



Minutes
The Captain's Club, Christchurch
Tuesday, 18 July 2023
11:00 –13:00

MEMBERS PRESENT

Andy Lennox (AL)
David Bailey (DB)

Vice Chair (Acting Chair for this meeting)
President

Sector Reps

Guido Schillig (GS)
Jackie Richmond (JRi)
Richard Wade (RW)
Rosie Radwell (RR)
Steve Turner (ST)

IEA Sector Rep
Attractions deputy
Transport Sector Rep
Accommodation Sector Deputy
Conference & Convention Sector

BID Representatives

Christina Pengelly (CP)
Fiona McArthur (FMc)
Jacqui Rock (JR)
Martin Davies (MD)
Paul Kinvig (PK)

Christchurch BID
Bournemouth Coastal BID
Poole BID
Bournemouth Town Centre BID
Bournemouth Town Centre BID

Professional Officers

Cllr Vikki Slade (VS)
Cllr Millie Earl (ME)

Leader - BCP Council
Deputy Leader BCP Council & PFH for Connected
Communities
Strategic Development Manager, BCP Council
Interim Director of Planning

Andrew Emery (AE)
Sam Fox (SF)

Co-opted members

Samantha Richardson (SR)

National Coastal Tourism Academy

Secretariat

Stevie Sainsbury (SS)

Destination Development Co-ordinator - BCP Council

Apologies

Bill Perkins (BP)

Bournemouth Chamber

Carol Scott (CS)
Craig Mathie (CM)
Georgina Bartlett (GB)
Jon Weaver (JW)
Lucy Filer (LF)
Morag Wood (MW)
Peter Ruscoe (PR)
Tim Lloyd (TL)
Tim Seward (TS)

Leisure & Attractions Sector Rep
Chair (Listened in via Teams)
Poole BID Chair
BCP Council, Head of Events
Christchurch BID
Cultural Representative
Bournemouth Coastal BID
Christchurch BID Deputy
Accommodation Sector

1. Welcome & Apologies – Chair

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Actions from the last Minutes (not covered by agenda items) – Chair

Minutes were approved

Declarations of Interest – None

3. Additional Agenda Item (AOB) – Update on Tourism Awards – David Bailey

DB provided a short update on the Tourism Awards in the absence of TS.

- Applications now closed
- Over 100 entries received
- Judging already underway
- DMB members and Sponsors will shortly receive an invite to the announcement of the finalists on 13 September 2023. This will be in the format of a Cruise around Poole Harbour at 4pm followed by an event at Hennings on Poole Quay when the finalists will be announced.
- The Gala Event will take place on 9 November 2023

4. New Confirmed Director of Planning & Destination

AL welcomed SF to the meeting and congratulated him on his recent appointment to Director Planning and Destination.

AL asked if the Planning Department had managed to catch up on the backlog of applications. SF confirmed that it was still a work in progress and proving to be a long term journey to get on top of the backlog.

FJB Hotels - Following the circulation, prior to the meeting, of the latest Planning update AL asked for clarification of where the application for FJB Hotels, Sandbanks was currently positioned. SF confirmed that the combined plans for the three sites had been ongoing for a number of years but that the applicant had recently addressed the main issues which were around flooding and that a revised plan had now been submitted and gone back to consultation with a view to going to the planning committee in the Autumn. AL expressed the opinion that it was essential that there were ultimately 2 hotels on the site and not just the one.

Local Plan - When questioned over the historical culture within Planning SF agreed that this was more deep-rooted than he would have liked and was taking time to establish the right leadership values. He confirmed that it was not acceptable to 'just say no' and that it was clear that old policies and procedures were out of date and not helpful. The Local Plan is currently under review with consultation taking place, particularly with Ward Councillors. It was hoped that a new draft Local Plan would be ready by the back end of the year.

Once the draft is submitted it could take between 12-18mths before it is officially adopted. However, once submitted they will be able to start using it.

Belvedere Site – AE confirmed that the previous funders have pulled out as the proposed scheme was not viable and they are now looking at a residential scheme. Savills in Southampton have been engaged to look at this. SF confirmed that if the residential plans go ahead then it will be a requirement that a proportion of units will be required to be for holiday use

Coach parking - RR asked if any consideration was being given to the provision of suitable coach parking in outlying areas of Bournemouth, eg. Southbourne, Westbourne as the lack of suitable parking in these areas was having a detrimental impact on getting Coach parties to come to Bournemouth. CP confirmed that Christchurch has similar issues over coach parking. SF agreed to review coach drop off and parking with the Transport team.

5. New Political View on Tourism – Cllr Vikki Slade

AL welcomed VS to the meeting and invited her to give an outline of the new Administration's plans in relation to Tourism and the Destination.

VS introduced Cllr Millie Earl, Deputy Leader BCP Council and Cabinet Member for Connected Communities including tourism, pointing out that Culture is covered by Cllr Andy Martin as Cabinet member for Customer, Communications and Culture.

VS then went on to give an overview of the current Administration's thinking:

- The main driver is that more consideration needs to be given to the views and needs of residents.
- Rather than a constant drive to get bigger and bigger numbers of visitors and tourists to the destinations the focus needs to be on the type of visitors and the quality of what they can bring to the area.
- The Administration appreciates the important role that tourism plays in relation to jobs, economic value and the DNA of the area but they consider that the negative impacts of tourism both on residents and the area have been ignored.
- This thinking has led to one key objective – targeting the needs of local people, showcasing the advantages of living here and looking at schemes to incentivise locals to appreciate where they live. Eg. Residents Cards
- One suggestion under consideration is for parking restrictions on residential roads whereby residents can park for free but visitors have to pay.
- There is also an emerging vision for wellbeing. People love living in the BCP area and are proud of where they live. This needs to be celebrated as a way of encouraging visitors to the area.
- Current plans for BCP include:
 - Coastal Path – joining to the Jurassic Coast
 - Expanding opportunities for Motor Home users – currently very limited places where they can stay
 - Extension of the Marina at Poole Quay
 - Exploring the Seafront offer using the Levelling Up Fund. Higher quality offer in relation to Beach huts and commercial stock
- **Bournemouth Air Festival.**
 - VS pointed out that the information she was providing was **embargoed until Wednesday 19th July** when a press release would be going out.
 - BCP Council currently faces a £44million hole in next year's budget. The Air Festival is currently costing the Council £400k and this investment will only increase with higher insurance, infrastructure, security costs. This investment cannot be sustained.
 - A Task & Finish Group is to be set up to look at options for the future of the Air Festival. This group will be inviting people to come up with new ideas including options for:
 - Self-funding event
 - Less frequent event
 - Sponsorship
 - Re-branding

- VS stressed that conversations need to be had with new people and businesses not previously approached, to come up with innovative ideas. Other events are self-funded so there is no reason why the Air Festival cannot do the same.
- VS pointed out that there are plenty of people, particularly in Poole, who do not appreciate or like the Air Festival or want it to continue as it does not benefit their area. There is a need to be fair to the whole area.
- **Bournemouth Town Centre**
 - Focus needs to be on linking the town centre to the beach
 - Town Centre Survey is currently being carried out to find out what people love/like/want. Currently in excess of 2100 responses have come in and it is anticipated that this will rise to between 5000 – 6000 by the end of the month.
 - Stage 2 will be a Town Centre Summit – gathering information on what has been done in the past.
 - The Council does not have a pot of money so needs to look at enabling and facilitating. Looking for investors with funding who can make things happen. Everyone has a stake in the future of the town including the University, Industry, Landlords, BAHA, DMB
 - MD pointed out that whilst the idea of linking the Town Centre to the Beach is a good one there is a fundamental problem in that the physical link is the Lower Gardens which remain firmly in the past. Following some discussion It was agreed that this is something that needs to be addressed with the Lower Gardens Trust and its members, but it was acknowledged that the rules around the Trust and how it operates are quite restrictive. The make-up of the Board is also very specifically defined.
- Other topics discussed were:
 - **Economic Impact of Tourism** - RR asked why, at the recent BAHA meeting attended by VS and ME, they focused entirely on residents and their needs and the importance of tourism and its economic benefit to the area was not acknowledged or appreciated. In particular the importance economically of the Air Festival to the town was not acknowledged. AL challenged the figure of £49million economic benefit to the area from BAF as not being the true figure and was used as a 'red herring'.
 - **Christchurch support** - CP asked what plans the new Administration had in relation to the Christchurch area. VS responded to explain that at the present time focus has to be on Bournemouth. In both Poole and Christchurch footfall is on the increase and at the moment there needs to be reliance on the BIDs and Town Council in those areas to keep them stable while energy is put into bringing Bournemouth back up to their level. With a 28% decrease in footfall Bournemouth has seen a steady decline which must be halted before it starts to have a negative impact on the wider BCP area.
 - **Anti-social behaviour** - CP pointed out that Christchurch has seen a massive increase in anti-social behaviour recently. VS acknowledged that there has been an increase in ASB across the whole area but stressed that the situation is worse in Bournemouth which is getting very negative national attention at the moment.
 - **Blue Flags** - RR asked why, given the importance of tourism to the area, the decision had been taken not to fund the £10k for the Blue Flags next year. She felt it was a very small amount to pay for the benefits to the area. VS pointed out that with a £44m hole in next year's budget the Council was having to make some very difficult decisions and whilst £10k may not seem a lot, it all adds up and unless a balanced budget can be reached for next year then the repercussions will be extremely serious. SF confirmed that if a balanced budget cannot be achieved then the next step will be the issuing of a Section 114 notice followed by the cutting of all non-statutory services. The Council is trying to avoid this happening but the consequence is that some very difficult decisions have to be made.

- **Tourism Strategy** – SR pointed out that a lot of work has already been done and many of the things the Administration want to focus on have already been identified within the Tourism Strategy – they just need pulling out and implementing including a move from ‘day’ to higher spend ‘stay’ visitors.
- AL summarised his views on the discussions:
 - Overall agreement that focusing on locals is the right thing to do
 - Agreed focus needs to be on stay visitors with more money to spend but it is important that they are the ‘right’ people
 - Residents card – good idea
 - Bournemouth is the worst area at the moment by a wide margin
 - The Council needs to listen to what the industry is saying and wanting and not consistently stand in the way and say ‘no’. eg. He has been trying to get planters in place on Poole Hill since 2013 and still not achieved this small thing.
 - AL expressed the opinion that the Council should not operate businesses on the seafront and that this should be left to external operators with the Council as landlord. AE pointed out that these operations bring in a net profit to the Council of around £1million but AL challenged this as being ‘turnover’ and not profit.
 - On a personal level AL pointed out that whenever he bids for seafront operations he gets outbid and is unsuccessful.
- VS agreed that there needs to be a way to enable and make it easier for local town centre businesses to operate businesses on the beach and the Council needs to ‘get out of the way’. Her personal experience in running local events has been that the Council often appear to put obstacles in the way of operators asking for things that quite possibly are not really required. She felt that processes are made un-necessarily complicated by Council Officers when they could be simplified.
- MD suggested that the Council would possibly make more money as the landlord rather than the operator of seafront businesses, given that the private sector have the funds and the Council does not. VS agreed that in essence that is what the review of the Air Festival is about – getting around the table with people who have experience and innovative ideas which she felt has not happened over the last fifteen years when it has been run under Council pressures.

6. Accommodation BID (ABID) – Fiona McArthur & Andrew Emery

AE explained that the previously identified £35K ARG funding is no longer going to be used to fund a contract with AttisTown in relation to developing the DMB as a CIC due to the revised proposal from Attis Towns not meeting the brief set out by DMB at the May meeting. However, the money needs to be used now or it will have to be returned to the Government. A possible alternative use of the funding has been identified and FMc presented a proposal for an Accommodation BID(ABID) to the Board for consideration and discussion. **See attached presentation.**

Following the presentation there was an in depth discussion around the table on the proposals, covering the following:

- There needs to be more analysis and expert advice on the figures and the amounts that can be achieved. There has been mention of millions but that is probably not realistic.
- There were concerns that the new ABID proposal will only cover the Coastal BID area of Bournemouth. FMc confirmed that this is because realistically that is what can be achieved, whereas a wider BID covering the whole of BCP, would inevitably take longer to get set up. It is proposed that once set up the ABID could be extended to cover Poole and Christchurch as well.
- Some board members were confused over whether the proposal to set up the Destination Management Board as a CIC with its own bank account and income so that it could take over some of the functions of the Council was still on the table given that the

ARG funding was no longer being used for this. AL confirmed that the two proposals were independent of each other.

- Concerns were raised that the new ABID would make all decisions over how the money raised would be spent and that although the proposal states it would be used for marketing the destination there was no guarantee that they would not change their mind at some stage.
- The fact that the proposals provide for the businesses taking part in the scheme to get their levy back through a contra from the new BID raised concerns as it was felt that this would create an imbalance with other levy payers
- It was suggested that rather than just being an Accommodation BID for that sector it could be a wider BID incorporating other sectors – Hospitality/Retail/Attractions.
- It was agreed that there are a number of issues with the scheme that would need to be ironed out taking expert advice. The ARG funding would support this work.
- There is a need to generate income to drive tourism forward and some Board members felt that at the moment the ABID may be the only viable option in the timescales required. There are currently only two ABIDs (Liverpool and Manchester) and Coastal BID has already spoken to both for initial advice. There were concerns that if we don't move quickly other areas, eg. Eastbourne, may get in first and we will have missed our opportunity to help lead the way.
- It was suggested that some form of local tax could be an alternative but there may not be any legal mechanism for this – whereas there is a precedent for an ABID
- SR pointed out that the Dorset Tourism Association members had asked her to feedback their concern over any form of tax/charge on tourists and the implications for the BCP + Dorset Local Visitor Economy Partnership that is being developed.
- There was concern from both Poole and Christchurch that because of the geographical restrictions of BIDs their areas could ultimately miss out.
- JRi pointed out that in Torbay, where she has business interests, there is a levy of 1.95% of rateable value on Accommodation and Attractions which is used solely to market Torbay. It was originally proposed to include Retail as well but that was ultimately dropped. This levy generates around £5m which is used to market the area and is guaranteed for 5 years. She felt that we might be missing out on the bigger picture by just going with the Accommodation sector.
- DB felt it was important not to lose sight of the aim. Spending on tourism/destination marketing has decreased steadily and isn't going to improve. There is a need to act now and the ABID is a good starting point.
- It was generally agreed that there needs to be a statutory obligation to pay. If it is a question of businesses being able to decide whether to pay or not then it will not work.
- FMc pointed out that by deciding to go with the proposals for ABID that did not mean that later on once it was established it could not be extended to include Hospitality/Attractions.

Proposal

Following the above discussions and given that the ARG funds need to be spent imminently or they will have to be returned to Government AE suggested that the wording for a proposal, based around going ahead with engaging a consultant to work through the detail of a pilot ABID in Bournemouth, but with a view to rolling it out to Poole and Christchurch and possibly other sectors later, be formulated and circulated via email for a vote to be taken. AE confirmed that as long as the money is being used to look at improving Destination marketing across the area there is no need to go back to the Council for agreement.

AL proposed a **vote in principle** on the above proposal be taken and this was carried.

ACTION: Email to be sent to members outlining the proposal for agreement for the £35k ARG funding to be allocated to take forward work on the initial stages of creating a new ABID in Bournemouth. Voting members to be asked to submit their votes via email.

7. **AOB** – Covered at start of meeting

8. **Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 19 September 2023** Venue and time tbc