



## **RESOLVE: Putting Safety First**

### **Croydon BID – ASB Impacts on Town Centre**

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Croydon Business Improvement District (Croydon BID) is an independent business led, and business funded organisation representing circa 535 of the largest businesses across Croydon Town Centre.

With the support of Croydon BID levy payers from the retail, commercial, leisure, hospitality and public sectors, we have a vision for Croydon to become one of the most sustainable, welcoming, vibrant and culturally diverse locations in south London.

Croydon BID invests £900,000 per annum, delivering initiatives and much needed services that would not otherwise exist to support the business community and enhance the prosperity of the town.

Croydon BID has recently secured the support of local businesses with a 'YES' vote achieved at the latest BID Ballot, with 91% of business voting in favour by number and 95% in relation to rateable value, demonstrating a strong mandate of support from the business community.

This support means that Croydon BID will operate for a further 5-year term, running from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027, delivering on an ambitious yet realistic business plan proposal which aims to meet the current and future challenges of the town, as identified by local businesses.

Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone in the town centre is the BID's number one priority, but the experiences of our members indicate that a multitude of safety and security issues currently facing the town centre, including business crime, shoplifting, threats to staff, aggressive street begging, street drinking and antisocial behaviour, has reached unprecedented levels. All of which are detrimental to the town's reputation and its ability to attract and retain business.

As part of the recent BID ballot process, businesses were surveyed, and the following results were recorded in relation to crime and safety within the town centre (sample 158 businesses):

- 97% of businesses stated that improving feelings of safety and security for the business and their staff is a priority.
- 80% of respondents stated it was 'very important' and 17% stated it was 'important' that work is undertaken to help ensure everyone feels safe, and support efforts to tackle crime across the town centre.

Whilst significant incidents in relation to persistent low-level crime and ASB within the town centre are reported to the authorities, issues and concerns which affect a business's ongoing trade, are often reported directly to Croydon BID.

Local businesses need to be able to conduct their everyday trading in environments which are welcoming to their customers, however most of the common concerns and issues encountered are incidents related to excessive alcohol consumption and the subsequent levels of antisocial behaviour and criminality, which prevent custom and limit trade to a business and also impact on their staff and their wellbeing. These issues are apparent in both the daytime and night-time economies of the town centre.

Examples communicated to Croydon BID include:

- Hewitts - street drinkers congregating directly outside the premises, harassment of staff and customers and their land being used as a toilet. This has been a long term issue which the BID has worked with partners on to resolve.

- The Spread Eagle Pub - customers continuously harassed, approached for money, drinks and cigarettes whilst enjoying meals and drinks in their licensed outside seating area.
- Holiday Inn Express – street drinkers congregating at Priddy's Yard behind Holiday Inn Express, impacting guests at the hotel, thus impacting their reviews, which subsequently effect ongoing business and bookings owing to experiences when staying at the hotel.
- Whitgift underpass - reports of harassment, alarm, and distress by a wide variety of people over the course of 6 months, with the location having significant economic impacts on businesses.

Large antisocial groups are also found in many of the public spaces across the town centre, which in some cases has affected a business's day to day operations to such an extent, that it's reduced their capacity and means to trade.

An example of this relates to Nando's restaurant, who have ceased to operate their outdoor dining space due to the significant issues encountered outside of their premises. Removing this seating option directly impacts the number of covers they can serve and therefore the profitability of the business. Further to this, the business has also taken the extreme step to hire permanent door security to prevent access to the premises during the day and to safeguard their customers and staff.

These changes to their operations over the last couple of months are a direct result of the antisocial behaviour and the groups occupying the High Street.

The perception of the Croydon Town Centre, is currently one which portrays a lack of control and management. Persons are able to conduct themselves in an anti-social manner and as they want, often unchallenged in many spaces and locations which directly affect members of the public.

At a time when the town centre is trying to recover from the pandemic, these negative experiences and perceptions of the town centre, are having a detrimental effect on the prosperity of the town centre. Many businesses are considering the future operations, and issues such as this are a factor they are considering with regards to their future presence in the town centre.

#### **General ASB Statement – June 2022**

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