



Monday 27 April 2020
2.00pm – 4.15pm
Zoom meeting

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

David Bailey (DB)
Craig Mathie (CM)
Mike Francis MBE (MF)

Chair
Vice Chair
President

Sector Representatives

Carol Scott (CS)
David Squire (DS)
Guido Schillig (GS)
Martin Davies (MD)
Paul Clarke (PC)
Steve Turner (ST)
Tim Lloyd (TL)
Sara Uzzell (SU)

Leisure & Attractions Sector
Transport Sector
IEA Sector
Town Centre BID (Bournemouth)
Coastal BID (Bournemouth)
Conference & Convention Sector
Accommodation Sector
Dorset LEP

Professional Officers

Chris Saunders (CS)
Cllr Lewis Allison (LA)
Jon Weaver (JW)
Stevie Sainsbury (SS)

BCP Tourism
Portfolio Holder - Tourism
BCP Tourism
Board Administrator - BCP Tourism

Guests

Sam Richardson (SR)
Rosie Radwell (RR)
Andy Lennox (AL)

NCTA
BAHA
Wonky Table

Apologies

Cllr Vikki Slade (VS)
Graham Farrant (GF)
Bill Cotton (BC)

Leader – BCP Council
CEO – BCP Council
Executive Director – BCP Council

1. Welcome

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the protocol for how the meeting would run.

JW clarified that the reason for the meeting was to gauge the current position from the relevant sectors, including the issues being faced and the plans being developed to move forward.

2. Local and National Overview of the Tourism Industry – Sam Richardson (NCTA)

Please see attached presentation.

Results from the DMB Barometer Survey

Please see attached presentation

Following the presentation Chair invited comments from the Board

- There are a number of other surveys being conducted, two of which are based on the same/similar questions. CM asked if it would be possible to merge the surveys in the future to avoid businesses getting too many requests to complete surveys
- SR confirmed that although some of the questions will remain the same when the survey is repeated in mid-May, the majority will be tweaked/changed
- AL pointed out that insurance is a big issue for all businesses:
 - 98% unable to claim in the local area.
 - Insurance companies are using loopholes in policies, eg: even when a human disease/pandemic is specifically covered they will not pay as COVID-19 was an unknown virus at the time the policies were put in place.
 - One solution could be for the Council to temporarily revoke licences so that businesses could claim 'loss of licence cover' but at the moment the Council are not able to do this.
 - Loss of stock is another issue as the longer the lockdown continues the more stock currently held (eg: frozen food) will deteriorate beyond the point of being able to be used.
 - SR agreed that in the South West 85% of claims have been rejected. DCMS are currently compiling a list of examples which they will be using to try and get a chance in the stance being taken by insurance companies. SR asked AL to send through any examples he may have.

3. Individual sector updates on issues and current position

a. Accommodation – RR

- VAT collections have been made which has caused problems for many businesses
- All businesses are very worried about rates which they may be unable to pay. Email has been sent to Conor Burns asking him to write to Merrick Estates
- Concerns over continuation of the Furlough scheme and how that will affect the reopening of businesses given that hotels will only be able to open at 50% capacity and won't be in a position to re-employ all staff straight away. Don't want to lose well trained established staff through furlough stopping. There needs to be more flexibility over the Furlough scheme so staff can come back gradually.
- Concern over procedures for re-opening:
 - i. Managing food service
 - ii. Non-residents wanting to use the restaurants
 - iii. Social distancing
 - iv. Leaving rooms vacant for up to 3 days
- Insurance – cheaper if you pay annually – Would like clarification on why companies cannot give that reduction for monthly payments at the moment

- Biggest issue is not knowing what is going to happen/when. Need some idea from the Government of when going to be able to open
- BAHA feel that another letter to MPs would be beneficial

b. Visitor Attractions - CSc

- Very similar issues to those facing Accommodation sector
- Worries over coping when allowed to re-open particularly in relation to:
 - Paying staff – furlough continuation?
 - Additional staff likely to be required for additional cleaning but with reduced capacity this will be unviable
 - Managing social distancing
 - Concerns over staff safety
- Many businesses have current loans and are very concerned over their ability to repay these – some are private some government.
- Major concern that inevitably a lot of attractions will go under
- Envisage that attractions like Splashdown and Play Centres will be among the last to re-open because of inability to social distance

Parks & Beaches – CSa

- Can't control access to the beach at the moment
- Has been really busy – weather driven. Hopefully will calm down with the projected change in the weather
- Cycling on the prom is a big problem
- Police presence is very limited
- Public are becoming less and less tolerant as time goes by with an increase in physical threats/assault
- Huge impact on Seafront income
- Fears that when rules are relaxed there will be a huge influx of people to beaches and parks. It will be difficult to enforce social distancing and likely to be somewhat ineffective
- Messaging – very difficult to get the right balance, without openly saying – Don't come.
- Seafront and Parks tenants are having a really difficult time and the Council will need to be a bit flexible moving forward
- Upton Country Park and Hengistbury Head are open, but car parks are closed to try and dissuade visitors, but this is causing congestion on the side roads
- AL asked why the RNLI have laid off all lifeguards as he felt they could be utilised patrolling and enforcing social distancing. CS explained that RNLI have furloughed all their permanent staff, so they have no infrastructure in place to manage casualties

c. Restaurants, Bars, Cafés & Nightclubs - AL

- Wonky Table was set up to bring together restaurants, bars, cafes and nightclubs to work together and now has over 200 members. The group are looking at best practice for a possible reopening from August based on what has happened abroad – eg: Sweden, Hong Kong
 - Social distancing – 5'
 - Full PPE for all staff – looking at how to acquire this
 - Use of screens
 - 50% capacity. Spread bookings across the week not just Fri/Sat
 - Up to 4 people per table
 - Pre-booking only
- Looking to achieve some form of accreditation

- Grants to businesses have been managed well by the Council and are coming through quickly. Would be interested to know what is going to happen to unpaid grants.
- Have produced a letter to go out to local MPs and Secretary of State which AL will share.
- Furlough
 - Sector is unlikely to reopen at the end of June -many are currently working towards an August opening
 - Furlough must remain in place for as long as closure is in place and beyond.
 - Businesses likely to reopen at significantly reduced turnover levels (below 50%) to adhere to the social distancing measures that are likely to be enforced.
 - It is hoped the furlough scheme will continue as capacity is reduced possibly at reduced %. See this as needed until at least December 2020 in some form or another.
- Rent and leases
 - Rent challenges will continue over the remaining three quarters of 2020.
 - Need Government to act now to extend the legal right to defer rent payments and protect businesses from the risk of forfeiting leases for 9 months. This should include all forms of debt enforcement providing a breathing space for businesses to renegotiate rent terms.
 - Asking the government to urge landlords, wherever possible to release rent deposits as a way of helping businesses to pay rent. The Council need to look at this as well.
 - MD commented that some landlords will not be a position to be able to do that and at the end of the day it is down to the Government to step up and put more money into support across all sectors– otherwise it is just a question of moving money around.
- VAT
 - Believe a reduction of VAT will be required when the industry reopens. Reduction to 15% in 2008 was really important to the recovery.
- Government Grants
 - Thousands of businesses in this sector have been unable to access Government grants
 - Up until last week the threshold for C Bill grants was too low but it has now been increased to £75K which has opened it up to more businesses
 - Some banks are now agreeing overdrafts where they were not previously doing so
- Insurance
 - Many businesses have Pandemic / Human disease cover and Government closure cover but because Covid-19 was not a 'listed/named/known disease at the time of the policy inception' they are refusing to pay out.
 - Need Government legislation to enable those who have the relevant policies to be able to claim.
 - Insurance companies are trying to elongate the process and complaints procedures in an effort to not pay out. Need insurance companies to bear some of the burden.

d. International Education – GS

- Everything has moved to online

- Universities and Colleges are looking after themselves
- Not really heard anything from the 'Boarding' sector
- Language Schools – balance sheets are quite weak with some closures already having happened and more expected
- Vast majority of language school students are from overseas and the issue of confidence in travelling will have a high impact on any return to normal.
- Visas are another issue – with students unable to secure these at the moment and many countries (eg. Italy, Korea) sending out strong messages to students to stay at home and not travel. Others will do the same.
- Summer will be completely missed for language schools. Universities and Colleges with Sept/Oct intake have a problem with students not being able to secure the visas in time. Visa offices are currently closed and at present don't know how long that will continue.
- It is anticipated that the recovery will not be until at least Jan/Mar 2021 and possibly not until the summer 2021
- Furlough due to stop from June but is required for a lot longer. Need confirmation that it is going to continue
- Far East/Middle East countries are gradually coming back from East to West. There will be increased competition from S. Africa, Australia/Canada/Malta and the USA.
- Been in conversation with other countries and whereas it appears that the UK is taking the stance that everything will be ok when we get a vaccine – that is not the case in other countries.
- There are a handful of students with host families who are still over here as they were unable to get home in time before lockdown. Communicating with them online.

e. Conference & Convention – ST

- Most conferences have postponed rather than cancelled
- Currently optimistic that small conferences will be able to take place from September
- It will be a lot longer before the Theatre will be able to reopen- moving into the last quarter of the financial year.
- There is more concern currently about the public meeting up prior to concerts/shows ie.in bars/restaurants, than in the actual attendance at the concert.
- Anticipate that big events may come back sooner than small with entry checks/temperature checks etc. in place.
- The biggest issue is going to be consumer confidence. Delegates want to attend but there will need to be a lot of safeguards in place.
- If there is a second spike of the virus (November?) then everything could be back to square one.

f. Transport – DS

- Government funding is currently propping up Rail transport
- Local buses are supported by a Government deal – contracting 50% of the network here in Bournemouth
- Open top buses are cancelled
- Coaches – SMEs mostly and many will not survive. Six have gone in the last two weeks including Seaview Coaches. Shearings are in a very 'wobbly' position at the moment and have filed a notice of intention to appoint administrators. Daish furloughed staff early on

- Need a proper plan on how to come out of this situation and most importantly furloughing needs to continue beyond June.

g. BIDs – Town Centre – MD

- Working closely with the Echo to promote those businesses that are still open.
- Looking for support into the recovery
- BCP Grant has been well run and everyone has received it already
- Biggest concern – discretionary spend has been squashed and when things do start to reopen the consumer will be too scared to spend.
- Looking at a campaign to encourage spend and going out and having fun but it is a challenging position
- Levy bills will be going out in July.
- Would like a discussion on possibility of the Rangers who are currently furloughed being used in an enforcement role. CS will have a separate discussion with the BID over this.

h. BIDs – Coastal – PC

- Currently have cash in the bank
- Concerned over levy collection and need to have a conversation with other BIDs and the Council over how this is going to be managed. **ACTION:** Set up meeting with BID companies and BCP Council. The BIDs need to work together.
- Believe Birmingham City Council have paid out a grant to every BID in the region of £30million to cover levy payments.
- Concern over future funding for CTW if levy payments do not come in
- Only currently have one employee.

i. Events & Festivals – JW

- No events on Council land April and May. Will review policy after 11th May.
- Government messaging – forecasting without making Policy ie. “Many months of social distancing”
- Reviewing and advising continuation of major events –
 - Ability to meet social distancing measures
 - Contractual commitments
 - Increasing costs to meet social distancing measures
 - Commercial income unknown - ticket sales, trader, sponsorship
- Concern over the risk of re-infection and lock down happening days/hours before, or even during, an event
- Council focus
 - Policy of cancellation extended - June, maybe July
 - Under review working with Stakeholders
 - Fireworks Poole and Bournemouth, Folk Festival, Quay for my Car Vintage
- Bournemouth Air Festival - Working closely with Eastbourne to try and ensure any cancellation messages go out at the same time and that a date for next year can be publicised at the same time.
- Bournemouth7s – CM reported that this event is postponed currently to the August Bank Holiday. He is hopeful that it may be able to go ahead but realistically thinks it is unlikely. Reviewing on a daily basis
- Events businesses are struggling with a very real possibility that 60% will fail in the next 6 months.

j. LEP – SU

- Meeting scheduled for Wednesday
- Strategy – everything changing – will feedback after meeting
- National Trust
 - Closed until 1st July. Car parks may open later in May
 - Overcrowding of beaches is a major concern (eg: Studland)
 - Commercial tenants (pubs/restaurants) - deferring rents

4. Key elements of Recovery Plan

- To facilitate setting up/ attending individual Sector meetings
- Looking at following similar forward planning strategy to Scotland (see attached document)
- Have created a GANTT chart broken down by sector and areas within each sector to map out expected/anticipated recovery times based on different timelines. This will be circulated to everyone.

5. Next DMB Meeting. Tuesday, 26th May 2pm. Zoom Meeting

This meeting has now been rescheduled to Wednesday 27th May 2pm in order to avoid a clash with an LEP meeting.