

Minutes of the VBID AGM – 21 September 2018 - 1100 hrs
The Orient Suite, The Grosvenor Hotel, 101 Buckingham Palace Road,
London SW1W 0SJ

Nigel Hughes, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the Victoria BID Annual General Meeting and explained the order of the meeting. He commented on the significant changes in Victoria over the past year and plans for the future. Nigel highlighted that Connect Festival Victoria is part of the London Design Festival, with lots of offers and event around Victoria over the week 15th -23rd September, he encouraged attendees to visit and pass on the information to others in their businesses. This fits well with Open House weekend this weekend.

Election of Board Directors

The Chairman thanked the outgoing Board members for their support and contribution during their time as directors and wished them well.

Nigel proposed that the remaining Directors should be voted in collectively; a paper was available to all setting out the Directors and their sector. The following Directors were proposed:

Corporate

Justine Brown, DP World
Lorrie Dannecker, Telegraph Media Group/Vice Chair

Energy

Claudia Binkert, EDF Trading / Vice Chair
Ruth Hart-Leverton – Ørsted (UK) Limited

Hospitality

Toby Garden, The Grosvenor Hotel
Michelle Wells, Park Plaza Victoria
Stuart Geddes, The Goring

Leisure

Caroline Hanson, Victoria Palace Theatre

Property Owners

Nigel Hughes, Grosvenor / Chairman
Harry Foster, Land Securities

Retail

Vacancy

Finance

Vacancy

Ruth Hart-Leverton was the proposer and was seconded by Carl Muller – the motion was carried unanimously and the Directors voted in.

Annual Report & BID Progress

Ruth Duston, Chief Executive, noted that the annual report sets out contributions across all themes and shows Victoria continuing to build on its success. As with all neighbourhoods across London we need to up our game and remain competitive working together to tackle some of London's biggest challenges.

The BID's core activities are based on what businesses want to see as set out in our business plan. This is delivered through five strategic themes. The annual report documents what we have delivered over the past year.

Ruth reiterated that 2017/18 was a big year hosting Lumiere London, the UK's largest light festival, the opening of Hamilton, a huge Broadway show helping to put Victoria on the map. The area has been transformed by large investments and on-going enhancements to the area. Our reports show over 255k people have been welcomed by our ambassadors.

Our close relationship with Westminster City Council has seen the proposed transformation of Christchurch Gardens move forward over the past year with the BID pushing new design proposals. Air Quality continues to be a challenge and the BID recognises that small changes can make a big difference. Working with Kings College London the BID has worked to track exposure to poor air quality and can use this to consider intervention methods such as walking routes and consolidation.

The BID continues to lobby for redevelopment of Victoria Station and is working closely with Network Rail. Public affairs work continues, working with the New Statesman to hold roundtable events with Deputy Mayors to tackle business problems at a strategic level.

International Women's Day saw a panel discussion of the role of women in the workplace marking the centenary since women secured the right to vote. The panel consisted of inspiring local business women with over 65 attendees.

Ruth explained whilst a lot has changed since the 2010 there is still work to do. The re-ballot for the Victoria BID is in sight and we will remain dedicated to improving Victoria. Already this financial year we are tackling big topics head on with events and lobbying. With the success of the Victoria Westminster Ballot we will look at how we can collaborate to raise the profile of the area.

Ruth extended her thanks to businesses for continued support, to the Board for their expertise and guidance, to the executive team for their work to move projects forward, and to the on-street teams the front facing body of the BID dealing with issues on a daily basis.

A copy of the annual report was available to attendees.

Nigel Hughes introduced the Panel Discussion on 'Tackling Homelessness in Victoria'.

Panel Discussion: 'Tackling Homelessness in Victoria' chaired by Cllr Ian Adams.

Cllr Ian Adams, chair of the panel, introduced himself as Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Licensing, explaining that homelessness is a shared issue and is a key priority for Westminster City Council (WCC). There are two main issues that need addressing, firstly the individuals on the streets and their needs and secondly the wider impact that this is having on the area. Two thirds of people on the streets of Westminster are based in Victoria. Cllr Adams invited the Panel to introduce themselves.

Mick Clarke- Chief Executive of The Passage explained that The Passage is based in Victoria but works across London to help prevent people being on the street. With over 100 staff and 500 volunteers, the passage recognises the increase in rough sleeping and the changes to its complexity.

Sara Sutton - Director of Public Protection and Licensing, WCC enlightened that there is a shared responsibility to tackle homelessness. WCC has seen an increase in daytime rough sleeping and is the first council to set up a daytime engagement team. WCC currently invest £6.5 million annually on rough sleeping and this is more than any other local authority. In the first quarter of last year 99% of people new to the streets were helped off the streets of Westminster.

Rob Flinter, Trustee of Hotel School, informed that the hotel school is there to help provide people with a sustainable future. Hotel school teaches a range of key skills, bringing people back to work and finding solutions after being homeless.

Hugh Milroy, OBE PhD, Chief Executive at Veterans Aid explained Veterans Aid has been in Victoria for 78 years and is a small organisation working to deal with global prevention. Veterans Aid works with other war charities to combine forces to help individuals away from the streets. Veterans Aid has a 90% success rate with Veterans going through their system.

Cllr Adams asked the panel what they felt the drivers were for an increase of people on the streets.

Sara explained that numbers have increased by 169% since 2010. Authorities are trying their best to prevent these figures from increasing further. A large factor that leads to the increase is the increasing complicity of mental health. Mental health needs to be recognised early on to prevent those that are unwell ending up on the streets. Mick Clarke added that Spice is also another key factor, it is having a big impact on the homeless community. Sara reminded the group that less than 3% of those that are in Westminster are locally connected or have Westminster as their last settled base. WCC are lobbying to be able to access funding for those that are not locally connected.

Ian Adams asked if more could be done at the point of leaving the army to prevent homelessness, would he like to see more coordination?

Hugh Milroy informed the meeting that coordination is already in place, people are lucky to be veterans as they have access to a wide range of Veterans charities. Most veterans in

their 30's-40s who need help - it is rare to meet someone in need of help who has served for a long time. More help is needed with regards to housing and mental health.

Cllr Adams explained that there is a clear focus around hospitality are there any other areas that we should be considering for back to work?

Rob Flinter explained that having spoken with candidates they are open to getting back into work. Careers in hospitality are so diverse and can range from kitchens, baristas, maintenance teams, the list goes on. Ultimately, they have made the first step in wanting to get back to work. One thing that has been noticed over the course of the hotel school is that people are easily exhausted. Employers need to make sure that they are aware of this and work together with the candidates to prevent burn out. Hotel School gives great opportunities for a new social and working environment.

Cllr Adams gave the opportunity for audience member to ask the panel questions.

A resident in the audience commented that often the homeless community can be intimidating. It is tricky to know what to do, there are often bags left unattended including suitcases and belongings which can be a security risk. How can residents show support? Sara explained that there is often a gap between perception and reality. There are currently integrated street engagement resources to assist people on the streets. There are challenges to moving people away and enforcement. WCC are working to deploy 5 police and 5 inspectors across the area to tackle issues and this is a model that is being reviewed at the moment. There are ways of reporting issues however it is a complex legislative issue. If you suspect anything suspicious report to the police immediately. Remember the BID security team are around to provide support and share intelligence with relevant bodies.

Ian Adams asked if there was a perception problem in the area especially with the Passage being a hub in the area?

Mick explained that when people are seeing a change they want to help and to feel safe. The Passage is working with VBID to make people's views heard through lobbying etc. VBID security are in the area along with the community intervention team who are able to provide people with more information should they wish.

Michelle Wells asked what business can do to get involved - what is the first point of call?

Sara Sutton explained:

- Street link - For reporting a homeless person
- MET Report antisocial behaviour tool - for reporting begging and ASB
- WCC Waste online tool- for reporting any waste issues

Rob added that the Hotel School look for businesses to support candidates by offering:

- Mentoring – Someone for a candidate to talk to
- Work placements- Mixed week or single week placement
- Training opportunities

- Job opportunities – The Hotel School take it very seriously that all candidates that complete the 10-week course are ready to work

Mick added that if anyone would like more information on how to get involved to speak with Josh Brown, Community Liaison Co-ordinator. Volunteering is another way to get involved by investing time along with providing the opportunity to offer training, it empowers people giving them skills to build on.

Ruth Hart-Leverton explained that if people are discouraged from giving money, tents, food etc how the public can help?

Mick Clarke suggested the public offer their time to help in kitchens, help financially to charities and to use your voice and speak to local MPs.

Sara Sutton added that WCC are launching a new comms strategy to develop a better communication tool as currently different problems are posted in different places.

Jimmy Duggan asked if there was a figure of how many ex-service men are on the streets in the community. Jimmy praised the work of The Passage and the services that they offer. Hugh Milroy explained that all ex-servicemen on the streets in the area are known to Veteran's Aid by name. A lot of people claim they are ex-military but this may not necessarily be the case.

Joanna Barnes from The Rubens Hotel questioned once working how are people supposed to afford homes if they are starting off on lower paid jobs?

Mick expressed that this is something that is missing we need to find a pilot for workers hostels. Rob explained that often you have to look at other areas outside of London. Leeds for example has a lower rental price and would be a more feasible place for someone to maintain a fair lifestyle. Hugh explained that this is something that needs to be looked into on a wider scale as housing benefit doesn't quite cover it. Veterans Aid keeps people in accommodation for up to 9 months after they have found a job.

Carl Muller expressed that he was impressed with the Hotel School and the concept, he questioned how scalable this the scheme could it be rolled out across other parts of London?

Rob explained that yes the scheme is scalable however the focus of the Hotel School is to ensure that the Hotel School remains sustainable people need support the whole way through the process. Support from employers is imperative.

NH thanked the panel for their attendance and for the success of the discussion.

Wicked, The Musical

Nigel Hughes introduced Wicked, The Musical and thanked them for agreeing to perform for local businesses and residents. Pieces performed were:

The Wizard and I – Performed by Laura Pick

As Long As You're Mine – Performed by Laura Pick & Carl Man

For Good – Performed by Laura Pick and Maria Coyne

The Chairman thanked Wicked for their incredible performance.

Closing Remarks

The Chairman thanked The Grosvenor Hotel for their Hospitality and to the addendees for being at the AGM. Attendees were invited to look at the key themes and speak with the VBID team and to join them for a sandwich lunch in The Reunion Bar.

The meeting closed at 1245. *Minutes taken by Lucy McNicholas*