



Bishop's Stortford Business Improvement District

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024



A Business Improvement District (BID) aims to raise the profile of the town centre as a great retail, tourist and business destination and improve the experience of the town centre for those who visit, live and work here.

Bishop's Stortford BID is a not-for-profit organisation which is funded by businesses within the designated town centre area. Our key objective is to deliver additional support and services to benefit the BID businesses. It is a government run scheme, but locally funded and locally managed.

We are currently in our second term following a yes vote in Autumn 2022 for a new 5-year term enabling us to deliver an agreed Business Plan. Business premises with a rateable value of £10,000 or above, within the set area, pay 1.6% of their rateable value into Bishop's Stortford BID through an annual levy. There are around 330 businesses within the BID area, coming from a variety of sectors. The BID levy amounts to **around £220,000** a year, which is used to fund four key areas of the Business Plan:

- **Marketing & Promotion**
- **Events**
- **Supporting Bishop's Stortford Businesses**
- **Bishop's Stortford Placemaking**

These are explained in more detail on page 6.

The second term of the BID has brought new challenges for all, as we deal with global events affecting supply chains and overhead costs. However, throughout 2023-4, the first year of our second term, we worked hard to meet those challenges by promoting the town centre and its businesses, hosting events and expanding our Discover Stortford brand. We also continue to develop key stakeholder relationships to ensure Bishop's Stortford is considered in all important district and county decisions.

In addition, we have laid new foundations for public realm improvements, and we look forward to delivering some exciting projects in the coming months and years.

A message from our Chair:

Once again, I hope this annual report finds both you and your business well and our endeavours have supported you in some way during the past year.

Our second term has reinforced our voice, most notably with key stakeholders in the town centre, as we work towards achieving progress on important issues like parking, and major developments within the town centre.

We continue to expand our engagement with levy payers through our regular business meet ups, one-to-one visits, e-newsletters, Bishop's Stortford BID website and a closed Facebook group. Please get in touch if you would like to arrange an appointment to talk through what the BID can provide for your business.

During the past 12 months, the introduction of a Frontage Improvement Grant was welcomed by businesses, as was a variety of BID-funded training opportunities. New VMS signage highlighting the number of available spaces in four town centre car parks and parking marshals in Jacksons Square car park during December helping visitors find a space quickly and easily, were introduced to enhance the customer experience in the town centre. Event highlights include the King's Coronation street party, Swan Summer Trail and colouring competition, Festive Fun Day and sponsorship of the Christmas tree.

Face-to-face conversations at events we organised or attended, such as BSMB, combined with social media, regular press articles, the town centre gift card scheme and our newsletter which was delivered to 20,000 homes, all helped draw attention to the town's diverse business offerings. These are just the highlights - there's so much more we have done and will continue to do! But this is your BID, so please get in touch with your thoughts and ideas.



Karen Burton
Chair, Bishop's Stortford BID

The Team & Financial report

Bishop's Stortford BID is governed by a voluntary board of Directors. In 2023-4, the BID funded two part-time members of staff (one BID Manager, and one Marketing & Communications Manager) to deliver the Business Plan.

BID staff & board as of 31st March 2024



Karen Burton
Chair BID
Karen's Cakes



Glenn Armon-Jones
BID Director
Barrow LLP



Gary Smith
BID Director
Nockolds Solicitors



Gina Thomas
BID Manager



Madeleine Lees
BID Marketing &
Communications Manager



Calvin Horner
East Herts
District Council



Sarah Copley
Bishop's Stortford
Town Council



Graham Burgess
Coopers



Judith Bates
Premier Travel



Kathryn Hughes
Fashion Flooring
& Interiors



Michael Smith
Jackson Square
Shopping Centre



Sinead Corr
Bishop's Stortford
Independent



Daniele Manduca
Franco Manca



Leigh Keates
Peach



Nicola Chambers
Pardon Chambers
Architects



Richard Taylor
Simpsons Creative



Perry Colman
Hair by Elements
and Urban Spa

Summary	Balance B/fwd £	Income £	Expenditure £	Balance Cfwd £
Marketing & Promotion	£23,917	£51,000	£45,653	£29,263
Events	£96,840	£55,533	£47,386	£104,988
Supporting Businesses	£77,849	£32,886	£19,898	£90,817
Placemaking	£18,386	£48,733	£10,808	£56,311
Operational Costs	-	£11,333	£10,000	£1,333
Contingency & Reserves	£16,029	£11,524	£27,552	-
TOTAL	£233,021	£210,989	£161,297	£282,712

The Bishop's Stortford Business Improvement District (BID) is funded through a levy calculated as 1.6% of the rateable value of all eligible businesses within the BID area. This is reduced to 1.2% in the case of a tenant in a managed centre where a service charge applies, as at the 'chargeable day' (1 April).

2023 - 2024 In Review

Marketing & Promotion

Highlights include...

- **Discover Stortford** - we have continued to increase brand awareness through events, merchandising, competitions and a public newsletter.
- **Local publications** - we communicate what we are doing through regular articles, columns and thought pieces in The Independent, Flyer, Axis magazine and The Bish.
- **Website and social media channels** - we aspire to be the first port of call for town centre news. We invest in creating great content, including videos, reels and new photography. Followers and engagement continue to increase as a result.
- **Merchandising** - BID bags were produced for Christmas 2023, with a bespoke design created by Bishop's Stortford artist Julia Fonnereau. Often seen in use around the town!



Events

Highlights include...

- **Coronation celebration** - this saw local groups perform in Market Square, as well as horse guard stilt walkers strut their stuff and businesses getting involved with relevant promotions.
- **Swan Summer Trail** - ran for the six-week school holiday, generating extra footfall and interest in businesses right across the BID area. Families searched for swans in windows, gathered clues and entered a prize draw. All prizes were purchased from our town centre businesses.
- **Festive Fun Day** - this got people in the Christmas spirit, enjoying the entertainment, and checking out what our town centre businesses had on offer for the festive season ahead.
- In addition, we sponsored the town centre Christmas tree in Market Square and ran a Christmas window competition, voted for by the public.



2023 - 2024 In Review

Supporting Businesses

- **Premises Frontage Grants** - launched in January 2024 to support individual businesses in funding additional work, whilst improving the look and feel of the town as a whole.
- **Business Meet Ups** - an increasingly valuable opportunity for business owners and managers to share their challenges with key stakeholders in the town, including councillors and police, as well as learn how the BID can support them and establish new business connections and collaborations.
- **Training** - including 1:1 Google business profile and social media training, plus print & design, HR and first aid.

Other highlights...

- **Awards** - raising awareness of, and sponsoring, business awards such as The Indie's Extra Mile Award.
- **Networking** - attending business events with the Chamber of Commerce, and the annual BSMB exhibition.
- **Campaigning** - a voice for key improvements, such as reduced parking fees in Northgate End car park.

Placemaking

- **Audit** - as Placemaking is new to the business plan, ways to improve the appearance of the town centre had to first be identified, and then prioritised.
- **Electronic car park signage** - installed to facilitate easier parking and improve the shopper experience. Funded jointly by the BID and UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- **Street cleaning and weeds** - weekly monitoring, recording and reporting of issues to the East Herts District Council provider is gradually seeing an improvement in the town centre's overall appearance.
- **Lighting** - UKSP funding for additional electric bollards was applied for and secured. This will enable the installation of LED lights in five trees within the South Street area. Other permanent lighting schemes have been identified.
- **Long term initiatives** - putting forward a view of the town centre as a destination, and how the various areas work together, is of increasing importance. We have actively contributed to discussions around public realm improvements, Old River Lane plans and other parts of town which require particular attention.



Our Business Plan Priorities 2024-2025: Looking ahead...

On 1 April 2024, we started the second year of our second term, and continue to deliver the 2023-28 business plan, which was developed following extensive consultation with businesses prior to the re-ballot in October 2022. The BID was voted back in and is now in place until 31 March 2028. The next re-ballot will be at the end of 2027, when businesses will decide if the BID continues for a third term.

Following Gina Thomas, our first BID Manager, moving on to pastures new, we are delighted to announce Madeleine Lees, previously Marketing & Communications Manager, and Karen Burton, our original Chair, have been appointed joint BID Managers. This appointment provides our businesses with a breadth of experience and knowledge, as well as continuity.

Within the four key areas of the business plan, there are a number of initiatives underway.

Marketing & Promotion

Promoting all that Bishop's Stortford has to offer in a coordinated and strategic way. Expanding the Discover Stortford brand using our own social media channels, website and advertising posters and banners in key town centre locations. We will continue to write regular columns in the local press and increase awareness of the BID's work and initiatives.

Events

Bringing the town alive with entertainment and footfall boosting events is a key aim. We are looking to develop and grow existing events, as well as introduce new ones. This year will see another summer trail, including prize draw and colouring competition. Our vintage circus event, Showtime on North Street, aims to shine a light on this part of town and its longer-term potential for residents, businesses and visitors alike. Festive Fun Day is our Christmas launch event, designed to get people in the Christmas spirit and explore what our businesses have to offer. We will also continue to work on gaining Purple Flag status, which signals a safe night out in town centres.

Supporting Businesses

We will expand on the success of previous training opportunities, repeating popular courses as well as offering new ones. We understand our business owners, managers and teams are busy people, so we are launching a new online training platform to make training more accessible. Liaising with councils over key issues, such as parking, traffic and public realm improvements will continue to be a priority. We will be hosting more business get togethers, to enable collaborations and open up wider town centre conversations with key stakeholders.

Placemaking

This is about creating inviting and welcoming places that people want to spend time in. As a new area to the business plan, 2024-5 will be a time for delivering some of the key priorities identified last year. A deep clean of the town centre paved areas is scheduled and three permanent lighting schemes have been approved to enhance the look and feel of the town, as well as improve safety and links between areas. These include festoon lights in North Street and Devoils Lane (in collaboration with Jackson Square) and LED tree lights in South Street, funded by a Town Council grant. The BID is leading on plans to make North Street a pedestrian-priority area and is actively contributing to discussions around public realm improvements elsewhere in the town centre, including South Street.

The Bishop's Stortford BID team are here to deliver the best we can for our town. We look forward to working with you over the coming year on these projects.



How you can get involved

Bishop's Stortford BID is a business led organisation and we welcome all feedback, suggestions and comments from levy payers. Your input will help ensure we are delivering relevant and useful support and opportunities. By being proactive, you will be aware of all initiatives you can get involved with. Working together we can achieve more.

If you'd like to find out more about the work of Bishop's Stortford BID, please get in touch.



Subscribe to the e-newsletter

We send regular e-newsletters with useful information. Sign up via our website.



Check the website

We keep our website up to date with the latest news and information.



Follow us on social media

Instagram, Facebook and X for all the latest news and opportunities.



Join our Facebook group

A closed group specifically for BID businesses.



Meet with the team

The BID Managers and Directors welcome meetings with levy payers.



Attend a BID business get together

Meet fellow business owners, managers and other key stakeholders.

T: 07399 245280

E: info@bishopsstortfordbid.co.uk
bishopsstortfordbid.co.uk

Closed Facebook Group

facebook.com/groups/bishopsstortfordbid



@DiscoverStortford



@StortfordBID





BID

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

BISHOP'S STORTFORD

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