

27 November 2012

Walsall Markets Consultation Surveys

Wards: St Matthews, Willenhall South, Bloxwich East

Portfolios: Cllr A Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Report:

Background

The purpose of this report is to advise the Working Group of the initial outcome of the surveys undertaken in respect of the markets in Walsall, Willenhall and Bloxwich.

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 a programme of actions aimed at improving the viability and performance of the markets in their key role of enhancing the offer and attractiveness of the centres.

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 consultancy team advising on the location of Walsall market also consulted a number of town centre retailers.

Considerable data has been collected and will take some time to fully analyse in order to give a full interpretation of the data collected that can then be used to inform a programme of actions. A full and final report on findings and suggested outcomes will be presented to a future meeting. In the interim, however, the data has been used to identify some preliminary actions that will seek to enhance the viability of the markets in Willenhall and Bloxwich.

Key Findings to date

A summary of findings from each different type of respondent is attached (Appendix 1)

Interestingly, there were many similar comments highlighted around all three of our markets, Walsall, Willenhall and Bloxwich which arose from all respondents including:-

- Average spend was between £6 to £10 with visitors shopping on the markets for around 30 minutes to an hour
- The most popular stalls were fresh produce including fruit & veg, meat and fish, flowers. In addition clothing and household goods were visited often
- Respondents liked the markets for value for money, discounts, variety and quality
- On average respondents felt that there should be more stalls selling fruit & veg, clothing, local produce and cakes
- Generally respondents rated the markets as good

Positive Feedback

When asked why respondents visit our markets most liked the proximity of the markets to where they live. This indicates that locality is a key driver to attracting footfall to our markets and that the distance visitors will travel to markets is limited. This is further evidenced when non users were asked why they did not visit Walsall Markets; a proportion confirmed the markets were too far from where they live.

Regardless of the type of respondent, on average most respondents felt that markets were fairly important to them as an individual or business but with a higher proportion confirming markets are very important to the town and district centres overall.

The evidence around locality being a fundamental factor in attracting customers suggests that retaining and improving our existing markets is crucial and that removing a market would not necessarily mean a transfer of customers from one market to another.

Negative Feedback

Users and non users of Walsall Markets raised the following as having a negative impact on the markets:-

Bloxwich	Willenhall	Walsall
Improved paving Increase of stalls Reduce queues on Saturdays	Litter Limited range Car parking provision Increase of stalls Poor quality of products Traffic through Market area Poorly maintained shop fronts Poor stall infrastructure Lack of electricity Increase in crime Poor links to Morrisons	Litter Limited range Poor image Car parking Lack of toilet facilities Lack of public seating Smoking and dogs at market Traders packing up early Market layout Poor ambience

Initial Actions

Bloxwich

Traders highlighted that Tuesday was the worst trading day as it was too near to shopper's big weekly weekend shop. There were also a number of improvements suggested together with a call for additional stall holders. The following actions are identified for further investigation:-

- Action:** Consider practical ways to attract stall holders trading in clothing, kitchenware, shoes, local produce and fruit and veg to enhance Tuesday trade and ultimately increase revenue.
- Action:** Review current maintenance and environmental regimes to more effectively remove litter and trade waste.
- Action:** Consider ways to improve toilet facilities.

Willenhall

The following issues were highlighted by customers, retailers and traders resulting in the following suggested actions:-

- Action:** Consider increasing the specification for litter removal.
- Action:** Consider investing in improvements to the market stalls.
- Action:** Consider practical ways to attract stall holders trading in clothing, fruit and veg, sport supplies and refreshments with the view to increase trade on Saturday, the least productive trading day.
- Action:** Improve market signage, advertising, and market attractions.
- Action:** Consider more cost effective methods for the erection, take down and storage of market stalls.

Walsall

- Action:** Preparation of a comprehensive action plan that addresses the following matters: litter, limited range of goods, poor image, wi-fi availability, refreshments, market layout, smoking, dogs, and traders leaving early. Generic issues relating to car parking and lack of toilets and seating will be addressed as part of a complementary programme of actions to enhance the wider offer within the centres aimed at creating more of a leisure destination.


Recommendations

That the Panel:

- a) note the initial conclusions from the customer surveys in respect of Walsall, Willenhall and Bloxwich markets;
- b) support further investigation of the recommended initial actions;
- c) receive a further comprehensive report on the survey conclusions and a detailed action plan to address the enhancement of the markets.

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