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| Faringdon Town Team Activity Report  JEF 17/7/2014 |  |

*The Town Team had just commenced their contract at the time of the last JEF meeting, since then we have made a great deal of progress on a variety of projects.*

1. **Surveys and Consultation**

The team conducted several surveys asking for the opinions of Faringdon’s businesses and markets as well as consumers, and with the help of the Chamber of Commerce, an online survey of Loyalty Card holders and their opinions on the scheme.

The surveys for all seemed to suggest that most people – retailers, stallholders and customers alike – would value an increased level of footfall into the town centre. Many suggested that community events in the town centre, better facilities, attractiveness, advertising and marketing may help to increase interest.

1. **Events in the Town Centre**

*Blackbird Day*: A novel event to encourage a spirit of community, history and culture in Faringdon, drawing people into the town centre and increasing footfall in businesses around town. The event generated a great deal of interest, with craft workshops, a trail involving twelve retailers around town, food tasting and a children’s art exhibition. Footfall was significantly increased in the town centre, participating businesses seemed happy with the result, and a general feeling of community spirit and good will was felt on the day. A formal survey was conducted to gain retailers’ opinions of the day.

*Independents’ Day*: With the National Campaign falling on the July 4th, we used the following Saturday to run an Artisan Market in the town centre. It was timed to coincide with the opening of the new hardware store and was in response to many requests for some form of Saturday Market. Again the day had a good feeling to it, market stall holders had a successful day, one independent retailer, *Hare in the Woods*, was directly involved with their own stall, and others were represented in a variety of ways. The town team used it as a vehicle to advertise and promote local business, and several businesses reported increased footfall and takings in their shops.

*Future Events*: Other events are in various stages of planning. A celebration of Berners’ timed with the opening of the Portwell Bench, a *Young Entrepreneurs’ Market* in September, a *French Market* or similar for the Remembrance weekend, and a *Christmas Market* of some sort have all been suggested and explored. A more traditional market, similar to the Tuesday offering would be appreciated by many, though it is felt that we need to encourage footfall into the town centre first, before stallholders will be willing to set up on a Saturday morning.

1. **Loyalty Card Scheme**

Following the Loyalty Card Survey and consultation with the Chamber of Commerce it was decided that the scheme needs to be modified in order to encourage its usage. A stamp card, which would require shoppers to accrue ‘points’, was one of options suggested. Other ideas have been suggested including one similar to that running in Wantage and Grove where customers take pictures of the items they’d bought and post them on social media for a prize, in this case The Loyalty Card Facebook Page, hosted by the Town team. This idea is being trialled over the summer holidays. Further feedback is required before we settle on a suitable course of action.

1. **Empty Shops and Park Road**

Currently there are three empty retail units in the town centre; while one is currently being renovated the owners of the other two have been difficult to track down. Empty frontages have been used to advertise Town Team events, and it was generally felt that this usage was an improvement to the look and feel of the town; more permanent displays may be beneficial in the short term while new tenants can be found.

The idea of hanging flags around the town centre and along Park Road was an idea put forward to improve the look and feel of the town, and is in-keeping with nearby towns, including Lechlade, Wantage and Fairford. The team has run a *Faringdon Flag Competition* through the primary schools, which will be continued at coming events; Costa is on board to sponsor the competition. The development of other community flags, production and planning is ongoing.

1. **Maximising Advertising and Faringdon’s Public Profile**

*Leaflet Distribution and a New Residents’ Pack*: We have explored several means of distributing existing stock of ‘What to do in Faringdon’ leaflets, giving some to estate agents, and contacting distribution companies to maximise exposure in local attractions and hotels. A new residents’ pack has been suggested for distribution through housing developers, and directly to residents in new estates; it would include information about the Loyalty Card and other material.

*Social Media*: The Faringdon Market Facebook page is now being managed by the team. Other pages including the Loyalty Card page, and others focussed on retailers may also be adopted by the team. Early analysis of the Market page looks promising.

*Improving Web Profile*: A series of PDFs is planned highlighting different aspects of the town. These would include Faringdon as an Historic Town, a Shopping Town, a Foodie Town, and an Eccentric town, and can be distributed to targeted websites.

*Signage*: The new sign advertising the town centre will be installed in the Tesco car park; communications with Tesco continues. Other signage, advertising markets and events will also be investigated.

**Faringdon Town Team Co-ordinators**

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