

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

7 MARCH 2012

HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

TOWN CENTRE- PERFORMANCE & PORTAS REVIEW

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For members to note and comment on the Annual Town Centre Benchmarking report 2011.
- 1.2 Members to note The Portas Review and after considering the recommendations identified in the report suggest areas of focus that will inform future projects and the Economic Development Strategy and the application for a 'Portas Pilot'

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members note and comment on the Annual Town Centre Benchmarking report**
- 2.2 **Members note and comment on the 'The Portas Review'.**
- 2.3 **Members consider the summary of recommendations and suggest area of focus for projects and strategic development.**
- 2.4 **Members delegate to the Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods the final submission to DCLG on the 'Portas pilot' application scheme.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Town centre performance and benchmarking.

Benchmarking data is collected on a quarterly and annual basis within the town centre, with the aim of providing consistent data to monitor the town centre's performance. Data collection comprises 12 key performance indicators, which include Business Confidence surveys, Visitor surveys, Footfall counts, Car park usage, Vacant unit rate etc. (See Appendix A for KPI's). This report seeks to provide a full evaluation of the town centre's performance, and to compare performance on a year on year basis. It also seeks to offer comparison with other comparable market towns, both across Leicestershire and East Midlands and to compare performance against national statistics.

- 3.2 The data is collected predominantly by visual surveys and counts (footfall and car park usage), individual surveys and consultation (business confidence, visitor surveys, postcode origins, retail yields, vacant units etc). Car park usage and footfall counts are recorded in April and May each year, at the same times and town centre sites. Other surveys and data are collected in September. This seeks to provide a more comprehensive and accurate year on year comparison, and is also so for the other Leicestershire and East Midlands comparator towns.

3.3 Within the Melton Town Centre Report 2011 (Appendix A), the town centre performance is also compared against the national average and East Midlands Comparator group. It is worth noting, that the national average in this report refers to the average of all those towns taking part in the benchmarking, and not the UK national average.

3.4 The information contained within the Annual report is captured as a year on year Comparison and this is attached as Appendix B. Some of the key issues this shows are:

- Vacancy rates have been fairly consistent over the last 3 years and still perform better than the regional and national average.
- Business turnover has either increased (54%) or stayed the same (24%) for 78% of businesses.
- Similar outcomes for Business profit. Both significantly higher than the national average.
- 88% of businesses expect their turnover to increase or stay the same.
- Rental values/premises costs remains the biggest barrier to growth.
- Shoplifting has increased
- 93% of people surveyed think the town is very good or good in regards to physical appearance
- Although the vast majority think the town is clean nearly a quarter rate the town as poor or very poor.
- 47% rate the variety of shops as poor.
- Leisure & culture activities in the town are rated as poor or very poor by the majority.

3.5 A further analysis of this information compared to other town in the county/region is attached as Appendix C. This shows:

- A low number of vacancy units
- Second highest performance in regards to turnover increasing
- Good expectations of turnover increasing next year, however, lower than some other areas in the county.

3.6 Portas review

In March 2011, central government asked Mary Portas to conduct an independent review into the state of the high streets and town centres. This is attached as Appendix D.

3.7 The review recognised the growth of online retailing, the rise of mobile relating and the improving ability of the major national and international retailers to meet changing consumer behaviour.

3.8 A clear focus of the review was to tackle the rising rate of vacancy units in town centres and consumer spend away from town centres, whilst acknowledging some high streets are thriving.

3.9 The review highlights what [Mary Portas view] has led to the decline in the high street, vision for the future and some ideas of what needs to be done to deliver that vision.

3.10 As part of members consideration of this review, members are asked to suggest some area of focus from the 28 summary of recommendations within the review report, which is attached as Appendix E

3.11 Portas Pilot

On the 4 February 2012 the department of communities and Local Government launched the 'Portas pilot' Prospectus: an invitation to become a Town Team Appendix F). This is

not the Governments response to the Portas review, which is due in the Spring, however, it responds to a key recommendation from the review:

Put in place a “Town Team”: a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets

- 3.12 DCLG are offering local partnerships the opportunity to become pilot areas to test the 'Town Team' approach and pilot some of the other ideas and recommendations set out in the Mary Portas Review. They are a competition for local partnerships to bid for a share of £1 million. It is the intention of the council to lead on a bid working with our copartners' and the Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District. The application is attached as appendix G and members are asked for their comments and to delegate to the head of Communities & Neighborhoods to develop the final submission to DCLG.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Councils Corporate Plan identifies as priorities:

- Support people and businesses through the economic downturn
- Maximise the potential of Melton Mowbray Town centre

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or other resource implications directly arising from this report. However, members are asked to note, that as part of the initiatives that will be developed out of the emerging Economic Development Strategy, progressing some of the recommendations out of the Portas review and the submission for to be a 'Town Team' will require resources.

5.2 There are some resources associated with the sale of Nottingham Road, which relate to specifically to the town centre and are not part of the capital receipt, and a further report will be brought back to this committee if and when those resources have been allocated.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no community safety issues directly arising from this report.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 No direct links have been identified from recommendations within this report, any projects and initiatives developed, will be subject to their own Equalities Impacts assessment.

9.0 **RISKS**

9.1 As section 4 highlights, corporate priorities are subject to a service and corporate risk register contained in the Communities & Neighbourhoods Service Plan 2011/12.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 The Portas review has been developed from a culmination of more than six months' work, visits to many high streets and over 2,000 online comments.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer Harrinder Rai – Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods

Date: 27th February 2012

Appendices : A- Melton Mowbray 2011 Town centre Annual report
 B- Market Town Benchmarking report year on year comparison
 C- 201 town centre benchmarking County Comparison
 D- The Portas Review
 E- Portas Review recommendations
 F- Portas pilot prospectus
 G- Portas review Pilot Application Form

Background Papers: None

Reference : REEA/2011-12/070312/HR- Town Centre- Performance and Portas Review