

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	20 December 2016
Title:	Market Town Co-Ordinator Update
Contact Officer:	Becky Reid, Market Town Co-Ordinator

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an overview of work undertaken since starting in position on 1 November 2016, and outline plans for the next quarter.

Update

2. General overview

Since starting in position I have focused on two things: engaging with events already in progress, and developing an Action Plan to focus my work going forward.

3. Engaging with Events

Great British High Street

Thame has been successful in making it into the top 3 for the Great British High Street 'Best Small Market Town'. I have supported Mayor Linda Emery to promote the 'vote4Thame' campaign to win this, including promotion at the Charter Market and taking part in the judge's visit to Thame in early November. We will find out on 12 December 2016 whether we were successful in winning our category. This competition has helped to boost the profile of Thame, and mobilised volunteer effort and sponsorship from people/businesses who are passionate about Thame and the continued success of its high street. We will continue to build on this in the future.

Small Business Saturday

Thame hosted the Small Business Saturday Bus on 14 November 2016, and then ran an exciting programme of workshops, 1:1 support sessions and a Young Entrepreneurs Competition on Small Business Saturday itself, 3 December 2016. I promoted both events, providing the opportunity to start to get to know the local business owners. I attended both events. Unfortunately the Saturday event falls on the first weekend in December. This is retailers busiest Saturday of the year so it was not attended by any retailers, but was attended by a range of other small businesses. Some consideration needs to be given to this next year and is something that I will be more involved in. The event provides great opportunities to support to business owners as well as a platform to promote the independent businesses in Thame.

4. Future Action: creation of Action Plan

The remainder of my time has been focused on developing an Action Plan. This has been drawn together from various sources including:

- Vibrancy & Vitality Study of Thame Town Centre - Miller

- SODCs Economic Development Action Plan for Thame 2015/16
- Thame Town Centre Working General Action Plan (May 2016)
- Thame Retail Capacity & Impact Study – Carter Jonas
- Thame Market report for Town Council – Chris Hurdman

From this work 5 themes have been identified, with various action areas included under each theme as follows:

Infrastructure

Improving footpaths & Cycling; influencing the Cattle Market Development to best support the town centre; Parking improvements identified and actioned; development of town centre civic space; Signage into and around the town.

Communication

Continue to explore High Street Awards; improvement of digital and on-street communication; development of our communication with residents; re-visiting the potential of town centre Wi-Fi.

Business Engagement & Support

Develop Town Centre Working Group and explore a Town Team set-up; engage businesses in events already delivered; scope and establish a Buy Local scheme/activity; explore a Business Engagement programme and implement if necessary; identify and mitigate gaps in town centre offer – e.g. night time economy, street theatre, etc.; retail & customer surveys.

Tourism

Develop Midsomer Murders offer; develop brand, marketing resources as required; accommodation options; new leads to market Thame as a destination; support delivery of new events to encourage more visitors to Thame; Art projects, sculptures etc.

Thame Markets

Improved market facilities – such as installation of electric fixtures; Market entertainment calendar established; improve market development and promotion; explore a Saturday Market Day; continued investment in the market.

5. Next Steps

Specific action I will aim to take over the next quarter is:

- Improve the signage to the town from the boundaries, with focus on signage to parking
- Improve our digital communication through establishing an integrated business website that links to the Town Council website; and developing Town Council Facebook presence.
- Improve marketing contained in wayfinding system already established in town
- Develop Town Centre Working group and potential of Town Team, including coordination of General Action Plan
- Develop Market events calendar in partnership with Chris Hurdman.

Action Required

To note the report