

Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Walsall Markets Questionnaire: Summary of findings

Background

To better understand the views of the public (users and non users), local retailers and traders themselves, a programme of public consultation was undertaken, the findings from which will inform decision making concerning improvements and the future direction of markets overall.

Self completion questionnaires for members of the public, local retailers and traders, were distributed during the month of September, with an online version also available. In addition to the self completion survey robust data was collected via a random sample telephone survey of residents (503 interviews) thus capturing the views of users and non users. The random sampling approach means that the data collected via the telephone survey can be used to make certain statistical generalisations and inferences about the wider population. On a base of 503 (with a total borough adult population of 204,710), the margin of error is $\pm 4.4\%$, meaning on a result of 50% we can be sure, at the 95% confidence level, that should every adult in the borough be interviewed the result would fall somewhere between 54.4% and 45.6%.

The data collected is immense and will take some weeks to cross reference these data sets in order to give a full interpretation of the data collected. These findings will be presented at a later stage.

Headline findings

Walsall Markets – telephone survey (Base 503)

- 59% of those interviewed had used a Walsall borough market in the last 12 months, the majority of market users had used Walsall town centre market (86%), with 21% having used Bloxwich and 17% Willenhall.
- For all Walsall markets respondents are most likely to visit them on at least a weekly basis.
- For all Walsall markets the trading days of Saturday and Friday were the most popular
- On average most people spent about 30 minutes to an hour when visiting markets in Walsall with most spending £6 to £10.
- Visitors most liked the proximity of the market to where they live, its value for money and the quality and variety on offer

- The most visited stalls were fruit & veg, clothing, meat and fish, flowers and household goods.
- Most respondents felt that markets are fairly important to them as individuals but a higher proportion felt they are very important to the town centre overall and that the market had a positive impact on the town centre
- 46% of respondents said that nothing puts them off or prevents them from visiting Walsall's markets

Walsall Town Centre – market users (have visited the market in the last 6 months Base 204)

- Most market users visit Walsall market at least once a week, spending around 30 minutes to an hour on average
- The most popular trading days to visit were Saturday and Friday with the least popular being Monday and Wednesday
- Average spend was between £6 and £10
- Respondents liked Walsall market for its value for money, discounts, variety and quality the market offered
- Fruit and veg, flowers, clothing, meat and fish were the most popular stalls on Walsall market
- Most users of Walsall market rate it as good
- Most users of Walsall market either drove to the town centre, walked or took the bus
- The aspects of Walsall market rated most poorly were; litter, limited range, poor image, car parking and lack of toilets and seating
- Visitors wished to see more clothing, local produce, fruit and veg, cakes and free Wi-Fi on Walsall market
- 55% confirmed the market has a positive impact on the town centre with 4.9% saying it has a negative impact.
- Comments around what could be improved or addressed included the layout, litter and rubbish, smoking, dogs at the markets, traders packing up early and access

Non visitors to Walsall markets

When asked why respondents did not visit Walsall's markets:-

- The markets are perceived as dirty, litter, poor image, lack of toilets and seating, poor quality, poor ambience with a limited range

When asked what would attract respondents to the market:-

- Greater range of clothing, free Wi-Fi, local produce, more fruit and veg, sports supplies and car accessories were rated popular

When asked if the markets had a positive effect on the town centre 46% rated the impact as positive

Walsall Town Centre – Retailers and Businesses (Base 52)

- 48% of respondents confirmed footfall increased on market days with 50% confirmed an increase in trade/sales
- 48% saw an increase in litter during market days with half confirming the market did not disrupt their daily business in a negative way
- Appearance of stalls were rated equally from good to poor with the cleanliness, quality and servicing of the market rated as good
- Most respondents rated the market as being fairly important to their business with a higher proportion feeling the market is very important to the town centre overall

Bloxwich market – (have visited the market in the last 6 months Base 20)

Most respondents use the markets at least once a week, with Friday and Saturday being the most popular trading days

- Generally visitors spent between 30 minutes to an hour at the market, with most spending £0 to £6
- Visitors liked the value for money, car parking, friendly traders and the goods offered the most
- Fruit and veg, meat and fish, flowers, clothing, cards and refreshments were the most popular stalls
- Generally respondents rate the market as good
- 45% came by car with 35% walking to the market
- The market was rated as very important both to visitors and the town centre

- Responses show that improvements could be made to the range, quality, location and litter
- Visitors would like a greater range of clothing, kitchenware, shoes, local produce and fruit and veg
- 50% confirmed the market had a positive impact on the town centre
- Comments around what could be improved included improving the paving, increasing the stalls and reducing the queues on Saturdays

Bloxwich market – retailers and businesses (Base 47)

- Responses from retailers in Bloxwich confirmed that footfall, trade, disruption, litter and crime generally remained the same during trading days
- On average the appearance of stalls, cleanliness, quality and servicing of the market was rated good
- 57% confirmed that the market adds value to overall retail and business offer in Bloxwich district centre and 48% and 40% rated the market as very and fairly important to their business and the town respectively.

Bloxwich market – traders (Base 22)

- Just over half of all respondents have been trading at this market for 5 years and above
- Half of traders have seen a decrease in customers and trade with the remainder seeing no change or an increase in trade
- Friday is the best trading day with Tuesday trade being the worse day to trade
- Tuesday was deemed as poor as demand for goods/food from shoppers is perhaps low early in the week as Tuesday is too near visitors regular weekend shopping.
- Traders voiced their concerns around poor maintenance to stalls, insufficient parking and changes to bus routes and Park & Ride has impacted upon the market
- On average traders rated the market and market staff as good with 40.9% stating Bloxwich market is on the whole comparable to other markets
- 90.9% of traders prefer to pay for rent in cash and 63% would prefer regular newsletters by way of communication
- 18.2% of traders also work on Dudley market and 27.3% only trade on Bloxwich market

- Overall the market and its service were rated good

Willenhall market – (have visited the market in the last 6 months Base 14)

- 35% confirmed they visited the market at least once a week with the popular days being Saturday and Wednesday
- Most people visit for 30 minutes to an hour, spending around £6 to £10
- Visitors liked the produce sold, friendliness of traders, value for money and general atmosphere
- Most popular stalls were fruit and veg, meat and fish, flowers, clothing, beauty products and household goods
- Respondents generally rated the market as good overall
- 42% of visitors used the bus compared to 28% who used a car
- Overall the market was rated as fairly important to individuals with more rating it as very important to the town centre
- Visitors would like to see improvements made around litter and the range. A high proportion feel that the market was not as it was before.
- Respondents who already use the market would visit the market more if there was an increase in clothing, fruit and veg, free Wi-Fi, DIY, sport supplies and greater range of refreshments
- 50% confirmed the market had a positive effect on the town centre with 21% saying that the market was very positive
- Comments around what could be improved included improving car parking, increasing the number and variety of stalls

Willenhall market – retailers and businesses (Base 45)

- Respondents felt that footfall, litter and crime increased during trading days
- Trade and disruption to businesses remained the same
- The appearance of stalls, cleanliness and servicing of the market was rated good but the quality of products on offer was rated poor
- 42% confirmed that the market adds value to overall retail and business offer and 33% and 57% rated the market as very important to their business and to the town.

Willenhall Market – traders (Base 26)

- Just over half of all respondents have been trading at this market for 5 years and above
- 73.7% of traders have seen a decrease in customers and trade with the remainder seeing no change or an increase in trade
- Wednesday is the best trading day with Saturday trade being the worse day to trade
- Saturday was deemed as poor due to the small number of traders and competition from larger markets trading on the same day such as Walsall and Bilston.
- Traders voiced their concerns around increased traffic through the market, litter, poorly maintained shop fronts, poor stall infrastructure, poor links to Morrisons, lack of electricity and an increase in crime
- Suggestions to improve the market included increased visibility of knowledgeable market staff, rent to be collected later in the day, improvements to stalls, toilets, market signage, more promotion through advertising, reduce rent for Saturday trade, increase attractions to pull in more footfall and introduce a Thursday trading day.
- On average traders rated the market and market staff as good with 73.1% stating Willenhall market is on the whole comparable to other markets
- 92.3% of traders prefer to pay for rent in cash and 63% would prefer regular newsletters by way of communication
- 23.1% of traders also work on Bilston market and 19.2% only trade on Willenhall market
- Overall the market and its service were rated good to OK

Non visitors to Walsall markets – (Base 32)

From the responses received 65% of respondents never visit Walsall market but this data should be used as an indication only as the responses are not proportionate to the number of residents within the borough.

Other markets visited

- Birmingham market was the most popular market that these respondents visited.
- The most popular day to visit Birmingham markets was a Saturday with an average spend of £26 to £50.

- Respondents liked Birmingham market as it provided value for money, car parking was nearby and there was good offers and discounts.
- Fruit and veg stalls were most popular along with meat and fish, clothes, toys and flowers
- Most travelled by car (56%) with 25% walking to the market
- Birmingham market was rates as very important to the City Centre