

Leatherhead BID Shadow Board – Notes of Meeting

Date: Friday 29th August 2025

Start: 10:00am

In-person / Teams

Venue: The Stockroom Society – Swan Centre

Attendance

Role	Name	Business / Organisation
Chair	Richard Keel	Swan Centre Manager
Vice Chair	Rachel Groom	The Stockroom Society
Board Member	Tim Caffell	Leatherhead Theatre
Board Member	Dave Smith	Surrey Hills Radio
Board Member	Mahdi Dolati	Violet London
Board Member	Bruce Shaw	Patrick Gardner
Board Member	Richard Cunningham	Cunningham Eves (Solicitors)
Consultant	Simon Matthews	Matthews Associates
Observer	Matthew Minson	Mole Valley District Council

1. Welcome & Introductions

The Chair (Richard Keel) welcomed all attendees and thanked Rachel Groom for hosting the meeting at The Stockroom Society. It was noted that Zoey Darbon (new manager of The Edmund Tylney, replacing Kara Nash) was unable to attend due to a family emergency; the Board sent best wishes to Zoey and hopes she can join the next meeting (as she is keen to be involved). Simon Matthews outlined the agenda for the session, which would focus on reviewing the draft BID Proposal and addressing feedback from Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) ahead of the 23rd September Cabinet meeting. The agenda in the meeting pack included: Consultant Update (Paper 1), Next Steps over Summer (Paper 2), MVDC feedback discussion (email 26/08/25), review of draft BID Proposal Part A, examples of BID business plans, planning the Business Plan production timeline, and stakeholder engagement plans for the pre-ballot period.

2. Apologies for Absence

Miranda Virgo – Swan Centre

Zoey Darbon - The Edmund Tylney

Candida Goulden – MVDC Observer (Matthew Minson substituted)

3. Notes from previous meeting (30/07/25) and matters arising

The notes of the Shadow Board meeting held on 30th July 2025 were reviewed item by item and were agreed by the Board as an accurate record. Simon Matthews recapped the key points from that workshop-style meeting, noting that many had been carried forward into the draft BID Proposal. The Board had confirmed the BID's draft five-year budget and key parameters (2% levy, £8k rateable value threshold, no levy cap, and a charity exemption for sub-£70k RV premises).

It was also reaffirmed that the preferred ballot timetable was to close on 1st December 2025 with a 1st January 2026 BID start, rather than delay to April. These decisions were reflected in the outline proposal submitted to MVDC.

Updates on action points from the previous meeting were noted: the MVDC development loan agreement (for up to £35,500) had been finalised and signed by the Chair on 26th August, after minor delays with documentation, and receipt of funds into the BID bank account was expected imminently. All Board members' AP01 forms (company director appointments) were to be submitted to Companies House. MVDC confirmed that Candida Goulden would continue as the MVDC observer on the Board (with Matthew Minson supporting as needed) – this had been arranged at the July meeting. An outstanding item was the Directors & Officers (D&O) insurance: the consultant has sought a quote from a specialist provider, and this will be obtained before the next meeting. The Board's earlier discussion on adding new Board members had borne fruit – Richard Cunningham (Cunningham Eves) was welcomed formally to the Shadow Board (per the invitation agreed in July), and the Board may still consider one additional member (a further candidate had been discussed previously). All other actions from 30th July were either completed or addressed in the agenda of the current meeting. With these points noted, the July meeting notes were approved for the record.

4. Consultant Update Report

Simon Matthews presented the Consultant Update (Paper 1) which summarised the developments over August. Following the 30th July workshop, an outline BID Proposal and accompanying statutory annexes were prepared and submitted to MVDC on 4th August for inclusion in MVDC's Cabinet papers. This submission included the draft Proposal document (with required content split into Part A and Part B), as well as Annexes A–G (draft budget, baseline agreement, operating agreement, BID area map, risk register, communications plan, etc.) as required.

MVDC conducted a review of the draft proposal and on 22nd August held a feedback session with the consultant to raise queries and suggestions. These queries were summarised and circulated to the Board via email on 26th August, along with the consultant's recommended responses for each point. Simon reported that seven of the nine Board members (78%) responded by email to indicate their agreement with the recommended responses (the remaining two members were unavailable). Based on this, MVDC was informed on 27th August of the Board's position on each item of feedback. Simon emphasised that the purpose of today's meeting was to give the full Board an opportunity to discuss and ratify those responses and address any remaining concerns, before finalising the BID Proposal for MVDC's Cabinet.

Additionally, the consultant update noted that MVDC's Revenues team had provided an updated figure for the levy income after refining the business rates list. The projected annual BID levy income is now ~£190,000, slightly reduced from earlier estimates due to the agreed charity exemptions. (The draft budget has been updated accordingly in Annex A.) MVDC also confirmed its ballot delivery fee for Leatherhead BID will be £11,630 + RPI per year, lower than the £15k originally budgeted; this saving has been reflected in the latest budget version. The Update Report concluded that the project was on schedule for the MVDC Cabinet meeting on 23rd September, with all required papers submitted on time and only procedural clarifications to resolve.

5. Next Steps Over Summer (Paper 2)

Paper 2 provided a checklist of tasks and milestones following the July meeting, and the Board reviewed progress on each item:

- **Submission to MVDC (4th Aug):** Completed – as noted above, the outline BID Proposal and all supporting documents were delivered by the 4th August deadline. MVDC's Cabinet will consider the BID Proposal on 23rd September.
- **MVDC Feedback & Clarification:** Completed – MVDC's queries from the 22nd Aug review meeting were addressed via the consultant's email of 26th Aug and interim Board approvals (see item 6 below). MVDC was updated on 27th Aug with the Board's responses, with final discussion taking place at this meeting.
- **Hereditament List Cleanse:** In progress – BID development manager Sandra Grant is collaborating with MVDC's Matthew Minson to validate and update the list of business properties (hereditaments) in the BID area. This includes correcting any errors in names/addresses and ensuring the list is accurate for ballot mailings. A physical "on-the-ground" check of premises will also be done during September's engagement period, to mitigate any list issues ahead of the ballot (as previously offered by the Board).
- **Revised Draft Budget:** Completed – The working budget has been revised to incorporate the new levy income estimate (~£189k) and the confirmed MVDC levy collection fee (£11,630 in year 1). The updated five-year Profit & Loss (v3) was attached to the meeting pack. (It was noted that the levy income could change slightly if the property list is further refined, but £190k p.a. is the planning figure.) The budget continues to include repayment of the MVDC loan over 5 years and assumes a part-time BID Manager from year 1.
- **MVDC Loan Agreement:** Completed – As noted, the £35,500 development loan agreement from MVDC has been signed by the Chair (Richard) as of 26/08/25. The Board is awaiting the imminent transfer of funds. Once the loan funds are received into the BID's bank account, a bank statement will be sent to MVDC to evidence the BID's available funds (per MVDC's requirements – see item 6). The Board recorded its thanks to MVDC for facilitating this development loan (which is interest-free and only repayable if the BID ballot is successful).

6. MVDC Feedback (from 22/08 review) and Required Decisions

The Board discussed in detail the feedback points raised by MVDC (as per the consultant's 26th Aug email) and confirmed its decisions on each. The MVDC queries spanned items (a) to (o) in the BID Proposal, as well as several items related to the Civica ballot arrangements (a to c). The agreed outcomes are summarised below:

(a) BID Proposal wording (NNDR reference): MVDC requested a minor wording change to replace references to "NNDR colleagues" with "Revenues Manager." The Board had no objection – this edit will be made for accuracy.

(b) Charitable levy exemption: MVDC sought clarification on the Board's policy for charity/not-for-profit ratepayers. The Board confirmed the two-step exemption rule: A hereditament must (1) already receive business rates relief from MVDC, and (2) have a Rateable Value below £70,000 to be exempt from the BID levy. Any charitable or nonprofit occupier with $RV \geq £70k$ would not be exempt and would pay the 2% BID levy despite any MVDC relief status. This approach is intended to exclude smaller charities (e.g. charity shops or community facilities) but include major ones. For example: Nuffield Health and the Leisure Centre (Sports Centre), which benefit from charitable relief on business rates, would still be liable for the BID levy due to large RVs. Conversely, smaller charities like local charity shops (RV under £70k) would pay no levy. The Board agreed this interpretation was correct and will ensure the BID Proposal text clearly reflects this policy.

(c) BID commencement date & cash flow: MVDC noted that if the BID starts on 1st January 2026 (immediately after a successful December ballot), the BID Company would have a gap in income until the first levy bills are issued. MVDC had initially suggested formally starting the BID on 1st April 2026 to align with billing, but the Board's strong preference (as previously stated) is to "hit the ground running" on 1st January. The Board reaffirmed its desire to begin BID operations from 1st Jan 2026 (after the 28-day standstill) to maintain momentum and visibility, rather than wait three extra months. Recognising the cash flow challenge, MVDC offered to consider a bridging loan (similar to what was done for Dorking BID) to cover the BID's expenses from January–March until levy income comes in. The Board welcomed this offer and concurred that securing a short-term MVDC cash flow loan (on terms to be confirmed, and ideally interest-free) is the right solution. Decision: The BID will commence 1st Jan 2026 (if the ballot is successful), and the Board/consultant will work with MVDC to arrange an appropriate bridging facility to fund BID activities in Q1 2026. The first levy billing will occur in April 2026 covering the period 1 Jan – 31 Mar 2026 (retrospectively) and the full 2026/27 year, to consolidate billing cycles.

(d) MVDC representation on BID Board: MVDC requested that, in addition to the officer observer (e.g. Candida), a MVDC Councillor be given a formal seat on the BID Board, mirroring the arrangement in Dorking BID. This had been a topic of debate among the Board previously. Simon relayed that other Surrey BIDs and Dorking BID's chair both reported that having an elected member on the Board has been beneficial, providing insight into council processes and a direct line of communication. The Board discussed potential concerns (e.g. ensuring any councillor is there to support rather than dominate the BID agenda) but generally saw the value in a cooperative relationship. Decision: The Board agreed to allocate one Board position to an MVDC Councillor, to be appointed by the District Council, in addition to the standing officer observer. The Board's preference is that this councillor be a member with a Leatherhead ward or strong local link and ideally holding a relevant portfolio (e.g. business or economy) – as this would make their involvement most effective. However, it is understood that the Council will decide its representative. The BID Proposal governance section will be amended to reflect “one MVDC Councillor (Voting Director) plus one MVDC Officer (Observer)” on the BID Board. (It was noted that MVDC also mentioned a “resident observer” on Dorking's board, but the Shadow Board agreed to park the idea of a resident representative until post-ballot, focusing for now on getting the BID established.)

(e) Consultation evidence (feasibility & new engagement): MVDC must be satisfied that sufficient consultation has been carried out with the business community before approving the BID ballot. The draft proposal currently referenced the 2024 feasibility study consultation (mailshot to ~240 businesses, with 28 responses) as the evidence. MVDC felt that while the initial feasibility consultation was a start, the response rate was low, and they requested additional consultation (“part 2”) be undertaken in September to bolster the evidence base. The Board acknowledged this and agreed to incorporate a focused consultation exercise as part of the upcoming BID campaign. Decision: A “Phase 2” consultation will be conducted during September, integrated with the business engagement plan (see item 10). This will likely involve gathering feedback via face-to-face visits, short surveys or feedback forms at BID presentations, and logging business support or concerns. The goal is to be able to produce a brief Consultation Report Part 2 by early October for MVDC, documenting the additional outreach and any new input from businesses. MVDC's deadline for this report is w/c 6th October (ahead of their 20th Oct decision to issue ballot notice). The Board agreed this was achievable and prudent, as it will strengthen the BID's case. (Action: Consultant to compile Part 2 consultation results for MVDC).

(f) Ballot notice wording (“written notice requesting... ballot”): MVDC noted a technical correction needed in the proposal's text describing the statutory notifications. The proposal should state that the BID formally sent a “notice of intention to request a ballot” on 25th July 2025 to the Secretary of State and to MVDC's Chief Executive (as required by the 84-day rule). The draft had slightly misstated this. Decision: The Board approved correcting this wording in the BID Proposal document to accurately reflect that the formal notices of intention were sent on 25th July 2025 (which they were). This is a factual edit with no change in meaning.

(g) Annex A – Budget (Levy Collection Fee): MVDC confirmed that their charge for administering the BID levy will be £11,630 in Year 1, to be indexed by inflation (RPI) in subsequent years. This figure is lower than the £15k/year that had been estimated in the draft budget, resulting in a cost saving for the BID. The Board accepted the revised collection fee and noted the draft budget will be updated to reflect £11,630 for 2026 (and modest increases thereafter). Simon mentioned that after the upcoming local government reorganisation, there may be an effort among Surrey BIDs to collectively negotiate with the new unitary authority on consistent levy collection fees and baseline services, but for now MVDC's offer was welcome news. The Board approved the budget update. (Action: Consultant to revise Annex A budget with the new figure, now done).

(h) Annex B – Baseline Services (Surrey County Council): MVDC is in the process of updating the baseline service statements for MVDC services (e.g. street cleansing, parks, community safety) provided to Leatherhead. They highlighted, however, that Surrey County Council (SCC) – responsible for highways, street lighting, etc. has historically been unresponsive in providing baseline details (as seen with Dorking BID). MVDC reminded the Board that any highways-related issues in BID plans would need to be taken up with SCC directly, since MVDC cannot commit SCC to actions. The Board took this on board. Given the tight timeline, the Board agreed to proceed using MVDC's baseline statements and not delay for SCC input, if none is forthcoming. In other words, the BID Proposal will include the MVDC Baseline Agreement (once finalised), and simply note that no SCC baseline information was available at this stage. If needed, the BID can pursue an understanding with SCC post-ballot. This approach avoids derailing the ballot schedule. (Action: Consultant to incorporate MVDC's updated baseline and proceed without SCC's unless it arrives very soon.)

(i) Annex C – Operating Agreement: MVDC will be returning a slightly amended Operating Agreement (the legal agreement on billing/collection arrangements, based on the Dorking template) for the BID's approval. This is largely technical. The Board noted this and is content to accept MVDC's revisions as long as they are in line with standard practice. Action: Once MVDC provides the updated Operating Agreement draft, the consultant will circulate it for Board review and sign-off (no issues anticipated).

(j) Annex D – BID Boundary Map: MVDC raised a point about the northernmost tip of the proposed BID boundary. In the draft map, an arrowhead projection north of the town (along Randalls Road toward Leatherhead station) was questioned. MVDC suggested a minor adjustment: extending the boundary a slightly further north to a more natural cut-off between the BP Garage at Park Rise and Oaks Court, then across to meet the station car park. This adjustment would add two additional properties into the BID area: one is the Surrey Army Cadets centre (likely exempt as a charity) and the other is QED Industrial Controls, a business just beyond the original line. The Board discussed this and saw no issue – the change simplifies the map shape and is de minimis in terms of new voters (QED's rateable value would bring one vote and additional levy if included). Decision: Boundary Change Approved – the Board agreed to adjust the BID boundary as per MVDC's recommendation. The consultant will produce an updated boundary map reflecting this slight northern extension. QED Industrial Controls will be confirmed as within the BID; an action was noted to engage with QED promptly, informing them of the BID since they would now be a stakeholder. (if their RV >£8k they will have a vote and levy). The Army Cadets unit would fall under the charity exemption and thus not pay levy. These changes will be reflected in Annex D and the list of hereditaments.

(k) Annex E – Consultation Report: (This item was essentially covered under (e) above.) The initial feasibility consultation will be treated as “Part 1”, and the September engagement will form “Part 2” of the consultation evidence. The Board concurred with this approach (see decision under point e). A combined consultation report can be presented to MVDC with both parts.

(l) Annex F – Risk Register: MVDC observed that the draft risk register included with the submission was very broad, covering risks to both the BID and MVDC. They requested that the register be refocused to only reflect risks and mitigations for the BID Company, while MVDC will handle its own internal risk assessment. The Board agreed this edit made sense. Decision: The consultant will edit the Risk Register (Annex F) to remove MVDC’s perspective and limit it to BID-oriented risks/mitigations. (For example, risks like “ballot failure” or “insufficient voter turnout” will remain, whereas anything about MVDC’s processes will be left out.) This will be done in the next draft.

(m) Annex G – Communications Plan: MVDC acknowledged receipt of the draft Communications Plan and noted that Board members had already given some feedback on it post-release. MVDC’s feedback highlighted the distinction between pre-ballot communications vs. post-ballot communications i.e., what is needed to win the ballot will differ from the ongoing BID comms after establishment. They recommended the Board discuss this aspect. The Board did have a discussion on marketing strategy (see item 8 and 10 for details). In summary, the Board agreed that for the pre-ballot period (Sept–Nov), communications should be highly focused on the BID’s benefits to businesses and the rationale for voting “YES”, using simple and compelling messages. Visuals and examples that resonate locally (success stories, what will be improved) are crucial to “sell” the BID to levy payers. More detailed or long-term communications (e.g., branding exercises, consumer-facing promotions) can be developed post-ballot if the BID is approved. The Communications Plan will be adjusted to reflect this two-phase approach: an immediate campaign to secure a positive vote, followed by a broader strategy after the BID’s launch. The Board’s earlier input – such as emphasising local success images over generic graphics – will be incorporated. (See also item 8 for additional discussion on the prospectus style.) No formal decision was needed other than to adopt this emphasis; the consultant will refine Annex G accordingly.

(n) Annex H – Governance Policies: MVDC requested that the BID’s governance policies (which were adopted at the inaugural meeting, e.g. the Board Terms of Reference, conflict of interest policy, etc.) be appended in full to the Proposal, rather than just referenced. This is straightforward. The Board agreed to provide those documents as additional annexes. Action: The consultant will attach the previously approved governance documents (likely as Annex H) in the final submission.

(o) Annex I – Evidence of Funds: MVDC asked for confirmation that the BID Proposer has sufficient funds in place. This is satisfied by showing the MVDC loan in the bank. MVDC had sent the final loan agreement on 15th Aug and was awaiting the signed return. As noted, the Chair have signed it on 26th Aug and the loan drawdown is expected. Decision: The Board approved the signing of the development loan agreement (already done) and will, upon receipt of the £35,000 (net of MVDC admin costs) provide MVDC with a bank statement to evidence the funds in the BID account. This will likely be done by Richard/Simon as soon as the money arrives. This satisfies the requirement to demonstrate financial readiness.

Civica Ballot Form Queries (a–c): Finally, the Board discussed three practical questions related to the Civica ballot arrangements (Civica is the independent ballot agent):

(a) BID Logo for ballot paperwork: The BID’s current logo is a simple green square with the text “Leatherhead BID Steering Group”, which is now outdated (the Steering Group has become a Shadow Board). Creating a brand-new logo was deemed something to tackle after the ballot, as part of the BID’s branding if successful. In the interim, MVDC needs a logo for the ballot papers and notices. Decision: The Board agreed to update the current logo to read “Leatherhead BID Shadow Board” (instead of “Steering Group”) and use this as the official logo on BID Board ballot-related materials. This minor change keeps things clear and avoids any confusion. (No objections were raised to the colour or design – it will remain the simple style for now.)

(b) BID Website: Early in the project, the domain www.leatherheadbid.co.uk was secured by the consultant. MVDC’s ballot form asks for the official BID website. The Board discussed and agreed that this URL will be used as the official BID website. A simple site will be developed during September containing key information for voters: e.g. the BID Proposal (business plan) PDF, FAQs, background papers, contact info, etc. (The Board noted that Dorking initially used a similar “townbid.co.uk” site which later evolved into a consumer-friendly brand site “Hello Dorking” post-ballot. Leatherhead BID can likewise rebrand the site for public-facing use after the ballot, but for now the straightforward leatherheadbid.co.uk is appropriate for the campaign.) Decision: Use leatherheadbid.co.uk as the official BID website, and task the consultant/marketing support to populate it with the required content in time for the voter communications. (This is budgeted under development costs.)

(c) BID Prospectus distribution with ballot: MVDC advised that they are uncomfortable mailing out a full glossy BID Business Plan document with the official ballot papers or Notice of Ballot, due to cost, bulk, and impartiality concerns. Instead, they suggested (and Dorking BID had done similarly) that a simple summary sheet be included with those mailings. The Board concurred that a concise summary is a good solution. Decision: The Board will produce a one-page (double-sided A4 or folded A5) BID Summary leaflet to accompany the statutory mailings. This summary will highlight the main benefits, costs, and how to vote, and will include a QR code / link directing voters to the full Business Plan on the website. The full “glossy” Business Plan will still be designed and printed, but it will be distributed separately – either hand-delivered by the BID team and Board members, or via a dedicated mailshot or events, outside of the official Civica mailings. This way, every voter gets at least the essential information with their ballot, but the more detailed and visually rich prospectus will also be made available through BID channels. The Board felt this approach would maximise reach without running afoul of any mailing limitations. (Action: Create summary leaflet and coordinate its inclusion with MVDC/Civica; plan distribution of full prospectus to businesses in person or via post around the same time.)

With all feedback items (a–o) and Civica queries (a–c) resolved as above, Simon Matthews will now incorporate these decisions into the updated BID Proposal document and liaise with MVDC and Civica accordingly. The Board’s prompt responses were appreciated, noting that items (c) and (d) (Jan start/bridging loan and MVDC Board seat) were particularly time-sensitive for MVDC’s Cabinet report. The Board’s stance on those has been clearly communicated (MVDC has been informed that the BID intends a Jan start with a loan, and will accept a council Board member).

Action Points (from item 6):

- Update BID Proposal text (NNDR wording, ballot notice wording, charity exemption clarity, governance section for MVDC rep).
- Revise Annexes: Budget (new collection fee), Boundary Map (northern adjustment), Risk Register (BID-only risks), add Governance docs.
- Provide MVDC with bank evidence once loan funds received.
- Arrange bridging loan details with MVDC (finance officers) for Jan 2026 start.
- Engage QED Industrial Controls (newly included business) about BID.
- Prepare “Part 2” Consultation survey/engagement and report by early Oct.
- Modify Communications Plan per pre/post-ballot focus.
- Commission interim logo update and simple BID website launch.
- Design and print the summary leaflet for ballot mailings.
- Plan distribution of full Business Plan to businesses (door-to-door or separate mailing).

(Most of the above will be led by the consultant with Board member assistance where needed.)

7. Review of Draft BID Proposal

The Board turned attention to the draft BID Proposal document (Version updated 29 Aug 2025), in particular Part A which outlines the BID’s planned projects, services, budget allocations, and the key rules of the scheme. This draft had been re-circulated with the meeting pack for review.

Simon Matthews walked the Board through the structure of Part A, which follows the statutory template. It begins with background context and then details: 1) the Works and Services the BID will provide, 2) Baseline services, 3) the BID Area, 4) the BID Levy rules, etc. The Board verified that the Part A content accurately reflects the strategy agreed at previous meetings and the workshop on 30th July, a summary of the headline themes and projects as follows:

- **BID Programme (Themes & Projects):** The Proposal breaks down the BID’s activities into thematic areas, each with an indicative annual budget (for Years 1–4). The Board was pleased to see their priorities translated into clear commitments under each theme. Key points discussed:
- **Clean & Attractive Streets** – ~£16k/year. The BID will fund high-visibility cleaning “blitzes” (gum and graffiti removal) at key gateways and hot spots, plus a rapid-response capability for tagging/flyposting within 48 hours. It was emphasised that this will be over and above what the Council does, making a noticeable difference in town appearance. Baseline street cleansing by MVDC will continue as normal, but the BID will top-up to ensure a consistently clean environment. Success measures (before/after photos, trader feedback) were noted to ensure accountability.

- **Safe & Welcoming Town Centre** – ~£16k/year. The focus here is on practical security measures short of hiring full-time wardens. The Board’s earlier direction to explore the DISC crime information-sharing system with Surrey Police is included. The BID Coordinator would liaise closely with MVDC’s Joint Enforcement Team (JET) so that intelligence leads to action. The Board confirmed it does not intend to employ its own rangers or security patrols (given cost and current needs), which is reflected in the Proposal. Instead, leveraging technology and better communication among businesses is the aim to reduce low-level crime and antisocial behaviour.
- **Marketing & Promotion** – ~£32k/year. This is one of the larger budget areas. The BID will implement a coordinated multi-channel marketing program for Leatherhead, to raise the town’s profile and drive footfall. A “rhythm” of content (weekly highlights of local businesses and events) will be established, taking inspiration from the successful “Hello Dorking” model. The plan includes refreshing the town’s web and social media presence, possibly developing a new brand identity post-ballot, and using selective print or radio ads (notably, Surrey Hills Radio, represented by Dave, is mentioned as a channel the BID could use). The Board reiterated the importance of measuring results – the plan calls for tracking reach, engagement, and even simple metrics like uptake of special offers to show that marketing efforts translate into sales. The Board was satisfied that the marketing plans were comprehensive yet cost-conscious (avoiding expensive experiments like bespoke apps unless proven).
- **Events & Festivals** – ~£32k/year. The Proposal commits to restoring a modest but reliable events calendar for Leatherhead. Signature events will include a Halloween event and support for the Christmas Festival, which the town already values. The BID will likely supplement these with a few other seasonal or niche events (the Board has mentioned possibly piggybacking on community favourites like the Duck Race or arts events). Crucially, events will be designed to drive business revenue, not just “feel good” gatherings – e.g. integrating shop promotions, extended hours, or loyalty incentives around event days. Success will be measured by attendance and trader feedback on sales. The Board agreed this pragmatic approach to events (quality and tie-ins over sheer quantity) is wise given budget constraints.
- **Business Support & Development** – ~£13k/year. As previously discussed, the BID will help businesses “save money and grow”. The Proposal includes collective purchasing initiatives (for things like energy or waste collection) and short training workshops (e.g. improving online presence, social media skills, visual merchandising). The goal is to deliver tangible savings that can offset the levy cost for small businesses and to address Leatherhead’s weaker digital footprint by upskilling independents. The Board’s earlier feedback about demonstrating ROI to levy payers is addressed by tracking things like total savings achieved for members (a “savings tally”) and improvements in online visibility metrics over time.
- **Additional Initiatives (Parking & Business Attraction)** – ~£13k/year. The Board was pleased to see that ideas beyond the core themes were captured here. This line provides flexibility for projects such as parking promotions (e.g. targeted free or discounted parking days to support retail at Christmas or other key times) and investor/occupier engagement – essentially acting as a catalyst to fill vacant units by working with landlords, agents, and using the BID’s networks to attract new businesses to Leatherhead. The Swan Centre Manager and others had stressed the need for concerted effort on vacancy reduction; the BID Coordinator will have this as part of their remit.

- Contingency & Renewal Fund – ~£6.5k/year. The draft budget sets aside a small contingency reserve each year for unplanned needs or opportunities, which requires Board approval to spend. By year 5, about £20k is earmarked to support the re-ballot campaign (renewal) in 2030 – the Board noted this is standard practice to ensure the BID can fund its renewal costs. It was also noted that ideally additional income (via grants or sponsorship) could be raised to cover renewal so that operational budgets aren't impacted, but budgeting for it now is prudent.

Overall, the Board endorsed the proposed project portfolio and budget allocations as presented in Part A. The initiatives align with the priorities identified through the feasibility study and the Board's own brainstorming (including Mahdi Dolati's paper of ideas, many of which were noted as post-ballot opportunities for year 2+). No Board members suggested any projects be removed or added at this stage. It was observed that the first two years would be crucial for establishing credibility – hence the focus on “quick win” visible projects like cleaning and well-run events, as reflected in the document.

- Baseline Services: The Part A draft includes a section noting that BID services will be additional to statutory services, and that a formal Baseline Agreement with MVDC (and SCC if available) will be appended. The Board was satisfied with this wording. The BID will make it clear to levy payers that things like street cleaning, policing, etc., remain the councils' responsibility – the BID's role is to top-up or advocate, not replace. (The Board's decision under item 6h to proceed without SCC baseline info will be footnoted as needed.)
- Geographical Area: The BID area description in the proposal covers the town centre core (Swan Centre, High Street, Church Street, North Street, Station Road, etc.) and states that the BID area will not “split” any rateable property (i.e. a property is either fully in or out). With the minor boundary adjustment (item 6j) approved, the Board noted the description and map will be updated accordingly. The Board reconfirmed the BID boundary as finalised – it reaches all the main commercial areas of Leatherhead town centre and gateway into the town (e.g. railway station vicinity, part of Bull Hill), without including purely residential zones. This matches what was consulted on and the Board is content it's the right footprint.
- Levy Rules (Liability & Calculation): The draft clearly states the BID Levy will be 2% of Rateable Value, with no cap on large properties. It lists the exemptions: RV below £8,000 (smallest businesses) are exempt; and as discussed, charitable hereditaments with RV < £70,000 are exempt. (Also, the Swan Shopping Centre's units are treated as normal hereditaments, meaning each shop unit pays as any other – this was a point explicitly included in the text to avoid confusion.) The Board reviewed these rules and confirmed they are exactly as agreed in July. The charity exemption point had been clarified earlier in this meeting, so with that understanding, the Board is satisfied the wording is appropriate. MVDC had asked for the charity wording to be explicit, which will be ensured.
- Levy Collection & Enforcement: Although Part A mainly lists the rules, it was noted that Part B (not reviewed in detail at this meeting) will include the typical policies on things like no refunds on vacant units, how new hereditaments are handled, enforcement procedures (using MVDC's normal recovery for non-payment), etc. These follow the standard Dorking BID template. The Board did not raise any issues with those policies as they had been modelled on known examples.

- Other Statutory Content: The Board skimmed the remainder of Part A, which includes statements on the BID's duration (5 years, 2026–2030), the ballot timetable (target close 1 Dec 2025, start 1 Jan 2026), and relevant definitions. All appeared in order, with the one correction on the 25th July notice date (item f) already noted.

In conclusion, the Board approved the Part A content of the BID Proposal subject to incorporating the minor amendments from item 6. The Board felt the document made a strong case and clearly laid out what the BID will do. Several members commented that it was gratifying to see the general ideas discussed over months now formulated into a concrete plan of action for the town.

(No additional action needed aside from the edits already captured under item 6. The consultant will proceed to finalise the Proposal for MVDC.)

8. Examples of BID Business Plans – Discussion on Style and Content

In preparation for designing Leatherhead's BID Business Plan (the public-facing prospectus document), the Board had been provided with examples of business plan brochures from other BIDs (including the recent Dorking BID plan and examples from towns in the North). The Board discussed their impressions of these examples and guidance for Leatherhead's own document:

- It was noted that some example BID prospectuses put very little emphasis on the council or technical details, instead presenting a marketing-forward vision. For instance, one example hardly mentioned the local authority at all, focusing entirely on business benefits. The Board generally agreed that Leatherhead's BID business plan should be written in a business-friendly, engaging tone, rather than as a bureaucratic report.
- A few members felt that the examples, while informative, were too text-heavy and "dull" in design. Long blocks of text and generic stock images were seen as something to avoid. The Board stressed that to persuade levy payers, the document needs to grab attention. Simply sending a dry document through the letterbox is not enough – "that's not what's going to sell it," as one member put it. The Board wants to make sure the final prospectus is attractive and impactful at first glance.
- The Board agreed on using local images and references to instil pride and buy-in. Ideas mentioned included: photos of a busy High Street (contrasting a before-and-after if possible), snapshots of popular events (e.g. past Christmas or Duck Race events), and even historical images that show Leatherhead's community spirit. For example, it was noted a series of photos from when the town raised funds to build the Theatre in the 1960s – powerful images of community effort. Those would reinforce the message that Leatherhead can achieve great things when businesses and people unite. Unfortunately, it was mentioned that those particular images are in an archive with copyright controlled by a third party (and costly to license for publication). The Board will see if there are alternative heritage images that are free to use, but even recent photos of local businesses / customers would be valuable. Rachel Groom offered that she has many photos from The Stockroom Society events and local markets that could be used.

- The Board also discussed messaging. The examples provided a baseline, but Leatherhead's document should tell a story that resonates locally. It should highlight issues everyone knows (e.g. empty shops, cleanliness, competition from nearby towns) and position the BID as the collective solution. Positive, aspirational language is important e.g. "Bring back the duck race" or "revive the market" as rallying cries. These kind of phrases can create an emotional connection. At the same time, the Board must be careful to manage expectations (the BID can't promise miracles overnight). A balance of optimism and realism is needed.
- The format and length were considered. A typical BID business plan is a glossy booklet (often ~12–16 pages). The Board is aiming for something in that range – detailed enough to cover all required points and showcase projects, but not so long that busy business owners won't read it. Breaking up text with infographics, charts, and call-out boxes will make it more digestible. For instance, showing the budget breakdown in a simple chart, or having quick "By the Numbers" stats, can communicate key info quickly.
- One Board member inquired how much to feature MVDC or partnerships in the document. Some examples barely mentioned councils, which made them perhaps more appealing to businesses who can be cynical about council-led projects. The consensus was to keep the focus on "We, the business community, are doing this". MVDC's supportive role should be acknowledged (especially the loan, and any involvement of councillors), but the BID should be portrayed as business-led and independent, which is a selling point to many voters.
- Finally, the Board discussed incorporating multimedia or digital elements. Given time constraints, a full video might not be feasible before the ballot, but Simon noted that they could potentially create a short video message or vox-pop of businesses supporting the BID, to share on social media and the website. He mentioned contacting a local videographer to see if a short promotional video could be produced in September. Board members felt this would be a bonus if doable, but the priority is the printed and PDF plan that will be widely circulated. Simon agreed, noting the timeline is tight for any elaborate video, but even a simple montage could add life to the campaign online.

In summary, the Board concluded that Leatherhead's BID Business Plan should be visually engaging, upbeat, and easy to skim, while still containing the necessary details and statutory content. It should showcase Leatherhead's character – using local faces and places – rather than generic images. The narrative should focus on the future ("what we will do") backed by evidence from the past ("what's been done elsewhere or before") to build confidence. The consultant took these steers on board and will work with the marketing/design team to ensure the final product meets these expectations. The Board is prepared to review drafts and provide input on design elements quickly, given the short timeframe.

(No formal decisions in this item, but clear design guidelines were established for the upcoming Business Plan draft.)

9. Production of BID Business Plan – Timeline & Responsibilities

The Board discussed the plan for producing the final BID Business Plan (prospectus) and the timeline to get it completed. MVDC's Cabinet meeting is on 23rd September, and while MVDC does not require the finished glossy business plan by that date (they will be approving the formal Proposal document), the Board wants to have a near-final Business Plan ready by then for two reasons: (1) so that it can be shared with MVDC members as supplementary information to bolster support, and (2) so that the team can begin printing and circulating it to businesses as soon as possible after Cabinet approval.

Key points agreed:

- **Drafting and Design:** Simon Matthews (as BID consultant) will take the lead in drafting the text for the Business Plan, using the outline BID Proposal and these meeting discussions as the basis. However, professional design and layout will be crucial. Local contractors where possible will be engaged to handle the visual design, branding elements, and possibly copy refinement. Some have already been briefed on the project's needs. Simon will coordinate with them immediately to start the design process. The Board was comfortable delegating the design work to this team, given their understanding of the local audience.
- **Content Inclusions:** The Business Plan will include content from Part A of the proposal (in a more public-friendly tone), possibly testimonials from local businesses, Q&As about the BID, and a clear call to action to vote. Given the Board's input in item 8, the team will incorporate local photos and the thematic structure (Clean, Safe, Marketing, Events, Support) in a visually segmented way.
- **Review Process:** A working draft of the Business Plan should be ready by late-September. The Board set an aim to have an initial draft to circulate before the next Board meeting (23rd Sept) so that any final text amendments can be made then. In fact, it was noted that MVDC officers indicated they'd appreciate seeing the draft business plan ahead of time if possible (since MVDC ultimately has to approve the final plan as part of their Cabinet decision). Simon will try to get a near-final PDF of content pre final design to MVDC officers by around 20th–22nd Sept for any quick feedback.
- **Next Board Meeting:** The Board discussed scheduling the next Shadow Board meeting to which a date could not be agreed. (date and time to be confirmed via email, likely 10:00am start again). The primary purpose of that meeting will be to approve the final BID Proposal and Business Plan (ideally diary permitting before they are formally submitted to MVDC's Cabinet later that day), and to kick-off the full campaign phase. Essentially, 23rd Sept Council Cabinet will be a sign-off meeting. (Richard, Rachel and Simon supporting will present at the Cabinet meeting that evening if required, since MVDC Cabinet is the decision-maker on allowing the ballot).
- **Printing & Distribution:** The Board touched on the logistics: once approved, the Business Plan booklet will need to be printed. There is budget for a professional print run (likely a few hundred copies to cover all businesses and stakeholders). Simon will arrange printing early October so that distribution can align with the ballot timetable. As decided in item 6c/6f/6c(iv), a summary leaflet will go with official notices, and the full plans will be delivered by the BID team. The Board will organise a distribution effort in early October – potentially dividing the town into areas for Board

members to hand-deliver the plan to as many businesses as possible, supplementing with mail for out-of-town landlords or those difficult to catch in person. This personal touch is considered important.

- **MVDC Cabinet Preparation:** Richard Keel (Chair) and other Board members will attend or be on standby for the MVDC Cabinet meeting on 23rd Sept, in case there are questions. The Board is optimistic given no major issues have been raised by MVDC beyond what was addressed today. Nonetheless, having a well-presented business plan and clear mandate will help demonstrate the Board's professionalism.

Timeline recap: Essentially four weeks from now to produce the Business Plan and all campaign materials. Simon noted "the next four weeks will be intense" but he is confident it can be done. Board members offered their support, whether it be proofreading drafts quickly, sourcing images, or helping with design ideas, to meet the deadline.

(Action: Consultant to produce draft Business Plan by late-Sept; Board to convene potentially on 23rd Sept to approve draft version.)

10. Business Engagement Plan – September & October 2025 (Pre-Ballot)

With the materials and timeline in hand, the Board discussed how to engage businesses across Leatherhead in the lead-up to the ballot (September and October, before ballots are sent out). This is critical to build understanding and support for the BID. Key elements of the engagement strategy were agreed as follows:

- **Mailshot & Leaflet:** As decided, a concise BID Summary leaflet will be created for inclusion with the official ballot Notice (mid-Oct) and ballot pack (end-Oct). However, the Board did not want to wait until those statutory notices for initial outreach. Therefore, an introductory letter or flyer should be sent to all eligible businesses in September announcing the BID Proposal and inviting participation. This could be coordinated with the distribution of the full Business Plan once it's ready. Essentially, every business should receive some form of communication in September – either via post or hand delivery – explaining that the BID is moving forward and that their vote will matter. The Board will draft a cover letter to accompany the Business Plan when it's delivered.
- **Face-to-Face Visits:** All agreed that personal contact is the most effective approach to engage local businesses. Members of the Board and the consultant will organise town centre walk-arounds to visit businesses in person throughout September and October. The aim is to speak with as many owners/managers as possible, briefly explain the BID benefits, answer questions, and encourage them to read the Business Plan. The Board will essentially act as ambassadors in their own areas: A rota or schedule will be developed to ensure coverage. These visits will double as an opportunity to verify the voter contact details (important for the ballot – making sure the right person gets the paper) and to conduct the "consultation part 2" by asking if they have any feedback or concerns. It was emphasised that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact in winning support, and the Board concurred. Businesses will appreciate the effort and personal touch.
- **Consultation Feedback Collection:** As part of each interaction, the Board/consultant will try to capture feedback. This could be as simple as asking "What improvements in town would you most

like to see?” or “Do you support the idea of a BID?” and noting the response. A short questionnaire (paper or online via a QR code) might be used. The dual purpose is to get businesses thinking about the BID’s themes and to compile evidence for MVDC that consultation has occurred (per item 6e). The Board will ensure any significant concerns raised are recorded and addressed where possible. (So far, earlier consultations showed common themes which are already in the plan, like parking, safety, etc., but if new issues come up, the BID can consider them.)

- **Regular Communications:** Through September and October, the BID will maintain communication via email (for those businesses whose emails have been collected), social media, and possibly WhatsApp for quick updates. A dedicated BID newsletter might be sent out weekly or biweekly to update on BID progress, countdown to ballot, etc. The Board was reminded to leverage the WhatsApp group that includes many business owners to push out key messages (Action from July was to update the Steering Group WhatsApp – done). As the BID now transitions to campaign mode, consistent messaging is key: “BID is coming – your vote matters – here’s what it will do – here’s how to get involved.”
- **High-Profile Endorsements:** The Board discussed whether to enlist some prominent local business figures or property owners to endorse the BID publicly. For example, having a quote or letter of support from a major employer or a respected independent could sway others. Richard K. and others will approach a few such figures behind the scenes to ask if they’ll make positive statements that can be shared in communications.
- **Engagement Coverage:** It was recognised that not all eligible voters are physically present in town (some properties are landlord-owned or chain stores with area managers). For those, letters and phone calls will be important. Simon has a list of head office contacts for national chains – a tailored letter will be sent to them with the Business Plan, and follow-up calls arranged to discuss any questions. MVDC will be providing the official voter list (with company names and billing addresses) by late September, but the BID team is proactively assembling contacts now.

The Board is effectively planning for two phases of engagement: September–October “education and persuasion”, and then November “get out the vote” (covered in item 11). For this first phase, the emphasis is on making sure every business understands what the BID would do and sees it as beneficial. By the time ballots arrive, they shouldn’t be hearing about the BID for the first time.

All Board members agreed to actively participate in the outreach. A combination of mailshots and face-to-face was agreed as the winning formula. Simon will prepare a short briefing sheet or “sales script” for Board members so that everyone gives a consistent pitch during visits. This will include key points (the BID’s top 5 benefits, the cost relative to those benefits, and reassurance on governance).

(Action: Develop schedule for business visits; prepare promotional materials – Business Plan, summary sheets, FAQs; send initial mail communication in early Sept.)

11. Getting the Vote Out – November 2025 Ballot Period

The ballot will run from ~3rd November to 1st December 2025. The Board had a brief discussion on plans for this “Get Out The Vote” (GOTV) phase, recognising its importance. With a number of Board members needing to leave at this point Simon deferred the details of this item to a future meeting.

(Detailed GOTV plans will be developed and executed in late October, with Board members participating. No formal action now except to remain prepared.)

12. AOB and Date for next meeting

With a diminishing number of Board Members present Simon acting as Chair in Richard’s absence (Richard had to leave earlier) suggested the Board meeting was closed and the Board pick up any outstanding agenda items at the next meeting to be scheduled approximately in a month’s time around 23rd September (if possible pre-Cabinet meeting) or as soon as possible afterwards. He would circulate potential dates to the Board as soon as possible.

The meeting closed at 11:45am