



**Midtown Business Improvement District
Annual General Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 17th March 2021 (10:00-11:00)**

Attendees:

Alexander Jan*	Midtown BID
Debbie Akehurst	Chief Executive, Midtown BID
Ruth Duston*	Midtown BID
Austin Casey*	Midtown BID
Marcos Gold	Midtown BID
Nicola Frost	Midtown BID
Debi Doy	Midtown BID
Julie Rogers*	Mitsubishi Corporation International (Europe) Plc
Joe Edwards*	The British Museum
Susan Freeman*	Mishcon de Reya LLP
Lisa Humphreys*	WPP
Alistair Subba Row	Farebrother
Alexander Walduck	Imperial London Hotels Ltd
Paul Hobbs	BDP
Ed Whitson	YMCA
Russell Peplow	Arcadia University
Richard Jenden	LSE
David Kaiser	We Work
Ling Chong	Studio Lambert
Deepesh Sethi	Edwardian Hotels
John Reiss	Premier PR Ltd
Michael Bonsor	Rosewood Hotels
Lawrence Francis	Premier PR Ltd
Natasha Marshall	Royal College of Anaesthetics
Thomas Neumark	The Peel
Anu Liisanantti	Islington Giving
Caroline Wilson	LB of Islington
Ian Roberts	Midtown Business Club
Simon Elmer	The Bedford Estates
Ed Nicholson	Labtech
Tim Bacon	Colville Estate
Genny Fernandes	LB of Camden
John Reiss	Premier
Andrew George	Arcadia Univeristy
James Williams	Theatre of Comedy Co Ltd
David Lutton	London First
Chris De Souza	Warner Bros
Sam Markey	Connected Places
Denise van Blitterswijk	Camden
Sara Blackwell	Greenwoods GRM LLP
Eva Harput	Euromonitor
Ann Cadogan	Midtown Business Club

*Midtown Board members

	Item	Actions
1.	<p>Chairman’s Welcome</p> <p>Alexander Jan (AJ) welcomed all attendees, making introductions to the new Executive Team and opened the AGM meeting. AJ explained that this meeting had been delayed due to the pandemic. It was noted that the AGM was covering the year 2019/2020. The next AGM covering 2020/21 is planned for September 2021 when it is hoped it can be held as a “live” event.</p>	
2.	<p>Overview of 2019/2020</p> <p>AJ noted two themes of continuing importance for the BID: to focus on ensuring the BID’s areas are safe, clean and welcoming and to ensure recovery from the Covid lockdown through close partnership working with Camden, Islington, other public agencies and surrounding BIDs. He said that member feedback indicated that these are shared priorities. To deliver on these, AJ highlighted that the BID is aiming to install seasonal lights at gateway locations this coming December. It is also looking to improve the quality and availability of information (such as on footfall trends and real estate transactions) to help businesses track the post-Covid recovery and inform decision making.</p> <p>AJ delivered the Chief Executive’s presentation (Debbie Akehurst was in attendance but a little poorly). Amongst other things, he highlighted the results of last year’s ballot, noting the healthy majority in favour of renewal (82%). A copy of presentation would be circulated with minutes of the AGM.</p>	DD/DA
3.	<p>Election of Board Directors</p> <p>AJ explained Midtown is planning to hold the next AGM in Sept 2021. He asked that the election of Board directors cover the period until March 2022 to ensure continuity through the new financial year (2021/22). He noted that the position of non-executive chair is a remunerated role and that the chair has been appointed by the Board until the end of the current BID renewal period (March 2025).</p> <p>A slide was shown to display the current list of Board members and businesses and sectors represented by them. AJ noted that in line with good practice, the board reviews its performance on a regular basis (annually).</p> <p>AJ explained that for the purpose of re-election, each Board Member must be proposed, seconded, and then elected on a show of hands, noting only levy payers were able to vote. Julie Rogers, Tony Matharu, Lisa Humphreys, Susan Freeman, Joe Edwards, Ruth Duston and Austin Casey were all successfully re-elected for another year following this process to March 2022.</p>	

<p>4.</p>	<p>Adoption of Accounts</p> <p>Austin Casey (AC) explained that our April 2019 – 31st March 2020 accounts have been prepared and fully audited by Deacons, a firm of Chartered Accountants. A copy of the headline numbers were presented. The BID’s accounts were reviewed and approved by the Board on 19th January 2020.</p> <p>AC highlighted from page 6 the key fundamentals noting that the organisation is in a healthy financial position in terms of the reserves. Provision has been made for a substantial capital contribution to Camden’s Princes Circus public realm scheme – part of their West End project.</p> <p>AJ highlighted that the Board would welcome ideas from members with respect to areas of potential investment.</p> <p>The accounts were approved by levy payers by a show of hands.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Recovery & Renewal Strategic Overview</p> <p>Ruth Duston (RD) explained Midtown BID has been operating for over 15 years and is one of the country’s more established BIDs. The BID had brought on a new executive team post ballot renewal. Midtown BID together with neighbouring BIDS are aiming to be a powerful force for good providing the busiess community with a strong and effective voice, championing local priorities and ensuring the business community’s voice is heard at the decision table.</p> <p>RD noted that BIDs will be vital to the recovery from the pandemic. From a Midtown perspective, the pandemic has had a huge impact on members and indeed central London more widely. There is extreme pressure on our economic and social “ecosystem”.</p> <p>Looking further ahead, RD noted that there are likley to be lasting changes that have been accelerated by the pandemic. The hybrid model of splitting working from home and days in the office is set to stay in the short to medium term, but there are question marks as to what the long term looks like. A recent poll of businesses in Westminster indicated that up to 80% of workers will be returning to the office by the autumn, with the vast majority splitting their time between home and office; less than one fifth are planning on spending more than three quarters / all of their working week in the office. Although some commentators have predicted the end of the office, there is absolutely a role for offices in the longer term and a huge need for workers to collaborate and interact together. As we start to come out of lockdown RD noted it was crucial to maximise the momentum behind the recovery but to embrace change and what that change looks like for our BID footprint. Although things will look different, that change brings an opportunity. Vacant retail units will open up a number of</p>	

	<p>opportunities to us and we see ourselves being front and centre of the recovery, playing a key role in that ground floor usage and how we can shape and influence that vision and agenda. Whilst we know office workers will return, we know that approx 72% are planning to co-ordinate their time with social events so are looking to spend longer days in London and hopefully their money. The much delayed Crossrail/ Elizabeth Line is set to open in 2022 which will bring a further 1.5 million people to within 45 minutes of central London - a major opportunity. Midtown's biggest challenge will be communication and messaging, therefore part of our strategy will be working in partnership to address communication in getting people back onto public transport system. We will achieve all of this through collaboration and sharing new ideas, but we need to be bold in thinking how we deliver them and think more creatively. BIDS have a crucial role in bringing areas together - public realm improvements and a "green" recovery will play an huge part in this. There is a lot to do but we are ready to play our part and we recognise that Midtown has the opportunity to be a beacon of innovation and growth.</p>	
6.	<p>Q&A</p> <p>Richard Jenden (LSE) asked when will be returning furloughed staff on the cleansing and security Teams? Debbie Akehurst (DA) explained that our security team have been working all the way thorough and cleaning staff have everything in place to ensure a safe return to the streets.</p> <p>Ian Roberts (MBC) asked what does the BID plan to do in terms of engaging with larger landlords/owners in the area to ensure they are also driving improvements and bringing people back into the office space.</p> <p>AJ explained we are an occupier BID but that a number of our major owners are occupier levy payers. AJ explained further that the Board has asked Susan Freeman (SF) to oversee an initiative to explore whether we should create a Property BID and there may be an appetite for that. SF explained it is early days but agreed we need to reach out to the larger owners in the area. DA also explained we are in constant talks with our property owners, which is all part of our placemaking communications in terms of cleansing, safety and public realm. AJ confirmed that the BID recognised the importance of working with owners and occupiers together. Ian also wanted to voice and note that as Chair of MBC that the spirit of cooperation has been very clear the last few months and they are delighted that Midtown BID are entering into that spirit and MBC want to very much be part of that.</p> <p>Michael Bonsor (Rosewood) offered encouragement and noted that forward bookings fore his business were looking promising. He did have some concerns with vacant space around the area which AJ agreed to take to the next Property Group meeting.</p>	AJ/SF

7.	Closing Comments AJ thanked everybody for their attendance and input, noting he hoped to update everybody very soon on a Midtown rebranding project. The date of the next AGM for 2020/2021 would be circulated once it had been firmed up. He then closed the meeting.	