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| Briefing Paper  To  Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Place)  On  20 July 2021 |
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| **TOWN CENTRE UPDATE** | |

**1. SUMMARY**

* 1. This briefing paper gives Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Place) an update on the services provided by Town Centre Operations.
     1. This format for giving members regular briefing papers to update on certain areas of interest has been agreed in consultation with a former Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Communities) Chairman and the former Corporate Director – Housing & Environment.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 In consulting on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Communities) work programme in November 2013, the former Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Communities) Chairman and Corporate Director – Housing & Environment agreed to place updates for members into an easy-to-understand format of briefing papers.

2.2 The areas in this paper are bullet-points for Town Centre Operations.

**3. MARKETS**

3.1 Market Stall Occupancy Rates

The stall occupancy rates are not comparable to the same period in 2020//21 due to the 1st lockdown and the restriction of essential retail only being allowed to trade.

Unfortunately at the time of producing the report the 2019/20 occupancy levels were not available due to a corrupt file.

3.2 Market Income

The income for markets is not comparable to the same period in 20/21 due to lockdown 1 as the total income for Quarter 1 was only £2,964. Therefore, to give an indication on recovery the income has been compared to the same period in 2019/20.

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|  | **Apr - June** | |
| **Year** | **Income** | **% change** |
| 2019/20 | £40,137 | - |
| 2021/22 | £17,390 | -57% |

The staff also continue to sanitise the stalls each evening and alternative waste disposal continues to be in operation to reduce the risk to staff from handling it. Once the trader occupies the stall each day they are then responsible for the sanitisation of the stall and ensuring they manage their queues and customer safety.

We are currently working on plans to return the market layout to the pre-Covid layout / allocations with some potential minor changes if all traders are in agreement and it doesn’t affect seniority of allocations ready for the planned easing of restrictions on the 19th July.

New market canvasses have been delivered and once the layout has been finalised new rain gutters will be ordered, with a view to both being changed together.

The trade waste bins and fencing will also be removed and staff will revert to collecting the market waste from the stalls.

**4. CAR PARKS**

4.1 Car Park Income

The income for car parking is not comparable to the same period in 20/21 due to lockdown 1 as the total income for Quarter 1 was only £329. Therefore, to give an indication on recovery the income has been compared to the same period in 2019/20.

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|  | **Apr - Jun** | |
| **Year** | **Income** | **% change** |
| 2019/20 | £393,198 |  |
| 2021/22 | £172,585 | -56% |

Walkden Street car park cladding works are completed but there is still some remedial work to be completed i.e. safety fencing of which there is no confirmed installation date.

In addition to this work there are also concrete structural defects on Level 2 to the waffle slabbing and also to some concrete pillars etc. which is awaiting tender responses. As soon as they have been received a work programme will be developed.

Once those works are completed there is still a significant amount of remedial works that needs to take place in the form of painting, re-commissioning services, i.e. lifts, dry risers, car park equipment etc. which could not be done by our own staff.

With regards to the cleaning, painting, dry riser, re-commissioning car park barriers / ticket machines all quotes have now been received and are ready for orders to be placed as soon as we receive a completion date. Where work can be carried out parallel to other works that will be arranged to avoid further delays.

Facilities Management are arranging the re-commissioning of the lifts, Fire Risk Assessment and repairs to fire escape from the lift winding house.

Virtual Permits

Funding has been secured to transfer car parking season tickets to a virtual self-service permit system, which will provide a better service for customers, reduce the use of paper and minimise the administrative burden for the town centre team.

A meeting took place on 25June 2021 to look at the Portal and how each system works, some minor adjustments to be made, with expected testing system available in two weeks and anticipated roll out early August.

Cashless Parking

We are in the process of renewing the contract for the RingGo pay by phone system which is available on all 19 surface car parks and as part of that process we will be refreshing signage and putting together a new communications plan to encourage take up of the service.

In addition to the RingGo system there are card payment machines available in Water Meadows, Clumber Street and Walkden Street (when it re-opens) currently and there will be card and contactless machines installed at Toothill Road, Mansfield and Mansfield Woodhouse train stations in the next 2 months.

**5. SHOPMOBILITY**

The Shopmobility service was closed during the 1st lockdown, but re-opened in late June 2020 and has continued to operate throughout from the shop unit in the Four Seasons shopping centre.

Therefore, there is no comparable income, however, the income for the 1st Quarter 21/22 has been compared to the same period in 19/20 to give an indication of recovery.

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|  | **Apr - Jun** | |
| **Year** | **Income** | **% change** |
| 2019/20 | £1,049 | - |
| 2021/22 | £267 | -75% |

**6. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The charges for using public conveniences were waived at the start of the Covid pandemic to ensure that people had access to facilities whilst lots of businesses were closed and to encourage hand washing to reduce the risk of transmission. The charges have not been re-instated due to a problem with the paddle gates and availability of parts.

This was chased again on the 9th July and awaiting a response from the contractor.

**7. FOOTFALL**

As footfall cannot be compared to 20/21, the table below shows the comparison of the 1st Quarter data from 19/20 to 21/22. The decrease in footfall over the quarter is 27.5% which is a drop of 416,491 visitors to the town centre.

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|  | **Apr - Jun** | |
| **Year** | **Footfall** | **% change** |
| 2019/20 | 1.51m | - |
| 2021/22 | 1.10m | -27.5% |

**8. WELCOME BACK FUND**

The Activity Plan was submitted to MHCLG on the 28th May highlighting the planned activities across the district with indicative costs aligned to each section. We should be informed by the end of July if the plan has been accepted and work can commence.

A site visit and meeting with Warsop Parish Council was held and further site visits for Mansfield Woodhouse and Forest Town are booked with Via for the 26th July.

The parameters for how the money is spent if quite restrictive and can include repairs, beautification, temporary installations or events, signage, business support etc. but it cannot be used to gain a permanent asset.

All partners are being consulted on the project including Warsop Parish Council, Via, Mansfield BID, Four Seasons shopping centre and the Police.

**9. URBAN GREENING PROJECT**

* Site visits carried out to discuss design details for 5 priority sites and revised pricing schedule received.
* Meeting held on 28 June 2021 with Edge / Via to discuss each project / price and agree scope.
* Edge / Via progressing to detailed design stage, with fortnightly update meetings to be scheduled.
* Updated feasibility cost plan, indicative high level project programme, Edge / Via fee proposals and scope of works received 8th July.
* Multiple conversations with Via Assets / Structures teams carried out regarding options for steps & ramp from old bus station to Walkden Street pocket park (Tesco Valley).

**10. EVENTS**

The first event of the agreed programme for 2021, Comedy of Errors was held in Titchfield Park on Sunday, 4th July. Despite the inclement weather the turnout was still good and the feedback from those that attended was good.

The Bee Kind project in the town centre has been taking place from 28th May, with bee friendly planting across the town (and wider district), QR codes for bee and conservation information, and letters to identify a word to enter a prize draw and has been extended to the end of August so it operates throughout the school holidays.

This is being supported by the Four Seasons shopping centre through their Bee Club children’s activities and market traders have been handing out packets of wildflowers to people who shop on the market.

Town Centre staff have also been supporting the Tidy Together campaign by deep cleaning car parks and painting street furniture such as bollards and benches. This work will continue throughout the summer months until completed.

Work is currently being undertaken to re-commission the fountain with a view to it being operational by the end of July once restrictions have been lifted and to align with school holidays.

It may still be summer, but Christmas planning is underway! The Christmas lighting licences have been submitted to NCC and some new decorations have been ordered for Mansfield, Warsop and Mansfield Woodhouse, with installations planned to commence end of September.

**11. STAFFING**

The team continue to deliver high quality services across the town centre and operate within the current restrictions.

There are two staff who are absent due to long term sickness, which does have an impact on what work can be achieved as they are only two teams of 7 staff per team, which when coupled with holidays and any short term sickness does limit their capacity.

They also continue to support other departments as much as possible with events or requests for gazebo’s etc.

**12. COMMENTS OF HEAD OF SERVICE**

12.1 The Town Centre Team have continued to work hard through each lockdown and re-opening stage ensuring this has been done in a professional and safe manner along with key partners.

They are also involved in multiple funding projects which will culminate in significant changes to the urban landscape of the town over the next 12 to 18 months, in addition to their normal duties.

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