



## OUR ABERDARE - MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Venue: Market Community Hub – Aberdare Market

Present	Initials	Position	Representing
Michele Davies	MD	Chairperson	Windsor Jewellers
Amanda Webber	AW	Vice Chairperson	Wool Stall & Blas ar Gymru – Aberdare Market
Angharad Walters	AWa	Treasurer/ BID Manager	Our Aberdare BID Manager
Clare Prew	CP	Director	Shake, Waffle 'n' Cone
Darren Notley	DN	Attendee	RCT CBC
Lianne Burden	LB	Attendee	RCT CBC
James Prew	JP	BID Support/Secretary	Our Aberdare

Agenda Item	Discussion
Welcome & Introduction	MD opened the meeting.
Re- ballot	<p><b>Timing of Re-Ballot</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>All Members:</b> Agreed that re-ballot ideally should occur before Christmas. Aim to initiate the re-ballot process by November if feasible.</li> </ul> <p><b>Engagement with The Means</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>DN:</b> Suggested that support from The Means would be crucial to facilitate a successful re-ballot.</li> </ul>

All board members agreed to engage with The Means to assist in the re-ballot process.

**Proposal and Initial Meeting with The Means**

- **DN:** Proposed to engage with The Means as soon as possible and request a proposal to support the re-ballot.

Organize an initial meeting with The Means to gather insights on the optimal timing for the re-ballot.

**Notification of Ballot**

- **DN:** Confirmed that a notification of the re-ballot will be sent out one month prior to the ballot.

**Types of Support from The Means**

- **DN:** The Means can offer two types of support:
  - A hands-on approach with on-the-ground assistance.
  - An advisory role for strategic support.
- **AWa:** Mentioned that The Means provided on-the-ground assistance during the initial BID setup.

**Design of Manifesto**

- **DN:** The Means can assist in designing a manifesto to support the re-ballot effort.

**Importance of the BID for The Town, Events and Strategy**

- **AWa:** Emphasized that without the BID, many events and town activities would not happen.
- **DN:** Highlighted the BID's role in representing the business community and providing a platform for engagement with the local authority, particularly noted in the Aberdare Strategy consultation.

Empty Commercial Properties

**Difficulty in Contacting Property Owners**

- **AWa** highlighted that people seeking properties in Aberdare are facing challenges due to unresponsive landlords.
- **LB** explained that while they conduct land registry searches to identify property owners and send letters to initiate contact, there is often no response from these owners. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done if the owners do not reply.

**Issues with Land Registry Information**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AWa</b> noted that in some cases, the land registry lists the address of vacant shops, rather than the landlord's actual address, further complicating efforts to make contact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Legislative Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AWa</b> mentioned discussing the issue with Beth Winter, who acknowledged the challenge and stated they could look into see if legislative changes to facilitate easier contact with landlords would be possible.</li> </ul> <p><b>Condition of Vacant Properties and Potential Interventions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DN</b> suggested the possibility of engaging a company to place vinyls on the windows of vacant properties to improve appearance; however, this would still require permission from the property owners, which remains a barrier.</li> <li>• <b>DN</b> also recommended obtaining a quote from CityDressings for vinyl installation. <b>LB</b> agreed and offered to conduct a thorough check on all empty commercial properties through the land registry to assist with this effort.</li> </ul> <p><b>Enforcement and Property Maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DN</b> explained that action can only be taken on properties once they reach a significantly deteriorated state, allowing authorities to serve notices requiring owners to bring properties to a reasonable standard. However, once this minimum standard is achieved, properties are often left to deteriorate again.</li> <li>• Immediate intervention is only possible when a structure is deemed dangerous. <b>DN</b> noted that this approach has been taken on some commercial properties in Aberdare.</li> </ul>
Eisteddfod	<p><b>Grave Renovation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start Date: Renovation of James James' grave will begin tomorrow in preparation for the Eisteddfod event.</li> </ul> <p><b>Visitor Assistance for Locating the Grave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AWa</b>: Suggests exploring ways to help visitors easily locate the grave among others in the cemetery.</li> <li>• <b>DN</b>: Proposes consulting with Bereavement Services to determine respectful options for making the grave more identifiable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social Media and Public Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AWa</b>: Suggests using social media to promote awareness of the grave's location and historical significance in Aberdare.</li> </ul>

**Town Engagement**

- AWa: Plans to approach "Sketchy Welsh" regarding a proposal to create a National Anthem-themed trail in local shop windows, adding a cultural connection throughout the town.

**Publicity**

- AWa: Notes that James James' grave being in Aberdare has already received significant publicity.

**Sensitivity and Respect**

- MD: Emphasizes the importance of maintaining respect and avoiding commercialization of the grave site, acknowledging its historic value but ensuring it does not become a tourist attraction.

**Contacting Means Directly:**

- AWa will reach out to The Means directly for further information.

**Costings and Support Levels:**

MD said we will need to investigate the potential costings and the level of support available for the BID process from the Means.

**Local Authority Responsibilities:**

DN confirmed that the electoral services department lacks the capacity to facilitate the ballot. Therefore, the local authority will: Commission UK Engage, the company that oversaw the initial BID ballot and other BID ballots in different towns. Work directly with UK Engage and coordinate with Our Aberdare as needed.

**BID Boundary and Threshold:**

UK Engage will:

Obtain a list of all hereditaments within the BID boundary.

The board must decide:

Whether to maintain the same BID boundary and threshold. The percentage for the BID levy.

**Data Sharing and GDPR Compliance:**

Once decisions are made, the council will:

Retrieve relevant information from business rates. Share this data with UK Engage under a GDPR contract. UK Engage will compile all necessary paperwork for the ballot.

**Manifesto Distribution:**

Our Aberdare is required to send a copy of their manifesto if they want it included in the ballot notification.

Reballot Continued

**Notification Process:**

Approximately two months prior to the ballot:

- A notification of the upcoming ballot will be sent to all BID levy payers.
- This notification will inform them that they will receive a ballot paper in one month.

**Ballot Timeline:**

The ballot will remain open for **four weeks**.

- UK Engage will manage the distribution of ballot papers.

**Voting Arrangements:**

The council will collaborate with electoral services to provide:

- A sealed ballot box located in the library, available until **5 PM** on the final day of the ballot. This is intended for those who prefer not to use the prepaid envelope for mailing their votes.