

Report to: Events and Town Centre
Management Committee

Report Ref: E1916
Meeting Date: 27th April 2020
Agenda Item: 6
Prepared By: Town Centre and Marketing Officer



Subject: Town Centre Management Report

1.1 TASTE KNUTSFORD

Overall, the tours from 2019-20 financial year end made £329.66 profit and there have been 22 glowing Trip Advisor reviews and a mention within Knutsford's entry in The Sunday Times 'Best Places to Live 2020'. At the end of the 2019/20 financial year, there was £1,575 of gift vouchers to be redeemed which have been carried forward into the 2020/21 financial year.

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer has re-recruited Booths back to the tour and discussion have taken place with two other venues which are interested in joining.

The outbreak of COVID19 resulted in the cancellation of the April and May tours and it is anticipated that the June tours may also be cancelled. Refunds have been provided to those who did not wish to transfer their booking to an alternative date. The Town Centre and Marketing Officer will programme additional tours when it is possible.

1.2 FREE PARKING DAY

The last free parking day was planned to be used on Saturday May 16th to coincide with the start of *Love your Local Market* fortnight, Knutsford Heritage Centre Open Day to celebrate 20 years of the tapestry and a Taste Knutsford tour. The TCMO was to work with the retailers to offer content for the day. This day has now been postponed and will possibly form part of a wider celebration/promotion after lockdown.

1.3 LANDLORDS FORUM

A meeting was held in March with Cllr Houghton, the Town Centre and Marketing Officer and 13 representatives from letting agents and landlords within Knutsford. The idea behind the meeting was to open a dialogue with these key stakeholders in the same way the council has with retailers and businesses. Key points discussed were:

- Timpson Report
- Future High Streets 2030
- Current vacancy rate in Knutsford (which stands at 7%)
- Retailer, B2B and consumer confidence
- Current 'let status' of the vacant units

Both TCMO and the Forum of Private Business cited examples where landlords had offered support to fledging businesses and asked if this was possible within Knutsford.

The meeting agreed that:

- The Town Council should carry on 'doing what it is doing' with regards to events and promotions as these were a major selling point to businesses coming into the town
- The Town Centre and Marketing Officer would develop a 'tenants support pack' including testimonials from current businesses along with events for letting agents to utilise as part of marketing premises.
- Once robust reports are generated, benchmarking reports would be provided to support marketing the Town Centre
- The Town Centre and Marketing Officer would organise the 'pop-ups' for the building formerly used by Topps Tiles (in progress) as agreed with Fisher German.

Other suggestions from landlords were

- Improvements to the roads and footpaths on Princess and King Street
- Free parking for one hour
- More planters and landscaping (the Town Ranger was praised for the work he does)
- Electronic advertising boards to promote shops
- More regular buses to bring people into town and reduce the strain on parking.

It was noted from the majority of those present that they were not in favour of the 'Top to Bottom Street' proposals. The Town Centre and Marketing Officer referred them to the link on the website to ensure their views were recorded.

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer is to arrange a one to one meeting with one landlord who couldn't attend but wanted to and it is envisaged the next meeting will be in June.

1.4 DIGITAL KNUTSFORD

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer has been researching digital options for Knutsford that would allow customers to 'shop local' and support Knutsford retailers outside normal trading hours.

Appendix One gives a breakdown of the feedback from the simple ShopAppy Survey which took place in January. Although commissioned in conjunction with ShopAppy the responses can be used to gauge consumer interest in digital options generally. The Town Centre and Marketing Officer will be asking Shop Appy and Shocal to present to local retailers in the future. However, both options require further in-depth research, retailer buy in, sponsorship, promotion and a full integration plan.

Since lockdown a website has been produced in conjunction with Boxed Red Marketing, more information on this is provided in report E1917.

1.5 FIVER FEST/TOTALLY LOCALLY

A total of 21 retailers took place in the above and the Town Centre and Marketing Officer is currently collating feedback. So far three have responded they would take part again and two have declined. Town Centre and Marketing Officer is chasing the remaining participants but has noted the weather

was particularly bad during the two-week period and those who had a successful campaign were the ones who conducted their own marketing campaign alongside the council's. The next fiver fest is in June and it is envisaged that the town will take part again if restrictions have been lifted.

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer has been informed that the cost to become part of Totally Locally has gone from zero to £4,000 and on that basis has decided not to look to exploring taking part any further. As an alternative the Town Centre and Marketing Officer has briefed Bella Marketing and Design to produce a range of bespoke 'shop local' poster and marketing collateral that can be used by all retailers as well as the council specifically to promote Knutsford. These will be launched at an appropriate time.

1.6 RETAILER TRAINING

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer had set dates with Kevin Jardine of the Retail Excellence Partnership from April through to October to run a series of workshops which will focus on the following topics –

- Introduction (good retail is thriving)
- Leadership
- Planning for Success
- Know your customers
- Marketing
- Sales & Service
- Performance & Operational Measurement

It is anticipated that these workshops will be launched in the Autumn.

1.8 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Town Centre and Marketing Officer has contacted two businesses from Northwich and Altrincham BIDs to have a roundtable discussion with Knutsford businesses. Initial discussions have started with Revive and Thrive about a feasibility study options. The roundtable discussions were planned for May but will be rescheduled. Business Improvement Districts have been hit by the Covid-19 outbreak and in the changes in business rates and the Town Centre and Marketing Officer is researching how BIDs have responded to the outbreak.

1.9 BENCHMARKING

A plan was in place to undertake benchmarking within the town centre on 17th and 20th June and 4th and 7th November. The Town Centre and Marketing Officer is currently obtaining costs and will review the most appropriate dates for data to be collected once lockdown is over. A business confidence survey that was due to be sent in April has been postponed.

APPENDIX ONE

Digital research

Shop Appy Background

www.shopappy.com

Shop Appy has been in existence since 2017 and will be launching their 29th town (Walsall) in April. It is a website that allows consumers to order and pay direct for goods and collect them from the shop or from a central collection point in the town centre. A town centre can have up to 5 collection points (including one with a refrigeration point). The website also acts as an advertising window to attract footfall and spend – checking what is on offer etc.

Shocal

<https://www.shocal.org>

Shocal is an App that launched in 2019 in Urmston and was recommended by a Knutsford business who lives in that town. Put simply it is a local 'Deliveroo' delivering products (food and non-food) to consumers from independent shops. It employs local drivers to deliver and drives footfall into the town by giving users 'bonus points' or vouchers to spend in a physical shop

January 2020 Research

63 responses

A simple questionnaire was commissioned in conjunction with Shop Appy to research and gauge initial interest in a website that allows consumers to order from local shops and offer a variety of collection options.

These responses form the basis of on-going research to decide if Knutsford could have a retail on-line offer (across all retail) what would be the best option for the town. The best option may not be ShopAppy.

The simple questionnaire garnered the following 63 responses:

How might you use Shop Appy? (multi choice)

59% Use it to browse and buy

68% Click and collect from a single collection point after opening hours

- 43% Click and collect from a single collection point during opening hours
- 27% Click and collect from individual shops
- 6% I would never use it
- 1% I would use it to browse what is available

ShopAppy enables you to book appointments, events and services from local businesses, how might you use it?

- 78% I will use it to browse what services are available
- 73% I will use it to book appointments, make restaurant bookings and book events
- 5% I will never use it

Respondents watched a small clip of a video describing Shop Appy and commented. The full range of comments can be found here. A sample of comments includes –

- Fantastic idea to support local shops. Easy to collect all shopping from one collection point. Would love to use this, particularly if shops reduced their plastic packaging
- Fantastic idea to support local shops. Easy to collect all shopping from one collection point.
- Great idea for people who work and still want to buy locally with out of hours collection
- I love this idea! A perfect hybrid of online shopping and supporting local shops. I already use other click and collect services from shops in the area, so I'd definitely use this as well.
- Useless for Knutsford, as people can walk and buy what they need. Also, the number of shops is declining as rent is so high that not sustainable and City Council is not doing anything to fix it
- Good idea - I don't shop local that much due to opening hours so could work for me
- Good idea in general. I would probably use it more just to click and collect from the individual shops. If you buy say refrigerated goods like in the video for click and collect out of hours from a single point, would they be stored correctly until pick up?