

## **Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

**Date: 19 September 2022**

**Subject: Mitcham Town Centre Manager / Mitcham Regeneration Update**

Lead officer: Lucy Owen, Executive Director for Housing and Sustainable Development

Lead member: Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Cabinet Member for Civic Pride

Contact officer: Mark Warren, Mitcham Town Centre Manager,  
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**Recommendations:**

- A. That the panel note the range of activities underway to support Mitcham Town centre.
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**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report has been made to provide an update with the ongoing work being produced to regenerate Mitcham town centre.
- 1.2. There are multiple council teams working to support the town centre. This report focusses on the work the Business & Economy team within FutureMerton are delivering, however due to the collaborative approach taken across the council there are inevitable crossovers across what is being delivered. This report provides a summary of relevant work being co-ordinated by other teams, however if more detailed information is needed, the relevant teams should be approached.
- 1.3. The appointed Mitcham Town Centre manager started 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023 and has been seconded from an urban design officer role from the Future Merton team. The Mitcham Town Centre manager role has been funded from the Council's Civic Pride fund for 3 years with the possibility of extension subject to review.
- 1.4. The Business & Economy team are undertaking multiple work streams with particular emphasis on the 'Mitcham Matters' public consultation, see section 2 for further details.

**2 DETAILS**

**Mitcham Town Centre Partnership Action Plan**

- 2.1. The Mitcham Town Centre Partnership Action Plan is being coordinated by Safer Merton. Following ongoing concerns and issues raised by residents, the purpose of the plan is to collectively work together with relevant teams in responding and tackling these concerns by providing enhanced visibility and community reassurance and increased community engagement. A review meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> September will provide an update on the Council activity, alongside the Policing plan, and assess ongoing response.

2.2. The action plan is a targeted piece of work to enhance the Councils presence and activity in Mitcham Town Centre. It focuses on the main issues raised by residents in the area and was undertaken within a 3 week period. After the 3 weeks the activity will be reviewed, and a longer-term approach is developed and feed into ongoing work such as the Mitcham vision statement and other future implemented projects.

### **Mitcham Matters public consultation**

2.3. Upon news of Morrisons vacating Mitcham town centre, the Council initiated a consultation on the future of the town centre. The consultation ended on 31 August 2023. Its aim was to obtain feedback from local people about what they want for the future of Mitcham Town Centre to help shape the roles of two new roles that the administration was already in the process of introducing, the town centre manager and market manager. There was a strong push to reach as many residents in and around the town centre, particular those who rarely or never use the town centre even though it's local.

2.4. The consultation was promoted using a variety of methods, both in person and online. FutureMerton were present at the Mitcham Carnival and held a consultation launch event on the market square on 26 May 2023. At both events we directly engaged with 63 people and often had in depth conversations about the challenges and opportunities Mitcham has. The consultation was also promoted with the help of ward councillors, the MP, online via the council's social media channels as well as utilising digital advertising boards around Mitcham.

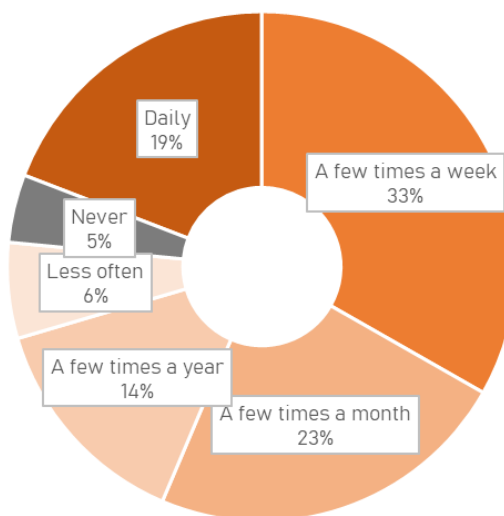


2.5. In total 691 respondents participated which exceeded our expectations when based on other consultations. This is a clear indication that Mitcham residents are engaged with the town centre and there is an appetite to make

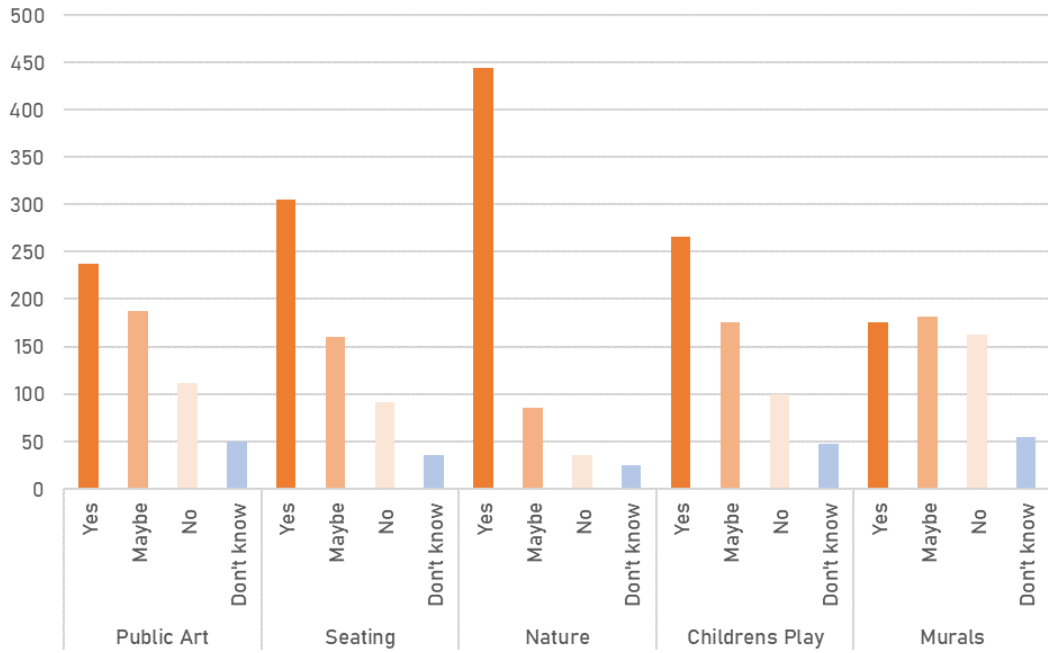
improvements. Although we received many responses, the data collected indicate that under 25's were poorly represented.

- 2.6. The consultation feedback is now currently being analysed and will directly inform the objectives set for the town centre manager and the market manager as well as the overarching future direction of Mitcham town centre.
- 2.7. Some immediate interventions have taken place already or are being planned for. These are typically around general maintenance of the public realm and respond to early feedback from the consultation as well as conversations from historic public consultations.
- 2.8. Longer term interventions will be planned in direct response to the consultation feedback from local residents that seek to strengthen and celebrate the existing qualities and character Mitcham has already. Many of these interventions will require significant planning and depend on many external factors, such as seeking permission from private landlords.
- 2.9. The outcome and analysis of the consultation will form a 'Vision Statement' or similar that sets out objectives and priorities for the shorter and longer term vision of the town centre. This document will provide a positive and unified vision for Mitcham that will reflect the diverse demographics it caters for. The indicative timeline to complete the consultation report is early October, and the 'Vision Statement' or similar will follow with an indicative timeline of the end of the year. The timing is based on the procurement of the market manager who will have an input into this document. More details on the market manager can be found below.
- 2.10. A high-level overview of the consultation responses can be found below. Please note that the results shown are crude and do not take into account further analysis on how this relates to specific demographics and feedback obtained from the comments boxes that will need careful review.

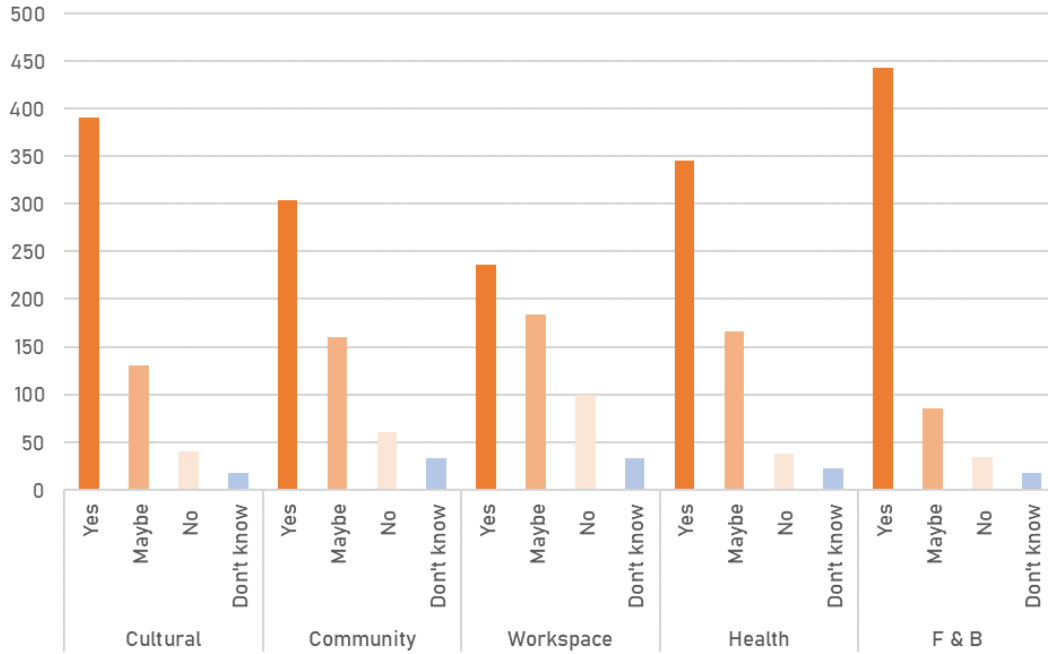
### How often do you visit Mitcham Town Centre?



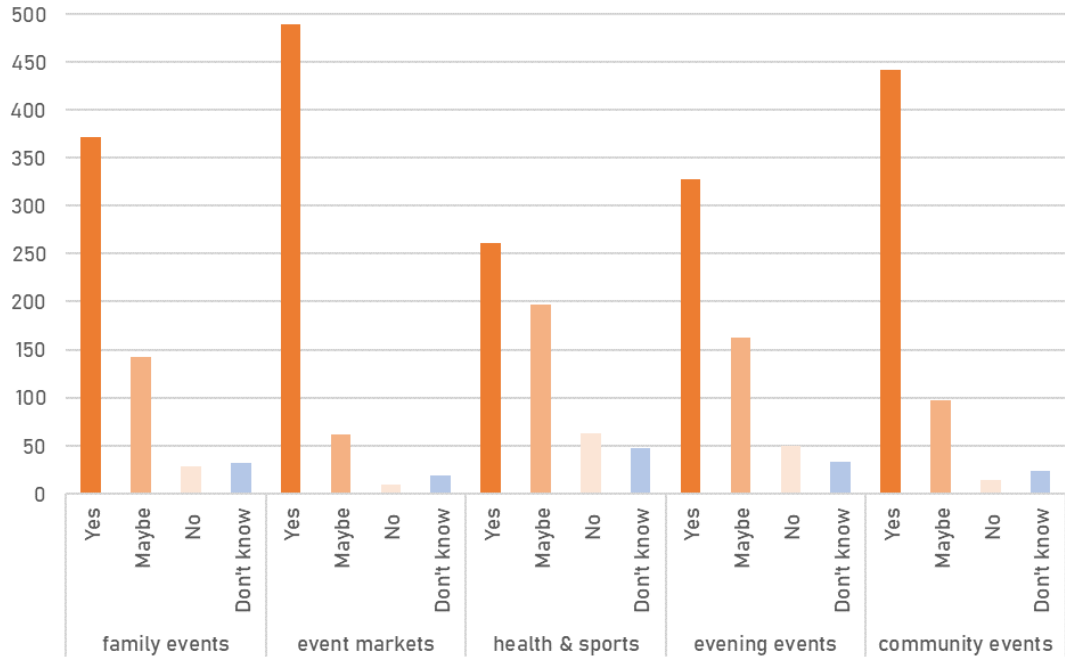
### Q1. What would improve the public space?



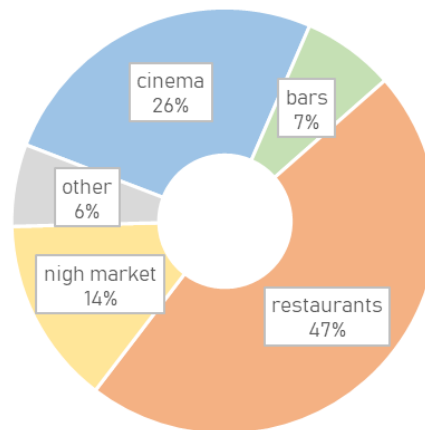
### Q2. What uses would you like?



### Q3. What would you like in the market square?



### What would you most likely use after 6pm?



2.11. Additionally, feedback from other relevant and/or previous consultations will feed into the statement. Such as 'Your Merton' engagement in 2021, recent community safety activities and work undertaken in the 'Borough Character Study SPD' consultations. We will be working closely with other council teams to ensure that the vision statement carefully considers Mitcham through different lenses.

- 2.12. The consultation will be fed back to all teams that support Mitcham Town Centre and be made available online.

### **Market Square Manager and activities**

- 2.13. Alongside the Town Centre Manager, the administration took the decision to hire a Market Square Manager to revitalise the market area at the heart of the town centre. This area had been redeveloped with capital funding from the Rediscover Mitcham Programme back in 2014/18 but without dedicated resource to promote and develop it, the market had dwindled to a few stalls.
- 2.14. The Invite to Tender (ITT) document for the Market Manager role has now launched. The projected start date for this new role is end of November/December. This role is pivotal in promoting and managing the market square. The ITT has been heavily informed using early feedback from the 'Mitcham Matters' consultation where residents expressed that the market square is more than a market and should hold events also.
- 2.15. Future Merton are also working on a 'business friendly licencing' pilot which attracted grant funding to support short term intervention around the Fair Green and market square; seeking longer term arrangement with market management to promote a range of events and activities in these spaces.
- 2.16. Working with the Sport and Leisure Team at the Council, we are in dialogue with organisations to provide free and inclusive wellbeing activities on the Market Square and Fair Green as part of the plans for Merton to become London's Borough of Sport. These activities will have an emphasis on making exercise accessible, encouraging users to become part of a supportive community that helps create healthier lifestyles.
- 2.17. One major challenge Mitcham town centre faces is its moderate public transport accessibility level (PTAL). It is important that active modes of transport, such as cycling, are promoted and any barriers that are preventing people from cycling are addressed. We have spoken with 'Dr Bikes' about the potential of hosting a mechanics workshop event on the market square to teach local people how to fix bicycles. This is ongoing. We will also be seeking to promote 'Dr Bikes' one-to-one riding sessions that help people build confidence when riding on the road. The aim is to make people feel better equipped to cycle to the town centre.

### **Public realm improvements**

- 2.18. Based on early analysis and previous feedback from historic consultations, some immediate work has already been, and being, planned that has been based on previous feedback from the public, such as general maintenance of vegetation, street cleaning and decluttering the public realm alongside day to day enforcement.
- 2.19. In summary the public space team have:
- (i) Removed duplicate old bins that were causing obstruction and visual clutter

- (ii) Tree works to commence week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> September.
- (iii) Cutting and pressure washing of the Sibthorpe Road central reservation are being planned and awaiting traffic management dates working around other utility company requests.
- (iv) Sibthorpe Road car park raised beds are planned for improvements for late October.
- (v) Mitcham Town Centre clocktower garden are awaiting initial designs and improved planting plans but will be a winter works projects with an aim to commence October 2023 - February 2024

2.20. Mitcham based youth focused design studio, POoR collective, was successfully awarded NCIL funding to design and deliver a mural on Brickfield Road at the end of 2021. Due to a series of unforeseen delays, the work has finally been completed on 13 August 2023. The mural was designed in collaboration with MA architecture students. It contains many symbols that represent the heritage of Mitcham. It provides a more welcoming backdrop to the Community Orchard and southern entry point into Brickfield Road adjacent to the Mitcham gas works site.



## Longer term planning

- 2.21. We have started to engage with local businesses to see how they can support the regeneration of Mitcham Town Centre. To date, Poundland have in principle agreed for their hoarded windows to become an art project subject to the design and fixtures required. These hoardings form an inactive street frontage on London Road and fall victim to graffiti.



Vacant shops: Officers are engaging with operators to understand their requirements to take on a temporary space, such as a boxing gym and creative studios. We are also engaging with other operators such as to create a series of cultural events and activities that can take place within the town centre. Please note that the use of vacant shops will rely on gaining permissions from the relevant landowners.

## 3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. None for the purpose of this update report.

## 4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. See section 2.1 onward for details of consultation undertaken.

## 5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. Consultation feedback report, including short, medium and long term actions, October 2023
- 5.2. Appointed market manager, November/December 2023
- 5.3. Mitcham Vision or similar, January 2024
- 5.4. The consultation report will result in a series of actions that respond directly to residents feedback. As this is ongoing work, there are no detailed



timescales yet, however these will be developed after the consultation report is finalised.

- 5.5. Please note that many of the longer term and strategic interventions will rely on engagement with land owners and operators and therefore programming these may be unpredictable.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The above workstreams are funded by exiting resources in the FutureMerton team supported by the Council's Civic Pride fund.
- 6.2. The consultation report and/or the Mitcham vision statement may identify further actions which may require additional growth funding given their ambition. We will try to maintain this within the existing Civic Pride budgets where possible.

## **7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None for the purpose of this report.

## **8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. None for the purpose of this report.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None for the purpose of this report. There is a separate community safety action plan to address these matters.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. None for the purpose of this report.

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- 11.1. None

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1. None

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