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## **Economy and Growth Committee**

**11 November 2025**

### **Knutsford Business Improvement District - Ballot**

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**Report of: Phil Cresswell, Executive Director**

**Report Reference No: EG/19/25-26**

**Wards Affected: Knutsford and Mobberley**

**For Decision**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 A proposal for a new Knutsford Business Improvement District (BID) is to be the subject of a postal ballot.
- 2 The Council is entitled to vote in the ballot. This report seeks a decision on which way the Council wishes to vote in the ballot.
- 3 Additionally, this report seeks to confirm arrangements for Council representation on, and supporting, any BID Board established in the event the BID proceeds.

#### **Executive Summary**

- 4 The Council has received a request to hold a postal ballot on a proposal for a new Business Improvement District in Knutsford.
- 5 On 6 August 2025, [Corporate Policy Committee](#) considered the obligations on the Council as billing authority, enabling the ballot to proceed.
- 6 In the event the BID ballot returns a 'Yes' vote and proceeds to commencement, the Council would be required to pay BID levies for six premises within the BID area. The Council will therefore be entitled to six votes in the ballot.
- 7 The financial implications for the Council need to be considered balanced against any anticipated impacts of the BID for businesses and

residents, which are considered overall to be positive and aligned to strategic Council commitments.

- 8 On balance, considering the anticipated benefits of the Knutsford BID it is recommended that the Council votes in favour of the proposed Knutsford BID.
- 9 It is also recommended that, in the event the BID proceeds, appropriate Council representation and advisory support is agreed to facilitate coordinated and aligned working between the Council and BID Body.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Economy and Growth committee is recommended to:

1. Vote 'Yes' in support of the Knutsford BID proposal in the Knutsford BID ballot, delegating authority to the Director of Growth and Enterprise to complete, sign and return ballot papers on behalf of the Council.
2. Agree that in the event of the Knutsford BID proceeding to commencement:
  - i. The Executive Director-Place shall, having regard to any advice given by the Monitoring Officer, determine, in consultation with the Chair of Economy and Growth Committee:
    - a. Whether a CEC representative should be put forward for appointment onto the BID Board and if so, select the appropriate appointee and empower them to make any decisions required on behalf of the Council.
    - b. Agree any advisory officer support to be made available to the BID Body, empowering that officer to provide advice as needed.
  - ii. The S151 Officer shall write to the Director of Growth and Enterprise instructing that BID levies are paid for all eligible premises for which the Council is the BID levy payer and savings are made within the relevant service to offset the new burden.

#### Background

- 10 A Business Improvement District (BID) is a defined area where business rate payers have voted in a ballot to pay a levy, in addition to business rates, into a fund and that fund is then managed to deliver specific

agreed initiatives to benefit the BID area. A general overview of BIDs is set out in the report considered by Corporate Policy Committee on [6 August 2025](#).

- 11 A proposal for a Knutsford BID has been submitted to the Council by Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside, on behalf of the Knutsford BID Steering Group. The initial term of the BID would be five years commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. After the initial term a further ballot would be required before the BID could continue for a longer period.
- 12 The Council has received a formal request to instruct a ballot on the BID Proposal. On 6 August 2025 Corporate Policy Committee agreed delegations to enable the ballot to proceed. In accordance with the decision of Corporate Policy Committee, the Council as billing authority has instructed the ballot. Those organisations who would be liable to pay a BID levy are entitled to vote in the BID ballot with one vote per eligible hereditament. Postal votes must be returned by 5pm on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025.
- 13 The BID would cover the geographical area shown below. This is focused on Knutsford town centre but also includes buildings within Tatton Park.

## PROPOSED BID AREA



- 14 BID levies would be payable for all eligible business premises in that geographical area which have a rateable value above £5,500. The only specified exceptions are public funded primary schools and places of worship. Levies payable would equate to 2% of the rateable value of the premises per year, based on the 2023 rating list with an annual increase of 0.05%. Levies would be payable from April 2026 and thereafter annually for the lifetime of the BID. The party responsible for levy payment would be the party responsible for payment of business rates.
- 15 The Council is responsible for the payment of business rates on seven business premises within the proposed BID area, six of which have rateable values above the confirmed minimum threshold. Therefore, the Council will be required to pay BID levies for these premises if the BID proceeds. The Council is therefore entitled to six votes in the BID ballot.
- 16 It is estimated that the BID would generate circa £1.035m over the five-year term. This would be primarily generated from levy payments but

includes circa £0.12m of match funding to be generated by the BID Body.

- 17 The funding raised would be spent supporting three themes:
- Destination Knutsford – Initiatives to make Knutsford the place people want to visit, explore and enjoy.
  - Experience Knutsford – Initiatives to make the town centre cleaner, safer and more enjoyable for everyone.
  - Connected Knutsford – Initiatives to help strengthen and support businesses.
- 18 These themes appear to align well with Council policies seeking to support the vitality and viability of town centres and growth of the economy. There is clear potential for initiatives brought forward by the BID Body to also support additional priorities such as encouraging use of sustainable transport.
- 19 Committee are referred to the full finalised BID Proposal in **Appendix A** for examples of the kinds of initiatives anticipated as likely to be brought forward under these themes as well as further details on the levy, management arrangements etc.

### **Consultation and Engagement**

- 20 The proposed BID would fall predominantly within Knutsford Ward, also extending into part of Tatton Park which falls within Mobberley Ward. All ward members were invited to a briefing. Several ward councillors are also Knutsford Town Councillors. Knutsford Town Council has been instrumental in facilitating the BID Proposal development.
- 21 As part of the BID Proposal development, consultation has been carried out by Groundwork Cheshire Lancashire Merseyside, funded by Knutsford Town Council as part of the BID development. An overview of this consultation is set out in the BID Proposal (Appendix A)/ This consultation influenced the final BID proposal.
- 22 CEC has not undertaken any additional consultation with businesses, given that this is not a CEC driven proposal.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 23 Committee is recommended to vote 'Yes' in support of the Knutsford BID proposal in the Knutsford BID ballot because the proposal is considered to align well with the Council's strategic commitments as set out in the Cheshire east Plan 2025-2029 requiring only limited financial commitment as discussed further under Financial Implications.

- 24 Committee is recommended to support delegations to allow further timely consideration of appropriate representation on and officer support for any BID Body given that any Terms of Reference are likely to be relevant but not yet available for the former decision, and because the decision on the later may be dependent on the former. Similar officer delegations were approved in relation to the establishment of Wilmslow and Crewe BIDs.

### Other Options Considered

- 25 The table below outlines the anticipated impacts and risks associated with the other identified options considered.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing – Abstaining from vote	The ballot result would likely be determined by votes cast by other organisations required to pay the BID levy with the Council having no influence on the ballot result. The outcome of the ballot could still be for or against the ballot.	The Council could be criticised for not actively supporting a proposal aimed at improving Knutsford.
Vote 'No' in the ballot, against the BID Proposal.	The BID ballot could overall return a 'No' vote which might have been a 'Yes' vote in the event the Council had voted 'Yes' for all its hereditaments.	Local businesses in support of the proposal could criticise the Council for voting against something which support its corporate commitments.

### Implications and Comments

#### *Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance*

- 26 The Council must comply with the requirements outlined within the Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004, (BID Regulations) and Part 4 of the Local Government Act 2003 (LGA 2003).
- 27 The aims of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are to enable businesses and local authorities to work together to effect improvements within the area in which the BIDs operate. The BID Body (Groundwork) has submitted documentation to the Council which satisfies the requirements of Regulation 4 of the BID Regulations. The

Council must now hold a ballot on the BID Proposal in furtherance of Regulation 4(5) of the BID Regulations.

- 28 In accordance with paragraph 3, Schedule 2 of the BID Regulations, the publication of the Notice of Ballot must be at least 42 days before the day of the ballot. The Notice must state the day of the ballot and be sent to each person and/or hereditament entitled to vote or, if applicable, their proxy. All ballots must be a secret postal ballot (paragraph 4, Schedule 2 of the BID Regulations). Section 50 LGA 2003 identifies that there is a dual-key mechanism, meaning that a proposed BID is supported by both: i) a simple majority of those eligible to vote; and ii) business representing more than 50% of the rateable value of those eligible to vote.
- 29 The BID Board will be responsible for implementing the BID arrangements should the proposal be successful at ballot.

*Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 30 The decision concerns how the Authority should exercise the six votes it will receive as a consequence of the qualifying business premises that fall under the scope of the potential BID levy.
- 31 In the event the BID receives a 'Yes' vote and proceeds, the Council will be obliged to pay the BID levies estimated below (increasing 0.05% per annum) from April 2026.

<b>Hereditament</b>	<b>Rateable Value (£)</b>	<b>Levy @ 2% (£)</b>
King Street Public Car Park	46,750	935
Knutsford Library	50,500	1,010
Princess Street Car Park	22,000	440
Tatton Street Car Park	55,000	1,100
Silk Mill Street Car Park	13,500	270
Tatton Hall	85,000	1,700
<b>Annual Total</b>		<b>5,455</b>

- 32 These are a revenue expense and because BIDs are not driven by the Authority the costs are not budgeted for at a service level. If approved the BID would be in operation for an initial five years followed by a renewal ballot. They represent an annual cost and because the BID funds are to be used for additionality there is limited scope for the Authority to supplant its own expenditure within the BID area. Current services being undertaken within Knutsford would form part of a baseline service agreement.

- 33 BID levy bills would typically be sent to Facilities Management as they receive and pay business rates for the relevant hereditaments. Usually for small increases to revenue expenditure, services would be expected to find compensating savings from somewhere within their service and the recommendation sought is that the S151 officer write to the Director of Growth and Enterprise instructing that savings be made to offset levy payments which will become due. The additional burden of the BID levies falling to Facilities Management will have to be absorbed into the Facilities Management budget with a corresponding reduction for maintenance on the wider portfolio. If pressures become too large to manage within the existing budget envelope, then additional budget would need to be sought via the annual MTFs route. This is now the third BID in Cheshire East and whilst on their own BID levies are not material, collectively the levies have the potential to place a material burden on the responsible service.
- 34 In the event of an overall 'No' vote in the BID ballot the levy would not be chargeable. In that case direct financial consequences for CEC would be confined to those associated with holding a ballot.

#### *Human Resources*

- 35 It is anticipated that in the event of the BID proceeding, there would be a request for officer resource to attend BID meetings. The extent of involvement of officers may need to be limited having regard to current officer resources and the many other priorities.
- 36 Additionally, if the BID succeeds at ballot there will be additional work for the Business Rates Team who will become responsible for collection of the levy. As set out in the report to Corporate Policy Committee reasonable charges can be made to cover the costs of this service.

#### *Risk Management*

- 37 There is likely to be both positive and negative reaction to the BID Proposal from local businesses. Whilst the Council is not the BID Proposer there is a clear possibility that the BID proposal may be perceived as a Council initiative with associated reputational risks. Risks around this can be mitigated by ensuring clear communication and continuing close liaison with the BID Proposer.
- 38 There are additional reputational and financial risks which might flow from procedural error, for example should a challenge be lodged claiming an irregularity in the ballot process. This is being mitigated by ongoing involvement of Legal Services at each stage in the process via an internal working group.



*Impact on other Committees*

39 This decision is not considered to have any significant impacts on other committees.

*Policy*

40 The following highlights ways in which the BID proposal aligns with the commitments of the Cheshire East Plan (2025-2029).

<b>Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all</b>	<b>Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing</b>	<b>Commitment 3: An effective and enabling Council</b>
1.1 Creating new opportunities for business communities - the proposal includes plans to support networking opportunities  1.3 Supporting life-long learning - the proposal includes plans for subsidised training for businesses  1.5 Communities connected including through active travel- - the proposal includes plans to promote public and active transport options in Knutsford.	2.3 Everyone feels safe and secure - the proposal includes initiatives to enhance safety and security.  2.4 Communities build their capacity, with support to access information, guidance and funding – the proposal will build capacity around the business community to take forward their priorities	3.3 Innovative solutions are developed through a culture of collaboration – the proposal specifies that the Council will be invited to relevant meetings in an advisory capacity  3.5 Contact with the council and access to services is consistent and easy- via attendance at BID Meetings council representatives would be able to signpost services

*Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

41 The Council has not undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this proposal since it is being brought forward by a third party.

*Other Implications*

42 There are considered to be no specific implications for rural communities nor any for young people/cared for children. If the BID proceeds and is successful in boosting the local economy this could have beneficial indirect impacts for health although economic benefit may not filter to those in poorest health, particularly in a single term five-year period. The proposal has the potential to impact on climate change via initiatives delivered. Council representation on the BID Board could help ensure climate change impacts are considered in decision making.

## Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	24/10/25	27/10/25
Hilary Irving	Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer	30/10/25	30/10/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Aaron Lecroy	Principal Finance Officer	22/09/25	Click or tap to enter a date
Nick Wrigley	Senior Lawyer	22/09/25	24/09/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Peter Skates	Director of Growth & Enterprise	23/10/25	24/10/25
Phil Cresswell	Executive Director - Place	23/10/25	24/10/25

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Jo Wise, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager Jo.wise@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A: Knutsford Business Improvement District Proposal
Background Papers:	<a href="#">Business Improvement District Regulations 2004</a> <a href="#">Business Improvement District Technical Guide for Local Authorities</a>