

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 9th July

As members are aware, Morecambe Town Team was set up in 2012 to deliver an increase in footfall between the Arndale Centre and the Festival Market area under the Portas initiative. This echoes one of the objectives of the Morecambe Area Action Plan proposals to promote this area as a linkage of the two distinct shopping areas in the town. Since my last report the Team has varied the objectives and I enclose an updated Action Plan.

Progress since the last meeting include the awarding of the contract for the Town Website to Bucket and Spade who, as it happens, are based on Victoria Street. This website will be launched over the summer and has a wider brief than just Victoria Street as it offers the traders within the town the opportunity to not only profile their goods and services on a central Morecambe website but also to highlight offers which may attract trade.

We have also had the results from the Springboard exercise which is a three pronged survey into the shopping habits within the town and was offered to all towns who had received funding under the Portas scheme at a reduced price. This covered a Mystery shop exercise (traders were offered the opportunity to opt out of this if they wanted), a shopkeeper survey and an analysis of available statistics. The results of the exercises were fed back to the Town Team over two in depth evening sessions. The individual shopkeepers also were offered the opportunity to discuss the findings on a one to one basis. The outcome in a nut shell is that Morecambe gives excellent value for money goods and services, however, there is a lack of offer for the younger end of the market and there was negative feedback on customer service. We are addressing the latter by putting on drop in sessions on customer service within the town centre in September and by producing leaflets and cards for distribution to shops so their assistants have the basic information about things to do in the area at their fingertips. Maybe the Frontierland development will address the lack of offer for the younger end of the market!

You will note that more money has been placed within the Art Street project. There is now £20k within the budget and the ATCM representative, Lisa Durkin, was very keen on this change. We have a working group investigating how this can be brought to fruition. The brief includes a requirement that whatever is placed there must have the WOW factor so people will seek out the street to visit if they are in town. Early wins are that Morecambe High School are intending to place art work within one of the shops on the street

and a local café owner encourages artists to place relevant artwork for sale on her walls.

You will note the market aspirations have been removed from the Plan. This decision was not taken lightly but the work involved rested with too few people and, as our members are business people who need to be working within their individual businesses, it was not sustainable. The balance of the budget went to the festivals and there has been a very successful celebrity signing hosted by the Carnival Committee where two cast members from Emmerdale attended both the Festival Market and the Arndale Centre to huge crowds. They also had lunch at one of the cafes on the street. A Food, Drink and Craft Fair is also scheduled for later in the year. There is £7500 left in the budget and a couple of applications are currently under consideration.

Finally, the Town Team has evolved over the last year or so and its members are now from the wider town and the Chamber of Commerce has offered its services. Discussions have progressed to the continuation of the Team beyond Portas and, following on from the successful BID in Lancaster, it was natural progression to look towards a BID for Morecambe. It is hoped this will be the legacy of the Portas project. A working group, led by the Chamber, has been established and the first meeting was held on 26th June. This was a very positive meeting and exciting for Morecambe's future. I am looking forward to the coming months.

Christine Stebbing
Chair
Morecambe Town Team