

Westside Traders Subgroup Council Meeting – 9th May 2022

Remit to Council:- The main prerogative of the westside subgroup is to establish what financial hardship support package can be provided by the council following their admission at the mtg 7th April of their lack of consultation and poor communication which has resulted in the situation we find ourselves in.

Deputy leader, Councillor Simkins made a promise to the traders that he would personally ensure that this situation would be addressed as you agreed that as businesses the direct breakdown in communication has jeopardised the survival of businesses in the westside area. Some have already been lost. In order for business survivability, we need this issue addressed formally so we can give reassurances to westside traders that the council have not forsaken westside.

Now that purdah is over, it has been a month since the last meeting, **please tell us what immediate financial measures the council are putting in place to mitigate continued losses.**

From council perspective we are very keen to understand what has been achieved against the issues highlighted in the minutes of 7th April 2022?

Further to the minutes, the council made the following responses at the Meeting Held 9th May 2022 at the Council Offices.

Order of Urgency	Minute Ref	Description	Council Response
1	5.1	<p><u>Financial Hardship Support.</u></p> <p>To ensure business sustainability now & moving forwards. Drastic continued downturn in footfall & trade is jeopardising business survival.</p> <p>Business traders have been improvising, using their own initiatives, however, we need immediate intervention & personal resources have been exhausted. Council cannot expect us to keep afloat businesses through personal funding.</p> <p>We are stakeholders and provide services to the community. This is affecting livelihoods and employees too.</p>	<p>Steve Simkins gave his assurance that the council are here to work with Westside businesses.</p> <p>Clear statement made that the issues with contractors needs to be addressed urgently in particular with regards to the barriers.</p> <p>*Isobel Woods has prepared a tender which will acquire business consultants to work closely with Westside businesses on the losses encountered <u>since commencement of works.</u></p> <p>*Council agreed to financial support whilst the development works continue through to completion as impressed on the council at the meeting.</p> <p>*We have agreed to the commencement of this on behalf of Westside as time is crucial.</p> <p>*A template will be used to gather individual business information. It will be up to businesses to ensure they work with consultants for their benefit. Please have your records/accounts ready to expediate the process. <u>Whole process will take 5-6weeks & is dependant on businesses to be forthcoming with information else it will DELAY assistance for individual businesses.</u></p> <p>* Once data collected the council can review public monies needed to support businesses currently and moving forwards as Council understands that footfall will take time to rebuild.</p> <p>*Council expressed they wish to work with Westside moving forwards to listening to ideas of how footfall can be drawn into area.</p> <p>*Establishment of Westside is important now and also making use of the new “event space” to attract more footfall to the area.</p>

Westside Subgroup – Review & Action plan Outcomes

2.		<p>Project Timescales & Completion of Works</p>	<p>*John Roseblade said that the timescales have not slipped and that everything is on target for completion of Phase 1. *Working document will be produced to ensure the programme of works inclusive of timescales etc so everyone has information. This will also be reviewed and updated to show any delays etc. so that Westside is kept informed. *Any slippages need to be liaised so that businesses can plan.</p>
3.		<p>Communication & Signage.</p> <p>We are still experiencing issues with communication, signage. *Customers are still getting frustrated and confused with accesses. *Deliveries are still being obstructed making business function difficult. *Security of site at the end of the day being left insecure-inviting mischief etc. Bricks being thrown through 1st storey windows.</p>	<p>*Council to revisit Signage as it was still not clear. Barrier positioning preventing people from easy access. This the council have agreed is high priority. * Better signage to show businesses open as usual. *Steve Simkins also agreed for council to showcase businesses regularly. Agreed we are vital local businesses offering unique businesses and unique experiences. *Transport(Council) to ensure suitable locations to allow deliveries and remove current difficulties being experienced by businesses. *Transport to look at ensuring parking tickets are not issued. Consideration *John Roseblade to ensure at the end of the day the working site is left safe & secure by the contractors.</p>
4.	5.4	<p>Parking</p> <p>Temporary parking to allow pick up/drop of points in market st.</p>	<p>Steve Simkins agreed with opening up some temporary parking to ease current issues being faced by disabled people, customers. Market Square was one such place. Transport to look at how customers can access parking for collections without being ticketed. Transport to investigate best solution e.g. ensure traffic wardens allow extra time, permits etc. to be reviewed. Possible idea – ring ride buses to allow customers to jump on and get to Westside.</p>
5.	5.3, 5.7	<p>Advertisement of businesses and footfall direction.</p>	<p>*Establishing westside. * Advertisement in Wolverhampton Today has a very wide audience. More exposure of independent businesses in Westside now and going forwards.</p>
		<p>AOB</p> <p>BUSINESS RATES</p> <p>LANDLORD/RENTS</p>	<p>With respect to business rates, the Council are a collecting agent for the Government. The onus is on individual businesses to speak to Business Rates Dept. either via phone or email to make individual arrangements/payment plans. Please DO NOT IGNORE.</p> <p>In terms of landlords & rent payments again Council cannot get involved in any negotiation & suggests individual businesses address this personally.</p>
<p>NEXT MEETING TO BE ARRANGED IN <u>6 WEEKS</u> WITH SUBGROUP TO REVIEW WITH WESTSIDE, THE FINANCIAL PACKAGE AVAILABLE BASED ON WHAT HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY BUSINESSES. EACH BUSINESS WILL BE INDIVIDUALLY DEALT WITH AS EVERYONES FINANCIAL SITUATION WILL BE DIFFERENT. PLEASE COMPLY ITS IN YOUR BEST INTEREST</p>			