

Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

Date:	09 November 2021
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 28 September 2021.

Update

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

Last met 28/10/21.

- 2.1. KPIs to monitor the health of Thame's town centre have been put on hold until after the new Town Clerk starts in her role. It is felt that these need to be owned by the Town Council as a whole rather than a working group. Otherwise, the risk is a lot of work and resources is put in to collecting data that is then not used, when this time could be better spent achieving other outcomes.
- 2.2. Thame Businesses Awards has also been put on hold. This would require a lot of effort and both Thame.net and Thame Rewards club are unlikely to be able to take on a share of this work, making it unachievable as MTCO capacity is already stretched.

3. **Partnership work with 21stCT**

- 3.1. Thame Art Crawl was a great success. Although the start of the week was quiet the Library reported an increase in numbers by 100% on the Saturday (an additional 200 people). During the event 2 businesses approached the MTCO to ask to be involved next year, and the new businesses involved this year have so far had very positive feedback – with one commenting on the fact that it drew people into their business who had never visited before. However, the event has grown too large for 1 person to run alone, so we are now recruiting volunteers to help with this. We currently have 2 admin support volunteers and a Social Media lead to help with this. Suzanna Fellows from fitch & fellows has also expressed a desire to take on more of a role as she steps back from Bucks Art Weeks. This year we used Venue Flags that were created to draw more attention to the event and help people find their way around. This definitely worked, with people talking about it more on social media and as stated above, other venues asking to take part next year.
- 3.2. Taste of Thame will launch in 2022 and a team of people are focused on making this happen. This has included recruitment of an additional 4 volunteers through the new monthly volunteer event being run at The Coffee House. The Black Horse has expressed an interest in being part of this team. We still need an event lead to chair the meetings to progress this project so if you are aware of anyone who may like this role, please pass on the details.
- 3.3. Volunteering Opportunities coffee mornings started in October, with the next one due to take place on 10th November. This is being supported to get more people involved in events and activities that will allow them to benefit the Town Centre of Thame for years to come.
- 3.4. Shopping Guides updates are underway.

4. Other MTCO work

- 4.1. Christmas event promoted through the creation of a booklet that has started to be delivered to homes in Thame. Implementation of the events will now take place.
- 4.2. Work on Town Guide starting to be ready for distribution January 2022. This picks up pace now to meet this deadline.
- 4.3. Thame Inner Circuit and Thame Outer Circuit Roundels still to be ordered. This needs a final walk for numbers to be confirmed. Then will be ordered before Christmas.
- 4.4. Statistics:
 - Monthly Business Newsletter: 268 subscribers, up from 259 at last report.
 - Weekly Town Council Newsletter: 1093 subscribers, up from 1080 subscribers last report.
 - Town Council Facebook page: 1362 followers up from 1328 at last report.

5. Visitor Economy Working Group (VEWG)

- 5.1. Meeting of this working group took place on 25/10/21. There has been real activity over the past years despite what we have faced. There is a lot in the pipeline for the future now that things are getting moving. As a group the Visit Thame flyer has been a hugely successful outcome and we need to ensure that this is able to continue. These leaflets fly off the shelf at almost every location they are placed in, and we need people to help to refill them regularly. Please continue to consider if you can play a small part. This could include distribution around Thame Town Centre to just 1 location. Every part played will allow us to achieve so much more in drawing people to Thame and supporting our Visitor Economy.

6. Public Arts

- 6.1. The 'Art leading Wayfinding' project is well underway. We are working towards 3 trails that both provide wayfinding, as well as a fun way to engage people in walking into town. These are:
 - Story Trail from Thame Meadows to town centre: already created the story through community workshops. Next step identifying locations for artwork/signs/benches etc and getting permission.
 - Fun Facts trail through Lea Park to town centre, Football Stadium/Skate Park and Rugby Club. Working with Barley Hill School to create artwork to be included in this. To begin shortly.
 - Poetry Trail from Wenman Road Housing estates, along the Phoenix Trail to town centre. Possibly a 2nd Phase project depending on budget.
- 6.2. The proposals for above will be presented to Thame Town Councils Public Art Working Group for approval and risk assessment as agreed in the Public Art Strategy and following successful completion will move into Phase 2 of fabrication and Implementation.

7. Thame Markets

- 7.1. Thame Farmers Market will be changing to 'Thame Produce Market' and rebranding is currently underway.
- 7.2. Due to capacity, we decided to use Love your Local Market to launch a series of articles in our newsletter introducing people to the market traders behind the stalls.

7.3. Bookings for specialty markets around the Town Hall are already being explored for next year as they are all keen to return.

8. Any other business

8.1. Cllr Emery has asked for a meeting to discuss the future of parking once OCC take it over, and how it might impact businesses. She will arrange a separate meeting to discuss this in more detail once we know what OCC are doing to consult on this. The meeting will determine what response the Town Centre Working Group might give to this consultation and what role it should play in supporting businesses to feed into this consultation.

8.2. Cllr Fickling will progress an issue of bins on pavements with Lisa Selby at South Oxfordshire District Council. She has sent photos of bins that are causing a nuisance in Thame but has yet to hear back.

Action Required:

To note this report. To consider taking on areas for leaflet delivery – even just one establishment.