

Recommendations to Policy & Finance Committee Meeting 22.06.20

From the Town Marketing Group

Cllr Chris Williams
Cllr Denise Knights
Cllr Alison Reynolds
Cllr Trevor Martin

Following a Meeting of the Town Marketing Group on 17th June, the following recommendations are made for consideration by the Policy & Finance Committee

KCC Town Centre Road Closures

Invitations were sent out to traders to attend two Zoom meetings, one at 10am and one at 6pm on the 11th June to discuss their concerns about the impending road closures following Government Guidance to enable social distancing measures within the town centre.

KCC Road Closure Temporary Traffic Order granted with effect from 22nd June for a period up to 21 days covering the following roads 7 days a week:

- Court Street – from the junction with Market Place to the junction with Crescent Road
- Market Place – for its entire length
- Middle Row – for its entire length
- West Street – from the junction with Market Place to a point in line with the boundary of 121 and 122 West Street

The Zoom meetings were attended by the following traders:

- Simon Tylor, Creekside Vinyl
- Cathy Rogers, Optima Opticians
- Mark Greenwood, TWM Property Services
- Charlotte, Lottys Flowers
- Tim & Lacey Stowell, The Bear Inn
- Rachel Thappa, Top Hat & Tales
- Amy, The Tattoo Studio
- Tania Bourne, The Carriage
- Kevin & Sharon Moon, Ollie Bongos
- David Simmonds, Faversham Market Association

The main concerns raised by the traders were:

- Access for delivery drivers
- Access for blue badge disabled drivers
- Residents' parking – issues raised on line and phone calls to the office outside of the Zoom meeting
- Lack of consultation and feeling that their concerns weren't being listened to

Potential solutions to assist discussed included:

- Applying for the area immediately behind 12 Market Place to become a loading bay for couriers
- Increased blue badge spaces in Court Street

- Potential for manning the barriers to allow access on discretion
- To enforce the road closures only on market days

Having discussed the road closures at length and taking into account the concerns raised, the TMG make the following recommendations:

- To support and enforce the road closures from Friday 19th June
- In addition to the roads stipulated in the order to include:
 - East Street from the junction with Newton Road and therefore East Street by default from the junction of Preston Street
 - Preston Street up to the junction with Stone Street
 - This extension will allow more space for social distancing measures for the considerable number of cafes and shops in Preston Street that are likely to require more outside space for either queuing or outside seating in an area with very narrow pavements
- To apply for the road closures, with the addition of the above, to continue for a further 6 months
- To monitor the situation and consider where possible refinements to the traffic order
- To ensure adequate signage (KCC red/white traffic signs) be provided by SBC/KCC to explain road closures are to enable social distancing

The TMG did not feel it appropriate at this stage to apply for the area behind 12 Market Place to become a loading bay for couriers mainly due to its close proximity to Central Car Park and because it has only recently become a no parking/loading area.

The TMG did not feel it wise to open up 12 Market Place to accept deliveries on behalf of traders; concerns raised were:

- Staffing cost
- Covid-19 remaining live surfaces/packages up to 72 hours – staff safety
- Insurance issues around involving a third party in accepting deliveries on behalf of recipient

The TMG were not in support of barriers being manned during the Road Closures to allow discretionary access; concerns raised were:

- Staffing cost
- Health & safety issues of manning the barrier, potential abuse of staff

During the meeting a letter of complaint was received from Simon Tyler (Creekside Vinyl) and a letter from Helen Whately, MP following a meeting she had with some town centre traders and the Chairman of the FTA, Tim Brown (East Street Music).

The TMG asked that the letter from Helen Whately, MP be read out at the Policy & Finance Meeting and recommends that the Town Clerk reply to the letter along the lines that the road closures have been applied for following Central Government social distancing guidelines, and to invite Helen Whately to work with the Town Council in supporting these Government issued measures and that we would welcome dialogue direct with her regarding any suggestions/assistance she can offer to mitigate the difficulties expressed by the traders she met with.

It was pointed out that it is not the Town Council who are responsible for these road closures, the Town Council being merely a consultee in the process and we are required to enforce the traffic orders issued by KCC Highways (the governing authority for such measures) in response to the Government's policy on social distancing measures that are being put in place in town centres across the country.

Specifically regarding the contentious issue of road closures, but also including other broader issues that may come up in the future, the TMG groups recommends that for wider communications directed at the Town Council as a whole, the Town Clerk be responsible for replying to correspondence received to

ensure a consistent, transparent and open response is given reflecting the views of the Council as a whole.

Town Centre Signage

The TMG expressed a concern that social distancing and road closure signage should not be produced by both FTC and SBC for reasons of cost and also to avoid the issue of too many signs becoming 'noise'. Claire explained that 25 A3 signs reminding visitors of the 2m rule were produced at a cost of £35 to FTC to be in place in good time for the markets on the 5th/6th June as SBC had not at that time provided any signage around the town centre.

On the 12th June SBC with assistance from our Facilities Manager, Adam Andrews, started to put social distancing signage up and painted reminders and directional arrows on the footpaths in line with government guidance. Claire confirmed that Adam was liaising direct with the relevant SBC officer to ensure the appropriate signage is in place regarding the road closures.

The TMG recommends that all future signage, including that advising of the road closures (i.e. Road Closure to allow Social Distancing) be provided by SBC with the cost being met by SBC.

Visit Faversham Website

By way of update following previous resolution to move forward with the Visit Faversham website, Claire Windridge confirmed that she now has CMS access to the Visit Swale website which now includes a Visit Faversham section. Following a quick update of the existing pages on the site she will then arrange for the www.visitfaversham.org domain to point to the new Visit Faversham pages hosted on the Visit Swale website. She will then start to add pages for blogs, articles, features and add content for various businesses and attractions not already featured on the site. The Visit Kent webmaster is currently in furlough until the end of June; upon his return Claire will ask that social media links to our relevant Facebook pages be added to the main navigation bar, and will also ask for some changes be made to the main navigation to make it a little more user friendly. Whilst Claire has CMS access for content, top level design and navigation issues can only be made by Visit Kent.

Claire Windridge
Economic Development Officer
18th June 2020