

## Oswestry Town Council

### Report from the Retail Markets & Events Manager to Council - 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

#### Oswestry Markets And Events Update

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of market activities and acknowledge any identified issues. It also informs about future events to be held in the town.

##### **Market update**

There have been several positive introductions recently with the indoor market welcoming three new businesses; namely a fragrance specialist, a men's clothing shop, a vegan street food vendor and a Peruvian clothing retailer, adding to the eclectic mix of trades within the building. Sadly, following eight successful years, Llyncllys Farm Shop are no longer trading due to staffing problems. This vacant area will be earmarked for food only in accordance with Council policy and it is hoped it will be filled soon. There are currently two vacancies within the building.

The upstairs café has also now fully reopened but is under new management. Raya Milanova has maintained the same offering as before but has already made some improvements and it is hoped this business will develop further.

The outdoor market has been consistently strong attracting many quality producers on a weekly basis. Fresh bread, vegetables, homemade fudge and cakes can be found as well as crafts and artwork; not forgetting the more traditional wares on offer.

##### **Covid 19**

On 24<sup>th</sup> July 2020 the Government enforced the wearing of face coverings within retail premises; this included Oswestry Indoor Market. Signs have been installed on all the entrances of the market reminding customers of the new

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government policy and the traders themselves have been given instructions. Overall the vast majority of customers have been compliant and is already accepted as part of daily retailing; however since the new ruling there does appear to be a drop in footfall inside the building and a possible drop in dwell time, which could affect businesses who rely on consumer browsing.

### **Alcohol License Update**

The Council agreed to pursue an alcohol license for the indoor market. Following a brief training program, the Alcohol Personal License exam has now been successfully held on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and a personal DBS is currently being processed. The Alcohol Planning Application for the building itself will be the next step which can take up to eight weeks following a consultation period. The Police will also need to be satisfied that all safety precautions are in place. Comprehensive trader selling policies, risk assessments and changes to license agreements will all be brought to Council to be agreed before any trader is permitted to sell.

The Covid 19 outbreak seriously delayed this process but it is hoped the building will be licensable by Christmas.

### **Promotion**

Traditional advertising has been hugely reduced to save costs. Only a limited number of local advertising is now used. Instead an inhouse Facebook campaign has been developed focusing on an individual trader each market day. This has proven popular and has managed to attract more traction than regular posts. Groups of traders selling related goods have also been the focus of a social media campaign.

The market Facebook site itself has nearly 4000 followers making it an effective medium for promotion. Most individual traders also have their own sites with their posts regularly shared onto the market page. The Market Google Rating also remains high achieving an overall 4 stars, with many 5-star reviews within this figure and plenty of positive comments from visitors.

Following a meet and greet with the Mayor on the 16<sup>th</sup> September feedback indicated that a shared branded seating area directly in front of the market

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would produce an attractive visitor space as already proven on Festival Square. Designs and costings will be taken to Council at the earliest convenience.

### Events

All major events up to October remain cancelled although the annual Charity Market was successfully held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020. There are plans to have a smaller version of Apple Day also in October. The holding of major events continues to be reviewed and will follow Government guidelines.

Oswestry Town Council has partnered local groups to organize a town litter pick as part of the national campaign, The Great British Clean, between 11<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> September 2020. This was first arranged back in April but then cancelled due to the outbreak of Covid 19. Social distancing rules will be adhered to, and safety measures are in place. The focus areas are the Cambrian railway tracks, Wilfred Owen Green, Town center, Henley Woods and the Hillfort.



### NABMA Updates

#### Local Authority Lettings of Market Stalls, Pitches and VAT

Following the recent updates on the revised VAT guidance issued by HMRC, NABMA can confirm that their efforts have produced a positive result ensuring that the threat of VAT to many of their members' Markets has now been removed.

Following NABMA's representations, they have received the following confirmation from Government:

"I raised this with HMRC colleagues, who advised that the purpose of the recent revision to the guidance was to give advice about street trading

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licences. Whilst the updated guidance is not technically wrong, they appreciate that the sentence you refer to is misleading, and will therefore revise it”

Government has promised that the text of the revised draft guidance will be shared with NABMA who are delighted with this outcome, demonstrating the value of NABMA’s strong links to Government.

### **Summer Conference**

NABMA is disappointed to head towards September and witness the cancellation of the NABMA Conference from its historic dates stretching back over many decades. Arrangements however are already in place for 2021 when there will be a planned return to Stratford Upon Avon on 19th-21st September. A ‘Virtual’ Conference has been arranged for 22nd September 2020.

NABMA is pleased to announce its intention, subject to government guidelines, to hold its One Day Conference on Thursday 4th February 2021 at the Council House, Birmingham. The programme will be focused around Markets Fighting Back. This will be an important occasion to hopefully bring the NABMA family together after without doubt the most distressing time as recorded in its long market history.

### **Artisan Market**

Understandably since lock down the Artisan Market has struggled to match the numbers of last Summer. There have been some retirements, whilst other traders have found alternative ways to conduct their business. Although the street remains full there has now become a noticeable gap on the Bailey Head creating a disconnect with the indoor market.

There has been a demand from the regular market traders to attend the Bailey Head on Fridays. It is proposed that the Bailey Head be used once a month only (on Artisan Market days), for regular traders and continue to position the Artisan Market in Bailey Street and possibly Cross Street if demand allows. As a trial this was actioned at the August Artisan Market and worked well, creating more market activity on the Bailey Head. This meant the indoor market was less isolated whilst the Artisan Market was better supported.

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The Artisan traders also maintain their “identity” as they continue to have their own allocated area within the street. It is hoped, with time, the Artisan Market will rebuild and there are already some positive signs with several new traders trying this particular market. For example, there were four new traders at last month’s market.

The Members are asked for approval for allowing regular traders to attend the monthly market using the Bailey Head only.

**David Clough**

**Retail Markets & Events Manager**