

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

5th MARCH 2013

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

TOWN CENTRE PERFORMANCE 2013

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For members to note and comment on the Town Centre Performance Report 2013.
- 1.2 Members to note that the AMT Town Centre Report 2013 will be published in March 2014, which will include comparison with other comparable market towns, both across Leicestershire and the East Midlands and will compare performance against national statistics.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members to note and comment on the Town Centre Performance Report 2013.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Town centre performance and benchmarking.

Benchmarking data is collected on a monthly, bi-annual 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 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

- 3.2 The data is collected predominantly by visual surveys and counts (footfall and car park usage), surveys and consultation (business confidence, 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 sites. The business surveys and remaining data is collected in September, which seeks to provide a more comprehensive and accurate year on year comparison. This is also so for the other Leicestershire comparator towns.
- 3.3 The information contained within the town centre performance report is captured as a year on year comparison and this is attached as Appendix A. Some of the key issues this shows are:
 - Independent businesses continue to represent a high proportion of the total town centre businesses, 68% in 2013 and are reflective of the town's continued start-up businesses and USP. 2013 saw 13 new independent start-ups in the town centre, whilst nationals and regionals decreased with the closure of Blockbuster, Game Station as part of national High Street closures. Town centre businesses, new and

existing have also been supported with the Business Support Grant Scheme, offering £250 grants to businesses towards improvements to premises, signage etc.

- Independents are also reflective of the high longevity of businesses within the town centre, with business surveys showing 65% of businesses being within the town centre for more than 10 years and 20% between 5-10 years. Springboard figures in October 2013 showed an average of 50.9% independents within the East Midlands, nationally 47.7%.
- Vacancy rates have seen a fall in the last year to 6.9%, despite national closures such as Game Station and Blockbuster, reflective again of the independent business start-ups. Springboard figures in October 2013 showed a national vacant unit average of 11.1% and East Midlands average of 10.2%, which has shown little movement in the last year. Other comparative Leicestershire towns recorded a vacant unit rate in Hinckley of 8.3%, Coalville 17.5%.
- Footfall figures have also slightly fallen in 2013, which is indicative of the national fall in footfall on the High Street. Whilst the UK vacancy rate has remained static, High Street footfall figures have dropped dramatically, down 26% between 2007 and 2013. In 2013 the most significant footfall drop was in October-Dec, with significant online spend and competition. A Footfall Counter will be installed in the town centre in 2014, to enable detailed Springboard footfall data within the town centre over a three year period.
- Business survey analysis also reflects internet and online shopping as the greatest competitor for town centre businesses. In response, a Town Centre App and the Town Centre Business Directory will be launched in 2014 to support and promote town centre businesses and footfall. Free Social Media training in Facebook, Twitter, Setting Up a Website and Optimising a Website workshops have also been well attended and have supported online business competition.
- Car parking occupancy has slightly decreased in 2013, but still remains higher than occupancy in 2009-2011. This may also reflect the fall in footfall in the town centre, in line with national High Street trends.
- The town centre market has grown however year on year, rising again to 142 in 2013.
- Business turnover and profit figures have shown a significant increase in 2013, with 37.5% of businesses surveyed experiencing an increase in turnover and 26% an increase in profit. A high number of those businesses were notably professional/commercial sector businesses. Businesses showing a decrease in turnover and profit have also decreased in number.
- 91% of businesses also expect their turnover to remain the same or increase moderately in the next 12 months, with just 6% expecting their turnover to decrease.
- Staff numbers within businesses however have remained static during 2013, at 68%.
- Visitor figures have risen slightly again in 2013 to represent 44% of surveyed shoppers, continuing to reflect the promotion of Melton as a destination town.

3.4 Next Steps

This information is considered as part of the Economic Development Strategy's action plan to ensure any changes in trends are captured as part of the Ton centre Strategic Priority within the Economic Development Strategy.

Members are also asked to note some significant projects that are underway or due to be underway which will impact on town centre performance:

- Car Parking Strategy- to be presented to the next Committee
- Town Centre Masterplan- to commence April 2014

3.5 The Revive and Thrive Challenge Bid

The Council submitted a bid around creating a better town that is well connected and engaged. Our submission has been shortlisted into the final.

The final is being held on the 12th March 2014 and members will be updated on the outcome. The successful bid will receive a prize package of projects and support specifically designed around the needs of the winning town worth £191,000.

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.

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.

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, landlords and agents. It is compared against High Street Index and Springboard figures 2013.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer Shelagh Core – Town Centre Manager

Date: 14 February 2014

Appendices : A- Town Centre Year on Year Comparison Report 2013

Background Papers: None

Reference : X drive/Committee/CSA/2013.14/050314/HR- Town Centre Performance