

ORPINGTON FIRST LIMITED (COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

COMPANY INFORMATION

Directors	Sia Bodbin Martin Price Chandra Sharma James Williams Bill Perera Michael Blower (Appointed 8 October 2014) David Warnes (Appointed 28 January 2015) Danny Cole (Appointed 8 October 2014)
Company number	08139594
Registered office	The Walnuts Management Suite High Street Orpington Kent BR6 0TW
Accountants	Baxter & Co Lynwood House Crofton Road Orpington Kent BR6 8QE
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC Bromley 3 Leicester Leicestershire LE87 2BB

ORPINGTON FIRST LIMITED (COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE) STRATEGIC REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

The directors present the strategic report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015. The company has four strategic objectives expressed under individual theme groups:

- **First for Customers** – to improve Orpington’s image and bring more people into town
- **First for Look & Feel** - to improve the visual appearance of the high street
- **First for Access** - to improve access to and within the town centre
- **First for Business** - to improve our member’s profitability

We have recently added - **First for Investment** – to establish an AAP for the area that can assist us with directing our approach to the most appropriate and relevant inward investment opportunities, ensuring that we are able to manage the various developments with a holistic view regarding their impact on the town centre and developing a focussed marketing campaign that presents a professional and consistent message.

Review of Business

The programme of activity for the BID company is developed from the original proposal “Let’s make our town centre better for business” which is available online at our website. www.orpington1st.co.uk The prospectus lays out a variety of projects under each of the headings with an aim to complete them within the first 5 year term of the BID. In our second year of activities we have successfully implemented projects from all 4 of the original theme groups and started the development of the newest investment theme.

As we have increased the range of projects that we have in either development or implementation stage we have appointed a second member of staff in the role of Projects Manager to ensure timely delivery and increased day to day management, our staffing resource is now 2 FTE.

First for Customers

We continue to improve and broaden our communication with customers with both our online presence and with regular **presentations** at community groups and organisations which have proved extremely popular, especially with our older residents. We have also provided targeted marketing material such as our monthly event flyers. We will continue to review and refine all communication to ensure best value is achieved between cost and engagement.

This year we took the opportunity to work with a local photographic society to develop an Orpington 1st Calendar for 2015. The project has provided a tool to market the activities of the BID, keep customers informed and raise money for a local charity “The Maypole Project.” We aim to produce a similar **Calendar for 2016** using the opportunity to engage customers and businesses in a competition that can generate inspiring pictures and stories of Orpington and raise awareness of the town’s people and places.

We have utilised the high streets lamp columns by installing banners to inform customers of the BID’s activities, and have recently installed **A1 poster sites** around the public square to use for the promotion of events and to provide an opportunity to raise additional revenue.

The quarterly **magazine** continues to offer an excellent vehicle to communicate with local customers and residents, it provides a comprehensive review of the BID programme as well as promoting other events and activities that are relevant to local residents but beyond the remit of the BID.

We have recently moved the content management of our **website and social media** from an external supplier, to become part of our new Project Manager’s role. This transfer of responsibility has increased engagement significantly. We now offer more targeted information, a faster response and have decreased the costs.

**ORPINGTON FIRST LIMITED
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STRATEGIC REPORT (CONTINUED)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015**

The **digital high street** has now become a reality and the BID are working with LBB on a joint initiative to strengthen Orpington's position as a well-connected town centre. With the help of a £10,000 Funding contribution from the New Homes Bonus to review and strengthen the infrastructure, we will continue to encourage and support the training and development of individual business capacity, as well as ensuring Orpington town centre takes full advantage of the commercial improvements that can come from being a well connected high street. The objective is to ensure that customers are better informed and attracted to take advantage of the services available within the BID and that businesses are more engaged with their customers and more aware of their requirements.

We have continued to promote the **Loyalty Card** scheme set up to encourage shoppers to *buy local* with a range of offers and incentives. Although this scheme is well supported by customers and is an excellent engagement tool for retailers and service providers it lacks the capacity to gather meaningful data for marketing and the recording of relevant KPI's.

We are therefore taking the opportunity of reviewing the current scheme alongside newer, more responsive systems that will enable more targeted marketing campaigns. In the meantime we have once again been able to reduce costs by moving all current activity in house.

Events continue to be an important element of encouraging footfall into the high street and of creating a platform for business. They also provide an opportunity to present the town to a wider audience, strengthening the positive perceptions of the high street and creating exciting USPs that can have significant economic and social benefits (e.g. Cycling /Food).

During the past year we have created a full calendar of events that have allowed us to showcase the town centre and encourage visitors to take another look at what Orpington has to offer both now and in the near future.

We now have a variety of different events that range from the introduction of a farmyard into the town to celebrate **Easter**, to our sponsorship of the **Armed Forces Day** hosted by the British Legion. We held our first **Charity Golf Day** at one of Orpington's hidden gems, Chelsfield Golf Club, in May and were delighted that it coincided with the appointment of the new **Mayor of Bromley**, who was able to join us on their first official duty. The day provided an ideal opportunity for local businesses to network in an informal setting and proved extremely popular so is being held again in 2015.

In September we launched our project to develop cycling in Orpington with the introduction of **Cycle Mania**, an event held in the high street on a Sunday which required the pedestrianisation of the area from the Memorial to Knoll Rise. The event included everything to do with cycling from the various areas of health, leisure, safety and transport. There were bike displays, information and advice, workshops and children's rides and activities. The content attracted a broad customer base from experienced cyclists and those who were interested in getting started, to those who just wanted a day out. This was all presented alongside a food court with communal seating which created a great social space and customer interaction.

This year was the second year that the BID had managed the popular **Christmas** light switch on event. Building on the success of having attractions throughout the town centre last year, we pedestrianized the south of the high street, creating space for even more activities to be included during the evening. This also provided the extra space that was necessary for the introduction of a traditional **lantern parade** which attracted a wider participation from the public. The positioning of activities across a much greater length of the high street also gave the opportunity for more of those businesses with a high street presence to be included in the festivities on the night.

The evening saw a rise in reported footfall and we received very positive feedback from both businesses and residents.

In February we held our second **Business Expo** which this time was also designed to attract local residents to come and find out about the various developments within Orpington. It proved a popular extension of the core programme with the general public and also provided a vehicle for local residents to consider their own opportunity of starting a business in Orpington and to hear about the support and advice that is available to them.

New for the year was the introduction of a **Wedding Fayre** which incorporated a variety of local retailers and services from the high street as well as providing home based businesses with an opportunity to connect to potential customers. The exhibition also included a fashion show supported by students from Bromley College. All those that exhibited said that they would return and we have had interest expressed in next year's event from local Churches who want to get involved.

We are also taking the opportunity of developing **partnerships** that can support a wider variety of events and attract additional customers in more meaningful numbers. If organisations already have events that are successful, or if they are developing new ones, then we will encourage them to use Orpington as a venue by promoting the value of our marketing and promotional activity to them and the opportunity of direct engagement with the business community. We are also promoting the changing face of the town centre as a leisure and social HUB for all those involved in the surrounding area and the opportunities we have of working together to present a high quality offer that can attract the more affluent resident population to engage with their own town centre.

In the year ahead we will continue to add value and grow those events that were successful last year such as **Cycle Mania** which now has the backing of the newly formed Bromley Cycle forum, which Orpington 1st was a founding member of, and **Priory Live**, a music concert held in the Priory gardens in August which now includes **Priory Intro**, a series of smaller scale music events leading up to the main concert.

New for 2015 will be **the Big O Festival**, a celebration of suburban art and culture to be held in July, with taster events in June, and a **Food festival** in partnership with the new Hospitality, Catering and Enterprise College for October.

We are keen to promote all good quality events that take place in the town centre that add vibrancy and help to shape the use of social space. We will therefore continue to encourage event organisers to share their events, to utilise the high street and to build connections.

First for Business

The **OBF**, which was the organisation which developed the BID in Orpington, has now been dissolved as it became clear during the year that its aims and ambition has now become the role and responsibility of the BID company. The Board of Orpington 1st and the OBF committee have worked together to ensure that business **engagement and communication** is enhanced and new networking opportunities are created. The BID will be working with key business partners such as **BNI** and the **FSB** to establish a full programme of activity for 2015. We want to ensure that all business requirements and requests are considered and that we can support them by working with those who are most experienced in delivery.

This year has seen the creation of the enterprise **HUB**, a venue located in the centre of the high street that provides affordable office accommodation, conference facilities and training rooms as well as providing our own office space. We were delighted that our local MP Jo Johnson was able to join us for the official opening in October and to meet some of our business support suppliers and start-up businesses that we have been able to support with affordable premises. The office has also enabled us to provide rest facilities for the new town centre police team. This has added real value to the partnership we have been able to develop with the police and increased the time that the team can spend in the high street. The office space and access to facilities for our staff ensures that the BID is presenting the appropriate professional image to all of our customers and suppliers which is particularly important in our role of encouraging inward investment and new developments.

The HUB also provides space for our programme of training **and business support services**. We have recently been successful in winning a joint funding BID with LBB to support a programme for business training and development, with Orpington 1st as the delivery partner. It was the creation of the HUB that enabled us to support such a bid.

Our **joint procurement** programme, which is offered via Meercat Associates, continues to identify cost savings for our levy payers and is being broadened with the inclusion of insurance and stationery. This project continues to offer real value to our members and we would encourage everyone to take full advantage of the FREE service. Again we have been able to transfer some management of the programme internally which has reduced costs without affecting delivery.

The recognition of quality in both product and service provided by local business is of real value, so Orpington 1st was delighted to again partner the OBF in the **Orpington's Finest Competition**. This year, applicants were invited to nominate themselves in 6 categories which were judged by an independent panel, with two further awards being voted on by the general public.

As well as hosting the awards evening, the BID also supplied lamp column banners to celebrate the winners and improve the marketing opportunity that the event provides to both the individual businesses and the town centre.

First for Access

The BID management and maintenance of the **public toilets** in College square continues. The high volume and nature of their use presents us with an ongoing challenge to be able to maintain the high quality standards we aim to deliver. The Walnuts shopping Centre provides 50% of the funding required for the cleaning and has also been providing a basic level of onsite handyman services as required. We have recently installed advertising boards to provide an income stream which could potentially support the ongoing project costs.

We are working on repositioning the current disabled facility (which is not connected to the main service and has been out of order for some time) to ensure that this service can be maintained and located in an easily accessible location. Our intention would then be to utilise the premises as an information and communication facility.

The provision of good quality and accurate **signage** is an essential requirement for any town centre to work affectively. Again the BID have successfully secured additional funding to support improvements to the public realm which includes the creation of new public space at College Square, as well as improved signage and the maintenance of street furniture within the high street.

We will now also work to improve the connectivity of space and services within the high street and between the high street, green space and the station.

We have carried out a business survey to capture the issues and provide **Parking Services** with the required information and evidence to review and implement the necessary changes in design and enforcement to the current parking provision. We have been successful in changing the loading bay provision to allow free parking after 6pm and to agree a permit system managed by Orpington 1st that will allow SME's to use their cars for deliveries.

Other recommendations that we have put forward (except the provision of a 10 minute FREE parking period) are all following the necessary consultation process of the Council and we have been assured that they will be implemented but are still waiting final confirmation.

First for Look and Feel

This year we were also able to implement projects from this our final original theme. We began the season with a **community clean-up** day in partnership with McDonalds and LBB and with assistance from staff at the Walnuts shopping Centre and our waste collection provider CD waste.

It provided us with the opportunity to remove large dumped items as well as carrying out a general litter pick across all areas of the high street on both public and private land.

We are introducing an extended clean up this year with a two day event that will clean up and green up the high street and include small scale maintenance works.

We provided the **summer floral display** towers and barrier baskets for the high street which complemented the Council's lamp column hanging baskets, and we will continue with the installations in the coming year. We have carried out a review of the high street's most challenging areas and requested businesses to inform us of any grot spots that require attention.

We are delighted with the number of businesses that have, or are in the process of installing and updating their shop fronts and we would encourage all businesses that have a high street premises to review their area and consider how they can make improvements that will contribute to making the high street a really pleasant place to spend time in.

The town's **General Market** has suffered from a lack of investment in the infrastructure that supports its existence, poor quality trading conditions such as old stalls, and a lack of marketing to encourage both new traders and new customers. We will be working with LBB and the Shopping centre on an investment programme to breathe new life into the current market as well as introducing a variety of new complementary markets into the high street. This will be implemented as part of our business support programme, **Start-up, Step-up and Grow**, offering trading platforms for new and developing businesses, providing alternative and flexible ways of trading for businesses, and more engaging and exciting ways of shopping for customers.

We were delighted that our continued pressing for improved policing of the high street has resulted in a dedicated team of **6 officers**. We have agreed to part fund the initiative which has already proved extremely beneficial in reducing anti-social behaviour and retail theft. The team now provides us with the resources to establish a meaningful **Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP)**, pre-empting the challenges that come with an evening and night time economy and ensuring that Orpington can meet both its current and future requirements.

In addition to the 4 themes identified we have also developed a programme **for growth and investment**. We have identified the need for Orpington 1st to take a lead role in ensuring that Orpington Town centre is considered as a place for investment by both the local authority and potential investors, that we are equipped with the necessary information and resources to act with confidence and credibility, and that we provide suitable marketing material and dialogue to increase interest and upgrade the quality of design and facility within the high street.

We identified the need to develop our **branding** so that it was easier to use on a wider range of products and had a more corporate image for use on investment material. We now have a pack that can be used for presenting information to a wide audience and to inform all businesses of the projects being undertaken on their behalf.

Orpington continues to provide an opportunity for residential development and we must ensure that the necessary retail provision and leisure facilities are also provided to complement the population growth, whilst also protecting employment facilities and securing the appropriate growth in quality office accommodation. We will continue to push for improvements in the way that the local authority deals with local business needs and create a best practice platform for the future.

Following the boards' decision to bring the accounting period in line with the financial year end 1st April to 31st March our accounts now reflect our grant and levy collection dates. This enables us to present a clearer picture of the budget v project costs for the financial year ahead. The AGM has therefore been moved to the beginning of Q2 allowing for a more up to date commentary on the financial year that is being reported on and a more timely presentation on the business plan for the year ahead.

We have restated our continued intention that as much of the levy collected from businesses as possible will be used to fund core activity and project costs, with staffing costs being supported by the sourcing of additional income and grant funding.

On behalf of the board

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Martin Price

Director

8 July 2015