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Oswestry Town Council

Report from the Retail Markets & Events Manager to Council – 22nd
July 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.

Oswestry markets – dealing with the corona virus

Oswestry Town Council decided to temporarily close all non-essential markets activities from 25th March 2020 and only allowed essential goods to trade from there on, which followed government guidance at the time. Only three essential food traders continued to operate for a further week, however a mutual decision to close the market to the public was then made.

First and foremost, the main objective for Oswestry Markets during this difficult time has been to ensure all traders and customers remain safe and measures were quickly put in place to enable this in time for the reopening. Toilets and touch areas are cleaned regularly by the maintenance team and traders are given regular advice and PPE equipment. Safety guides were issued to each and every trader and the 2-metre rule was consistently enforced throughout the market space using signage personal to the traders, and located throughout the building, whilst any potential queue areas have been marked to the 2-metre rule.

One main area of concern was the upstairs balcony as the corridors are narrow and there are few passing places with 2-metre distancing. By dividing the ramp so that customers can go up on the left-hand side, and come down on the right, and by introducing a one-way system, has helped to resolve this. The

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public toilets also have limited use and are cleaned on a regular basis. There is also plenty of signage to remind everyone to maintain social distance and to wash hands thoroughly. New legislation is being issued at regular intervals and the market has had to adapt to each new rule following government guidelines. It has been released this week that all shoppers will need to wear facemasks before entering a supermarket. NABMA are waiting to advise the market industry as to how this will affect markets and will provide advice shortly.

Trader access to the Powis Hall remained throughout the closure as many traders required access to manage their online businesses and delivery services. During the lockdown, all the traders were kept notified of any site changes and informed of available Government support throughout the lockdown via email, social media or text. A closed Market Trader Group was also established through Facebook enabling immediate contact with the traders if any updates were announced.

All market events, up to the end of August, have been cancelled and any planned events for September onwards are currently under review. Both the indoor and outdoor market is now fully operational and is performing fairly well under the circumstances. There have been some retirements within the indoor market; however, this has led to some positive changes and the indoor market continues to be fully attended.

Financial support from the government, for market traders in particular, was initially low as any support has been based around retailers located in rateable premises. However, a Discretionary Fund has now been released and some traders have been successful. The traders themselves have been very grateful of all the support from the Town Council during this time and a number of emails of appreciation have been received.

In some ways markets and market traders are the best to survive such difficult times as they are more flexible than larger businesses and can therefore adapt quicker. No doubt it will be a challenging retailing environment going forward with a continued dominance towards online shopping. It is hopeful that there will be an increase in localism and support towards independent businesses.

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What has been impressive is the number of Oswestry Market traders who have adapted to the situation by improving their online services to enable postal deliveries and online ordering. Others have provided personal deliveries or have introduced retail elements in other locations, and many have invested in cashless payments.

Business support

Councillors agreed to a series of measures to support the traders through this time recognizing the need to help drive the necessary change, promote the market and their businesses. Free business support to all our regular outdoor, indoor and Artisan traders has been offered to help our traders adapt and continue to have sustainable businesses. Working with Oswestry based business Be A Better Fish Ltd, a support package has been designed to help create and develop existing business opportunities at Oswestry markets. It is also a forum for sharing local expertise and experience with other local businesses and creates resources, tools and events to help share knowledge, and work together on common issues. Overall there has been a positive response with many traders taking advantage of the support which will hopefully be of benefit going forward. A full report will follow once the information has been gathered.

Real Deal Charter

The Real Deal campaign is a cross-sector, partnership initiative, bringing together local authority trading standards services, market operators and traders, industry groups, and copyright and trademark owners, all of whom are united with a common commitment to ensure markets are free of counterfeit and other illegal goods, so that consumers can shop, and legitimate dealers can trade, in safety and with confidence. It must be highlighted, at this point, that Oswestry Markets has never experienced any problems with illegal goods and to apply for the Real Deal Charter just confirms that our markets are safe and a legal place for the public to shop.

Once everything is in place the Real Deal logo may be displayed around the market area confirming that the market operator abides by the terms of this charter and in agreement with their local trading standards service. This will mean Oswestry Market will work in partnership with the local authority trading

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standards service to prevent the sale of any counterfeit and other illegal goods at the market place and make the public aware of this commitment. There is no cost in adopting the Real Deal campaign.

The key stages are:

Step 1 - achieving the Code of Practice - this sets out the procedures for a market to have in place in order to proceed to signing the Real Deal Charter and being listed as a member of the Real Deal. The Code of Practice was first produced in conjunction with Graham Wilson at NABMA.

Step 2 - make contact with your local trading standards service at Shropshire Council to inform them that Oswestry markets wishes to sign the Real Deal Charter.

Step 3 - assuming that trading standards are happy to work with Oswestry market on the introduction of the Real Deal, then the next step is for both organizations to mutually agree a date for the Real Deal Charter to be signed. The Charter is a very simple proclamation which is signed by a representative of the market and a representative of the Council's trading standards service.

It is a good opportunity for a press release and photo opportunity by the market and trading standards to make the local community aware that we are working together to protect local shoppers and support legitimate traders.

Oswestry Fire Appliance



Picture of Fire Appliance

This beautiful fire engine, which was purchased from the London company Shand, Mason and Co. was designed to be drawn by two horses and carry a crew of up to 12 men. The company had exhibited engines at the 1851 Great Exhibition and this particular model, fitted with self-locking levers, a patent swing-bar arrangement, improved brakes and copper lamps, had been awarded first prize at an exhibition held in Edinburgh in 1886.

During the summer of 1886 Mrs Wynne Corrie, of Park Hall, held a fete at her home, which raised the sum of about £100. Private subscriptions collected, by a Mr Buller Swete, supplemented this fund making it possible to buy the engine for the town, to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of Queen Victoria's ascent to the throne.

On Saturday 12th March 1887, at the Powis Hall, Oswestry, Mrs Wynne Corrie, who was well-known in the area for her philanthropy, was invited to name the engine **The Park Hall** and break a bottle of champagne over it. **The Park Hall** first went into action at a stack fire in Haughton in September 1887.

This fire appliance has been in storage for many years at Oswestry Fire Station and at the start of the 2020 they asked if the Town Council could relocate the

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machine. The British Iron Works Centre kindly agreed to store and display the appliance and the Mayor and Mayoress officially opened the display to the public on 12th March 2020. It continues to remain the property of Oswestry Town Council.

NABMA update

During the pandemic, NABMA has supported the market industry throughout by providing information on reopening markets safely, possible funding streams for traders and have lobbied government asking for more support for the market industry.

Their primary focus was to support markets through these unprecedented times, sharing good practice, information and advice through Basecamp and other NABMA communication channels.

The Chancellor was asked by NABMA for urgent support for the markets industry highlighting that 1,150 regular traditional markets support tens of thousands of small businesses and have a significant role to play in the future of town centres.

As part of a meeting with the Chancellor, NABMA acknowledge that some markets are theoretically in a position to take advantage of the recent announcement on abolishing business rates under £51,000. Unfortunately, local authority markets cannot do this because the ability to grant relief falls under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and under that part of the Act a local authority is unable to allow relief to itself. NABMA is asking, as a matter of urgency, that the discretion is applied to all markets as, until this discretion is applied, we have an unfair situation as markets operated by private operators are only in a position to take advantage, that then places them at a significant advantage to local authority markets. Out of the 1,150 traditional markets, some 82% are provided by local authorities thereby highlighting the imbalance and the need for remedy.

NABMA have cancelled their Annual Conference in September but intend to hold a National event in October to focus on the lessons learnt from this crisis and what the future holds for Markets. The provisional dates are 19th /20th

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October, returning to Stratford upon Avon, but this is continually under review.

David Clough

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