

## Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>6 October 2020</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>TCWG: Market Town Co-ordinator Update</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Becky Reid, Market Town Co-ordinator</b>

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide an overview of the current focus of work and action taken since 20 March 2020.

### Update

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

Due to Covid-19 this group moved to regular meetings by Zoom. During this time attention moved from set targets to work that aimed to support Thame through Lockdown and through the restrictions that Covid-19 has created. There were some key focuses:

**2.1.** Creation of a Recovery Plan for Thame. This was based on a model that the Institute of Place Management (IPM) created, and was advocated by the Governments High Street Task Force as a good practice way to support towns through the Covid crisis. The group

- Implemented actions to ensure the safe re-opening of the town centre
- Met with the Transport Plan Working Group to develop a proposal for a one way system around the town centre that was submitted to OCC. No response to date on whether this will be implemented.
- Ensured communication with residents about this Recovery Plan and action being taken with a webpage created for people to feed in their ideas.
- Communicated businesses opening times to residents by working in partnership with Thame Rewards Club
- Developed an on-line businesses community through Basecamp (Continuation of this now needs to be reviewed)
- Ensured a regular flow of information to businesses throughout Lockdown, and through re-opening
- Created relevant posters and publicity to support town centre businesses to re-open, meeting all guidelines
- Implemented a Lockdown Love Awards scheme to celebrate the resilience and community spirit shown through lock down by residents, charities and businesses.
- Delivered events such as Monster Heroes Safari and Thame Lockdown Treasure Hunts to keep people connected to our town centre.
- Delivered a Shop Local Campaign in partnership with Thame Rewards Club
- Supported the development of ShopOX9 Directory in return for free Town Centre listings across the site.

**2.2.** Through this time the MTCO carried out a large amount of online training, joining IPM and attending webinars to learn about what was happening elsewhere that could be brought to Thame. This has been useful and will inform future work. There is especially work to be done to consider how the views and needs of businesses might influence the direction of the work being done by the MTCO, and possibly even feed into the development of a corporate strategy for the Town Council as a whole.

**2.3.** MTCO work was otherwise largely put on hold. Work that now needs to be re-started includes:

- Create KPIs for the town centre
- practical training courses for businesses who have expressed an interest or individual support
- Create a database of Town Centre Landlords
- Implement footfall counters (if still relevant)
- Customer Survey analysis
- Business survey analysis – although the landscape is now so different consideration needs to be given to redoing this.
- Business Awards (a possible partnership activity with Thame Rewards Club)

**2.4.** Work is in progress to organise Christmas Activities that draw people to the town centre in a way that meets all safety requirements for Covid. This will include printing a guide to be delivered to each home in Thame and the MTCO is currently exploring the potential of running this in partnership with Shop OX9 directory to support local businesses.

### **3. Partnership work with 21stCT**

**3.1.** Thame Trees has been on hold, but now have 420 saplings to get planted in November. A meeting about next steps is required.

**3.2.** Taste of Thame. This event was cancelled we will explore running it in May 2021 instead

**3.3.** Thame Wedding Show (4 Oct 2020) was cancelled and we will explore running in in October 2021 instead.

**3.4.** Thame Art Crawl is going ahead as a predominantly window-only display from 15 – 18 October 2020. This is now being organised and taking up a lot of capacity of the MTCO at this time. There is also the opportunity to continue the exhibition in Thame Museum from November – December 2020.

### **4. Other MTCO work**

**4.1.** Town Guide: this will now be printed in Jan 2021 at the earliest, however due to the potential 6 months of further restrictions we may push it to March 2021 when it is clearer whether or not town events will go ahead in 2021.

**4.2.** Monthly newsletter to benefit the businesses: still being delivered with subscribers up to 183

**4.3.** MTCO set up a Town Council Facebook page at the start of Lockdown to enable better communication across the town. This now has a following of over 760 people and climbing slowly.

**4.4.** MTCO has played a part in supporting the launch of the Green Living Plan which has taken more capacity than anticipated

**4.5.** Twinning signs: Cllr Linda Emery was successful in securing funding from Cllr Nick Carter to update the Twinning signs after OCC did not advise us correctly about letter height needed for these. This is now being progressed.

### **5. Visitor Economy Working Group (VEWG)**

**5.1.** No meetings have taken place since lockdown

### **6. Public Arts Working Group (PAWG)**

**6.1.** Wayfinding Map is completed. This has included TCWG members, Lea Park and Green Living Group and the full report is attached here as an appendix.

**6.2.** Work is now being done to get together an Artists brief for expressions of interest to create the wayfinding needed that has been identified. This will be artistic in nature, but practical in implementation, helping to encourage people to walk or cycle rather than always get in their cars. It will also include notice boards, possibly benches and other installations that will meet practical needs, as well as the possibility of some art that exists for its own sake.

**6.3.** Funding is in place and much of it is ready to draw down from SODC. We are working closely with them

**7. Thame Markets**

7.1. Market: promotion of safety measures in place has been ongoing throughout Lockdown.

**8. SODC**

8.1. We have applied for funding through Covid-19 grant schemes but have yet to hear how we will be supported through this work

**Action Required:** For Councillors to note the report and read the Wayfinding Report.