

OUR COLCHESTER BID

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Overview of the Our Colchester BID

For: Colchester Borough Council Scrutiny Panel



OUR COLCHESTER

A BID to make new history

What is a BID?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a business-led and business funded body formed to improve a defined commercial area. The benefits of BIDs are wide-ranging and include:

- Businesses decide and direct what they want in their area
- Businesses are represented and have a voice in issues affecting their trading area
- BID levy money is ring-fenced for use only in the BID area
- Increased footfall and spend
- Improved staff retention
- Reduced business costs
- Enhanced marketing and promotion
- Looking at infrastructure, pollution and movement
- Guidance in place shaping vision activities
- Facilitated networking opportunities with neighbouring businesses
- Assistance in dealing with the Council, Police and other public bodies

Concerns of local businesses from the planning survey and the services Our Colchester will provide to tackle them:

Rough Sleepers

- Support initiatives to tackle rough sleeping, drinking and aggressive begging

Anti-social behaviour

- Police-accredited street ambassadors and security
- Professional representation to outside bodies (inc. Local Authority and Essex Police)

Appearance of empty units

- Shop front hoardings showcasing local artists

Customer perception of the town centre

- Cleaner and greener environment to create a more welcoming town
- A strong marketing offer to improve trading in the town centre
- Active support for tourism activities and promotions
- An Independent Business Fund
- Co-ordinating and promoting a full calendar of events for the whole year
- An improved streetscape
- Bespoke events and marketing to showcase heritage
- Increased promotion of the art and culture in Colchester

Accessibility of the town centre

- Improved signage and accessibility

Our Colchester BID

In June 2018 businesses voted in favour of Our Colchester BID's business plan to revitalise and promote Colchester for the next five years after a month-long ballot, in which the BID secured 85% in favour from a 36% turnout and represented 83% rateable value of the votes cast.

The operations and management of the Our Colchester BID are overseen by a Board of Directors, chaired by Simon Blaxill. The composition of the Board reflects the BID's membership with Directors drawn from all town centre sectors.

There is also a BID Manager and operational team who deliver the BID's activities on a day to day level and who report to the BID Board.

Our Year 1 (Oct 2018 to Sept 2019) Objectives:

When launching in October 2018, we set out our year 1 objective to look at *improving and enhancing the appearance and perception of the Town Centre*. If we do not get the foundations set up correctly then we cannot build a concrete plan for our 5-year term.

Our Year 2 (Oct 2019 to Sept 2020) Objectives:

We have set out objectives for year 2 to continue on improving the perception and appearance of the town centre whilst investing in *making Colchester town centre the best possible place to work, visit and live*.

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What have we achieved in our first year so far?

Since launching in October 2018 we have already:



- launched a new consumer facing brand, InColchester, for the town centre. Our key objective is for this website & brand to be the 'one stop shop' for those that use the town centre. It will have a comprehensive directory of businesses in the town centre, a full co-ordinated calendar of events (something that hasn't been achieved before), offers page, jobs page and many more exciting features. Check it out www.incolchester.co.uk

- launched our BID in Bloom project. This involved the planting of over half a million flowers across the town centre focusing on gateways/entrances to the town centre that provide an impact as opposed to covering the entirety of the town centre. We have 115 planters covering key areas such as Queen Street, Osborne St, St Johns Street, Crouch St, North Hill and many other areas.

- launched our Create Fund for events/projects/initiatives to apply for funding to expand and grow their ideas to enhance and improve their delivery for town centre. We have already funding Colchester Carnival, Invasion Colchester and AGE Concern.

- funded a brand new DISC system for Colchester Pubwatch covering the night-time economy. The app is a place for all night-time economy businesses that have signed up, for free, to view a gallery of offenders or trouble makers across the town centre alongside a gallery of those that are now banned from all bars and clubs by Colchester Pubwatch. They can also report when offenders cause trouble in or around their business.



- Employed two street ambassador who are our eyes and ears for the businesses of the town centre. They do not hold any enforcement powers and are there simply for business engagement, public realm reporting and general public support. They have been a huge hit with the businesses and have creating a link for businesses to other key authorities including the zone wardens and police teams.

- taken over the leadership of organising Christmas in Colchester 2019 achieving an overall investment of £53k into this project with £30k BID funding alongside extra funding from Culver Square, Fenwick and CBC. We will be organising the Christmas light switch-on, the media campaign promoting the town centre for Christmas and organising full entertainment for the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas day.
- launching a vacant unit vision with our first stage project in partnership with FirstSite where we will be working with a renowned artist, Mark Titchner, who currently has an exhibition at FirstSite. Mark will be completing some community engagement workshops with businesses, consumers and workers of the town centre to create artwork bespoke for Colchester town centre. We will then vinyl the front windows of 10 vacant units alongside opening a studio to present Mark's work for people to visit and read more about the project. Our key objectives are to improve the appearance of certain areas and units throughout the town whilst increasing footfall to these areas.

These are all but a few of the key projects we have already launched and set-up since starting in October 2018. We have some really exciting plans for the next 4 years so keep up to date on our websites

www.ourcolchester.co.uk (business to business) and www.incolchester.co.uk (business to consumer)