

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	13 August 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 2 July 2019.

Update

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

The Town Centre Working Group has not met since last report as most projects are progressing without the need of a meeting.

2.1. Customer Survey: to be delivered in November 2019.

2.2. Business survey: Parallel surveys to capture information for B2B and B2C businesses. Final drafts still to be created. To be delivered in October 2019

2.3. The Business newsletter has 96 subscribers (up 4 on last report). A marketing campaign to increase this will take place after the summer period.

3. **Partnership work with 21stCT**

3.1. The Thame Shopping Guides are now installed and changes have meant one update has already been installed. Work to update the Bus Shelters outside Coop and the Town Hall will be taking place towards the end of the summer period when MTCO is back from Annual Leave, including installation of new notice boards that will hold the new Shopping Guide.

3.2. 21stCT website is now being designed by the MTCO with support from Cllr Sonja Francis and Sue Martin-Downhill (chair of 21stCT). Once the basic structure is created regular posts will be added, linked to social media, to promote the organisation and try to attract new members.

3.3. Taste of Thame: Pentangle are creating a webpage for this to allow businesses and producers to sign up to the event which is booked to take place Saturday 30 May 2020.

3.4. Thame Art Crawl: Artists have been recruited and are currently being connected to relevant shops. Aim for their details to be released during September and website and social media updated accordingly. This work is allowing good relationships to be developed with business owners who have not previously engaged with the event.

3.5. After a very positive response from the survey about Children's Cinema, alongside a positive meeting with TC4A, 21stCT is supporting a pilot of 4 Children's Cinema events at The Players from September 2019 – March 2020. If this goes well further events will be delivered. Work will be done to try to get a leaflet into every child's book bag in each local primary school in Thame, and further afield where possible. The event will:

- provide another attraction to boost footfall to the town centre,
- increase the use of the The Players Theatre, boosting the profile of the opportunities on offer at this location at other times – including Thame Cinema for all;
- raise the profile of, and funds for the Red Kite Family Centre

4. **Other MTCO work**

4.1. The Gateway signs: we have requested that OCC explore whether they have funding to cover the cost of replacing the names of the Twin Towns as they failed to provide advice about lettering heights for signs, and approved the original designs which are inadequate.

4.2. Town Guides have been delivered to all business parks.

- 4.3. Work to get all the relevant positions for Christmas Lights locations will take place from the end of August. This will involve liaison with both landlords and tenants of each locations identified and confirmed

5. Visitor Economy Working Group (VEWG)

- 5.1. Visit Thame, Town Guide and Midsomer Murders leaflets have all been distributed to relevant locations – with a master list available now to identify locations and track how quickly flyers are being used.
- 5.2. The VEWG has decided the marketing priorities for the rest of the year:
 - We have cancelled our Experience Oxfordshire membership as it did not feel like a good use of money.
 - We have reduced the size of our advert in the Coach Drivers Companion, The Black Horse continues to support this with a 'Drivers Incentive' offer.
 - Visit Buckinghamshire & the Chilterns membership has been maintained
 - We have taken out a membership with Tourism South East.
 - We plan to re-print the Visit Thame flyer as the 10,000 printed have already been distributed. This will be subsidised by businesses offering a voucher to include, to attract more visitors to the town.
 - A postage budget has been created to allow us to send out an annual pack to accommodation providers within the local area, so that people staying near or in Thame know what they can do while they are here.
- 5.3. The Midsomer Murders Facebook page has seen a very quick rise in followers as a result of promotion of the site on the Official Fan page. This has seen several people enquire about the tours and declare that they will plan a visit to Thame into their trip to Britain, so we hope to see additional footfall in the town as a result.
- 5.4. Museum re-branding has been decided and a new website created. This will be launched soon.

6. Public Arts Working Group (PAWG)

- 6.1. Section 106 Public Art funding has been awarded to carry out an initial Wayfinding Strategy to identify the best locations for new pieces of Public Art around Thame. This will ensure that they are located in positions where they can play a part in aiding Wayfinding. This project will extend across the whole of Thame, but specific focus will be given to Lea Park and Thame Meadows.
- 6.2. Since Mary Stiles retired from the Council at the last election, this group no longer has a serving Councillor attending. It would be great to get someone to step in to take her place.

7. Thame Markets

- 7.1. Work has been done to promote Market Community Day to the wider Thame Community.
- 7.2. A Summer Market was held 26-28 July. This was run by the same group that delivered the very successful World Village Market. The event did not attract as many shoppers as before and there was one complaint from a local business owner that the markets were damaging to footfall to his business.

8. Other

- 8.1. Met with the Economic Development Team on 11 July who have suggested that work to promote the Visitor Economy may be something they are able to support again in the future. At present they are looking at updating the Visit Midsomer Website, and will look to include the Thame Midsomer Murders Tours FB page feed onto this site.

Action Required: For Councillors to note the report. For a Councillor to volunteer to join the Public Art Working Group.