



Explanatory Notes

**1 January –
31 December 2024**

Who are Kingston First?

Kingston First is a business improvement district (BID) which operates within Kingston town centre. Set up in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, we are a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee and principally funded by a levy. This levy is used to provide additional projects and services to those provided by Kingston Council and other public agencies.

The company is governed by a voluntary board of directors who represent a cross-sector of the town's business community. They are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the agreed business plan. A dedicated team is delegated responsibility for its delivery and the management of the company.

In 2021 Kingston First refreshed its mission, vision and values to better reflect our role and our company culture. These are set out below.

Our VISION

Kingston will be a vibrant town where everyone has an amazing experience.

Our MISSION

By leading, supporting and working with our members, partners and community, we will create a town where our members can thrive and where people want to be.

Kingston First was the first BID set up in the country and following a successful renewal ballot in June 2019, the company started its fourth five-year term on 1 January 2020.

Our work and services focus on the following themes:

- Attractive Streets & Spaces
- Marketing the Town
- Supporting & Informing
- Influencing & Representing

To view the Renewal Proposal and find out more details about our projects and services, please visit our website.

Financial overview

The below forecast and budget are indicative and based on our Financial Year (April to March). Full year-end 2023/24 accounts will be provided in Spring 2024, alongside 2023/24's Annual Report.

Business priorities reflect our Renewal Proposal themes. Additional funding includes running and managing the Ancient Market Place and project contributions.

2023/24 Forecast

Levy income	£901,602
Additional funding	£437,492
Total	£1,339,094

Spend against business priorities is forecast as follows:

Attractive streets & spaces	£342,934
Marketing the town	£250,680
Supporting & informing	£255,281
Influencing & representing	£124,741
Overheads	£183,111
Markets	£370,799
BID5 renewal	£20,590
Public realm transformation	£200,000
Total	£1,748,136

2024/25 Budget

Levy income	£893,590
Additional funding	£437,428
Total	£1,331,018

Spend against business priorities is forecast as follows:

Attractive streets & spaces	£302,138
Marketing the town	£242,014
Supporting & informing	£236,507
Influencing & representing	£120,348
Overheads	£174,327
Markets	£373,507
BID5 renewal	£17,500
Public Realm Transformation	£125,000
Total	£1,591,341

How do I pay?

Payment instructions are found on your bill. Kingston Council issues the BID levy bills, collects the levy and transfers the funds to Kingston First. For all billing queries, contact the Council team shown on your bill.

Our work and achievements in 2023



Attractive streets & spaces

Led on the designs for the next stage of the Social Spaces project

The Social Spaces project consisted of temporary planting, seating and greening outside the train station; on lower Fife Road and Thames Street in 2021. This year we led on engagement with businesses, residents, students and community groups to develop plans and designs to introduce permanent seating and greening, better wayfinding and lighting interventions in these locations. We are now working with the council to introduce some of these recommendations across the town.

Eagle Brewery Wharf and Memorial Gardens

We have continued to work in partnership with Kingston Council to transform Eagle Brewery Wharf on Kingston's riverside and Memorial Gardens in the town centre into places where everyone can unwind, enjoy and connect with nature. Landscape architects have been appointed for both sites to develop designs in collaboration with businesses and the community. We are aiming to implement the new designs in 2024.

Activating the town centre

Over the year, we organised and supported 47 markets, activities and events to drive footfall and support town centre activities, including the Christmas lights and market and Chimp trail.

Waste management and cleanliness

We continued to supplement the routine cleaning and have undergone over 25,400 sqm deep clean of the town centre, this is equivalent to four and a half football pitches. We provided 92,000 recycling sacks and stickers to members via First Mile, saving them over £200,000, and more than £40,000 in savings was made by businesses on the list price of additional waste collections.

Hanging basket/sustainable planting

We installed 120 hanging baskets and sustainable planting across the town centre. We replanted and continue to maintain flower beds with a mixture of pollinator friendly evergreen and perennial plants.

Marketing the town

Consumer brand and website

We continued our work to position Kingston as a destination, with traffic to our new consumer facing website kingstonuponthames.info receiving 13,000 visitors on a monthly basis.

We raised awareness of the brand throughout the town including branded wayfinding on hoardings and planters, deckchairs and an interactive installation with information and facts about Kingston in the Ancient Market Place.

Christmas

We led, managed and delivered another successful Christmas experience and marketing campaign for the town centre, building on insights and learnings from last year. We installed the Christmas lights and new light installations including the reindeer and neon tree. We introduced new experiences including curling and children's areas - initiatives introduced to drive people to the town and increase dwell time.

Summer activities

We organised activities over the Summer period, from circus workshops to storytelling and face painting, and secured involvement from over twenty local businesses to help create a buzz during the school holidays. We launched a digital marketing campaign and created a film to help raise the profile of Kingston targeting new audiences. The campaign was viewed by almost 70,000 people, and made 728,000 impressions and received 12,557 engagements on Facebook and Instagram.

PR and Social Media

We raised the profile of Kingston Upon Thames by achieving 40 pieces of media coverage across the year; including articles from Metro, Primary Times, Surrey Live, Londonist, Time & Leisure, London TV and This is Local London. We also featured on BBC Breakfast and BBC London.

Our profile and engagement on social channels helps promote Kingston as a destination and its local businesses. We achieved over 28,000 followers on our social channels, an increase of 3,000 since last year. We created and sent out a monthly newsletter to local residents and those that are interested in what's on offer in the town centre, and now have over 7,500 subscribers, an increase of 1,000 since last year.

Supporting & informing

Training and networking

We delivered 13 training sessions, from first aid to social media to leadership. 91 businesses made use of these sessions and 98% would recommend the training sessions to a colleague.

We launched the 'Inspire' series, bringing together panel guests, including members to discuss important leadership topics and allow members to network and exchange experiences and opinions.

During the year, we ran two social networking events with 80 members attending from more than 30 businesses.

Cost saving support

We introduced brand new services to support members and help them save money; including free procurement and carbon reduction advice, and a scheme to help reduce food waste.

Member communications

We continued our bi-weekly newsletters providing information about the town centre and services which received over 500 opens each month, with 96% of members reporting that they found our e-communications useful. We also produced quarterly data and insights reports about town centre performance, a service highly valued by members.

Keep it Kingston (KIK app)

Our Keep It Kingston app (KIK), continued to be popular with businesses and employees within the town centre, offering members an opportunity to advertise their offers and discounts helping to encourage spending within the town.

Over 8,000 town centre employees signed up to Keep it Kingston, with average satisfaction of 8.5 out of 10, and 89% awareness.

We also introduced push notifications on the app and quarterly email round ups to highlight new offers from businesses.

Influencing & representing

Town centre vision

One of our key priorities in this term has been the development of a Town Centre Vision. We successfully lobbied, and then went on to work with the Council to make this happen.

We have played an important role in shaping the Vision development representing the views of businesses and property owners as well as local communities through workshops, surveys and on-going conversations with members. Our recommendations for a Town Centre Vision focus on the following themes:

Riverside Movement and Transport Town Fit for Future Generation

We also recommended a Vision which centres on the idea of **connection** – a common thread between and within the themes we've highlighted. We will continue to shape and influence this work to make sure we have a Vision that is ambitious, delivers and reflects the views of members.



Vacant units

We continued our work on vacant units, producing regular data and insights on vacancies, sharing with members and stakeholders where appropriate, to help encourage a diverse make-up of the offer in the town centre and encourage investment.

We have also commissioned research into what the barriers are for businesses and organisations wanting to invest in the town centre, to help inform our strategic approach to managing vacant units and encourage a thriving town. We look forward to sharing the findings with you shortly.

London Vitality Index 2023

Lambert Smith Hampton's annual vitality index ranked Kingston Upon Thames the top London borough which reviews various factors linked to quality of life; economic, cultural, social and environment. A great testament to the work of many across the borough, and of course the role of the town centre in the borough, which we are very proud of.

The year ahead

Ballot 2024

Over the next few months the Kingston First team will continue to meet members, gathering insight and feedback to shape our priorities for the new Kingston First term, 2025-29 as we prepare for our renewal ballot in June 2024.

We hope to see you at one of our workshops or networking evenings. Details are on our website.

Public Realm projects

In partnership with Kingston Council we will continue to transform Eagle Brewery Wharf on Kingston's riverside and Memorial Gardens in the centre of the town. We expect these projects to be completed in Autumn 2024.

We will continue our work on the Social Spaces project, working with Kingston Council and stakeholders to take forward some of the interventions proposed to help improve wayfinding, lighting, seating and planting in key locations and we hope these become a catalyst for further change across the town centre.

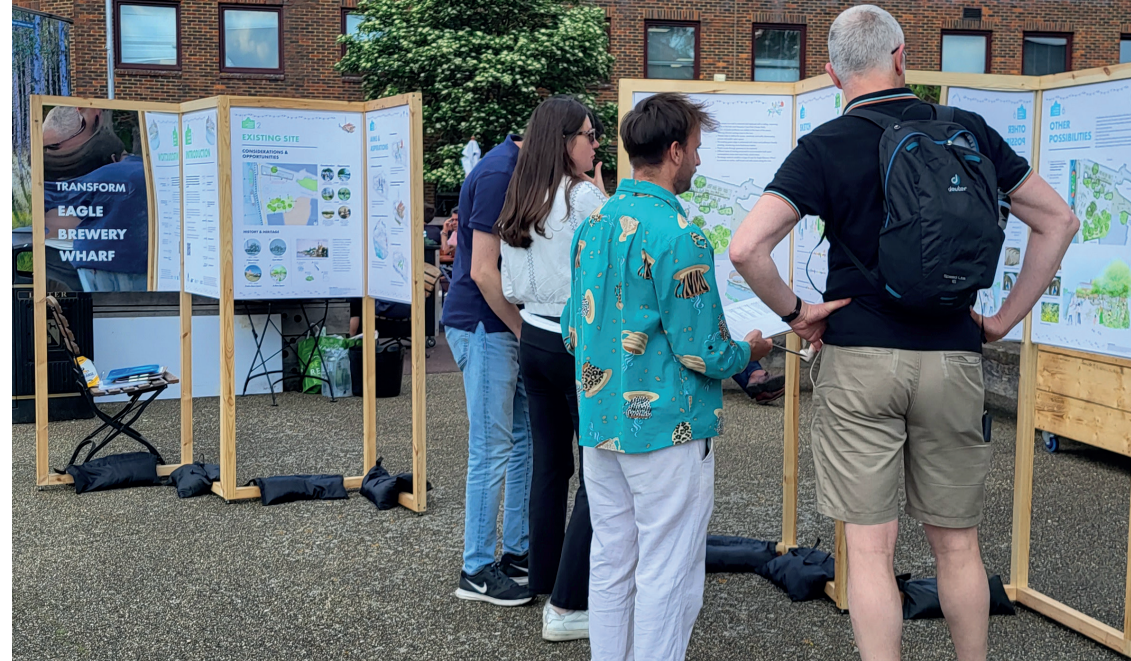
Marketing and activations

We are looking forward to bringing a new trail and activities to the town centre in 2024 to help drive footfall to the town and to position Kingston as a destination. Keep an eye on our newsletter for more information and how to get involved.

Training and networking opportunities

We recently partnered with SEEDL to create a brand new learning hub where you and your teams can enjoy free and unlimited access to over 200 live virtual courses. Topics include; leadership, customer service, office 365, mental wellness, communication, retail, hospitality and lots more!

We will also be continuing with our networking events with several planned for the year including a new historic walking tour exclusively for members.



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