AGENDA ITEM 10

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

29th MAY 2013

HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

AMT TOWN CENTRE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2012

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 For members to note and comment on the AMT Town Centre Performance Report 2012, comparing performance against other comparable market towns across the East Midlands and against national statistics.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **Members to note and comment on the AMT Town Centre Performance Report 2012.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 <u>Town centre performance and benchmarking.</u>

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 year on year performance. Data collection comprises 12 key performance indicators, which include business confidence surveys, town centre user surveys, footfall counts, car park usage, vacant unit rates etc. This report seeks to provide a full evaluation of the town centre's performance, and to compare performance on a year on year basis with comparable market towns in the East Midlands and 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 September each year, at the same times and at the same town centre locations. Town Centre User/Visitor Surveys were distributed in May/June 2012 to 22,000 Borough residents. The remaining surveys and data are collected in September each year, to provide a more comprehensive and accurate year on year comparison.

3.3 Within the Town Centre Performance Report 2012 (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 Key comparisons within the report include:

- Independent businesses continue to represent a high proportion of Melton's town centre businesses at 68% in comparison with other large towns; also indicative of the town centre's USP and business start up trend. This is reflective of the high business longevity within the town centre, with 67% of businesses being within the town centre for more than 10 years (56% nationally). 50% of businesses surveyed in 2012 were also planning to grow their business over the next year, with 22% increasing employee numbers.

- Vacancy rates have been consistently below the AMT regional and national averages over the last year, reaching 7.7% in September. Current national surveys show a vacancy rate of 10.4% and an East Midlands rate of 10.9%.

- Footfall figures have also been consistent over the year, with high footfall on a Tuesday/market day, though below the East Midlands town average.

- Car park occupancy on a Tuesday reflects the continued successful draw of the town's markets in driving footfall and occupancy to the town centre, with occupancy far higher than the regional and national average. This is also reflective of the visitor survey results, with 80% of town centre users visiting the town centre by car and high ratings of town centre accessibility. Car parking costs remain an issue however, with 79% of businesses rating costs as unsatisfactory or poor.

- Business turnover and profit figures have shown a decrease in 2012, but 38% expect a turnover increase over the next 12 months. Sustained business turnover and profitability in 2012 however has been above regional and national comparisons.

- Increasing business costs, rental values and lack of funding for investment remain key barriers for businesses and growth. Local labour pool and staff skills are also significant growth barriers, indicatively higher than regional and national averages.

- Highly rated positive aspects however of the town centre included ease of walking, convenience and restaurants, which was comparative to other town/national averages.

- Business support requests in 2012 have included business premises improvements, staff training, networking events/seminars and promotional/marketing. Free social media workshops were open to Borough-wide businesses in 2012/13 and to date have been attended by 156 businesses. Business Support Grants are available to town centre businesses in 2013 to offer funding support with business premises improvements.

- Competition, particularly local business competition is high at 65% and notably higher again than the regional and national averages of 15% and 17% respectively.

- Business crime figures in 2012 are comparative to national and regional figures, though criminal damage is significantly higher. 85% of businesses rate the daytime safety in the town centre as unsatisfactory or poor, which may reflect the rise in daytime retail theft.

- Visitor surveys show a significant increase of visits to the town for shopping (73%) compared to 26% regionally and 29% nationally. Also to access services (34%), market (58%) and leisure (58%).

- Comparatively, a high proportion of visitors visit the town weekly (54%) and predominantly by car (80%), compared to 39% and 52% regionally/nationally.

- 75% of visitors rate the physical appearance of the town centre as very good/good/average and 88% for cleanliness; above other averages.

- 57% rate the variety of shops as poor and very poor, reflecting need for greater retail mix in the town centre.

- Ratings of the Leisure and Cultural activities in the town were also below average, 33% rating as poor/very poor.

- 87% however rated the town centre's restaurants and cafes as good/average/very good, reflecting the town's niche and need to continue to promote the evening economy businesses and drive evening footfall into the town centre.

- High visitor and tourist numbers, in comparison to regional and national figures, support that Melton Mowbray is a growing destination town.

- Members will note projects and initiatives proposed within the town centre management scheme agenda item designed to ensure the town improve performance.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Councils Corporate Plan identifies as priorities:

- Support people and businesses through the economic downturn
- Meet the economic needs of the Borough
- 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.

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 **Probability**

Probability	IV Neg-ligible	III Marg-inal	II Critical	I Catast-rophic
Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D				
Very Low E		1		
Almost Impossible F				

Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	No actions taken in response to areas of development in performa report
2	

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

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

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 The benchmarking data collection has included consultation with 443 town centre businesses, including landlords, agents and partners. Town Centre User Surveys / Visitor surveys were distributed to 22,000 Borough residents in May/June 2012.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer Shelagh Core – Town Centre Manager

Date: 09 May 2013

Appendices : A- Town Centre Performance Report 2012

Background Papers: None

Reference :