**APPENDIX A: SERVICE SPECIFICATION**

**Consultancy support to undertake a Feasibility Study (and potentially a Business Plan) into establishing a Business Improvement District in Wickford**

**Introduction**

Basildon Brough Council wishes to appoint a suitable consultant / consultancy firm to:

* Organise a ‘team building and shared visioning’ workshop in Wickford (for key public, private, educational and voluntary/community stakeholders interested in shaping the future of Wickford town Centre); and
* Undertake a Feasibility Study to assess the potential for establishing a viable Business Improvement District (BID) partnership in the town of Wickford, in Basildon borough.

The reason we are asking the consultant to organise a ‘team building and shared visioning’ workshop at the outset of the process is because we believe there is some evidence to suggest that we need to increase some stakeholders understanding of the need for solid partnership working of this process is to work and we think there would be some value in helping these same stakeholders understand the scale and of the opportunity, build a shared vision for Wickford Town Centre and establish a strong consensus and buy in to this vision.

Once this workshop is complete, we are looking for the consultant to help us to undertake a BID Feasibility Study.

Whilst we need to be guided by the outcome of the Feasibility Study, if the results are positive and the indications are that the development of a BID might be viable in Wickford, we may then subsequently want to work with the appointed consultant to develop a Business Plan for Business Improvement District in Wickford, in order to be able to use this Business Plan to further progress the establishment of a BID in the town.

Basildon Brough Council is inviting quotations from organisations capable of undertaking this work. The successful organisation should:

* Have a proven track record in completing Economic Development related feasibility studies.
* Have a proven track record in preparing actionable business plans.
* Be able to demonstrate a full understanding and application of BIDs legislation.
* Ability to communicate effectively with the BID Task Team, wider business community, Council and public sector.

**Background**

Basildon Borough Council has undertaken some preparatory work to establish a ‘Shadow’ Town Team of elected members made up of representatives nominated by the different authorities that have responsibility for overseeing the future of Wickford Town Centre, comprising:

* Councillor Tony Ball – representing Essex County Council
* Councillor Eunice Brockman – representing Basildon Borough Council (and Wickford Independents)
* Councillor Don Morris - representing Basildon Borough Council (and Conservative and Unionist Party)
* Councillor Matthew Wright – representing Wickford Town Council.

In addition, we have spoken to Corporate Affairs Manager at Wm Morrison Supermarkets Limited (they are about to commence the development of a new supermarket in the town) who has agreed to join a ‘Town Team’ as an interim member, pending the formal appointment of the store team nearer the formal opening. We have also had a couple of other nominations that we are reviewing to ensure the applicants possess the skills and abilities we need, for this initiative to succeed.

At the end of 2021/22, we also developed a database of the main high street businesses in the town centre and undertook some preliminary survey work into the aspirations for Wickford Town Centre, that canvassed a variety of stakeholders.

More recently, we have purchased a range of data on the town centre performance – covering issues such as vacancy rates, footfall, dwell times, crime etc. (which we would be happy to share with any consultants interesting in bidding for this opportunity, if interested in receiving it). We also have access to a business database, a commercial property database and business rates data, to add further value to our understanding of past and current performance of the Town Centre.

**Scope of the Contract**

The scope of this assignment will initially focus on all business sectors trading in Wickford Town Centre, but the feasibility study should also include businesses operating in the surrounding area to determine several area options.

The consultant will be required to:

1. Organise a ‘team building and shared visioning’ workshop in Wickford (for key public, private, educational and voluntary/community stakeholders interested in shaping the future of Wickford town Centre), that will;
   * Enhance stakeholders understanding of the need for solid partnership working for this process to work.
   * Enhancing stakeholders understand the scale and of the opportunity.
   * Build a shared vision for Wickford Town Centre.
   * Establish a strong consensus and buy in to this vision.
2. Undertake a Feasibility Study to assess the potential for establishing a viable Business Improvement District (BID) partnership in the town of Wickford, that will:

* Identify the key challenges, needs and opportunities being experienced by businesses in Wickford
* Identify the key development opportunities that exist in Wickford, that could potentially add value to the overall trajectory of the town centre
* Determine whether a BID is feasible and appropriate for Wickford
* Identify the BID boundary, should the feasibility study conclude that a BID is potentially viable
* Identify the potential income that might be raised through a BID levy
* Establish whether local businesses have the appetite and interest to pursue a BID, as a result of the findings of the business consultation process

Following the delivery of the Feasibility Study, the Town Team (which we expect to expand between phase 1 and 2 of the process set out above, to involve a wider range of stakeholders) will take a view on the results of the Feasibility Study, and should they conclude that the approach appears to have merit, the appointed Consultant/Consultancy may be asked to develop a Business Plan for a BID in the Town.

Whilst the decision to develop a Business Plan for a BID has been included in this service specification, this is merely to ensure we retain the same consultant to undertake both the Feasibility Study and the Business Plan, should the Town Team decide there is merit in taking forward the Business Plan following due consideration of the Feasibility Study. This should in no way be taken as a guarantee that Basildon Council and the Town Team will commission the Business Plan element of the project, as this needs to be informed by a consideration of the results of the Feasibility Study.

If the Feasibility Study shows positive response, the consultant may subsequently be asked to prepare a detailed **business plan**, designed to:

* Assess the resources required to develop a BID
* Produce required additional documents including Operating Agreement, baseline statements, service level agreement etc.
* Produce the BID proposal once final go-ahead is confirmed
* Develop a high-level prospectus, which can be used to canvas support for the BID
* Develop a timetable for implementation of the BID

Whilst we look forward to hearing what Consultants propose as part of the **Feasibility Study**, we might normally expect it to include the following kinds of activities:

* Desk Top Report & Economic Assessment
* Assessing and analysing the business ratings data
* One to One Consultation
* Facilitated Workshops (these should be distinguished in your proposal from the initial ‘team building and visioning workshop’ we have suggested above)
* Business consultation/survey/workshops
* Final feasibility study report

If the results of the Feasibility Study are positive, and the Town Team decide to progress to the development of a Business Plan, the results of the Feasibility Study should inform the Business Plan for the BID. The Business Plan should set out the services to be provided and the size and scope of the Business Improvement District. It will also set out who is liable for the levy, the amount of levy to be collected and how it is calculated. We would envisage the **Business Plan including the following elements:**

* Define the geographical area (including a map showing that area) in which the proposed BID arrangements are to have effect
* Define what businesses are to be liable to the BID levy, how the amount of the BID levy is to be calculated and if the costs incurred in developing the BID proposals, holding of the ballot or implementing the BID are to be recovered through the BID levy
* Assess the existing baseline services provided by the relevant billing authority or other public authority – baseline agreement with the billing authority
* Develop the programme – getting the right mix of projects and services to address the challenges and priorities that the businesses expressed – and evidence clear value for money as well as its additionality to existing public sector services
* Plan inclusive consultation events for participants to reflect on the proposed business plan and programme
* Assess resources required to develop a BID, and provide financial management options for appraisal
* Establish governance, control and leadership arrangements (i.e., BID body)
* Develop a prospectus (including a stronger identity – a brand that is recognisably the BID’s) and canvas support
* Develop a timetable for implementation of the BID and advise throughout ballot, any veto or challenge to the ballot declaration.

**How will the Feasibility Study be used?**

The purpose of the Feasibility Study is to provide Basildon Council and Wickford Town Team with the information needed to determine if a Business Improvement District is viable and help stakeholders decide if it has sufficient merit to move forward.

Should the results of the feasibility study show weak or lack of support for a BID, the commission may be ended early after the feasibility study.

**Reporting and deliverables**

It is envisaged, the appointed contract will be working closely with the Wickford Town team as well as relevant Council officers during this process via regular meetings and periodic reporting.

The key deliverables will be based around the appointed consultant’s response to this tender but will be primarily focussed on the production and presentation of the final Feasibility report in the first phase. If the Wickford Town Team decide to progress to Business Plan, following the final Feasibility Study, a key deliverable in the next phase will centre around the production of a Final Business Plan.

**The timeframe and service level expectations**

Ideally, we would like the Feasibility Study to be completed by late Summer 2023.

Whether to progress to Business Plan stage, and the timing of its implementation will be dependent on the findings of the Feasibility Study, the decisions made by the Wickford Town Team and the continued availability of UKSPF Funding.

The appointed consultant is expected to always provide a point of contact and to respond to any queries that the Wickford Town Team might have in a professional and timely manner. The appointed consultant will be expected to attend meetings (the frequency may be determined at the beginning of the commission) and lead some workshops as specified in the scope of the contract, as and when it is feasible to do so.

**Total budget for the ITT**

The indicative costs of delivering this overall assignment are as follows:

* Estimated Budget for organising the ‘Team Building & Visioning’ Workshop £1,000.00 + VAT
* Estimated Budget for the Feasibility Study £15,000.00 + VAT
* Estimated Budget for the Business Plan £15,000.00 + VAT

**The selection consultant / consultancy firm**

In order to deliver the ‘Team Building and Visioning’ Workshop and conduct the Feasibility Study, the Wickford Town Team will need to appoint a consultant/consultancy firm to undertake both elements of this commission. Whilst Basildon Council will oversee the procurement process to appoint a suitable consultant / consultancy firm, Basildon Council will work with the Wickford Town Team to select a suitable consultant to meet the service requirements.

To procure a consultant to undertake the feasibility study, Basildon Council will issue an invitation to tender (ITT), outlining the service(s) we require. Consultants will be expected to respond to the ITT by describing how they envisage the study will be conducted, what questions will be answered by the study, a timeline for completing the analysis and how much it will cost.

Whilst Basildon Council and the Wickford Town Team will be responsible for selecting a suitable consultant to undertake the Feasibility Study, Basildon Council will be responsible for contracting, managing and monitor the performance of the appointed consultant.

The appointed consultant will provide the Wickford Town Team with highlight reports as the project progresses, and suitable presentations to enable the outcomes of the report to be presented to other relevant stakeholders.

**Project Management of the Contract**

Basildon Council will be responsible for project managing the overall delivery of the project, overseeing the procurement process and managing the selected consultant to ensure the feasibility study delivers on time/cost/quality objectives.

At the outset of the project, Basildon Council will establish a project Steering Group (also known as Wickford Town Team) to oversee the delivery of the project and work with the appointed consultant, as the project progresses.

The Wickford Town Team will provide strategic direction and lead for the project. The Wickford Town Team will be the overall authority for the project and is accountable for the success or failure of the project.

The Wickford Town Team will also act as the main point of liaison between the appointed consultant and the partnership to ensure that the study progresses, consistent with the project’s objectives. The Wickford Town Team will:

* Represent the project needs and interests to the appointed consultant.
* Review and clarify what is needed from the appointed consultant.
* Monitor the work of the appointed consultant.
* Provide a list of stakeholders for consulting on the Feasibility Study.
* Review reports and papers presented by the consultant, providing feedback in a timely manner.

Before accepting the Final Feasibility Study, the Wickford Town Team will be responsible for reviewing the final version of the report, assessing that it addresses all the relevant issues and questions and meets the expectations.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and Evaluation will be carried out as set out in [UKSPF Additional Information](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-additional-information). This will include but is not exclusive to the following main evaluation requirements:

* Continuous monitoring and evaluation of progress aligned to the deliverables stated within the UKSPF Investment Plan submitted by the Lead Local Authority and approved by the Secretary of State;
* Engaging with our evaluation partners to collect and provide additional quantitative data as required to support, where relevant, intervention and place-specific evaluations

**Branding**

Because this project is being supported by UKSPF, the supplier will be expected to comply with the Branding and Communication guidance associated with UKSPF projects, set out in the [UKSPF Additional Information](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-additional-information).

The supplier agrees to adhere to the guidance and any updates subsequently released by the Secretary of State or HMG on communications linked to UKSPF or wider Levelling Up Funding.

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