

SECOND MEETING OF THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (SCOTLAND) STEERING GROUP: MINUTES

COSLA, Rosebery House, Edinburgh (16 November 2005)

Present

Chair:

David Henderson, Scottish Executive Finance & Central Services Department

Members:

Billy Sommerville, Scottish Assessors Association (SAA)

David Davidson, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Bob Baldry, Scottish Consumer Council (SCC)

Euan Dobson, Scottish Enterprise

Vicki Lewis, COSLA

Trevor Bailey, COSLA

Nikola Plunkett, Scottish Executive Finance & Central Services Department

Donald Meldrum, Scottish Executive Facilities & Estates Services, Property Advice Division

Ken Jobling, Scottish Executive Development Department

Jacquie Reilly, Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM)

Secretariat:

Billy McKenzie, Scottish Executive Finance & Central Services Department

Peter Barlow, Scottish Executive Finance & Central Services Department

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

1.1 David Henderson welcomed everybody to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from Andy McCann (RTPI), Sarah Wiggins (BPF), The British Retail Consortium, and Boots PLC. Apologies were also received from Niall Stuart (FSB) who has withdrawn from the group due to other work pressures (but has been asked nevertheless if he would still be willing to continue to offer advice).

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

2.1 The group accepted the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

2.2 With regard to the action points of the last meeting, Billy McKenzie noted that the intention of the Secretariat to approach CACI for information regarding potential applications for Pilot Project status was now unnecessary as the avenues for disseminating information available would ensure that the relevant parties would be informed of the tender process.

3. Draft Pilot Project Tender Document: Paper 05/08

3.1 Specification Documents

3.1.1 David Henderson explained that the Executive had prepared draft specification documents for the BIDs application process. Following a very useful discussion, a range of helpful suggestions were made by the group as to how the specification documents could be improved.

Action: Secretariat to amend specification document in line with comments made at the meeting and to circulate to members for further comment.

3.1.2 Jacqui Reilly explained some of the lessons learned from experience in England to inform the process of sifting through the BIDs applications. She noted that it was extremely important to have a named project team in place and that engagement with the local community and robust partnerships should be key factors in determining the success of a project. She also suggested that the timetable should be amended to include time for asking questions of applicants following the initial sift. Following discussion, it was agreed to set aside a day in mid-March, around a week after the group's 8 March shortlisting meeting, to which all the selected project teams would be invited for interview and which might also incorporate, if time permitted, some facilitated discussion. It was agreed the Executive would organise this day and that applicants would be asked to keep the date clear on the application form.

3.1.3 It was agreed that the Executive would forward applications to all group members a week before the 8 March meeting date. These should be assessed using a scoring system which would enable a consistent approach and would enable detailed feedback for unsuccessful applications. On the day of the meeting, subject to the number of applications received, the group would split into sub-groups in the morning to draw up shortlists for ratification by the full group in the afternoon session. Ken Jobling noted that he had already received some 15 enquiries about participation in the pilots.

Action: Secretariat to circulate applications to group a week prior to 8 March 2006.

3.1.4 David Henderson explained that some progress had been made on the legislative front and that he was now hopeful that it might be possible to make an announcement on this in the relatively near future.

3.2 Application Template

3.2.1 David Henderson stated that these templates were designed to provide a consistent approach when assessing applications. The group agreed these were appropriate and should ensure a consistent approach to assessing applications. Some amendments were suggested such as the addition of space

to include a list of names for a dedicated project team who would attend the 'development day'. Jacquie Reilly noted that it was important to get applicants to explain how they would engage with local businesses as BIDs can only succeed where there is active business support.

Action: Secretariat to make suggested amendments to document and circulate for further comment.

3.2.2 The group raised the subject of billing for the extra services provided. There were 2 separate issues. First, should the funding for the demonstration project, for example, go to a named institution or individual or possibly to the local authority. Second, how would the local authority bill businesses, given that to amend the NDR system would require expensive software adjustments which could not be made quickly. Jacquie Reilly noted that this was a significant problem in England that had still not been resolved. Cross border projects were especially complicated. It was suggested that the bills could either be added on to the business rates which would involve large software amendment costs, or a separate bill could be issued. It was agreed that this was an issue that should be discussed between the local authority and the BID proposer, however the Scottish Executive should continue to monitor this to try and ensure it does not become an obstacle to the success of BIDs.

4. Draft Project Manager Job Description (Paper 05/09)

4.1 Billy McKenzie gave an overview of the draft project manager job description. Jacquie Reilly enquired as to the structure of the management process i.e. would the project manager report to the BIDs steering group directly? David Henderson reported that this was indeed the case, however, the project manager would sit within the Scottish Executive and have access to the range of expertise within the Executive to support him/her. Decisions on the management of the projects would be made by the project manager but it was agreed there should also be a small expert 'task group', comprising members from the BIDs steering group, who could be called to deal with any problems as and when they arose. It was also pointed out that it would be more accurate to refer to this position as Project Director, as Project Managers are more appropriate for the individual Pilots.

4.2 The group agreed that the project manager needs to be a very dynamic and positive individual who is able to engage and motivate project groups, write surveys, run workshops and is able to liaise with the media. This should be made clear in the job advertisement. Members of the group also recommended that a salary of around £30-40K should be included in the job description together with the project management structure and the potential for secondment. David Henderson noted that, were the Executive to recruit someone directly, the equivalent grade would dictate a salary level somewhat below this. However, a lower salary might not attract the right calibre of applicant. In that case, the best course might be to seek someone on a secondment (where the salary level proposed could be accommodated).

Action: Scottish Executive to agree on appropriate salary for project director and to make suggested amendments to job description before circulating for further comment.

5. Draft text for publicising Pilot Project Application stage (Paper 05/10)

5.1 The group agreed that the text should be amended to make it more dynamic e.g. by pointing out the funding available at the top of the document and inviting applicants to consider what improvements they could make in their areas with this sort of funding.

5.2 It was agreed that it was unlikely there would be any media interest in the issue of the applications, but that the document should be circulated to industry publications. Media interest was much more likely when the successful pilots were announced.

Action: Secretariat to make suggested amendments to publicity text and circulate for further comment.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 The group agreed that the next two scheduled meetings (in December and January) should be retained meantime but would only take place if a particular issue arose which could not be dealt with by correspondence and needed a group discussion. For now, therefore, these dates should remain in members' diaries but it would be likely that the Group would not meet again until 8 March 2006. This would be an all day meeting as members would be expected to sift through the applications for each of the Pilot Projects.

Action Points

Secretariat to make suggested amendments to draft specification document

Scottish Executive members to circulate applications to group prior to 8 March 2006

Secretariat to make suggested amendments to application template document

Scottish Executive to agree on appropriate salary for project director and to make suggested amendments to job description.

Secretariat to make suggested amendments to publicity text.

Secretariat to circulate minutes of this meeting to Members by e-mail.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
November 2005