

Lisa Mortimer MRICS – Romsey Town and Tourism Co-ordinator

Report to Romsey Town Council Building and Town Committee - Tuesday 8th February 2022

Item No	Subject	Report
1	General commentary	<p>Since my last report to you in December 2021, Plan B restrictions which were in place to help combat the Omicron Variant over the Christmas period have now been lifted.</p> <p>Many retailers reported that the Omicron variant impacted footfall in December 2021.</p> <p>Operation Scrooge was implemented by the police in the Town Centre and there was 1 reported incident of shoplifting over the Christmas period. It is acknowledged by the police that the hard data pertaining to Romsey Town centre is hard to extrapolate and it is difficult to know whether there were more incidents of shoplifting over Christmas v those which were actually reported and what more can be done to encourage retailers to report such crimes. Several strategies are currently under review.</p> <p>Business Recovery Grants</p> <p>Test Valley Borough Council's Additional Restrictions Grant will support the following businesses who have been severely impacted by restrictions or by the Omicron variant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel • Travel supply chain • Events supply chain • Hospitality supply chain <p>Businesses occupying properties appearing on the local rating list with a rateable value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of exactly £15,000 or under on 30 December 2021 will receive a payment of £2,667. • over £15,000 and less than £51,000 on 30 December 2021 will receive a payment of £4,000. • of exactly £51,000 or over on 30 December 2021 will receive a payment of £6,000. <p>There is also a Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant with similar thresholds. Both grants have to be applied for by end of March 2022.</p>

		<p>National Retail Sales Picture</p> <p>In December 2021, retail sales in Great Britain totalled £10.2 billion per week, up from £9.5 billion in November. This figure includes money spent in shops, supermarkets, in petrol stations and online.</p> <p>The average weekly value of internet sales was £2.2 billion in December 2021 (excluding fuel). This was 27.7% of all retail sales (including fuel), down from November (30.1%) and high relative to pre-pandemic levels. Internet sales as a proportion of all retail sales have been rising steadily since 2006, reaching around 20% of all sales in 2019. Internet sales rose significantly in April 2020 with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, representing over 25% of all sales since.</p> <p>The above comes from the latest economic report prepared by the Office of National Statistics and appears on the House of Commons Library website</p>
2	<p>Around the Town Centre:</p>	<p>Many people are still preferring to stay local and shop locally rather than venturing into the major retail centres, particularly with Covid cases remaining high.</p> <p>However many businesses in and around the Town face an uncertain future, with cost of living increases rising exponentially, fuel bills, commodity price rises and Uniform Business Rates (UBR) rises, resulting in margins being squeezed. In some cases rental holidays which had been granted by Landlords to their tenants, are also coming to an end. Some businesses are describing the next few months as a “perfect storm”.</p> <p>Some non-essential shops and businesses, which have suffered a loss of business through successive lockdowns and closures, have put items such as refurbishment/redecorations on hold for now.</p> <p>Although there have been some changes to retail users in the Town Centre, fortunately vacated units have not stayed empty for very long and there is currently very little empty retail space. Romsey is fortunate in this regard and has traditionally performed well as opposed to centres such as Andover.</p> <p>21 The Hundred Judy Webb Florist – offered for sale as a going concern via Andrew Greenwood, due to relocation.</p> <p>https://www.judywebbflorist-romsey.co.uk/</p> <p>https://www.judywebbflorist-romsey.co.uk/assets/M3830.pdf</p> <p>17 Latimer Street (Kutz) – to let via Primmer Olds</p> <p>Quoting Rent £12,000 per annum via a new FRI lease</p> <p>9 Latimer Walk – let via Primmer Olds</p> <p>The premises is currently being fitted out as a hair/beauty salon and opening by end of February.</p>

<p>3</p>	<p>Town Centre events and markets:</p>	<p>Romsey Makers Market</p> <p>The Makers Markets were received really well throughout November and December in Romsey, gradually getting busier as the season progressed. December traders booked up really quickly and all three weeks were fairly busy on the Sundays. The final Sunday was extremely busy as the tractor run was on the same day creating a great atmosphere everywhere.</p> <p>Lots of new traders are regularly joining and compliment the markets and the town as a great local destination and place to sell. The Market see lots of regular customers most weeks and some who arrive and still didn't know there was a market on a Sunday, but do comment on how lovely it is.</p> <p>All in all, the markets are progressing well, all dates are confirmed for 2022 (back February) and people are already booking in to trade. South Central Makers has a small committee now of three regular traders (all from the Romsey area or just outside) who have a vested interest on how the markets progress and grow and are already coming up with great ideas for the future. All are in agreement that Romsey Makers Markets are working well and should continue to grow and thrive.</p> <p>Romsey Market</p> <p>The Christmas trading period at the Market was very good. The available spaces on Fridays and Saturdays were all taken and the extra trading day on Thursday 23rd December to compensate for missing 25th was appreciated by Traders.</p> <p>January and February is always a quieter time for the Market, with several Traders taking some time off. We now have a number of spaces on a Tuesday, which is always the least popular day as footfall is generally more limited. We do have feelers out for any potential interest and we would normally expect new Traders to emerge as we approach the Spring.</p> <p>We have made some adjustments to the Friday layout which seem to be working well and which released some extra space.</p> <p>Income for the Town Council for the quarters ended September and December 2021 was significant – around £1,700 for each period. This illustrates the popularity of the Market with Traders keen to attend regularly and reflects the pitch price restructuring earlier in the summer.</p> <p>Romsey Antiques Market</p> <p>Two dates confirmed for 2022 – 15th May and 16th October</p> <p>Christmas Lights Switch On and Winter Carnival/Lantern Parade</p> <p>Although this event was a great success, concerns have been raised subsequently about the number of people attending and the crowd control procedures. This will be looked at by the Carnival Committee in conjunction with the police and Romsey Town Council.</p> <p>Late Night Shopping and Santa Rescue</p>
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4	Meetings Attended	Attached is a schedule of meetings I have attended since my last report
5	ShopAppy on line trading platform for Romsey Businesses	<p>Welcome Back Funding received via allocation from DLUHC to Test Valley BC. ShopAppy instructed to deliver online e-commerce platform for Romsey on behalf of Romsey Town Council by end of March 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page construction complete • Physical “Find Out More” Session planned for Feb at Town Hall • Data uploaded to ShopAppy CRM with LM input • 28 businesses are currently registered and will be on-boarded soon • Online “Find Out More” session was held on January <p>Current work in progress is for ShopAppy to identify a delivery partner and aggregated “click and collect” points.</p> <p>Romsey businesses are taking part in the National “Love Local” Day to be held on 14th February. Consumers and customers are being asked to vote for their favourite local business by way of the thank you for their community assistance throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>https://www.romseytc.org.uk/uploads/1/1/8/0/118042421/pr_love_local_day_14th_february.pdf</p> <p>Businesses Nominated So Far</p> <p>SO51 Fitness The Exchange Romsey Eyecare Hundred Records Romsey Sadlery South Central Makers</p> <p>Further press release was covered in the Romsey Advertiser on 28th January and further press releases are planned.</p> <p>PR being pushed out on RTC website, twitter and Facebook. Also being promoted by the Romsey Chamber of Commerce.</p>
6	Tourism and Work with the Romsey	LM has attended several meetings of the Romsey Future Tourism Group Tourism SE are reporting that people are still booking holidays and breaks “last minute” with a reticence to commit with consumer confidence still at a

	<p>Future Tourism Group and Proposed Romsey Tourism & Community Heritage App</p>	<p>low ebb due to the uncertainty around Covid restrictions. It is predicted that this trend will continue throughout 2022.</p> <p>LM has managed to secure some residual Welcome Back Funding for the development of a prototype Romsey Tourism App, based on the Buckingham Town Council's Buxplore model and using the same App designer (Technovisual) and technology.</p> <p>Tourism SE and the Romsey VIC are also working with Technovisual to provide some content and also to ensure an interface with the Visit Romsey website, which is currently being overhauled.</p> <p>Once the prototype is up and running, it can be enhanced to include further venues and trails and tweaked as appropriate.</p> <p>We need a name!</p>
7	<p>Cruise Passenger & Local Tourism</p>	<p>Ongoing work with Portsmouth International Port, Tourism SE and Hampshire County Council to develop a potential trial tour for the 2022 Cruise season. Portsmouth International Port has now published its cruise schedule for 2022 which shows some 23 Calling Cruises from a variety of different cruise lines. LM to meet representatives from some of the cruise lines in February.</p> <p>LM is working in conjunction with various local tourism partners such as Tourism SE, Hampshire CC, Winchester DC and Portsmouth CC to develop a potential local tour for south Hampshire to include attractions in Romsey and the wider Test Valley area for a trial tour. It is a very competitive market, but the strategy is to concentrate on the boutique and high end cruise calls.</p>

LM 02.02.2022