

# NEWPORTFIRST

## HIGH STREET HEALTH-CHECK SPECIAL

This edition of NEWPORTFIRST is dedicated to providing feedback to traders and businesses from the High Street Health-Check (or benchmarking exercise) 2014.

First and foremost, thank you to everyone that took time out to contribute to the surveys - we had a fantastic response yet again, ensuring the findings are statistically sound.

### A few Headline Messages:-

- The town centre supports over 1,000 jobs and is vital to Newport's overall economy;
- Over 94% of shoppers & visitors would recommend Newport;
- People are staying longer and spending slightly more than a year ago;
- 7 in 10 traders & businesses say turnover has stayed the same or increased on 2013;
- More than 3 in 4 businesses say profitability has stayed the same or increased on 2013;
- Over 90% of businesses project turnover staying the same or increasing next year;
- The proportion of small independent retailers less than a year old has increased on last year reflecting an underlying churn;
- There is a slight increase in the number of businesses affected by crime.

### What Shoppers & Visitors had to say:-

- ✓ Gender, age profiles, purpose of visit, frequency of visit, and mode of transport for shoppers / visitors has not changed significantly in 2014 when compared to 2013;
- ✓ There is evidence that the average spend per visit has increased with 63% spending £20.00 or more in 2014 compared to 38% in 2013;
- ✓ There was an increase in the length of time that shoppers / visitors spend in the town centre with 4.8% now staying for 4 hours or more compared to just 2.1% a year ago;
- ✓ Overall shoppers / visitors are 3.2 times more likely to say something positive about Newport town centre than they are to say something negative;

### Contacting the Town Team:-

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- ✓ When asked their views about the positive aspects of Newport town centre 8 of 15 key features received 70% or higher score, and 11 received 50% or more;
- ✓ Of the 15 key features identified 11 received a higher percentage positive score in 2014 compared to last year, 3 received a lower score, & one feature is a new measure;
- ✓ **Over 90% identified town centre 'customer service' as positive;**
- ✓ When asked their views about the negative aspects of Newport town centre only 3 of 15 key features received 35% or higher score, and 8 received 20% or lower score;
- ✓ Difficulties finding parking spaces, the absence of cultural activities, and town centre cleanliness continue to be the three major issues for shoppers / visitors;
- ✓ Perceptions that Newport town centre is not a safe place at night was an issue for older age group respondents, although most did not visit the town centre at night;

### **What Traders and Businesses had to say: -**

- ✓ Business types and mix are unchanged when comparing 2013 and 2014 survey results;
- ✓ The age across all town centre businesses is comparable in 2014 to that found in 2013 however there is a rise in the proportion of (mostly independent) retailers that are less than a year old i.e. 16.7% compared to 12.2% in 2013;
- ✓ The survey of empty commercial properties provides a 'snapshot' at a point in time - 2014 survey shows there to be 6 vacant premises compared to 8 in 2013;
- ✓ In the period from April 2013 to end December 2014 (21 months) 34 commercial properties became vacant at some point in time indicating a significant amount of business 'churn' mostly affecting smaller independent traders / businesses;
- ✓ A majority (72.5%) of traders / businesses report their current year turnover to have increased or stayed the same compared to last year;
- ✓ A majority (75.8%) of traders / businesses report their current year profits to have increased or stayed the same compared to last year, a 7% improvement on 2013;
- ✓ A majority (90.3%) of traders / businesses anticipate their turnover to increase or stay the same next year, a 2.8% improvement on the 2013 survey figure;
- ✓ Traders / businesses identified prospects for local trade (66.1%), prosperity of the town (66.1%), valued local customers (66.1%), 'free' car parking (46.8%), and the mix of retail offer (51.6%) as their top 5 scoring *positives* for trading in Newport;
- ✓ Traders / businesses identified the absence of parking management (37.1%), out-of-town competition (33.9%), on-line competition (27.4%), high rents / rates (19.4%) and competition from neighbouring areas (17.7%) as their top scoring *negatives*;;
- ✓ Traders / businesses are 2.4 times more likely to say something positive about trading in Newport town centre than they are likely to say something negative;
- ✓ The proportion of traders / businesses experiencing crime has risen slightly from 19.6% in 2013 to 25.8%. Nearly two-thirds of traders / businesses experiencing crime say this is criminal damage, with the remaining third identifying it as theft.

***These findings are to be discussed and responses / actions agreed at forthcoming 'town team' business meetings.***