

# REPORT TO TOWN CENTRE COMMITTEE

## TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Report Reference** T-24-014  
**Meeting Date** 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024  
**Agenda Item** 6  
**Prepared by** Town Centre Manager

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### 1.0 INITIATIVES AND FOOTFALL EVENTS

#### 1.1 FESTIVE SUNDAY

This took place on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December and was aimed at offering a leisurely shopping experience mainly centred on King Street with a small amount of entertainment.

The feedback was mixed, for example:

##### **Shop A**

*After seeing you on Sunday things did pick up so I would say it was definitely worth opening for. I stopped opening Sunday's in December except the last Sunday before Christmas a few years ago as it was an utter waste of time. This Festive Sunday was possibly 3 times the amount of sales any of those other Sunday's in past years ever took, excluding the one closest to Christmas. From the people I asked all but one especially came because they had heard about Festive Sunday. They all said they came to get into the Christmas spirit and atmosphere, so the entertainment and shops and cafes having mulled wine and other such festiveness was the pull, I think rather than the specific opportunity to shop on a Sunday. They seemed to like the closed road as families who had met for Sunday lunch, whether out or at their own homes could stroll around much easier in a group. Several commented that they saw the band but were expecting them to be out and about so didn't watch them as they were in the mood for wandering and pondering.*

##### **Shop B**

*We were dead in the morning and get busier later in the afternoon. When I nipped onto king street there didn't seem to be much of a Christmas shopping vibe it just felt like a normal shopping day but with a road closure. It would have been nice to have had some stalls but of shops that are in knutsford rather than an external market, not all down king street but just to make it feel more like a Christmas shopping day. We also had a few customers complaining that shops that had specifically come in for weren't open on king street which was disappointing.*

The Town Centre Manager did speak to some shoppers who had mobility issues who stated it was 'the first time we've felt safe enough to venture down King Street'. The entertainment was lacklustre and some shops did not stay open. Overall, the TCM does not propose to repeat the event. Instead, there will be a focus on a two month 'Festive Knutsford' campaign that promotes shopping rather than a specific shopping event. The Christmas Advent videos will also be reviewed as part of this campaign.

The TCM has asked for feedback from a cross-section of shops regarding Christmas but hasn't received enough as yet for this report. It will be included in the next report.

## 1.2 HEALTH AND WELLNESS WEEK

At the time of writing this is taking place (Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January) with a focus on:

- Nutrition
- Physical Health and Fitness
- Mental Health.

There has been a good response to this event with many slots fully booked although the more specialist ones have had less bookings. The Town Council has been contacted by numerous local health and wellbeing specialists' who have been added to the programme. Once the week has been evaluated, a decision will be made if this becomes a permanent part of our town centre programme.

## 2.0 ONGOING INITIATIVES / UPDATES

Work is progressing with regards to:

- Take a Seat
- Business Recognition Awards
- Feeding Charter

All of these should launch in February. The feeding charter has been renamed after feedback from Knutsford Mum Club to ensure the scheme is inclusive to all (bottle feeding, fathers, grandparents etc.)

### 2.1 BUSINESS SKILLS WORKSHOPS

A programme of workshops has been distributed and is as follows:

| Topic                                | Date                      | Delivered by                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Introduction to Visual Merchandising | 13 <sup>th</sup> February | Sue Cottingham of D&S Living     |
| Instagram Reels                      | 21 <sup>st</sup> February | Hannah Locke, Scene in Knutsford |
| Introduction to TikTok               | 21 <sup>st</sup> March    | Bella Marketing & Design         |
| SEO & PPC                            | 27 <sup>th</sup> March    | Mike Lyon of Agenda 97           |

Two further workshops are to be finalised – Social Media MOT delivered by 438 Marketing and Work Station Assessment delivered by Carmichael Clinic.

### 2.2 SHOPPING CHAMPION VIDEOS

The above videos are continuing with 21 videos completed so far and a mix of shops represented. Two more are currently in the pipeline. This initiative will continue if there are willing participants and if any members wish to take part, please contact the Communications Officer.

### **2.3 KNUTSFORD VOUCHER**

£1,600 worth of £10 vouchers and £220 of £5 vouchers have been sold this financial year. Additional promotion of the voucher scheme has been included in the new branding tender for 2024-2027 period.

### **3.0 TASTE KNUTSFORD**

Taste Knutsford does not run tours during December and January. There is currently 6 people booked on the February and March tours plus a private corporate tour. A marketing plan has been prepared to promote the tours in 2024.

The TCM has a meeting with Linden Stores to bring them into the tour.

### **4.0 TOWN CENTRE SNAPSHOT AND VACANCIES**

Sigiriya is opened mid-November and a new fashion boutique on Minshall Street just before Christmas. A deli/grocers/wine store is scheduled to open on Church Hill within the next couple of months. Flat Cap Hotels entered into administration during January and Aperture Doors has also announced its closure.

The vacancy rate is approximately 7.3%

### **5.0 KNUTSFORD MARKET HALL**

It has been documented elsewhere that it has been a difficult period within the Market Hall with the departure of Jonty's Fruit and Veg.

The current market traders are as follows:

- Knutsford Market Hall Butcher
- Nyxcat Crystals
- The Market Café
- Slipped Discs
- The Market Barber
- Knutsford Mobile
- KHD Thai
- M&J Cards (which closes early February)

The TCM has secured pop-ups from a sportswear provider, yoga equipment and CEC's Health Watch (as part of wellness week) with further meetings with a vintage store and a pet photographer. The TCM has also gathering a list of potential traders for the newly refurbished market and this is before any proactive advertising.

A small group of traders were shown around 60 King Street on 16<sup>th</sup> January and had very positive

feedback. The Market Hall Butcher is due to view the premises on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. The TCM is developing a marketing plan for the year.

## **6.0 BANKING HUB**

There has been no update regarding the implementation of the Deposit Service for businesses from Cash Access UK, despite the Town Centre Manager chasing.

## **7.0 BENCHMARKING**

A programme of benchmarking took place on 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December with both questionnaires and footfall counts. A brief snapshot once again shows the main concerns were:

- Parking
- Narrow pavements
- Pedestrianisation
- Mobility access.

Interestingly, lack of amenities for teenagers was also highlighted. The final programme will take place in March and will be footfall counts only. These final programmes will be reported together.

## **8.0 SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

### **8.1 BID FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Three tenders were received for this work and after scoring by the Town Clerk and TCM the tender was awarded to the Mosaic Partnership.

An initial meeting was held with the partnership and the TCM and Communications Officer. This also included a tour of the town centre and an initial discussion regarding setting the 'BID map'. TCM has urgently requested rate information from CEC and is collating a list of businesses, retail and landlords for the partnership to meet with. A presentation with both businesses and councillors will be held in the near future.

### **8.2 DEVELOPMENT OF A PLACE BRAND**

Invitation to tenders have been sent to six marketing and brand specialists with a deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> January.

### **8.3 EXPANSION OF DISCOVER KNUTSFORD WORKSTREAM**

Subject to final signoff by Cheshire East Council, the Town Council should be awarded an

additional £15,500 under the fund to:

- Renew the town centre visitor information boards
- Deliver a programme of social media marketing to promote Knutsford
- Develop the Heritage Open Days event planned for September 2024
- Advertise Knutsford on the Visit Chester and Cheshire website

#### **8.4 TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN FEASIBILITY STUDIES**

11 tenders were received for these studies, following appraisal and scoring by the Town Clerk (with the Town Centre Masterplan working group invited to input) Hydrock have been appointed to deliver all aspects. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.