

BEXLEYHEATH *News* **Business Improvement District**

Members news from Bexleyheath BID

Introduction

Happy New Year to all our members. 2017 has come to an end, and we have 2018 to look forward to. The past year has seen some difficult times for businesses, not just in Bexleyheath but countrywide. However, Bexleyheath has held its head above water with the additional impact of the major road works on Albion Road and Gravel Hill.

We are aware that footfall and sales have been down compared to previous years due to some reasons beyond our control. In addition to the road works, we have also contended with the potential loss of Bexleyheath Police Station, inclement weather, changes to customer parking options, and the ever-increasing demand for online retail.

As mentioned in previous correspondence, in the latter stages of 2017 we were successful in our campaign to keep Bexleyheath Police Station open. We were also encouraged to hear that the Council have decided not



to go ahead with plans to increase the hours of the Bexleyheath Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) to include Sundays at this stage. The BID represents a significant voice for business, and we will continue to make sure that the business voice is heard when it comes to decisions about Bexleyheath and the surrounding area.

Our cost savings initiatives by way of free training courses (of which you will read more about in this newsletter on page 3) and joint procurement services continued to prove valuable to members throughout the year with savings nearly reaching the 100k mark. So much so that one of our members was encouraged to discover a massive £5,000 in savings on their energy and telecoms bills just in time for the festive period.

We will shortly be announcing our continued commitment to support the Bexley Business Awards, which is an excellent opportunity to learn more about your own businesses while hopefully getting the recognition you all deserve. This year we will be sponsoring the Customer Service award category and hope this gives all of you the opportunity to enter this or one of the many other categories. Together we can showcase Bexleyheath as a great place for great businesses.

Lastly, we would like to thank all of you for your continued commitment to making Bexleyheath what it is, and we hope to make strides as a collective this year to continue to make Bexleyheath a destination of choice.

Welcome to new businesses



Poppy Appeal

Over the weekend of 28th and 29th October, we again played host to the Borough's launch of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.

This year saw the welcome return of the replica Spitfire along with three other planes from years gone by. The aircraft were all replica's except for the Flying Flea of which is one of only two originals left in this country. All four planes along with the other entertainment were a welcome sight in the Broadway with many comments of memories and thanks paid to those who defended our country.

The weekend saw a new high of over £11,000 raised for the RBL in a single weekend in Bexleyheath surpassing last year's total. Although the weekend's footfall was down 4% year on year, which is representative of the year in total, we did see a 17.7% increase in the week on week figures proving the value of this magnificent event.

Plans are already in place for this year's event to take place on the weekend of 27th & 28th October with this year also marking the centenary of the end of WWI.



Remembrance Weekend

Last year saw Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday fall in the same weekend on 11th and 12th November respectively.

Saturday 11th November saw us host an informal service at clock tower where we were joined by the RBL, and representatives from the police, ambulance service, Council, and armed forces. We must also pay thanks to TFL for stopping buses and our businesses for bringing Bexleyheath to a standstill to show respect to those that have fallen during a moment of silence.



On Sunday 12th November we supported the annual remembrance service at the Bexleyheath War Memorial which saw the highest attendance in a number of years. The service was led by Rev Trevor Wyatt from Christ Church and was attended by a number of dignitaries including the Mayor of Bexley and Bishop of Canterbury. Following the service, the Cons Club hosted a delightful festival of remembrance lunch to a sell-out crowd.

As mentioned above this year is the centenary of the end of WWI with Remembrance Sunday falling on Armistice Day 11th November 2018.

Christmas

Christmas officially launched on Saturday 18th November with our switch on team consisting of the Mayor and our competition winners.

The switch on event was then supplemented by 15 days of pop up activities throughout December consisting of School carol-athons, ice carving workshops, pantomime, and Santa's helpful elves who assisted customers during the festive period. Furthermore, we also hosted a small Christmas market that proved somewhat underwhelming.

The festive period was different from any other with footfall correlating to consumers demand for 'sale



prices' during the Black Friday period, final shopping week before Christmas and Christmas/New Year week. This trend was proven nationwide with expectations that 'prices will reduce before I purchase'.

Overall December was down 10% year on year with

the final shopping week being the busiest recorded in Bexleyheath with 268,449 visitors (5% up year on year).

Work is now underway for this year with plans to launch Christmas on Saturday 17th November with the anticipation that it will be our biggest and best yet. This year also marks the final contracted year with our current festive light display, and we will be sourcing a new supply for Christmas 2019.

On the horizon for Bexleyheath...

Marketing & Events

This year the BID is looking forward to delivering at least six major events while supplementing it with smaller events and activities during all school holidays. We cannot do this alone and are currently talking through proposals with the shopping centre and Bexley Council to see where we can improve on previous events and the marketing of such moving forward.

In addition to these proposals, we are also sourcing funding streams and sponsorship opportunities to maximise the impact of our budget and to enhance the quality of each event and marketing activity further.

In order to showcase Bexleyheath to its full potential, we also need information from you to help us market

Bexleyheath as the destination of choice. Please let us know of any special events or promotions you are offering so that we can help you to promote them while continuing to drive consumers into the town.

Despite the final phases of road works we need to show that Bexleyheath is open for business and give people a reason to spend their time and money in our town.



Training courses



As you are aware, encouraging customer spend and creating a safe and vibrant BID area is not the only service we offer. To ensure businesses are receiving value

for money from the BID we also provide free training courses to our members representing a direct return on investment.

This year we will be holding at least ten training courses covering a myriad of topics including first aid and many other operational requirements to run a successful business. These courses will be supplemented by awareness sessions and workshops incorporating terrorism, data protection, digital security and marketing.

The first of these courses will be Counter Terrorism, aimed at management level staff held on 7th February followed by a certified one day Emergency First Aid at Work course on 13th February.

For other courses, please see Bexleyheathbid.co.uk or contact us for further information.

Enjoy Bexleyheath Loyalty App

The BID is set to launch its first loyalty and reward app in partnership with Indestinate at the end of this month. To make the launch successful, we need your input. As I'm sure you are all aware, loyal custom makes up a significant portion of your income and we wish to exploit this further.

The app is designed on a similar basis to a supermarket loyalty card. However, points are issued for repeat visits rather than spend. With one app benefitting all businesses – each business will have a unique landing



page while showcasing their rewards and/or loyalty offering on a proximity or service sector basis. From a simple give away on the 10th visit to a percentage discount for new customers the opportunities are endless with the decision being yours.

Better still you will have the ability to create push notifications, develop bespoke offerings and have back of house data entailing usage and customer engagement levels.

If you are interested in this app being available in your business or require further info with a demonstration, then please let the team know.

Business updates

Road Works update

Works are now back underway following the pause in construction for the festive period.

There are no planned works for Albion Road except for the final soft furnishings and removal of construction barriers.

The temporary roundabout and pavement works continue at the junction of Gravel Hill/Watling Street with no planned daytime closures or diversions expected.

Late January will see the commencement of approximately three weeks of night resurfacing works running through Gravel Hill/Erith Road and subsequent



adjoining junctions including Broadway. Although this phase of works will not impede daytime traffic, there are expected to be significant nighttime diversions.

Finally, February will see the completion of any remedial works with the final phasing of works due for completion in early March.

All of the above information and timescales are provided as a guide and could be subject to change due to weather restrictions – particularly on the night work phase.



Town Safe

Bexley Town Safe appears to be coming to an end as its own partnership following the removal of active CCTV monitoring staff and furthermore by last summer's resignation of the co-ordinator, Crissie.

Following feedback from businesses currently involved in the scheme (amongst other businesses) the BID are keen to get an active radio scheme and information sharing system in place. We are currently looking to recruit a new person to the BID team to actively manage and liaise with all business while upgrading the scheme to an enhanced digital version, which will allow for greater coverage.

In the meantime, we urge all businesses to continue to use the service and share information with each other as much as possible. For more information on the new role or the existing service, please contact the BID manager.

BID Board

The BID board has continued to grow in number over the past 12 months with five new directors joining the Board to help steer and shape the future of Bexleyheath BID. This number is already due to grow further still in the coming months, but we require greater representation from all sectors of the BID area. We are specifically looking for representatives of the leisure, hospitality and banking sectors

and welcome your interest to this voluntary but crucial governance role.

Richard Thomas of TG Baynes has been the Chair for a number of years but is due to retire from business later this year, with Greg

Abbott of McDonald's taking the interim role of Chair until a long-term successor can be appointed. If you would like further information on this role or would like to put your name forward, then please let the BID manager know.

Get in touch ...

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