

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

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| Date: | 21 May 2019 |
| Title: | TCWG: Market Town Co-ordinator Update |
| Contact Officer: | Becky Reid, Market Town Co-ordinator |

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an overview of the current focus of work and action taken since 12 March 2019.

Update

2. Town Centre vibrancy & vitality: Town Centre Working Group (TCWG)

The Town Centre Working Group last met on Thursday 9 May. Current Focus:

- 2.1. Finalising the content for the Town Guide. This was sent to print on the morning of 15 May, once we had confirmation of our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Delivery to all homes in Thame will take place during the first 3 weeks of June. Delivery to Moreton will have to be done ourselves and so if you are able to help with this please let me know. Delivery to local businesses will then be carried out over the following couple of months. We will also be delivering the guides to local Accommodation providers within and outside Thame as it will also serve as an information guide for people visiting the area
- 2.2. Customer Survey: work has started to create a customer survey to build on the one carried out in 2017. This will allow us to measure what change in opinion there has been, and will be completed annually from now on as part of a process to develop Town-wide KPIs
- 2.3. A business survey is being developed between the TCWG and Thame Business Forum for a similar purpose, and to gather evidence for our new Neighbourhood plan.
- 2.4. The Business newsletter continues to be produced each month, with a new 'In the Spotlight' feature that introduces readers to the people behind the businesses. It has 87 subscribers.
- 2.5. The World Village market had such a successful time here in April that they have asked to return in July. This is great news as it shows that footfall and spend was high for them, and the hope is this had a positive knock-on impact for some of our other local businesses.

3. Partnership work with 21stCT

- 3.1. The Thame Shopping Guides will be installed by the end of May. This work has taken longer than expected as a result of changing designer part way through the project and delays in securing advertising. What has been evident during this time is how many changes take place in our Town Centre as a result of shop closures and business re-locations. The new design of the signs will mean that future closures can be accommodated through temporary additions to the sign face, with a full re-print each year covered by funding from the advertising. Once the signs are in place in their current locations, work will be taken to improve the bus stops in the town centre, with shopping guides being located in these as well. This will leave blank space on the back of the boards in Waitrose, Sainsbury's and the car park behind Co-op. The content of these boards will be determined by 21stCT at a later date.
- 3.2. 21stCT website is progressing slowly with E4S. We will continue to chase.
- 3.3. Taste of Thame – a new food event to incorporate a town centre trail, tastings and workshops – is being developed by a team including Cllr Francis, Cllr Emery and Hannah & Joe from Deli @ No.5.
- 3.4. Thame Art Crawl is improving its terms and conditions and application processes, to overcome communication difficulties and ensure that expectations of artists and businesses are managed well. The event is more engaged with TAL this year which is positive.

4. Other MTCO work

4.1. The Gateway signs will be installed during this week with work commencing on Monday 20 May. A communications plan has gone out about this that explains the reasons for the work, covering the key drivers which were:

- End of official life-span for the current signs
- Inclusion of information about our Twinning with Sinaia in Romania;
- New estate entrances, and Lea Park entrances all falling after a sign
- So that no one has to pass more than one entrance sign on their way into Thame
- To move signage to by-pass to raise awareness of the existence of a Historic Market Town to tempt drivers who use the ring road to commute past Thame, to come in and visit us.
- To fit in with the new Town Flag and Thame Town Council re-branding.
- To install a sign on the Phoenix Trail to ensure that walkers and cyclists visiting the town receive the same warm welcome.

The planters that currently exists will remain where they are, and discussions about re-locating these will take place after this part of the project is completed.

4.2. Oxfordshire Art Weeks ran from 11 – 19 May. The closure of Stoneworld and Bell Kitchen, two of the venues, caused problems and Thame Town Hall ended up being used as an alternative venue. These closures also create an interesting dilemma for future Art Crawl events, as we have to have enough venues to make the event worthwhile. This will be explored further based on how well Art Weeks ran within Fisher German – a new venue this time round.

5. Visitor Economy Working Group (VEWG)

5.1. The 'Visit Thame' Flyer (promoting Thame as a visitor destination as well as helping to increase the profile of The Players Theatre, The Museum and Midsomer Murder tours) was successfully delivered to 8000 homes in April. Positive feedback has been received.

5.2. Experience Oxfordshire have promoted Midsomer Murder tours through their newsletter for free as a result of a recent complaint. We will be discussing the continuation of their contract.

5.3. Work is being done to support the Red Kite Family Centre to develop a Cinema offer for children in partnership with Thame Players. This will provide another reason for people to visit our town centre and will encourage additional spend elsewhere, as well as generate a regular income for the Red Kite Family Centre.

5.4. A meeting took place with Independent Oxfordshire to find out if there was a way that we were able to work with them as a Town Council. They offer a promotional platform, and will be considered as an option when we are considering future promotion plans.

6. Public Arts Working Group (PAWG)

6.1. Graham Hunt and the MTCO met with Silke O'Ferrall (Section 106 Officer, SODC) and Abigail Brown (Arts Officer, SODC) to discuss our application for close to £5k to commission a Wayfinding Audit to inform our first Public Art Project. They were concerned it would be rejected as not being 'Arts focused' enough, so we are working to amend the application form to better reflect the Arts aspects of the work. They hope to give us a decision on this by the end of May, allowing the project to finally move forward.

7. Thame Markets

7.1. May features 'Love your Local Market' fortnight. Activities during this event include a Social Media sharing competition to raise awareness of what you can buy at the market, and a partnership project to raise funds for Red Kite Family Centre in the form of a 'Kids Market Treasure Hunt'.

Action Required: For Councillors to note the report and gvolunteer to help with Booklet delivery in Moreton.