

Council Meeting – 24 March 2021

Public Question Time

Question from Ms Kelly Davies:

With a clear roadmap for leisure and hospitality industries in place and us moving closer to that restriction-free summer, what initiatives and ideas do the council have in place to help attract both locals and tourists to Melton's Purple Flag nightlife to enable them to be in the best stead to recover and grow after the pandemic?

Response from Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity:

The local economy in Melton is dominated by sectors such as Tourism, Retail, Leisure and Hospitality which have been particularly adversely impacted by the restrictions that have been in place over the last year. Following the easing of each lockdown, the Council has undertaken a significant amount of collaborative work with the Business Improvement District (BID) as well as Melton Mowbray Town Estate (MMTE) for the safe reopening of various sectors of our economy including the town centre and evening economy.

Business grants:

A significant part of the Council's effort to support economic recovery has been the distribution of grants money provided by the Government in a timely way to the businesses that needed it the most. Since November 2020 over £5m has been paid out across 8 schemes to over 600 businesses on top of the £10.7m given out during the first lockdown March-June 2020.

The Council has also looked at how it can support businesses during the recovery period and is currently looking at how it can introduce a comprehensive package of economic recovery related programmes and projects to support our economy over the next year. A report is due to be considered by the Cabinet in April 2021 to approve the package of wide ranging measures designed to support our local economy.

Just this week, the Council has been allocated £45,000 from the Government's 'welcome back fund' for initiatives in communities and high street. We will engage with the relevant stakeholders in spending this money in readiness to welcome back the visitors and shoppers in our town centre.

Town Centre:

In addition, the Council has allocated £50,000 for town centre enhancements. This funding will be used for working with partners to develop a long term vision for the town centre as well as undertaking environmental and public realm enhancements to make the town centre attractive in readiness for reopening later in the summer. We would like to explore the opportunities to animate the town centre by outdoor events, live music, open air cinema and such activities by working in partnership with BID and MMTE.

Support for the reopening of outdoor hospitality

Melton Borough Council will support measures in Step 2 of the Government's roadmap (no earlier than 12 April) - hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors and the measures to support the safe re-opening of hospitality businesses.

Al fresco dining:

The Council will continue the simplified route for pubs, restaurants and cafes to obtain a temporary pavement licence to place furniture including outdoor tables and seating on the highway. Melton Borough Council has decided to not charge the £100 fees for this and providing this free of charge. The process includes a streamlined 10-working day consultation and determination period. MBCs licences are granted until 30th September 2022, unless there are good reasons not to.

Freedom to use land for community events and outdoor hospitality:

The Council will continue greater flexibility for businesses to hold outdoor events such as summer fairs or motorsports on land without the need for a planning application for 56 days until 31st December 2021. Car-boot sales, or people or businesses such as pubs wishing to set up marquees will also be exempt.

Outdoor markets

The Council will exercise a new temporary right, extended to March 2022 that allows local authorities, either by themselves or by others on their behalf, to use land to hold a market without having to apply for planning permission.

Takeaways

The Council will take measures to support restaurants, drinking establishments such as pubs and cafes to serve takeaway food when they were otherwise closed due to coronavirus restrictions extended until March 2022.

Tourism related activity/information

We want residents and visitors alike to explore and enjoy Melton's countryside, market town and villages, and to learn and enjoy Melton's rich heritage by establishing our core stories and to immerse it's experiences. To support this the following initiatives and priorities are in place

1. The Council works in partnership with town centre stakeholders to retain the Purple Flag status and support the evening and night time economy.
2. MBC will launch a new Place based website **Discover Melton** in April to promote and attract people to **visit, live and invest** and raise the profile of brand Melton 'The Rural Capital of Food' as a destination.
3. This will be supported by an **interactive map** listing tourism related businesses, visitor attractions, food & drink, experiences, events and places to stay etc. within the Borough. The map will be digital allowing us to update information accordingly with links to businesses websites and social media channels where possible. As the site develops MBC will **market cultural immersive experiences, themes and stories** brought to life through the people that run businesses and live in the community.
4. The Council is working in partnership with the County Council to support **Uncover the Story Campaign** to welcome visitors back, stimulate cultural curiosity by promoting our great stories around food, drink and the richness of our heritage.
5. Continue to working closely with our partners and support local businesses to **develop visitor experiences** and targeted itineraries, taking them to market effectively.
6. Continue working in close partnership with key partners for cross promotion & joint campaign. Visit Leicester, Place Marketing and neighbouring Borough's to extend our reach across Leicestershire.

7. Promote awareness of the range of **quality assurance schemes** for accommodation, attraction and restaurants - **We're Good to Go** industry standard & **WTTC SafeTravels Stamp**.
8. Support local event businesses, Melton BID, and Town Estate to develop a **robust plan for future of events** in the Town and Borough.

Through this work we will support both the delivery of Melton's Destination Management Plan and the wider Leicester and Leicestershire tourism Growth plan, ensuring there is greater cohesion by working together to support the wider area. This approach will ensure we help promote the work we are doing when promoting the area nationally and get Melton's messages out to a wider audience.