

5 Towns Market Meeting - Notes from a public meeting at Ryedale House, Malton - 7 July 2008

The purpose of the meeting was to take a broad look at Ryedale Markets and listen to suggestions as to the way forward, including the approach of the District Council. The '5 Town Councils' Group had been particularly anxious for these issues to be examined

Janet Waggott, Chief Executive of Ryedale District Council, chaired the meeting.

Present were a number of individuals representing local businesses, operators of the Markets, Members of Town Councils, Members of Ryedale District Council and residents.

Several open questions were posed by the Chief Executive to start the meeting including:

- Are the markets in the right place?
- What do the public want out of the markets?
- Could the look/arrangement of the stalls be improved?
- Who is best suited to run the markets?

David Wilson, who organises Malton Market on behalf of the operator, said that there was much negativity around the market, the rents are too high, the cost of fuel is putting traders off attending (many travel from West Yorkshire and beyond, with £40 to £50 in diesel per trip paid by some), the market is poorly advertised, as are the directions to the car parks. Could parking be made free?

Denys Townsend (Malton Business in Action Group) said that Malton Market has had years of neglect. Trader's vehicles are left on the Market Square during trading and not removed. Traders often pack up before 4.00 pm. In contrast he believed the monthly farmers market to be well organised.

Other comments from the meeting felt that it would be odd if our market towns did not have a market. They were a draw and helped increase footfall in the towns and in consequence help local businesses as well as providing healthy competition. They should be an attraction. Markets could help plug the gaps in the retail offer of the town, and they should be run so that the market themselves provide a rounded shopping offer e.g. if they are missing a greengrocer, then efforts should be made to secure such a stall. There may be benefits in linking with farmers' markets.

Gaynor De Barr (Mayor and Chairman of Kirkbymoorside Town Council) talking about Kirkbymoorside Market felt that it was vibrant and attracted people from a wide area. The Memorial Hall Committee runs it and she asked would the other town councils be prepared to run 'their' markets rather than the District Council? Would Ryedale District Council be willing to hand over the running of the markets?

A Ryedale resident commented that he thought Helmsley market was well run. It had settled down since the recent change that had been made with respect to the erection and dismantling of the stalls. He believed the rents were reasonable and the Ryedale District Council officers who look after the market during set up and throughout the day do a good job. Others were concerned about the stalls being a little scruffy.

A series of general suggestions were made:

- The livery of the market stalls needs improvement
- Do not clash with businesses – look seriously at the location of the markets
- Increase marketing – push forward stalls that sell locally sourced food
- Tap into any funds/grants to help publicise the market. Can the National Park Authority help?

Christine Richardson (Kirkbymoorside Memorial Hall Committee) said they run the market as a not-for-profit operation and it works.

Mike Skehan (Malton Town Council) asked whether the businesses in Kirkbymoorside and Helmsley benefit by the Market. Christine Richardson said they did generally, although a greengrocer had to compete with a busy market stall. Brian Thompson (Helmsley Town Council) felt that the whole town benefited by the market bringing many people into town both local residents and visitors who bought at both the market and the surrounding businesses.

Councillor Dinah Keal (Ryedale District Council) expressed the opinion that Malton Market is improving week by week with new stalls appearing. Whether anything can be done to improve the general appearance of the market should be included in any debate about the future of the market, as should the impact of the market on businesses in Malton.

There was a small debate about the merits of a single line market as opposed to multi-line. A single line market would not be a good idea at Helmsley.

Usually market traders have excellent insights into difficulties, but may not be suited to the overall running of market operations.

The meeting ended with widespread support for the continuation and strengthening of the markets in Ryedale, which give confidence to the towns and provide a sense of community. There should be intervention and active efforts by Ryedale Council and others to improve them, including better publicity/marketing e.g. information to promote the markets on RDC's website (stressing the benefits of locally sourced food and reducing the fuel costs of shoppers) and to encourage new traders. As to the running of the markets, if it could be shown that others are better placed to do this then Ryedale Council should consider relinquishing its control. Alternatively, the Council may have to lower its expectations of returns from the market leases. The location of the markets is important and should allow for their expansion to enhance overall vitality in each of the towns. The Council should participate in the National Association of British Market Authorities, and learn from good and bad practise elsewhere.
