

**Summary of Consultancy Report on  
North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration (NWedr)  
Outdoor Market operations**

**As at December 2014**

**Bromsgrove Outdoor Market**

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This Appendix summarises the review of NWedr's outdoor markets carried out by consultants National Market Place (NMP) in so far as it relates to Bromsgrove Outdoor Market.

**2. METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 In order to carry out the review, the following project methodology was adopted:

**2.1.1 Desktop review**

This stage of the review used a combination of web-based and documentary research. This included the information and data provided by Council.

**2.1.2 Site visits**

Visits were made to the market. In addition, the surrounding retail, leisure and commercial areas were studied.

**2.1.3 Consultation with Stakeholders**

Interviews were conducted with key operational team members at NWedr, discussions with the senior officers in Economic Development, LSD Promotions and some market traders past and present.

**2.1.4 Evaluation criteria**

Research has identified a number of 'critical success factors', for retail markets. For a market to succeed and be sustainable it is important that it has at its heart as many of the critical success factors as possible. Those success factors are detailed further under paragraph 4 below.

**3. BROMSGROVE MARKET**

- 3.1 Bromsgrove Outdoor Market is operated by NWedr on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

- 3.2 It is sited in the recently refurbished pedestrianised area of Bromsgrove town centre (High Street) and has capacity for up to 32 stalls (depending on size) and a trailer/catering van stall.

- 3.3 Between February and September 2014, a temporary arrangement was in place, with the market operating to the frontage of the Asda superstore, Bromsgrove, whilst the High Street refurbishment works were carried out.

- 3.4 It is operated by NWedr on Bromsgrove District Council's behalf. As part of its remit NWedr collect the rents and oversee the day to day operation. Income collected is retained by Bromsgrove District Council.
- 3.5 New stalls with overhead canopies were recently purchased and these stalls are erected, dismantled and stored each trading day by NWedr operational team.
- 3.6 Since the market relocated back to the High Street, trader numbers have been increasing from those trading at the temporary location, though there is still some more capacity, particularly on Tuesdays.
- 3.7 The stalls are new and bright in appearance, though, as previously, the cost of erecting and dismantling them is a great expense. The operation is very physical and time consuming and any team would find it practically difficult to build the market and set up an events space at the same time.
- 3.8 The new public realm has undoubtedly improved the landscape. Thought has been given for events in the High Street and underground electric and stall fixings are provided. The linear nature of the High Street, the need to keep "key open spaces" free and the need to provide for emergency vehicular access means that the market is spread out along the street. However, the market stalls do give the market a fresh look and the traders look to be selling good quality products.
- 3.9 In 2013/14 Bromsgrove District Council received a surplus of £19,000. This is derived from rents received less an operating cost claimed by NWedr.
- 3.10 Given that the market is now back to its superior trading location there is now the opportunity to maximise lettings and income while also being able to effectively control expenditure.
- 3.11 Bromsgrove is also recognised as an affluent town and thus the ability to introduce Farmer, French, Italian and other themed markets is a real possibility. However it should be noted that most themed markets tend to be larger than the event space currently provides for, and these operators want to trade on Friday and Saturday. These are days when the High Street is already being used for the regular market.

**4. SUCCESSFUL & SUSTAINABLE MARKETS – CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS**

**4.1 Sense of place**

Locations are said to have a strong 'sense of place' when they have strong identity and character that is deeply felt by local inhabitants and by many visitors. This sense of place reflects not just the physical nature of the market and location but also the cultural and social diversity of the area.

**4.2 Critical mass**

This measure looks at the scale of a market in relation to its location, and is not just about size. It is important that the market has critical mass for two reasons. Firstly, placing 25 stalls in a space that can support 125 stalls means that a market will appear small and inconsequential. Equally, a 20

stall market that fills its location is more likely to appear bustling and thriving. In relation to size, the larger the market, the more chance it has to survive economic downturn.

### 4.3 **Good management**

Good management is fundamental to any successful market and should not be undervalued. Good decision making, effective communication, business acumen and the ability to deliver a safe, clean and inviting environment are essential. Equally, the effective capture, management and analysis of information and data is an important constituent of successful markets. It is both strategic and operational and recognises the need for, and delivers investment in markets.

### 4.4 **Accessibility & permeability**

A market needs to be accessible for all users, so good transport links (public and private) are essential. A market must be welcoming with good entrances, and the interior must be designed to allow good customer flow. This factor also includes location, arguably, the single most important success factor. Markets placed in the wrong location fail.

### 4.5 **Marketing & PR**

A market needs to be promoted to raise the awareness both for shoppers and to retain and increase the traders' base. Marketing strategies should recognise the market's brand and emphasise its 'unique selling point' (USP). There should be strong positive links with the local media.

### 4.6 **Safety & security**

Customers do not like to frequent places that have high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. Equally, they will react to perceptions of crime as well as actual crime. It is essential, therefore, that where this is an issue it is tackled robustly and effectively.

### 4.7 **Integration with surrounding retail offer and community**

A market offer has to be understood in relation to the surrounding retail offer. Is the market competing with or complementing that retail offer? What differentiates a market offer from the other shops, so that it can attract and retain its own customer base? Equally, a market offer has to be aligned to its demographic base. Understanding retail customer profiles, spend patterns and values and the types of commodity and services that different customer types prefer is essential.

### 4.8 **Partnership working**

Sustainable markets need partnership working. This involves not just effective working between managers and traders, but also building and maintaining links with, for example, other council departments, local businesses, town centre managers, local schools, colleges and universities, local primary care trusts, and the local media. They will vary from location to location.

**5. FINDINGS**

**5.1 Management**

There is scope to develop management policies that are more proactive and strategic. Operationally the market works well, but it requires strong directional management if it is to contribute in the delivery of a vibrant town centre.

**5.2 Location**

The location of the market could not be bettered. It has its own unique character and its potential is untapped. The improved location is attractive and with its improved stalls and given its local demographics, there is potential for themed markets to succeed.

**5.3 Appearance**

The market is of good quality and very presentable. The new stalls provide a fresh outlook and positioning them even closer together, where possible, would bring an even greater appeal of a unique and buzzing market atmosphere.

**5.4 Marketing**

The website information is accurate but limited. There is some planned advertisement for 2015. There is however no social media presence.

**5.5 Financial Performance**

The potential to increase revenue at Bromsgrove Market is realistic. The new High Street development allows for up to 32 stalls (depending on size) and the potential for themed markets in the town centre. The new environment is attractive and if managed appropriately could become a vibrant market. It is considered however that there is currently scope for the market to maximise its stall income potential.

**5.6 Prospects for Growth**

Bromsgrove offers great potential. New public realm, enhancing quality, new stalls all provide a fresh look. The opportunity to bring in new traders and supplement it with a specialist market package is all very feasible.

**5.6 Potential Outsourcing of the Markets**

Consideration should be given to outsourcing the market. Wyre Forest has successfully outsourced Kidderminster market for nearly ten years. The market has flourished and added value to the towns retail offer. The market days of Thursday and Saturday are the towns two main retail days. The market has undoubtedly supported Kidderminster, provided opportunities for local employment and significantly contributed towards the local economy.

**6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 It is strongly noted that managing markets is not NWedr core business activity.

6.2 For the market to maximise its potential the market management team is critical. On the visits to the market and further research, the market would benefit from some additional strategic management, given that the market function forms only part of the officers' work responsibilities. It is suggested that this would include developing:-

- Visions and Strategies
- Effective performance management
- Senior “market champions”
- Proactive, commercially - focused operational management of the service
- A focus on new business start up opportunities
- Marketing and promotional strategies
- An effective web site and use of social media
- Improved stakeholder and trader engagement

- 6.3 NWedr should be commended for their commitment and drive in that they clearly make the best of the available resource, however for long term development and sustainability of Bromsgrove market consideration should be given to looking at an alternative management model or provider to enable them to meet all the factors highlighted in paragraph 4 above.
- 6.4 The ideal time to do this would be when tenders are invited for the Kidderminster Market operation proposed for during the summer 2015.
- 6.5 This methodology would not disqualify groups whom maybe interested in operating their local market.
- 6.6 NMP would also recommend that an officer be appointed to manage the contract. This would not be a full time appointment but the monitoring of the contractor performance is essential in ensuring the market is operated effectively.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 Consideration should be given to outsourcing Bromsgrove market within the same package as the Kidderminster contract with interested parties be invited to tender for one or more markets accordingly.
- 7.2 The length of the contract awarded should be 5 years.
- 7.3 Operators to be invited to tender a price for each trading year during the 5 year period. This may result in a stepped increase across the contract period.
- 7.4 That NWedr cease operating Bromsgrove market at the appropriate handover period.
- 7.4 If a decision is made to outsource the markets, joint funding should be made available to resource a client role to manage the contract(s) and to monitor performance.