

## SCRUTINY BULLETIN

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If require further information please contact Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer on 01392 265197 or alternatively email [committee.services@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@exeter.gov.uk)

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Scrutiny Bulletin: Monday 18 October 2021

Title of Update: InExeter Annual Update

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## 1. What is the update about?

- 1.1 To update members on the second year (2021-2022) of second term (2020-2025) of InExeter, the Business Improvement District for the city centre and Magdalen Road.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 October 2019 the Business Improvement District (BID) – InExeter – commenced with their re-ballot, and businesses within a defined area of the city centre, as shown in Appendix 1, and with a rateable value in excess of £7,500, were given a vote for the continuation of a BID for another 5 years: 2020-25. In November 2019 the results revealed the majority of businesses within the defined area were in favour, and InExeter entered their second term April 2020.
- 2.2 InExeter is funded by a 1.25% levy on the rateable value of a business/hereditament, which is collected by Exeter City Council. This was forecasted to be £610,078.70 for 2020/21, but anticipated to achieve a collection rate of 97%, which equates to £588,241. Due to the COVID pandemic, BID bills were issued for 1 April 2020 with no reminders sent. InExeter sent gentle reminders mid-year, but no formal demand notices were issued.
- 2.3 The BID levy for 2021-2022 was billed at £611,884.82 and as of 31 August 2021 the levy totals collected total £448,515, which is a 73% collection rate.
- 2.4 The first demand notices were issued on 26 August 2021 for balance outstanding for the previous financial year and this. It has been agreed at a BID board meeting that no write off's will be given to businesses, with the BID working with businesses on payment plans and deferred payments to support them.
- 2.5 The InExeter Board comprises of members elected from businesses within the BID levy area, plus one representative from Exeter City Council and Devon County Council. Cllr Phil Bialyk is the current representative on the BID Board for Exeter City Council. The table below shows the board of directors as of September 2021. The BID are considering

an 'external partner' observer on the Board, to build relations outside of the BID area. Board members listed below were appointed at the AGM on Tuesday 27 July 2021.

<b>Board Director</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Represents</b>
P Cunningham (Chair)	Exeter Phoenix	Hospitality, Tourism & Culture
A McNeilly (Vice Chair)	Guildhall Shopping	Guildhall Shopping
N Fairclough	Guildhall Shopping	Guildhall Shopping
P Rutherford	Mantis	Gandy / Queen Street
M Menezes	Princesshay	Princesshay
M Buckfield	The Belt Makers	Fore Street / John Street / Market Street
P Parkinson	Café Espresso	Castle Street/ Musgrave Row/High Street
A Stock	Eat the Bird	Paris Street/Sidwell Street/Bampfylde Street
K Keller	The Brogue Trader – Loake Exeter	Cathedral Yard / Cathedral Close / High Street South
K Crocker	Margoux	South Street/North Street/Mary Arches
F Williams	The Oddfellows	Hospitality/Leisure/Culture
C Escott	Exeter Cathedral	Exeter Cathedral
Cllr P Bialyk		Exeter City Council
Cllr R Gilbert		Devon County Council
-	Transport (Observer)	Vacant
-	Media (Observer)	Vacant

2.6 The Growth & Commercialisation Manager also attends BID Board meetings as a non-voting observer, representing Exeter City Council.

### 3. Current position

3.1 As of 31 August 2021, InExeter Ltd is in a healthy position. Due to prudent spending, there was a surplus at the end of the previous financial year (31 March 2021) of £23,000, which was carried forward to the next financial year. Budget planning for 2021-2022 were set at 75% of total billed, to ensure caution and delivery. As of 31 August 2021, the BID has a collection rate of 73%, so a positive position ahead of further levy expected following the reminder notices.

3.2 The BID continues to work with businesses offering support to help cover any outstanding balances. The total amount outstanding from 2020-2021 is £170,531 and for 2021-2022 currently stands at £163,369.

3.3 The following is a snapshot of project delivery across the themes:

#### **Business Support – Supporting and Informing:**

- Accredited training courses with 24 businesses signing up over 115 employees across 4 different courses.
- Free food waste and electrical equipment collections
- Independent Advisory Group which includes the City of Independents gift card
  - 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2021
    - £4,161.58 transactions i.e., money spent in business
    - £15,642.00 funded cards i.e., money gifted
  - 1 April 2021 – 9 September 2021
    - £6,741.52 transactions i.e., money spent in business
    - £7,491.00 funded cards i.e., money gifted

YTD 2021 top 5	Funded Cards	Levy payment 2021
Hubbox	£780.30	£943.75
Hutch Houseplants	£560.75	£120.00
Fika Hair	£460.00	£190.63
LeFroy	£429.55	£203.13
Zero Waste	£380.01	£116.25

- Provide Data to BID levy payers and others: city centre footfall data with a 6<sup>th</sup> camera being installed on Sidwell Street, as well as city centre vacancy rates and car park data
- InExeter worked with partners to publish a 'Guide to Exeter for the Tour of Britain' distributing 6,000 to residential postcodes in Whipton, Pinhoe and Exwick as well as city hotels.
- Establishment of a Business Engagement Officer, which is a part-time role that has proven to be a huge benefit for this year. Visiting business and engaging with those who need support including the delivery of InExeter's produced social distancing packs
- Engagement and communication through multi-channels:
  - Face to face meetings
  - Individual street What's app groups for businesses within the BID area
  - Independents Group Facebook group (115 members)
  - Weekly e-newsletters with 672 subscribers and a 31% open rate

#### **Promote Business and Activities – Experiences - raising the profile of Exeter**

- Release of #somethingspecial wedding film series highlighting and celebrating the Exeter wedding industry. This will lead to a live event in Exeter Cathedral on 1 March 2022 in partnership with the historic Guildhall.
  - <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2952099495041296>
- Release of a series of 'Welcome Back to Exeter' films highlighting BID businesses
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MCqh6haIDI>
- International Women's Day film featuring 64 local women in business
- Proactive and engaging social media posts
- InExeter recently achieved 10k followers on Instagram, cementing the value of our content and reach:

Exeter Phoenix	8,335
Visit Exeter	4,478
Princesshay	3,704
Corn Exchange	246
Bath BID	2,784
Plymouth Waterfront BID	1,125

- Manage all content on [www.inexeter.com](http://www.inexeter.com)
- InExeter is subsidising 12 independent traders at the 2021 Exeter Cathedral Christmas Market
- For Christmas 2021 InExeter will be producing a series of publications:
  - Produce "Guide to Exeter this Christmas" – a partner publication
  - Produce "Support Independents this Christmas" – info and listing guide
  - Pull out map with listings of independents
- Event plans for 2022 include:
  - Events Manager (part time) introduced to manage events ran by the BID
  - Wedding Event: 1 March 2022, Exeter Cathedral
  - SpringGreen Eco Event: South Street closed road event, Sunday 6 March 2022
  - Streets of Expression: South Street closed road event, August 2022
  - Fore Street Flea: Fore Street closed road event, Sep, Oct 2021 with more planned in 2022
- InExeter have awarded £3,000 of community grant funding to:
  - RAMM, St Petrocks, Exeter Street Arts Festival and Exeter City Community Trust Santa Run

## **Improve the standards of the city landscape - Attractive and Welcoming Street**

- Over 170 hanging baskets on a summer / winter maintenance programme with recent additions on Longbrook Street and Queen Street
  - InExeter is scoping out the installation of a green wall on North Street (Wilko)
- InExeter led on the 2021 Exeter in Bloom submission
- InExeter pay for enhanced cleansing and cleaning of the city, Sunday to Thursday
- Installation of artwork around the city including flags on Magdalen Road, lanterns on Gandy Street, and recycled banner ribbon bunting on Fore Street
- New city Christmas lights display including static installations for 2021, contracted through Christmas Creations. There will be no Christmas lights switch on event for 2021.
- Removal of all the old redundant tree lighting, with upgrades to warm white festoon bulbs. Priority locations include Paris Street, Upper Fore Street and South Street

## **Additional Projects in delivery:**

1. InExeter have contracted 'Dirty Martini' to work on a brand re-fresh for InExeter. In 2018 the BID merged the B2B 'Exeter BID' branding and the B2C 'InExeter' brand under one umbrella but have not developed the brand since then
2. InExeter have commissioned 'Night-time Solutions' to work with the BID on scoping out and investing in the evening economy. The city centre is seeing a shift with the opening of hospitality, food and beverage businesses, this project responds proactively to this change. Below highlights the recent changes from retail to Food & Beverage:
  - a. No 93 Pizza (retail to F&B)
  - b. Crank House Coffee (retail to F&B)
  - c. The Press House (retail to F&B)
  - d. Tortilla (retail to F&B)
  - e. Brewdog
  - f. The Botanist
  - g. The Ivy (retail to F&B)
  - h. Big Bakes (retail to F&B)
  - i. The Mermaid (retail to F&B)
3. InExeter have confirmed partnership funding to recruit and employ a city centre 'ASB' officer role
4. Additional planting for Sidwell Street and Longbrook Street, is being scoped out
5. InExeter are partners on the Exeter City Council 'Safer City Fund' delivering Civic pride elements of the project
6. InExeter are delivery partners for Exeter City Council's Welcome Back Fund:
  - a. £25,000 for delivering the Fore Street Flea events commencing 12 September 2021
  - b. £10,000 for delivering temporary tables and chairs to increase capacity for hospitality.
  - c. £10,000 for installing 100 hanging baskets across the city centre
7. Through the Additional Restrictions Grant, InExeter were allocated £30,000 to develop the East Gate Market (Sidwell Street) to support new business start-ups and micro businesses. Stalls have been commissioned, with a markets Manager being recruited.
8. Through the Additional Restrictions Grant, InExeter were allocated £80,000 to rollout a business loyalty platform – MiRewards. Currently in the business registration phase

## **4. Future position**

- 4.1 InExeter will continue to work closely with businesses and partners in the city, as the city recovers from the restriction of COVID-19.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the two service leads of "Growth & Commercialisation" and "Communications, Culture, Leisure & Tourism" meet jointly with the General Manager of InExeter on a regular basis to avoid duplication and forge a productive working relationship for the benefit of the city centre and businesses within.

4.3 InExeter will adjust activity proposed, which is included within the business plan, as and when income improves, to enable projects to be delivered.

5. Are there any other options?

5.1 There are no alternative options, as InExeter is the official Business Improvement District for the City Centre.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Officers within the City Council will continue to work closely with the BID Manager of InExeter on collaborative projects to support businesses affected by COVID-19, as well as attracting residents, shoppers and visitors back into the city centre.

InExeter area including proposed extension

Map by Silvermaze

