

WCOT – Open meeting at The Swan Hotel 13th March 2014 – Discuss the proposal for a weekly market in Market Street

A letter was sent to the local businesses and residents of Market Street by the working party inviting people to attend an open meeting to discuss the positives and negatives of running a weekly market in Market Street. Twenty three people attended which included residents and businesses.

Alex Wilkinson opened the meeting and gave some background to the idea behind having a market. He explained that the purpose of the working party was simply to look into the feasibility of the idea and also to take account of the views of residents and businesses. Attendees were invited to voice their opinions.

Two petitions were presented, one from local residents and one from Wotton businesses, objecting to the proposal. The petitions have been sent to Stroud District Council.

The main objections raised by those who were against the idea are as follows:

1. Residents – issues with parking for residents and concerns as to where market traders would park their vehicles; issues relating to early morning noise and general disturbance; concerns over potential property devaluation; little benefit to the town or its businesses; general concern that the views of residents had not been taken into account.
2. Businesses – direct threat to their main trading day if there were stalls run by similar businesses ie fruit and veg; general parking issues for customers who might want to park in Market St; little value to businesses; wouldn't necessarily bring in more people; no quick results; didn't address the immediate issues; felt that other solutions would have a better result ie promoting Wotton in other towns etc by advertising, displays and leaflets.

The main arguments by those who were in favour were:

1. Businesses – research shows that similar markets held in other towns were extremely successful. An example given was that of the Stroud market which is allegedly the most successful in the country – well-supported by its community and by outside visitors; belief that if the market was innovative and offered a range of different produce/ crafts etc that this would create an interest and people would visit the town to appreciate new and interesting products; this in turn would lead to increased foot-fall from which potentially all high street businesses would benefit.
2. No residents present were in favour.

Potential Alternatives

Proposals were mooted by businesses that alternatives could be considered:

1. Arrangements for parking –ask Renishaw if they would agree to use of the Old Town site for visitors and/ or traders; consider using the Tabernacle for parking
2. Consider holding the market at the Renishaw site in Old Town
3. Consider holding the market in The Chipping
4. Hold markets once a month instead of weekly
5. Hold markets on Sundays instead of Saturdays

The meeting ended with no particular conclusions reached. AW said the WCOT committee would be meeting at The Swan on 18th March and would discuss the output of this meeting. Steve Barnes and Mark Austin asked if they could attend this part of the meeting. There were no objections to this.