



**Themed Workshop - Better Place for Business**

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Microsoft Teams**

**Attendee List**

No	Name	Organisation
1	Sarah Jones	Shropshire Council
2	Hayley Owen	Shropshire Council
3	Teresa Eccleston	Shropshire Council - Libraries
4	Claire Evans	Shropshire Council
5	Vernon Hogg	Hadleigh Management Limited / Growth Hub Advisor (self-employed) / Oswestry resident
6	Adele Nightingale	Oswestry BID
7	James Wallace	
8	Ingrid Knowles	Oswestry Community Enterprise Ltd
9	Duncan Tipton	
10	Lee Lucks	Oswestry Borderland Tourism
11	Peter Lloyd	TARA Trinity Area Residents Association
12	Elizabeth Jones	Civic Society
13	Jools Payne	
14	Craig Marston	Ke-design

**Feedback and comments captured on the online whiteboard**

**Key Points**

- Streets have gone down, shops are closing, nothing there. Lots of closed shops in the centre of Oswestry
- Other locations around Oswestry feeling left out. Connections to Oswestry are terrible - need improving for Oswestry businesses. Train link to Oswestry is vital if Oswestry going to benefit from businesses in the future. Shrewsbury is booming. Oswestry and neighbouring villages are being left behind. Shoppers are going to Wrexham. Possibility of reopening rail link to Oswestry would be great for business.
- Footfall in Oswestry this week - average footfall 10,000 per day. Growing from 4,000-6,000. Continue to monitor - new and repeat visitors and dwell time. Confidence returning. Ref rail - bidding for reversal beeching fund - got through to 2nd round. Many businesses would benefit from reconnecting Oswestry to the main line. Key for economic growth (Bid).
- Wilkos - massive footfall drop over 4-5 years. Competition from discounters and out of town development B&M. Concern developing out of town affects the town centre retail offer and small independents. Festivals in Oswestry - something different needed - gin festivals, BBQ weekend using local produce - offer something different good reason to visit. Help with finding use for vacant buildings in Cross St.

- Infrastructure, carparking, movement - key elements. Need to preserve historic, modern and streetscape, public realm space i.e. aesthetics. Some shop fronts need refreshing.
- Shop fronts have been previously designed in a traditional way - now more integration with modern shop fronts - can work well.
- Famous for being different - unique selling point needed. Don't reinvent the wheel. Good aesthetics help with working and living in a town/city.
- Focus on aesthetics (street realm and shop fronts) are important but vibe is really important.
- Oswestry food festival in the street - this is amazing. On information stall - visitors came from far and wide and they loved the uniqueness. It is not corporate high street Britain with good independent shops. Challenges of out of town development at previous Moreton Garden Centre/Dobbies - so don't need to go into Oswestry. Old people do not like walking to the town centre from the coach park. Coach drop off and pick up at Castle View. Out of town shopping centres and coach car park needs to be considered.
- Vibe - build on - Regal and Bwise is not the right place for a business centre. The vibe could be created at the Powys Hall?? Prefer market moved - perhaps around edge of central carpark. Bailey Head/Guildhall make use of - mini Covent garden (natural space to draw attention). Need to be better than a space for a sad market. Move OTC to Cambrian building. Cultural hub at Regal and Bwise.
- BT (1970) highly skilled jobs in Oswestry. This led to some high-tech companies in Oswestry - central was character of Oswestry. People's welcoming nature. Old attractions still there. Any design of streets in the town centre - should draw on history. In favour of market to locate where it needs to.
- Lots of traffic pass Oswestry - need to attract passer bys, need to have something on the outskirts to light their fire. Need to attract people off the A5 into Oswestry.
- Innovation Park - new road layout and housing coming forward - need nice gateway at this point into Oswestry. KFC, signs are not great. Needs a great announcement. Need to look at all the gateways in Oswestry. Existing businesses on Ind Estates – need to ensure those businesses have enough grow on space. Some will need bigger premises, so we don't lose them - employ local people.
- Innovation park - key opportunity for employment. Looking for inward investment and looking after existing businesses (room for new businesses to come forward)
- Key corridor into Holyhead.
- Independent retail offer and business community is great as it is the way they have diversified. Start-ups need encouraged, public realm draw factor.
- Movement, public realm v important. Businesses and landlords wanting to invest in HSHAZ. Business links, transport links, wayfinding, better signage, better gateways - needs co-ordinated approach to masterplan vision.
- Invest in Shropshire - unclear if there is a coherent inward investment strategy for Oswestry. Oswestry Chamber of Commerce - website need updating. Oswestry business community doesn't seem vibrant. Independent retailers - is BID the only voice.
- Visitor economy - high street is changing. Need to look at it as an opportunity. Good base as a town centre - so lets make it welcoming to attract other businesses. Visitors - short stay or long - lots to see. Festival Sq vibe is great. Need to build on that.
- Local people sometimes don't support certain activities e.g. breakfast clubs. Good case for a flagship store in Oswestry - with what?? not tat shops - more quality products on offer. Young couple or single people struggling to get suitable homes/accommodation. Developing old Morrisons is key to success for the town. Old Smithfield site ideal opportunity for live/work environment.
- Need to retain talent, entrepreneur support. Co-working, hot desk space (incubator space)

## Potential Key Goals

- Connectivity and welcoming gateway (Oswestry as a destination)
- Galvanising business environment (groups and hub - peer mentoring)
- Enhancing and expanding the vibe of Oswestry - it's feel and sense of place (activities/festivals etc)
- Reconfigured/Regenerate Bailey Head and flexible markets
- Inclusive action plan for town centre and industrial out of town businesses
- Different and unique offering from Oswestry (street design, furniture, types of shops, markets, bars etc)
- Creating an environment that provides opportunity and support to young people to foster and retain their talent in Oswestry

## Others

- Start with a vision, too many cooks! FOG - not enough involvement from civic society, more businesses
- As citizens we want to participate
- Economic Task Force - further discussions
- Would be nice to see more businesses attend this workshop

## Feedback and comments made in the Microsoft Teams Chat function (please note typos have been corrected)

- Street furniture - not enough - was a point made by visitors to the food fest time and time again
- We need to increase dwell time

## Other comments

- I would be very wary of placing too much reliance on this train link to Gobowen. I know it sounds very exciting, but I have worked on infrastructure projects like this & there simply wouldn't be the traffic to make it commercially viable, so it would have to be a publicly funded project & I would be very surprised if it succeeded in getting it.
- More positively, can I repeat my plea to resurrect both the indoor markets in Oswestry. The old market on the Cross would be a perfect artisan/ food market & the one on the Bailey Head could be repurposed as a food hall & craft type market. Altrincham in Cheshire has done this very successfully with its one covered market & I commend the way in which they have dealt with existing market businesses to you.
- Both markets would then act as small business nurseries (with suitable rent breaks) to allow people to test ideas & if successful, move into shops in the town.