

F & E September 2020 / Agenda item 6b

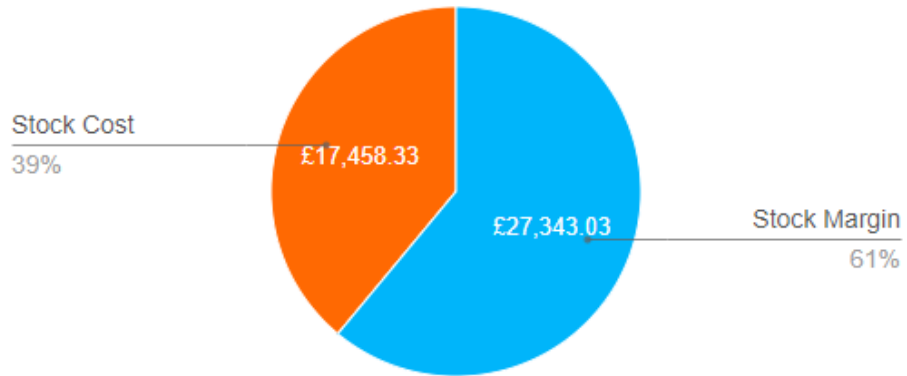
August 2020 TIC Report to Committee

1. Saffron Walden TIC was one of the first TICs nationally to re-open. SWTIC opened on Monday 15th June being the date on which non-essential shops were allowed to open under the Coronavirus Act 2020. It was felt important to show support and solidarity for local retailers and to set an example that the TIC and Town Council was up and running for business. Initially the TIC hours were reduced but from July 2020, the TIC has been operating its full opening hours of Monday to Saturday, 9.30am to 5pm.
2. Only two members of staff are on duty at any one time to comply with social distancing. Home working has been replaced with Town Hall working and staff have been flexible to accommodate the needs of the TIC. Where there is no alternative, casual staff are brought in to cover lunches.
3. Saffron crocus bulbs (*Crocus sativus*) have been in stock (at £5 for a bag of 10) and have now sold out. They are seasonal, so are only available for a few weeks in mid to late summer. They generated a profit for the TIC of £690.43. A waiting list has been started already for people who wish to be contacted when the 2021 delivery of bulbs has arrived.
4. The 2021 Calendar is now in stock. It is £7.50 and is already selling, complete with challenge to find all the hidden Saffron crocus images. It has been created by local designer Phil Clements.
5. Tubs of Saffron Ice Cream Company ice cream are now available at £2.50 per tub and have been extremely popular on hot days (we have sold 169 tubs at the time of writing). Other new items include "A Church Near You" and a Saffron Walden rainbow collage postcard/poster designed by Creative Walden.
6. A milliner in Wimbish has supplied the TIC with crocus pattern facemasks which are selling well (34 sold to date).
7. General takings from stock sales have been good! The footfall is less but people are actively wanting to buy things. Top sellers have been bulbs and ice cream, but also walking maps, books, cards and other gifts, calendars and facemasks. Three observations: a) much less free information on display means more stock is displayed. Customers aren't distracted by free stuff! b) British visitors (many on 'staycation' day trips) are happy to buy things which they can then put in the car, as opposed to visitors who have flown in, who haven't wanted the additional bulk in their luggage. c) Locals want gifts to take to people they are seeing for the first time in ages.
8. The TIC can report progress on the Income Generation plan. This progress has been added to the income document, which is attached.
9. At the time of writing, the new e-shop from Tela is imminent and may well have gone live by the time of the meeting.
10. The TIC continues to liaise with the BID, supporting the safe re-opening of Saffron Walden. The BID has overseen a survey about the temporary closure of King Street and Market Place, results are awaited.

11. The TIC continues to work with its county partners Visit Essex, promoting “Great Adventures, Close To Home”.
12. A few events are beginning to take place locally – the TIC has compiled a basic list of these (available under news section of website and on social media).
13. The foodbank has received several further Town Council shopping deliveries. A member of the TIC staff liaises to find out what is required, then purchases the items and delivers them to the foodbank.
14. Dialogue has resumed with Saffron Walden Community Shed now that they are about to reopen after lockdown regarding working with us to produce gifts for a new range of Bridge End Garden gifts to include bug houses, hedgehog hotels, bird tables, bird boxes, bat boxes and hand tools for adults and children. Branding for the range has been designed by Phil Clements.
15. A producer of cross stitch kits has been found and will work with us to produce Saffron Walden kits; these will arrive in plenty of time for the Christmas gift-buying season. No single use materials are used in the kits themselves or in the packaging.
16. A new island display unit has been introduced to maximise merchandising potential at the TIC; this has been very well received indeed by our customers, with lots of very positive comments including ‘This is better than a National Trust shop.’
17. The TIC is hoping to tap into the current resurgence of interest in vintage homeware by sourcing and stocking Hornsea Pottery’s ‘Saffron’ tableware; the first batch has been ordered and should arrive w/c 7 September.
18. It is planned that we will sell Christmas hampers and we are currently sourcing locally produced contents. This is subject to receiving the appropriate alcohol licence from UDC (applied for, decision awaited).
19. A series of historical fact videos have been added to the TIC’s You Tube account. Filmed professionally by Creative Walden, they are both interesting and fun.
20. Sonia Villiers has now painted one of the peeling black bollards in the Market Square with her view of Museum Street and the response from the public has been terrific (see attached). The other three large bollards are now being shared out to local artists, including, it is hoped, some A level art students at SWCHS.
21. The new Saffron Walden Official Guide is now available and has been produced for the TIC free of charge by Local Authority Publishing.
22. Twitter followers: @swtic 4341, Instagram @swtic 1180, Facebook /saffronwalden 2284, @GardenBridgeEnd 767.
23. Footfall figure for July was 4984. Footfall for August was 5428.

Mark Starte / Rachel Thomas/Judith Thompson

Graphs for August 2020



Best Sellers

