

**Notes of Trading Spaces Working Group Meeting
held on Tuesday 12th May 2020, via Zoom**

Present: Robert Eggleston, Joe Foster, Anne Eves, Janice Henwood, Steve Cridland and Liz Clark

Background:

Robert circulated a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Trading Spaces concept. Trading Spaces would be a capital project to bring back filled retail space in the town centre.

Robert explained he has had discussions with Jackie Tracy, Head of NewRiver Retail (NRR) Commercial Partnerships and Nadine King, Martlets Shopping Centre Manager (Workman) regarding the use of one of their empty retail spaces to become a Trading Spaces. Both were keen to do something. If under the Business Rates Mitigation Scheme costs would be reduced.

Robert suggested market testing the concept on 2 year lease with NRR which would save undue financial risk to Burgess Hill Town Council.

Some of the empty units were not in a good condition but the vacant Argos and Iceland units looked like they were okay. Robert preferred the Argos unit approx. 4,000 sq. ft., which could be divided into smaller units to sub lease out.

Initial discussions with Meg at Scrapless have been held. She was interested in taking on a lease in the vacant Argos unit at 1,500 sq. ft. Scrapless is a Community Interest Company in Burgess Hill providing zero waste shopping, plastic free, sustainable products, uses local suppliers etc. There was no other business like this in town or mid Sussex.

The Scrapless concept may not appeal to all but there is interest from some Burgess Hill residents and neighbouring villages and may even attract people up from Brighton as parking costs were lower in Burgess Hill.

If Scrapless took 1,500 sq. ft. this would leave 500 sq. ft. which could be partly used for a Community Cupboard (Fare Share), community space, e.g. yoga classes, BH Artists exhibitions/workshops, bar selling local Sussex craft drinks/micro-brewery and events/entertainment in the evening with street food sellers. The place would need to be licensed to sell alcohol. Other ideas put forward were to upcycle clothing and furniture.

Discussion Points:

- Business Rates Mitigation Scheme - vacant properties are not be expected to pay business rates for a period of three months after they become empty. After this period the ratepayer can become liable to pay the business rates again, even if the property remains unoccupied.
- Costs?
 - Rent – under Business Rates Mitigation Scheme hope to get rent at peppercorn rate from NRR.

- Business Rates – 4,000 sq. ft. unit, if unit is divided up into smaller units with different tenants then believe they fall under the business rate banding.
- Fit-out, divide into smaller units. Would planning/building regs be needed?
- Landlord for Riverside in Lewes pays the business rates and then the individual businesses pay the landlord.
- Why would MSDC allow us not to pay business rates?
- Joe suggested creating a Lean Canvass for this project.
- Look at HISBE website www.hisbe.co.uk, based in Brighton who also runs workshops which may be helpful to us in setting up our Trading Spaces.
- Competition with existing retailers/businesses in town.
- Selection criteria for prospective tenants based on the agreed values, e.g. ethically sourced produce, bio-degradable packaging, locally produced etc.
- Future proof in case Strapless decides they want to leave and establish own place, so need to have a waiting list of proposed tenants. National Market Traders Federation may be able to assist.
- Research market traders and opportunities. What will be the unique selling point (USP)?
- If the Repair Café needed a larger area they may want to relocate to Trading Spaces.
- Anne asked how hands on and officer time would be expected to run Trading Spaces? Robert anticipated Scrapless and traders would be opening/closing their area/s. He expected BHTC to be more involved in the early stages. Nadine King may be able to assist too.
- Joe suggested creating an information pack for prospective tenants.
- Planning/Building Regulations, are these needed?
- Divide into smaller units, fit-out, and decorate etc., would this be done internally by the Town Council's Maintenance Team or use external companies?
- BHTC would be the landlord.
- Need to establish costs including fit-out, running costs and overheads, plus feasibility study to see if Trading Spaces would be supported by residents/town.

Actions:

- Create a Lean Canvass project plan – Joe
- Tenancy/NRR – Robert
- Business Rates – Liz/Steve
- Riverside, Lewes – Anne to find out how it operates.