

Who's on the Ballymena Town Centre Partnership BID Board?

The Board consists of 12 representatives drawn from the Business Community, 12 Councillors, a representative from both Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Ballymena Retailers Against Crime under separate strategic alliance agreements and Partner organisations Black Advertising and 7FM, with Deputy Mayor Ald PJ McAvoy as Chairman and William Alexander as vice Chairman.

In addition to these, a range of public bodies including Ballymena Borough Council, Department for Social Development (DSD), Department for Regional Development (DRD), the Police Service (PSNI) and key individuals within the community, such as the recently retired CEO of Ballymena Borough Council, sit on the Board as advisors.

Ald P.J. McAvoy	BBC Councillor	William Alexander	The Gift Box Shop
Ald James Alexander	BBC Councillor	Steven Montgomery	Montgomerys, Ballymoney Street
Cllr Neil Armstrong	BBC Councillor	Fearghal Eastwood	Tower Shopping Centre
Cllr Robin Cherry	BBC Councillor	Stephen Glasgow	Camerons of Ballymena
Cllr Ms Monica Digney	BBC Councillor	Brian McGroggan	McGroggans Ice Cream Shops
Ald Roy Gillespie	BBC Councillor	William McKean	First Trust Bank
Ald Samuel J Hanna	BBC Councillor	Matthew McKillen	McKillens of Ballymena
Cllr James Henry	BBC Councillor	Sam Morrison	SVM Group - Fairhill Shopping Centre
Cllr Maurice T Mills	BBC Councillor	Stephen Reynolds	Front Page Bar, Ballymoney Street
Cllr Mrs Deirdre Nelson	BBC Councillor	Colm Ross	Bank Of Ireland
Ald Hubert Nicholl	BBC Councillor	Harry Smyth	Tesco
Cllr David Tweed	BBC Councillor	Thomas Wallace	Wallaces, Church Street
Damien McGinley	7FM	Trevor Parker	Ballymena Retailers Against Crime
Johnny Black	Black Advertising	Audrey Wales	Ballymena Chamber of Commerce

2007 To Do List Update

- Improvements to the Town Centre multi-storey car park** - Secured commitment from Department of Regional Development to carry out considerable improvements - now underway.
- Improved market image** - 2007/08 Marketing campaign delivered.
- Regeneration of Bridge Street** - Commitment secured from Department for Social Development (DSD) that this would be included in the Town Centre Masterplan, which is now underway.
- Improved pedestrian signage** - Commitment secured from DSD that this would be included in the Town Centre Masterplan, which is now underway.
- Need to improve and add to the existing civic space** - Commitment secured from DSD that this would be included in the Town Centre Masterplan, which is now underway.
- Improve the perception of safety in the town centre** - Crime rates reducing through partnership working, regular dressing of town centre with crime awareness banners.
- Improve the traffic flow of the town centre** - New parking scheme in place - scheme nominated for a major national award.
- Increase evening economy by improving safety** - Again crime rates reducing through partnership working, and implementing appropriate initiatives.
- Improve the presentation of the town centre** - Secured the cooperation of the property owners to give their derelict buildings a facelift.
- Attract a new hotel offering quality budget accommodation** - Promotion of opportunities underway - a number of interested parties now identified.

2008 To Do List - workshop held in January - now being developed

TO DO TO DO



INSIDE...

Crime shoplifting

Marketing results focused

Employees never too old



DEPUTY MAYOR, ALDERMAN
P.J. McAVOY, CHAIR
W. ALEXANDER, VICE CHAIR
BALLYMENA BID

at the centre of it
Ballymena
Town Centre Partnership

Business Improvement District

What is the Town Centre Partnership?

In 2003 Ballymena Borough Council appointed a Town Centre Manager (Colin Neill) with the aim of securing the future of Ballymena not only as the No1 Shopping Town in the Province but as also as a Town Centre at the heart of the community.

Following initial discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, a Town Centre Partnership was established as a consultative body of Council with its management committee consisting of elected members, commercial representatives and a range of public agencies including the Department for Social Development (DSD), Department for Regional Development (DRD) and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

During the period 2004-2006, the Town Centre Partnership developed and delivered a series of projects ranging from initiatives which required little to no funding from the Partnership but that had a major impact on the vitality of the Town Centre. These ranged from a comprehensive review of accessibility and on street parking, to a series of TV marketing campaigns which required the Partnership to secure funding from the private sector to the value of c£50,000 per year, backed by match funding secured from the Borough Council

giving a total annual spend of c£100,000.

In 2006 it was realised that there was a need to grow the Town Centre Partnership to allow a greater private sector remit and address funding based on individual projects which limited long term planning and in light of the Review of Public Administration (RPA), which would see a larger Council area, with the possible impact of a less Ballymena-focused Council and to tackle the growing competition from other in and out of town retail centres. Therefore, following a feasibility study, the Business Improvement District (BID) model was identified as the best suited to build on the existing strengths of the Town Centre Partnership (What is a BID? page 3)

In 2006 the Town Centre Partnership established the Ballymena Business Improvement District (Ballymena BID) based on a fee paying membership utilising the monies raised to replace the Town Centre Christmas Lights at a cost of £120,000, securing £60,000 from Ballymena Borough Council and the remainder coming from membership fees with contributions based on rateable value.

Continued on Page 3.

For more information on BIDS contact Colin Neill:

Economic Development Unit, 4 Wellington Court, Ballymena BT43 6EQ
T. 028 2563 3930 www.ballymena.gov.uk



COMMUNICATION PARTNER



MARKETING PARTNER



crime FOCUS

Trevor Parker, Development Manager, Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC)

“KEEPING RETAIL CRIME A PRIORITY”

According to the British Retail Consortium, the costs of retail theft to the UK economy is now over 2 billion pounds a year, which equates to just under £100 extra being paid by every household in the UK to cover the losses.

The bottom line for a retail business is that losses to retail theft can make a major difference to profit levels. Investment in staff training and improving security can and does make a difference when it comes to preventing your profit walking out the door.

Recognising that crime and safety are key issues for all Ballymena retailers regardless of size, Ballymena BID operate a dedicated Safer Task Team bringing together a range of skills and resources with the sole aim of providing a low crime environment within the Town Centre which not only benefits the current retail community, but is a strong selling point for Ballymena when attracting new businesses to invest in the Town.

The Ballymena BID Safer Task Team, which is delivered by Ballymena Retailers Against

Crime (BRAC), who also runs the highly successful Ballymena Radio Link System, provides a comprehensive approach to delivering the Ballymena BID Safer Action Plan. This includes ability to combine the operations of the BRAC Radio Link System with the Town Centre CCTV system, which is managed by Ballymena BID on behalf of Ballymena Borough Council (the system's owners) with a range of targeted initiatives to reduce crime in the Town Centre.

Without doubt one of the most effective elements and a direct benefit to the business community is the BRAC Radio Link, a simple and cost effective measure which incorporates training on anti theft awareness for staff with a two way radio system giving immediate contact with other traders and the CCTV control room who interact with Police to deal with incidents as they develop.

This can also help with another rising crime trend, which is the number of assaults being made on retail staff together with verbal abuse and intimidation from anti-social behaviour. Having Radio Link, which

incorporates an instant panic alarm that is relayed to the CCTV and Radio Link control rooms increases the level of staff safety and can even help to deter incidents.



For more information on the Radio Link system, contact the BRAC Development Manager, Trevor Parker on 2564 6050.

Ballymena BID's Safer Task Team and Safer Action Plan is delivered by Ballymena Retailers Against Crime (BRAC) as part of a Strategic Alliance Agreement between the two organisations.

employment update Sophie Irwin, HR Consultant, Personnel & Training Services, Ballymena**Retirement**

On 1st October 2006 the Employment Equality Age Regulations N.Ireland were introduced. The aim of this legislation is to prevent all forms of discriminatory treatment based on age within the workplace. It is commonly known that by 2020, a third of the labour force will be over 50. It must be remembered however that age discrimination affects old, young, middle aged employees and workers not just older employees as is often the misconception.

The effects of the regulations are far reaching, issues such as questioning a job applicant about their age, placing an advertisement for a “young, enthusiastic or driven” employee, banter in the workplace which could be construed as harassment based on age or failing to notify an employee regarding their upcoming retirement and offering an opportunity to work beyond statutory retirement age. The effects of which, may leave an unwitting employer facing the burdensome prospect of completing a response to a tribunal in order to prove that age discrimination has not taken place.

The Law

Employees now have a statutory right to request working beyond compulsory retirement, which employers have a “duty to consider”. In

short, you cannot retire employees below the default retirement age of 65 or your normal retirement age (within your terms and conditions*) You must notify employees who are approaching retirement age at least 6 months in advance, of their intended retirement date and notify them of their right to request to work beyond this age. An employee who has had their contract terminated without this notification may claim unfair dismissal. If an employee has been notified within correct time limits, they must make a request to continue working at least 3 months before their proposed retirement date indicating that they wish their employment to continue either; indefinitely, or; for a stated period; or; until a stated date.

Once a request is made, you should arrange to meet the employee and discuss the request. If the employer refuses such a request, the employee has a right to appeal this decision which should then be heard by someone in a more senior position.

*If your normal retirement age is below 65, this must be justifiable.

For more information on this or other employment issues contact: Sophie Irwin, HR Consultant, Personnel & Training Services, Bridge Street, Ballymena. Tel: 028 2564 4110

Strategic Alliance

Ballymena Borough Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Ballymena Retailers Against Crime, are both represented on the Ballymena BID Board under separate Strategic Alliance Agreements which link the three organisations into an agreement that removes duplication, enhances co-operation and provides for best placed organisation to act as lead partner.

From page one:

As part of the new structures, Ballymena BID undertook to ascertain what issues were affecting its membership by holding Town Centre workshops where members could input in the development of a ‘To Do List for Ballymena’. This process also allowed members to prioritise the issues to be addressed.

From its first ‘To Do List’ (2007) Ballymena BID delivered or had a significant impact on the top ten issues identified. Many of these issues required the securing of significant commitments from the Departments for Social and Regional Development (page 4).

In 2007 Ballymena BID secured a commitment from Ballymena Borough Council to provide a three-year funding package (2008-2010) linked to matched private sector funding with a renewal option subject to a successful evaluation at the end of the three-year period. The 2008 Ballymena BID annual membership workshop established the next ‘To Do List’, which will be encapsulated in the annual business plan before seeking membership fees to progress the delivery.

Ballymena BID has also been recognised as a model of best practice by the Association of Town Centre Management and was the only Town Centre Partnership to be invited to present evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly Inquiry into Town Centre Regeneration (2007) and was listed as one of the top five UK Partnerships in 2008.

What is a ‘BID’?

A Business Improvement District (BID) is simply a partnership between local businesses and the local authority to enable them to make improvements to a specific geographical area. Last year Ballymena town centre became a voluntary BID. The legislation, although enacted some time ago in the rest of the UK, still has to be agreed in NI hence the ‘voluntary’ term. Funding for the BID to operate is raised as part of a levy on businesses within the area and is based as a percentage on rateable value. The partnership consists of people from both the private & public sector (see list on back page), and is a constituted body that also acts as an advisory body of Ballymena Borough Council.

There are two sub committees that feed into the main board. They are the ‘task/accessibility team’, and the ‘safer team’. The board meet monthly, with the sub committees meeting on a need for action basis.

Property owners potentially stand to benefit from a BID in a number of ways; for example revitalising the environment, enhancing capital values, improving demand for space, rental growth, developing better understanding of tenants’ needs and concerns. Business operators within a BID receive many of the same benefits, and can have a voice of influence over the way their area develops to the advantage for all.

DID YOU KNOW**Parking spaces**

Ballymena Town Centre has around 5000 parking spaces available. Includes a combination of both multi-story, and flat level.

**Marketing focus...
Customer is still king!**

Joy Black BLACK ADVERTISING

Customer service has been identified as any contact between a customer and a company that influences the customer's perceptions, and includes every interaction from the first point of contact until the conclusion of the relationship.

Customers assess service quality based on making a comparison between what they expect and what they experience. In order to differentiate from the competition it is essential to become customer centred, and provide customer service that exceeds the customer's quality expectations. The benefits of good customer service include: increased customer retention rates, reduced running and marketing costs, stronger position in competitive market, and improved internal communication, staff relations and morale.

It is important to consider the message you are sending to your customers. Do your external communications, your printed materials convey a high quality image? There is the need for a strong brand communicated effectively and consistently, using the appropriate mix of colour, image and typography. Attention to detail in your external communications is an indicator of the level of service they are likely to receive.

The use of the internet as a means of communicating with your target audience is becoming increasingly important. An attractively designed, functional website is an integral part of an organisations communication strategy. It is now often the first point of contact between clients and the organisation. An attractive website provides essential information on products or service and conveys an assurance of a quality service.

Staff within a company or organisation provide tangible evidence of service quality. It is therefore essential that all staff have a smart and professional appearance reflecting the values of the company. Business owners and managers should provide staff with extra training in relation to customer relationship management. To ensure that high standards of customer service are maintained, client relationships are nurtured and

developed. Ensure that staff are aware of external communications, so that this can be reflected in their practice. This requires better communication between management and staff, to ensure everyone is clear about what is expected from them. This in turn would lead to increased performance, and motivation in the staff delivering the service.

The company's exterior, including entrance, shop window and signage, are permanently on display and can convey a quality image as long they are well maintained. Ensure that the entrance to the building is clean, the ambience, suitable lighting, music all should reflect the brand values of the organisation.

HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Devise and implement a customer service standard that is both specific and measurable, as clear standards, will provide a benchmark, against which, performance levels can be measured.
- Create a quality control system, and educate staff about importance of quality control. These must be quantified if they are to be reasonable (Capko 2005), for example, a standard asking staff to ensure that a customer is offered assistance within one minute of entering your store.
- By the development of an induction programme for all new employees, during which the quality proposition of the company is outlined to a new employee ensuring that they understand what your company's standards of customer service are and also what level of service your customers expect.

JOY BLACK

JOY IS A MEMBER OF THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF MARKETING