

STRATFORD ORIGINAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT *A New Approach to Regeneration*



Stratford Ambassadors, Olumide Babatunde and Omid Mafi, receive an award for Customer Service. Also in the picture: Carol Richards, Chair of Safer Stratford Forum, and Gianluca Rizzo and Francesca Sinclair-Reid of Stratford Original Business Improvement District.

There's a new partnership in Stratford, London E15, as St. John's Church is now working closely with Stratford Original Business Improvement District (BID). The team of Stratford Ambassadors had to find a new base, and there was a room available in the Crypt of St. John's Church. Rev. Dave Richards, Vicar of St. John's said, "We are very happy to support the BID by providing space for the Stratford Ambassadors, especially since they're making a huge difference to the Town Centre by making it a more welcoming and safer place."

Stratford has seen a huge number of changes over the years – most recently, the opening of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the Westfield Stratford City Shopping Centre. There was a real danger that the old part of town would become derelict and, to make things worse, this was just when the funding of Stratford Renaissance was coming to an end. The final act of the regeneration partnership was to promote a new type of organisation, called a BID. "Stratford Original" was a popular title because it has echoes of "old town" but avoids unfair comparisons of "old" and "new".

A BID comes into being when businesses in an area vote to pay an additional levy on top of the business rates bill. This seems unlikely, but all over the country businesses are voting to pay extra money to develop projects which will benefit the local area. The first UK BID commenced in 2005 and there are now over 290 across the country. The majority of BIDs are in town centres, but they are also in other locations like industrial parks. The Stratford Original BID runs for five years from 2015 - 2020 and over this time will spend over £1.2 million in the town centre. In 2019 there will be a re-ballot to see if businesses want it to continue.

The BID aims to deliver against four main priorities:

Doing business - The BID provides new opportunities to work together to cut costs, such as discounted trade waste recycling rates.

Promoting Stratford - The BID is promoting Stratford's unique identity and encouraging visitors and residents to explore the town centre and to contribute to the local economy.

Safer Stratford - Making Stratford a safer place for employees, shoppers and visitors is a priority for Stratford Original. A Safer Stratford Forum has brought together local Police, the London Borough of Newham Enforcement Team, local businesses, the Church and the BID's own team of Stratford Ambassadors to address anti-social behaviour and safety problems. Walkabouts have identified problems and the joint approach has helped to find solutions.

Welcoming – The BID is delivering a number of projects to make Stratford more welcoming and improve the environment, including “pocket parks”, better signage and fighting litter. The Stratford Ambassadors are also employed to give a personal welcome to visitors, especially on “Event Days” when there's football in the London Stadium.



St. John's Church in the centre of Stratford Original



A Safer Stratford Walkabout