

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 1 December 2022

Essential Edinburgh - City Centre Business Improvement District, Renewal Ballot March 2023

Executive/routine
Wards

Executive
City Centre

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Approve progress towards a renewal ballot for Essential Edinburgh (by not exercising the option to veto);
 - 1.1.2 Note that Essential Edinburgh are required to submit a business plan to Council and Scottish Government by 15 December 2022 and that Council are required to assess the business plan by 12 January 2023; and
 - 1.1.3 Note the process for making a voting decision on Council owned properties that incur the Business Improvement District (BID) levy.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Al Bryce, Contracts and Programme Manager, Business Growth & Inclusion

E-mail: al.bryce@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel: 07710 385208



Essential Edinburgh - City Centre Business Improvement District, Renewal Ballot March 2023

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the upcoming renewal ballot for Essential Edinburgh, the city centre Business Improvement District (BID) and summarises:
- 2.1.1 Essential Edinburgh achievements over its last five-year term;
 - 2.1.2 Proposals for Essential Edinburgh's fourth term (2023-2028); and
 - 2.1.3 How the Council will proceed with the casting of their vote for properties within the BID area.

3. Background

- 3.1 Essential Edinburgh, the Edinburgh City Centre BID, was established in 2008 and is in the final year of its third five-year term. A renewal ballot is now required for a fourth term. The process for a BID renewal ballot is set out in [legislation](#). Guidelines are also provided by Scotland's Improvement Districts.
- 3.2 Essential Edinburgh plays an active role in the city centre and their many programmes, projects, partnerships, and initiatives over the last 15 years have delivered a range of initiatives to support business growth and ensure the area is a leading place to visit, work and do business.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Over the current five-year term, Essential Edinburgh have delivered a range of additional, enhanced services and projects to improve the city centre.
- 4.2 These programmes and initiatives have led to:
- 4.2.1 Footfall up 9.8% during campaign activity;
 - 4.2.2 Retail sales 1.5% above Scottish average during campaign activity;
 - 4.2.3 Hospitality sales up 6.1% during campaign activity;
 - 4.2.4 Recorded crime down 66%;

4.2.5 179 Homeless people into accommodation with help from Cyrenians partnership;

4.2.6 628,100kg of litter collected by the Clean Team; and

4.2.7 900 Tonnes of CO2 saved from landfill disposal.

4.3 Plans for the next five years include the continuation of similar core business support services and key initiatives to support inclusion including maintaining the training and recruitment support at zero cost for levy-paying businesses; building on the successful partnership with homeless charity Cyrenians through funding outreach workers; and investment in upgraded cleaning equipment.

Business Consultation

4.4 Essential Edinburgh have continued consultation with levy payers during the run up to the renewal ballot including circulation of their draft plans, face to face meetings, information sessions and events.

4.5 In November 2021, Essential Edinburgh sent out a survey to all businesses in the BID area. 121 responses were received and of those 69 indicated they would support a further term. This represents 12% of the whole BID area and 57% of the responses to the survey, above the 5% required by legislation.

4.6 The survey results formed the basis of the draft Business Plan which was circulated to all members and followed up with one to one visits and meetings to discuss the contents

4.7 Members can also access a web page which has all the information on the renewal ballot and a further opportunity to provide feed back on the draft plan. It will be updated regularly as they approach the ballot period with news, video testimonials and how to vote guides. It can be viewed at [Essential Edinburgh Renewal 2023-28](#).

Legislative Steps

4.8 Legislation requires that Essential Edinburgh provide 154 days' notice of their intention to hold a ballot. They did so by writing to the Chief Executive of the Council in August 2022.

4.9 Essential Edinburgh is further required to submit its business plan to both the Council and Scottish Government 98 days prior to the ballot. This is due by 15 December 2022. An early draft of this business plan has been included with this report at Appendix 1.

4.10 The Council, in conjunction with the Scottish Government, is required to assess the business plan within 28 days of receipt (by 12 January 2023). It has discretion to approve the proposals and authorise the ballot or exercise a veto should valid reason be found.

4.11 Valid reasons are that the local authority consider that the BID proposals are likely to:

4.11.1 Conflict with any structure plan, local plan, strategic development plan or local development plan which has been approved or adopted under the

principal Act and which applies to the proposed business improvement district or any part of it;

4.11.2 Conflict to a material extent with any policy formally adopted by and contained in a document published by the authority (whether or not the authority are under a statutory duty to prepare such a document); or

4.11.3 Lead to a significantly disproportionate financial burden being imposed on:

4.11.3.1 Any person entitled to vote in the ballot on the proposals; or

4.11.3.2 Any class of such persons, as compared to other such persons or classes.

4.12 It is considered that these criteria do not apply here, and therefore the Council cannot exercise their veto.

Council's Vote in the Ballot

4.13 Any owner of property within the BID area is entitled to vote in the ballot. The Council owns two properties within the BID area:

4.13.1 The Assembly Rooms; and

4.13.2 The Bus Station.

4.14 The total BID levy paid on these properties in 2022/23 was £3,721.85.

4.15 The actual vote (or votes) has to be submitted by an officer of the Council. Committee have [previously delegated](#) this responsibility to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener of Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work, the Convener and Vice Convener of Finance and Resources and local ward members.

4.16 In respect of the vote for multiple properties, Committee have [previously also agreed](#) that:

4.16.1 In the event that the Council had multiple properties within the BID area, the Council would cast the same vote for all properties;

4.16.2 Should the Convener and Vice Convener of Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work, the Convener of Finance and Resources and local ward Councillors not reach consensus on how the Council vote should be cast, they would be asked to cast one further vote by way of a poll. The majority outcome of the poll would determine the Council overall vote; and

4.16.3 In the event of a tie in any poll carried out under 1.1.2, the Leader of the Council should be given a casting vote.

4.17 It is recommended that both the delegation and the process for votes for multiple properties remain in place.

5. Next Steps

5.1 If Committee approves the recommendations of this report:

- 5.1.1 Officers will continue to work with Essential Edinburgh towards a re-ballot;
- 5.1.2 Officers will liaise with City Centre Ward Councillors and the Conveners of Housing, Homelessness and Fair work and Finance and Resource Committees to assess the final business plan and agree the voting intention for the two Council owned properties in the area; and
- 5.1.3 Officers will make arrangements for the process of administering the ballot, with ballot papers being issued on 9 February 2023. The renewal ballot will close on 23 March 2023 and the declaration is expected on 27 March 2023.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Essential Edinburgh is an established BID therefore development of the business plan is self-funded.
- 6.2 The City of Edinburgh Council is required to carry out the ballot count including issuing lost ballots and administering proxy appointments. Based on previous votes, this is estimated as one officer full-time for six weeks in the lead-up to the ballot and four officers on the day of the ballot for vote counting. This will be funded by Essential Edinburgh.
- 6.3 There are currently two properties within the BID that the Council is responsible for the levy on – the Assembly Rooms and the Bus Station. The total BID levy paid on these properties in 2022/23 was £3,721.85.
- 6.4 Council retains 3% of all levy funds collected via business rates as contribution towards administering the collection.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Essential Edinburgh have been working closely with the businesses located within the BID throughout the last term and during the development of the business plan for the next proposed term. The majority of businesses have approved the BID in the last three ballots. The upcoming ballot outcome will determine if the stakeholders agree with the business plan.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Essential Edinburgh](#) website.
- 8.2 Scottish Government BID [guidance](#).
- 8.3 Scottish Government [legislation](#) on BID arrangements.
- 8.4 Scotland's Improvement Districts [guidance](#).

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 - Business Plan (Draft/Private).