

OUTLINE BID PROPOSAL – Leatherhead BID (Legal-Compliance Template, England)

Version: 4 Aug 2025 • For submission to MVDC Cabinet (23 Sep 2025)

Introduction (for MVDC Cabinet covering report)

This paper introduces the Leatherhead Business Improvement District (BID) proposal and summarises progress from initial feasibility through to the current pre-ballot stage. Following MVDC's commissioning of a feasibility study in 2024, a draft report was provided to the Steering Group on 23 December 2024, with the final Feasibility Study submitted on 10 March 2025. The study tested business appetite, modelled rateable value scenarios and indicative levy yield, and set out common BID priorities (cleanliness, safety, marketing/events, and business support) together with recommended next steps.

On 16 April 2025, MVDC Cabinet endorsed the work of the Leatherhead BID Steering Group, registered no objection to the inclusion of Council-owned hereditaments within the prospective BID boundary, and approved an interest-free development loan of up to £35,500 to a company limited by guarantee that would act as BID proposer (repayable only in the event of a successful ballot). The Cabinet report also set out statutory requirements, the high-level timetable to ballot, and the financial implications for MVDC both as billing authority and ratepayer.

In line with that decision, Leatherhead BID Ltd was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee on 14 May 2025 (Company No. 16451639), providing the legal vehicle for the proposer. Subsequent governance papers adopted the Memorandum and Articles and confirmed limited liability of £1 per member, consistent with standard BIDCo arrangements. A BID bank account was opened on 12 June 2025 to enable receipt of the MVDC loan and to manage development expenditure ahead of ballot.

The Shadow Board held its inaugural meeting on 19 June 2025 in the Swan Centre Board Room. The meeting agreed the purpose and remit of the Shadow Board during development (advisory oversight, stakeholder engagement and preparation for ballot), approved Terms of Reference, confirmed the initial membership, and appointed a Chair and Vice-Chair. It also reviewed the status of the MVDC development loan and confirmed the development budget envelope. A rolling calendar of monthly meetings and work-stream planning was initiated to carry the project through consultation, proposal drafting, and ballot preparations.

A high-level delivery programme was then adopted to align statutory milestones with engagement activity, publication of the BID Proposal and Business Plan, and the ballot process administered by MVDC's Returning Officer. A Gantt schedule set out the dependencies from summer 2025 through the autumn statutory windows (84-day notice, 42-day publication, and despatch of ballot papers), culminating in a ballot close on Monday 1 December 2025 (17:00), with result on 2 December and a 28-day standstill ahead of a potential 1 January 2026 go-live if successful. This preferred timetable has been used to structure readiness tasks with MVDC Elections and to coordinate voter-list accuracy work with NNDR colleagues.

Background papers circulated to the Shadow Board provide additional context on governance, legal compliance and resourcing—covering company formation and filings (AP01 process), the Cabinet decision record, and comparative development costings for the pre-ballot campaign—together with the feasibility evidence base and consultation approach. These documents frame the Steering Group’s transition to a constituted BID proposer and demonstrate steady progress from feasibility (2024) to company formation (May 2025), Shadow Board mobilisation (June 2025), and the setting of the 1 December 2025 ballot date now presented for Cabinet’s information.

At its meeting on 30 July 2025 the Shadow Board moved from feasibility options into practical programme shaping and a firmer budget position. Working through Papers 2–4, members tested the draft five-year cashflow against the most recent hereditament list and agreed to retain the levy at 2%, apply a minimum RV threshold of £8,000, no levy cap, and a charity rule that exempts charitable hereditaments below £70,000 RV (those at or above remain liable). On income, the updated list suggested a gross yield of c. £196k, reducing to ~£189k when the charity exemption is applied; the Board therefore adopted a planning figure of ~£190k p.a., pending MVDC’s confirmation of the levy-collection charge (working estimate ~£15k). The model assumes a PAYE, part-time BID Coordinator/Manager, and reflects MVDC’s development loan being repaid over five years.

On programme focus, the Board’s steer was to keep the first two years visible and confidence-building: targeted gum/graffiti “blitzes” and rapid response (expressly over-and-above MVDC’s cleansing baseline); an evidence-led approach to retail crime intel-sharing (e.g., DISC) in partnership with Surrey Police and close liaison with MVDC’s JET; disciplined multi-channel marketing with a weekly cadence (taking cues from “Hello Dorking”); a modest, reliable events rhythm anchored by Halloween & Christmas; and low-cost business support (collective savings and bite-size training to improve online presence). The Board also asked that tactical parking promotions (to support seasonal dwell time) and proactive occupier/investor liaison (to reduce vacancies) be included. A separate paper of ideas submitted by Mahdi Dolati was welcomed as a source of post-ballot opportunities to be tested once capacity and partners are in place.

Operationally, the Board confirmed the preferred ballot close of Monday 1 December 2025 (5pm), with result on 2 December and a 1 January 2026 start if successful. Rather than moving the date, members agreed to mitigate risk through a joint hereditament list accuracy work-plan with MVDC up to the 42-day notice, including cleansing the c. 230-hereditament working list and on-the-ground verification during September engagement. The Board also supported taking six-month British BIDs membership (once loan funds clear) for technical support through the run-in. These steers have been carried into the proposal and Business Plan drafting now before Cabinet.

The Board both directly and via its consultant have been in close liaison with MVDC via the Economic Development Manager and wider team to maintain close communications, provide regular informal updates on BID development progress and to identify and deal with any arising issues. The Board value this close working relationship and hope that through the next critical stages it will continue in a similar positive collaborative vein. The Board expresses its thanks to MVDC, Members and the officer team for facilitating the Leatherhead BID development programme to this critical stage.

PART A – BID Proposal Document (Schedule 1, para 1)

1) Works or Services & Delivery Body

Headline summary of the Works and Services to be provided under the BID:

Clean & Attractive Streets (Years 1–4: £16,149 p.a.).

The BID will make an immediate, visible difference to Leatherhead’s first impressions. We will commission targeted gum and graffiti removal on the main approaches, gateways and highest-footfall streets, delivered as planned “blitz” interventions through the year. This is backed by a practical rapid-response mechanism to deal with tagging and fly-posting, aiming to intervene within 48 hours where possible, so that small issues do not escalate into reputational damage. In line with the Board’s discussion, this activity is explicitly over and above MVDC’s cleansing baseline: routine services remain a Council duty, while the BID funds highly visible uplift and acts as an advocate whenever baseline gaps appear. Success will be evidenced with before/after images, short trader feedback loops and simple counts of hotspots treated.

Safe & Welcoming Town Centre (Years 1–4: £16,149 p.a.).

The BID will prioritise practical safety measures that deliver value without the cost and complexity of a uniformed security presence. We will evaluate—and, where local uptake warrants—adopt a crime information-sharing platform (e.g., DISC) with Surrey Police and participating retailers, ensuring appropriate data handling and training. Close liaison with MVDC’s Joint Enforcement Team (JET) will be built into the Coordinator’s role so that intelligence translates into targeted action and reassurance. The focus is on reducing repeat offending, improving image/pattern sharing and strengthening trader confidence; permanent security teams and night-time patrols are not proposed given the Board’s view on need and cost.

Marketing & Promotion (Years 1–4: £32,298 p.a.).

To compete credibly with nearby centres, the BID will run disciplined, multi-channel promotion for Leatherhead. This combines a refreshed web presence, a consistent social media rhythm and selective use of print or radio where it extends reach (for example, Surrey Hills Radio). Taking cues from “Hello Dorking”, the BID will maintain a weekly cadence that spotlights businesses and events across sectors, not just retail. Measurement is integral: campaign reach/engagement, click-throughs to local businesses and straightforward offer-redemption counts around key pushes will be reported to demonstrate value. “Shop Local” messaging will be used; high-cost app-based loyalty schemes will only be considered if there is clear evidence of return.

Events & Festivals (Years 1–4: £32,298 p.a.).

The BID will restore a modest, reliable annual events calendar anchored by Halloween and the Christmas Festival and aligned, where helpful, with community favourites such as the Duck Race. Recognising the resource intensity of events even with sponsorship, programming will be designed to balance footfall and sales outcomes: linking offers, cross-promotions and extended hours to event days so visitors convert to tills. Success will be tracked using simple counts—attendance estimates, participating businesses and redemptions, alongside trader feedback on trading performance.

Business Support & Development (Years 1–4: £12,919 p.a.).

To help independents “save back the levy” and improve everyday trading, the BID will broker collective purchasing for energy and waste and provide short, practical skills sessions focused on social media, Google Business Profile and visual merchandising. Responding to Board feedback about Leatherhead’s weak digital footprint, we will gently benchmark improvements in online presence and publish a straightforward “savings won” tally each quarter. The intent is to blend immediate, cash-recognisable value with low-cost capability building.

Additional Initiatives (e.g., parking & business attraction) (Years 1–4: £12,919 p.a.).

To support dwell-time at critical trading moments—especially the run-up to Christmas—the BID will explore tactical parking promotions with MVDC and operators (for example, selected-day incentives or limited support to RingGo fees where applicable). In parallel, the Coordinator will act as a market-maker by tracking expanding chains, working with national agents and the Swan Centre team, and introducing prospects to Leatherhead to help reduce voids and broaden the commercial mix.

Contingency (Years 1–4: £6,460 p.a.).

The financial plan now carries a single contingency line within the programme to manage small delivery variances and seize low-cost opportunities at short notice. This reserve is transparent and released by Board decision in-year, complementing the themed allocations above. Programme totals used here are £129,190 p.a. in Years 1–4 in line with the updated spreadsheet. Year 5 estimates reflect a budgeted £20,000 being allocated to support the BID renewal process. The Board hope that this sum can be raised via external income and sponsorship generation without commensurate reduction in operational activity budgets.

Provider: Leatherhead BID Limited

Legal Form: Company Limited by Guarantee

Delivery Arrangements: Managed by the BID Board of Directors a BID a Co-ordinator / Manager will be employed or contracted to deliver the agreed programme of works and services.

2) Baseline services (public authorities)

BID services are additional to statutory baselines; final Baseline Agreement(s) with MVDC (cleansing, maintenance, enforcement etc.) will be appended when agreed and signed. The proposal makes explicit ‘over-and-above’ positioning for cleansing and related items.

3) Geographical area (include map)

BID area: Leatherhead town-centre core (including the Swan Centre) and principal trading streets as per the boundary map (Annex D). The BID area will not include part only of a whole hereditament.

4) Liability & levy calculation

Liability: all non-domestic ratepayers within the BID boundary, except those exempt. Levy: 2% of RV (VOA list at billing); no cap per hereditament. Minimum threshold: RV < £8,000 exempt. Charitable hereditaments: RV < £70,000 exempt; RV ≥ £70,000 liable at 2%. Swan Centre: each separately assessed unit treated the same as street-front premises.

5) Reliefs/exemptions

Exemptions: RV < £8,000; charitable hereditaments RV < £70,000 exempt; RV ≥ £70,000 liable at 2%.

6) Alterations without an alteration ballot

Alterations may be made without an alteration ballot per Reg. 16 provided there is no increase in liability and no boundary change. Allowable: re-profiling within programme headings; supplier/delivery model changes; minor KPI adjustments. Procedure to be set in the Operating Agreement (consultation, notice, Board decision).

7) Duration & commencement date

Term: 5 years (2026–2030). Ballot close planned for Mon 1 Dec 2025 (5pm); result Tue 2 Dec; 28-day standstill; commencement 1 Jan 2026.

Governance & delivery (recommended)

Leatherhead BID Ltd (CLG); levy-payer Board; MVDC observer; conflicts policy; quarterly reporting to levy-payers and MVDC; lean central function (part-time Coordinator) and commissioned suppliers; British BIDs technical support during the run-in.

PART B – Items submitted with the ballot request (Reg. 4(2))

- Copy of the BID proposals: this document.

Summary of consultation undertaken

During feasibility the project team used a mixed-method approach to understand appetite for a BID and to shape priorities. A public Open Day at the Leatherhead Theatre (mid-November 2024) provided an accessible forum for businesses and stakeholders to discuss needs and options, supported by a direct mailshot to the town-centre non-domestic ratepayer list, email and social posts, and in-person visits to a cross-section of occupiers. Approximately 240 NDR accounts were contacted across these channels, yielding around 28 formal responses alongside qualitative feedback from the Open Day and subsequent conversations. While the formal response rate sits in the typical range for early BID testing, the blend of face-to-face dialogue and online returns produced a coherent picture of priorities and concerns.

The consultation findings align closely with the Board’s later discussion on 30 July. Businesses want visible, above-baseline cleansing to improve first impressions; favour practical safety measures such as crime-intel sharing over uniformed patrols; and see marketing and a dependable events rhythm—especially at Christmas—as central to putting Leatherhead back on the local map. Many independents are receptive to collective savings and bite-size skills support that lift day-to-day trading and online presence. Concerns were pragmatic: avoid duplication with Council services; ensure value is felt across sectors (including office occupiers); and keep delivery proportionate to the levy.

These insights are reflected in the Works & Services programme and in the budget model, which prioritises highly visible cleansing, evidence-led safety tools, measurable marketing/events and low-cost business support with tangible returns.

- Proposed business plan (financials): Annex A – five-year budget and cashflow with single programme contingency; MVDC collection fee, staff/overheads, programme allocations.
- Financial management & reporting arrangements: quarterly management accounts; periodic reporting to MVDC; annual accounts to members.
- Written notice requesting the ballot: issued 25 July 2025 (Secretary of State notified; request to MVDC).
- Evidence of sufficient funds for ballot costs: MVDC development loan executed; VAT registration confirmed; cashflow includes legal deduction.

Additional consultation and engagement to be undertaken in September prior to the final proposal and business plan publication.

ANNEXES (to be attached)

Annex A – Detailed budget tables and five-year projections
(updated spreadsheet attached)

Annex B – Baseline service statements
(draft version attached, final to be appended when agreed and signed)

Annex C – Operating Agreement
(draft version attached, final to be appended when agreed and signed)

Annex D – BID boundary map
(PDF attached)

Annex E – Consultation report and evidence pack
(Open Day, mailouts, survey results, comms evidence within feasibility report, September consultation to be appended as soon as complete)

Annex F – Risk register and mitigation plan
(draft register and plan attached)

Annex G – Communications plan
(pre-ballot, ballot, post-ballot draft plan attached)

Annex H – Governance policies
(conflict-of-interest; Board composition; MVDC observer – see previous board papers)

Annex I – Evidence of funds
(executed MVDC development loan awaiting Docusign; VAT status confirmed)