

OFFICER DECISION RECORD SHEET

Name of decision maker: Assistant Director Planning development and Regeneration

Service Area: Strategic Planning & Regeneration

Title of Decision: To approve and sign the operating agreement for the Hemel Hempstead Business Improvement District.

Decision made and reasons:

Decision: To approve and sign the operating agreement with the Hemel Hempstead Business Improvement District Ltd. (BID) following the successful ballot to allow the payment of the additional Business Rates Levy to be paid to the BID in accordance with regulations.

Reason:

Background to Hemel Hempstead Town Centre BID

At its meeting of 21 October 2014 Cabinet approved a multi point strategy and action plan for ensuring the vitality and attractiveness of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. The initial focus of this was the physical improvement of the public realm but the strategy recognised that the continued development and improvement of the town centre would require a focus on the involvement of retailers in the future of how the town centre continues to adapt and improve its offer. The strategy proposed that at the appropriate point the potential of a Business Improvement District be explored and, if supported by retailers and other businesses, be pursued.

A BID works through businesses present within the agreed BID area being balloted as to whether a BID should be created. A majority has to be obtained on two counts: a simple majority of the businesses that vote; and a majority in terms of the combined rateable values of the businesses for and against respectively. If both elements of the BID ballot are in favour then additional levy on their Business Rates is imposed within the area. The ballot will require the proposals for the BID, which lasts for a five year period, to be clearly set out to allow those voting to decide. The BID must provide services and activity that is over and above those already provided by the Council (and the Council must continue to provide the same level of service).

In July 2016 it was agreed to fund the costs of testing the level of interest in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre in developing a BID and, if the responses were positive, to formally follow the process of taking the BID to ballot and if successful to establish the BID. This was funded to the extent of £70,000 shared with Capital And Regional who paid £17,500 of the costs. The results were positive and the BID went to ballot in October 2017.

The ballot closed on 27 October 2017 and the result was 84% of businesses in Hemel Hempstead voted in favour by number, with 86% in favour by rateable value representing an overall turnout of 37%.

The Council is required to collect the additional levy of 1.5% and requires an

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operating agreement to be made between the Council and the BID. This has now been signed (see attached).

Link to the BID: <https://www.hemelhempsteadbid.com/>

Reports considered: Cabinet 21 October 2014 and Officer Decision Record Sheet July 2016.

Officers/Councillors/Ward Councillors/Stakeholders Consulted:

Mark Gaynor

Financial Comments:

The BID levy for 2018/19 is £150,667 and at 95% collection rate will be £143,134. The purposes of the expenditure are detailed on the BID website but will focus on a small team of town centre ambassadors dealing with visitor queries, communication with businesses and acting as a presence to discourage unwelcome behaviour, marketing and events, improvements to cleaning and a digital strategy. The BID will have a manager to co-ordinate activity, manage staff and resources and to act as a voice for the town centre.

The Council's reasons for supporting the BID were in part to ensure that the investment in the public realm was matched by a greater ownership and involvement in the development of the town centre as a visitor and shopper experience and also to add to the vitality of the town centre.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

It will be noted from the Bid Operating Agreement that the Council is responsible for the collection of the Levy and the enforcement of debts and therefore appropriate arrangements will need to be agreed to monitor payment and commence enforcement action if required.

Deputy S151 Officer Comments:

Dacorum Borough Council will provide on behalf of the BID the levy collection service, and will charge a small administrative fee for this service as outlined in the operating agreement.

Implications:

Value for Money: See above

Financial: See above

Reasons considered for rejection: The BID, being properly constituted and following the successful ballot, obliges the Council to collect and pass over the additional levy to the BID and there are no reasons to reject the decision.

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Officer Signature:

Date: May 2018