

BURGESS HILL TOWN MARKET – REPORT

In September 2020 the Town Council launched Burgess Hill Town Market as one of its Bridge the Gap initiatives to support Burgess Hill's shops and businesses by attracting footfall into the town centre.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the market has had to adapt its operations in line with the government's Covid-19 restrictions/lockdowns and faced severe weather conditions, and as a result the number of market traders attending each market has fluctuated between 7 and 21. The market is well supported by traders and shoppers alike, and existing shops and businesses have seen an increase in sales on market days.

There is an aspiration by the Market Working Group to increase the frequency of market days during the month and move it to the next level with increasing the number of stallholders. It is felt the best way to achieve this is to appoint a market operator to run and manage the Burgess Hill Town Market on behalf of the Town Council.

To date the market has been run in house so by appointing a market operator this will free up officer time plus give access to a large database of market traders held by the prospective operator and see the market grow and make Burgess Hill a destination.

Five market operators were approached of which four expressed an interest. Following meetings between the Market Working Group and the prospective market operators there is a shortlist of two operators – The Anonymous Travelling Market and Bray Associates Ltd.

Below is a summary of the meetings with The Anonymous Travelling Market and Bray Associates:

The Anonymous Travelling Market

Company has been trading for 11 years with core of events in the south west of England but regularly engages with projects in south Wales, central southern England, Thames Valley and the Midlands. <https://www.theatm.co.uk/>

- Q- BHTC support local businesses & entrepreneurs, so what guarantee can you give the market traders you bring to Burgess Hill will be local, i.e. within 30 mile radius, and that you will be able to attract traders to the market? Do you have a 'book' of traders that could be brought in quickly for example?

A - Database of 840 traders scattered across the south of England, some of which fit the Town Council's criteria/ethos. 90% are artisan traders. Key method for engaging stallholders to a new or growing street market is to visit other markets/events within a 30 mile radius, approach stalls that meet the

profile and offer information on the new prospect. Engage with traders that make the goods or grown them so traders able to fully engage with buyers.

- Q - Pitch fees: What protection will there be for our existing traders as we do not want them pushed out?
- A - £30 is a normal pitch fee for a 3m/10ft pitch but will keep fees as they are to start with and would liaise with the Town Council on any increase.
- Q - Frequency of market days?

A - Suggest increase number of Saturdays on a gradual basis, e.g. twice a month, 2nd and 4th Saturday of each month.

- Q - Relation between BHTC & Market Operator – how do they see this working? BHTC still want to be part of the market and do not see it as handing the market over and walking away.

A - Work with other Town/Parish Councils, BIDS, etc., so suggest weekly meetings with a council officer to start with if necessary and then quarterly review meetings, reducing to 6 monthly on agreement.

- Q - Financials/costs/contract

A – Believe can make it self-sufficient. Each market day needs to generate £600 gross to make it viable but aware this won't happen to start with.

Would seek permission to manage the market for a minimum of 1 year with an opt out clause by either party should all routes to sufficient stallholders and footfall not be achieved after exhausting all prospects.

Permissions to operate the market in Church Walk would remain the responsibility of the Town Council in liaison with the District Council.

The Market Working Group felt the market operator was enthusiastic, optimistic, had a good mind set to overcome challenges, good website, and had the same criteria/ethos for operating the market as the Town Council.

Bray Associates

Company currently operates for 14 local authorities and runs general markets in various locations, e.g. Chichester, Swanley, Fareham, Midhurst, Cranleigh, Milton Keynes, Staines, Waterlooville, Hounslow etc. <https://www.bray-markets.com/>

- Q- BHTC support local businesses & entrepreneurs, so what guarantee can you give the market traders you bring to Burgess Hill will be local, i.e. within 30 mile radius, and that you will be able to attract traders to the market? Do you have a 'book' of traders that could be brought in quickly for example?

A - Not as straight forward as you'd think to find traders as shopping habits have changed. Traders are spreading their wings and attending more

markets. No quick method, good markets are an exception and not so good need a lot of work. Suggest testing the trader market to see if there is interest to hold it every Saturday.

- Q - Pitch fees: What protection will there be for our existing traders as we do not want them pushed out?

A - All existing traders would continue to be accommodated, obviously if and when the proposed transition from monthly to weekly, this might not suit everyone. Stall/Pitch fees proposed; circa £25.00 per trading day based on 3m x 3m gazebo/pop-up or £2.50 per foot thereafter.

- Q - Frequency of market days?

A – Saturday is family shopping day and more people go out shopping, so the Saturday market should expand to every Saturday. Suggest the Town Council continues with 2nd Saturday of each month and then Bray Associates integrate the market as every Saturday.

- Q - Relation between BHTC & Market Operator – how do they see this working? BHTC still want to be part of the market and do not see it as handing the market over and walking away.

A – Want the Town Council to be involved, will need assistance with advertising/promotion of weekly market. A central point to channel ideas, not formal but informal and then review, think will take minimum of 3 months to get it going to see if everyone is up for every Saturday.

- Q - Financials/costs/contract

A – Suggest a 4-6 week period to set-up and monitor the market to get the right mix of traders would be needed; thus creating the hard core of permanent traders to establish an income for both Bray Associates and the Town Council on-going. Free rent period for establishment, so no licence fees would be payable to the Town Council. Once up and running; and after the initial free licence fee/rent free period the Town Council would receive 40% of gross take payable monthly in arrears. If both parties think it's not working then can terminate contract.

Permissions to operate the market in Church Walk would remain the responsibility of the Town Council.

The Market Working Group felt this market operator wasn't quite as enthusiastic or showed as much confidence in Burgess Hill Market as The Anonymous Travelling Market did.

Financial costs - Current expenditure to date to run the market

Expenditure	£
Street Traders Licence for 25 stalls from Sept '20 to Sept '21	£800
Market Supervisor - Sept '20 to Sept '21 (£100 per market)	£1,300
Marketing/Promotional material	£1,057.57
Equipment	£289.69
Total Expenditure	£3,447.26

Income	£
Stallholder pitch fees (excluding refunds due to Covid-19 lockdown & severe weather)	£1,980
Total Income	£1,980

Way Forward

Overall the Market Working Group felt it was a close call between the two shortlisted market operators but thought The Anonymous Travelling Market was more enthusiastic, up for a challenge, aligned with the Town Council's values and ethos for the market and demonstrated they wanted the contract.

It is proposed The Anonymous Travelling Market is appointed to operate and manage the Burgess Hill Market on behalf of Burgess Hill Town Council with a view to increase the number of market days to twice per month.

A financial report, draft contract/memorandum of agreement and specific rollout plans have been requested from The Anonymous Travelling Market.

One consideration is does the Town Council incentivise the market operator, e.g. pay them a fee to deliver the first 4 months with 25 stallholders per market day?

Recommendation

Noted.