

Response to those who attended Wokingham retailer workshop



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



**Wokingham
Town Council**

31 October 2017

Dear Colleague

Thank you for attending Wednesday's meeting. It was a really positive session and great to hear not only concerns being discussed but your good ideas and suggestions about what we can do to make things easier during this particularly disruptive time.

We're very grateful to you for giving up your time in the evening. Whilst we've been communicating with you through various channels, it's very important that we do this face-to-face to hear from you at first hand. And, your messages came over loud and clear. We're now looking at all the suggestions raised to see what we can implement, working with you all, and if so, when. We hope you will agree that it was time well spent and found it as valuable as we did.

It was also very clear you all see the benefits that are coming to the town and are excited about the future, but you're concerned, quite understandably, about the present. We must continue to work together during this time and keep the conversation going. We are committed to this.

We will be holding regular surgeries on Fridays at the Town Hall from 10am to Midday starting this Friday (3 November) so please come down and talk to us. These will complement regular visits to individual shops already being made by contractors Balfour Beatty and the Town Council.

Following your ideas and suggestions made on Wednesday, here are some of the immediate actions that we have either already taken or will have completed by the end of the week (3 November).

Listening and working together

All the suggestions and comments made at the Workshop are attached. On Wednesday, we will also publish them on our website at: <http://news.wokingham.gov.uk/projects/market-place-improvements/> for the wider community to see.

Signage

You told us to improve the signage to make it easier for pedestrians to navigate around the town centre. On Thursday (26 October) we started to install new signs around Market Place that are simple, and at eye level. They include information on pedestrian routes around the town and signs to individual shops. All new signs will be installed by the end of this week.

Help with deliveries

You said you needed more support regarding deliveries to your stores. Balfour Beatty is now setting up a dedicated phone number for deliveries which you will be able to use to secure help if necessary. We will circulate the number shortly.

Car parking

At its meeting on Thursday (26 October), Wokingham Borough Council's decision-making Executive agreed proposals for 'Free After Three' parking in its Wokingham town centre car parks from 3pm to 8am the next day, during the important pre-Christmas and New Year sales period.

The car parks included in the 'Free after Three' parking scheme are: Carnival Multi-Storey, Cockpit Path, Shute End Council Offices, Denmark Street, Easthampstead Road (east and west), The Paddocks and Wellington House.

Please let your customers know. Details of where all our car parks are can be found on our website: www.wokingham.gov.uk (and search 'car parking')

Noise

In response to concerns about noise, we're installing a new acoustic barrier in Market Place, which will be attached to the Heras fencing. This will help reduce the amount of noise from the work, making visiting the town a better experience. This will be in place by the end of this week (3 November).

Help with dust and litter

Road sweepers will continue to operate in Rose Street early in the morning to avoid the rush hour and prevent further congestion. However, we will increase the schedule, at other less busy times of the day, to tackle any areas that need particular attention.

Communication

You told us you liked the Market Place Improvement Project newsletter and were happy for it to be published monthly, at the same time. You also said you are particularly interested to know more practical information such as work schedules, details of what is happening when and for how long, and more information about any delays, should they happen. Therefore, as well as the monthly newsletter, we will now also send a weekly email, from Friday 3 November, to provide you with information about what is happening over the next week.

We've also arranged with Jonathan Holley from the Wokingham Business Association to provide more information on road works that have the potential to disrupt routes to and from the town. He has kindly agreed to circulate amongst the Wokingham Business Association.

Positive marketing campaign: short-term

We're working together on a range of actions to promote the town in the lead up to Christmas. Here are some of the things that are happening over the next few weeks:

- Online video, funded by the Borough Council, Wokingham Town Council and Wokingham Business Association to promote businesses and the town. This will be available on the Councils' website and social media channels. Once launched, we will send you the links to the video. Please help promote it

- Working with the Wokingham Paper to help promote the town
- On behalf of The Wokingham Business Association, Specsavers is organising a Christmas 'Scavenger Hunt' to attract families into local retailers and businesses with plenty of prizes available

Please continue to help promote the town and what is on offer.

What's next

As mentioned earlier, we're looking at all the excellent suggestions and ideas raised on Wednesday and see what we can implement and if so, when. We will also discuss how we might take forward a longer-term marketing strategy for the town. We'll tell you more about this shortly.

Thank you again for your valuable time. Let's continue to work together.

With best wishes

Cllr Charlotte Haitham Taylor
Leader, Wokingham Borough Council

Cllr Peter Lucey
**Mayor & Chairman of Market Place Working Party,
Wokingham Town Council**

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