

# REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL KNUTSFORD BID BALLOT



**Report Reference** C-25-16  
**Meeting Date** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
**Agenda Item** 8  
**Prepared by** Town Clerk

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The Town Council has long advocated the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) to generate greater investment in the town centre and to strengthen the voice of business owners operating in the town centre.

In 2018, it was identified that a feasibility study would be needed as the first step. In 2024, using funding obtained through the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Town Council commissioned the feasibility study. In 2025, the council budgeted to undertake the next (development) stage of a BID.

This stage has now been completed, and the BID is now at the ballot stage. The ballot papers have been sent to relevant business rate payers and it closes on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

### 1.2 ABOUT BIDS

A BID is a designated area where businesses fund additional services through an additional levy from the business rate payer. Creating a BID involves the businesses developing a five-year business plan which is then put to a ballot of businesses in the area, if successful, businesses must pay the levy.

The levy is paid by businesses occupiers of hereditaments above a certain level, where a hereditament has a business rates valuation below the level, it does not pay the levy (as the cost of collection outweighs the income received). The levy is collected by Cheshire East Council as the billing authority and paid to the BID. CEC will recover its cost of administering the collection. Only the businesses which will be paying the levy vote in the ballot.

For the ballot to be successful, 50% of those voting must vote yes. This 50% must be both the number of individual businesses voting, and the value of the rateable values.<sup>1</sup>

The BID lasts for five years. At the end of this period, a new plan would be prepared and business re-balloted on the BID.

### 1.3 THE KNUTSFORD BID

The full Knutsford BID proposal can be read at: [www.knutsfordbid.co.uk](http://www.knutsfordbid.co.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Business A and Business B's votes are both worth (1) in the first count, but if Business B's rateable value is twice that of Business A, it would be worth (2) in the second count.

The BID will cover Knutsford Town Centre and the main area of Tatton Park, as shown on the map below.



BID levies would be payable for all eligible business premises in that geographical area which have a rateable value above £5,500. The only specified exceptions are public funded primary schools and places of worship. Levies payable would equate to 2% of the rateable value of the premises per year, based on the 2023 rating list with an annual increase of 0.05%. Levies would be payable from April 2026 and thereafter annually for the lifetime of the BID.

The BID would raise c. £1m over the five year period.

The cost for the average sized premises in Knutsford is £537 per year (daily equivalent of £1.47). The cost for 92% of premises is less than £1,000 p.a. 27 premises (7.7% of premises with a rateable value above £5,500) in Knutsford will be paying more than £1,000 p.a. These are the largest premises with the highest rateable values in Knutsford.

Only premises with a rateable value above £5,500 will be liable for a BID Levy. For a premises with a £5,500 rateable value the cost is £110 per year (30p per day).

The funding raised would be spent supporting three themes:

- Destination Knutsford – Initiatives to make Knutsford the place people want to visit, explore and enjoy.
- Experience Knutsford – Initiatives to make the town centre cleaner, safer and more enjoyable for everyone.
- Connected Knutsford – Initiatives to help strengthen and support businesses.

The BID will be governed by a board appointed by the BID levy payers. Groundwork will be appointed to manage the BID. Groundwork will be accountable to and take direction and instruction for the BID

investment from the yet to be established Knutsford BID Board. Groundwork already delivers a range of projects and services across Cheshire East, including the Wilmslow BID, Crewe BID, the Lindow Common peat bog restoration, Tesco Bags of Help Grant Scheme, Green Doctor Services (to support resident struggling with fuel poverty issues) and river valley partnerships in locations such as the River Weaver and Goway.

20% of the project budget has been allocated to cover the cost of operating and managing the BID. The levy collection costs and associated administration costs from Cheshire East Council account for 3.7% of the total investment planned. The remaining costs from the 20% management and levy collection budget are related to the management of the BID by Groundwork, accountancy, administration, and overhead costs. The Town Council will not manage or have any direct control over the BID budget.

## **2.0 IMPACT ON TOWN COUNCIL**

### **2.1 FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Town Council will currently be liable for payments of £1,682 per year for the BID. This is for the following hereditaments:

- 60 King Street - £1,350
- Council Offices (Lower Chamber/Committee Room) - £194
- Council Offices (Chamber) - £138

A business rates assessment is currently awaited for the Market Hall which will determine if there is further liability for the BID for the central section of the Market Hall.

The Town Council invested £31,500 commissioning Groundwork to undertake the development and campaigning stage. If the ballot is successful, this will be repaid over the five years of the BID (£6,300 per year). If the ballot is unsuccessful, this investment will have been lost. The initial term of the BID therefore would not have a negative affect on council finances.

### **2.2 STRATEGY IMPACT**

Supporting a thriving town centre is one of the council's core strategic aims. The development of a BID strongly aligns with this aim and will directly contribute to the delivery of the council's strategic objectives, namely:

- Developing a town centre masterplan - through a stronger business voice to input into the proposals
- Developing initiatives to increase footfall – through partnership working and their own activity to promote footfall
- Delivery of a tourism strategy – through partnership working and their own activity to promote Knutsford as a visitor destination
- Working with businesses to ensure they have skill and resources – expected the BID will lead on this measure
- Programme of events supporting footfall - through partnership working and their own activity

The work of the BID are also likely to support the council's objectives in relation to active travel/public transport, and the aim of engendering a strong connected community.

### **2.3 RESOURCE IMPACT**

It is anticipated that the Town Council will work closely with the BID on a range of activity. It is likely that this will be mutually beneficial and will have minimal additional staffing impact. The Town Centre Manager will likely attend BID steering group meetings in an advisory capacity. It is anticipated that the council may also be able to appoint a councillor to attend steering group meetings.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

The Town Centre Committee received and reviewed the BID plan at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September. The committee resolved to recommend that Full Council votes 'yes' in the BID ballot.