recycling by business and tourists. Environmentally friendly business and tourism. Reduced waste and plastic use.
Consistency of staff and following through on action points. Three BID managers. Three meetings and nothing has really changed or anything of real consequence been actioned in that time. Should be inclusive to all levy paying business not just tourist facing ones, in campaigns and videos. Is the BID needed as a levy payer we have not gained very much from it's operation. Nothing remotely that equals the value of the levy that we pay.
Continue to be proactive 😊👍
Focus on more than the grove and brooke street. Stop offering discounts and offers, (devalues the work people do). Focus on young people and bringing them to Ilkley. On south Hawksworth we have had no streets cleaned, no Christmas lights, no cctv between spoons and brooke street, we end up with glass smashed up Hawksworth all the time. No more food market on Hawksworth as it's moved up to Grove. Definitely don't get moneys worth of the levy.
Free parking for Ilkley workers, this is proving to be a massive obstacle for recruiting in the are, all businesses will eventually suffer and it needs addressing before the next session starts in April.
Get rid of the drug dealing youths and boy racers. Lowe level petty crime reduces the appeal of the community

Greater connections to other businesses in Ilkley. What service can I buy in Ilkley.

greater emphasis on supporting and encouraging Ilkley BID businesses to be aware of and take up the existing range of business support programmes and grant schemes available. Encouraging greater links with Universities, for example through town wide research, placements and projects, take up of university support initiatives and business networks, for example hosting some of their events or networks in Ilkley's amazing venues

I feel very disconnected with what the bid does and how it helps Ilkley. I'm assured by my manager you are good to be involved with and would like to support but feel I hear very little about what is going on or ways bath house can be involved

I fully support anything that is being done to promote Ilkley but i have not seen any impact of anything that is being done. I don't feel there has been any improvement in the look of the town or any difference before Ilkley BID was formed. I am sure there are things going on in the background but to us and probably others paying in haven't seen any impact on the town, sorry

I have to admit with my general work load I'm very out of touch with the Ilkley bid and must make efforts more to understand what is offered and use the site more i will try to engage more this year

I think it'd be good to have a full open breakdown of where funds are being spent. Maybe the businesses could help prioritise where future spending is carried out to help create a joint vision for the coming year and beyond.

If you want to attract more visitors the provision of car parking either free or low cost is important - free parking is also paramount for workers in the area

Ilkley BID has not really done anything to help healthcare since it's creation- all I get is a bill. It's extremely helpful for the retail and food service sectors. But I can't think of one single thing it's help my business with.

Include not just the town centre, i realise its difficult with us not been in the centre, but something, anything for us outside of the centre

Increase in 2 way meetings so that Ilkley and the BID understand what the expectation is and what has been delivered 😊

It's difficult to say exactly what would benefit our business. Most of the BID work I've seen attracts people from out of town which benefits shops, hospitality etc. our business comprises of members that live within Ilkley and close by. How would you assist with that?

Less about green issues - the businesses can do that themselves if they wish. Communicate more effectively with the levy payers. Work with those who are not happy to get them on board.

Maybe include businesses in the town on how money is being spent. Let us have some influence on where our money is going. Let us have some influence on whether we think our money spending in areas is a good idea or not. Most of us didn't want the BID but we didn't get a choice we got it anyway and had no choice but to pay.

Money down the drain don't understand why we are forced to pay we can't afford it and it's making our business vulnerable in these times

More focus on contact and involvement with the levy payers and greater feedback from levy payers on the various currents aim and approach of the organisation.

More locational focus around The Crescent to actually push customers to this area of town and improve footfall to businesses here.

Please can the BID explain clearly how free public wifi will benefit local businesses, in both the short and long term. Omicron has cut our income (cancelled room bookings and less cafe footfall) at exactly the time when businesses were asked to pay the BID levy. The levy is proportionately higher for charities than other businesses as, unlike business rates, there is no charitable reduction

Projects to improve recycling facilities for businesses.

Really must push on the parking fees for Ilkley workers, the businesses will suffer as they will either lose the staff who are unable to pay or they will lose revenue covering the excessively expensive parking permits. It will become increasingly difficult to employ staff at Ilkley especially during the summer months when most businesses recruit seasonal extra hands. This could seriously affect all the businesses in Ilkley. With the amount of commuters that work at Ilkley, even if the council charged £10 per year they will still be making a killing, it is not fair on people that have taken up good jobs and are now facing a loss in income to pay extra for parking. We must come together to keep these charges at a minimum for the sake of Ilkley and its commerce.

Some provisions for helping businesses recycle.

Somewhat is not an appropriate choice of answer for a questionnaire.
The environment should be the focus.

Stop wasting our bid money on useless projects like street cleaning. Bradford council already do this. Use the money better

There doesn't seem to be a space for further comments so I shall use this box to make them here.

I have not answered some of the questions as they have been designed to only show support for the BID's projects by using "Somewhat", "Quite a Lot", or "Fully". It would give the Board a clearer idea of how levy payers view the BID if there had been the option "Not at All".

The survey also neglects to find out whether the levy payers think any of the projects are worthwhile. It is possible to think the BID has completed a project satisfactorily without believing the project was worth carrying out in the first place.

It probably wasn't a good idea to have the survey produced by Heartflood, This is a business that earns its living by promoting BIDs around the country and helped the Ilkley BID Steering Group to a "Yes" vote. They can hardly be described as neutral. I know that Helen contacted Heartflood to see if the survey could be changed (it was too late), but, really, the Board should have realised how biased the survey is before it was published.

This is a personal battle of mine. I fully believe that the grove takes preferential promotion. We are a progressively growing town with some diverse businesses. Leeds road is becoming very popular as is Skipton road. The amazing crescent court has some great shops. The moors centre and dalesway house also have some great businesses who have survived over 30 years off the beaten track. Surely these shops n offices need more support and backing.

Use of terms such as "free web page" rankles when we have to pay annual subs, we would expect everything to be included. Otherwise, I've had good contact from the BID team

We have shops in Ilkley, Harrogate and York and the York BID in conjunction with Indie York are by far the most active, excellent role models in their support of small indies in town - their initiatives are worth a look (eg treasure trails, Al fresco picnic tables during covid, their bee planting etc
Charging for parking in the main car park after 6pm seems mean minded when people are bringing economic wealth to the restaurants, pubs and bars in town.

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