

## **Levenshulme Market Research Brief**

### **Levenshulme Market CIC overview**

Levenshulme Market is a weekly market with approximately 50 stall holders at every market. We provide a family friendly atmosphere where neighbours can share a drink from our real ale bar and enjoy live music in our covered seating area...and do some shopping!

The business was formed in 2013 as a social enterprise with a specific remit to deliver a market that improves the larger retail environment it inhabits - the team behind Levenshulme Market have always been loud proponents of the idea that bad high streets don't happen to economically healthy retail environments and that putting a market into a high street with multiple problems is not going to solve those problems overnight.

This year we launched a funding scheme and issued £15,000-worth of grants to residents who wanted to start or improve retail or market businesses or run projects to benefit the high street.

In recognition of the success of the market and the pioneering work we are doing as a social enterprise the market was a finalists in this year's BBC Radio 4 Food and Farming Awards and the Manchester Food and Drink Awards and was cited as a reason to visit in Lonely Planet's entry for Manchester when it was named as one of their top 10 cities to visit in 2016. The Market is the only market established in the UK as a CIC and the first market to operate this innovative business model. All of this while delivering a fantastic, family friendly, well-loved market which is at the heart of a community it is truly serving.

### **Community area description**

Retail district centre of the A6 in Levenshulme, areas of which fall into both Levenshulme and Gorton South wards of Manchester City Council

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

As a CIC our profits are allocated specifically to help develop the high street retail environment in Levenshulme, which is one of three in Manchester considered "endangered" by Manchester City Council. In December 2014 we launched our first awards fund and in March this year awarded £15,000 to eight residents of Levenshulme who had applied for funds to develop retail enterprises - from pop up art hubs to market stalls and renovations for existing retailers - in Levenshulme. Through this work and the increased footfall we are bringing into the district centre in Levenshulme we are making some inroads into changing our high street for the better but we are still meeting significant challenges. Primary amongst those is that lack of available retail space. Despite the fact that much of the retail units in Levenshulme appears unoccupied there appear to be very few on the open market to potential tenants. We receive countless emails from potential high street traders who are keen to set up in Levenshulme but cannot find any properties for sale or let or find that

all their calls to potential landlords go unanswered. Ownership details seem very hard to come by and what few properties there are available seem very often to be priced above the market rate or have onerous terms attached to the lease.

Additionally there are a number of fast food takeaways in the area. Community perception is that there are too many but MCC do not agree that we have met this threshold and continue to approve change of use applications for properties which then get turned into takeaways that frequently change hands without appearing on the open market. Similarly in the last 18 months a trend has emerged for change of use applications for retail premises to convert to office space. These too have been continuously approved and, again, converted and let without appearing on the open market.

All of the above adds up to a complex economic picture for our high street that neither we, or it seems Manchester City Council, understand. We want our high street to develop and it is well placed to do so: the success of the market shows that there is a strong desire amongst residents to utilise independent retail opportunities in the area and with the fund we have been able to demonstrate a wealth of entrepreneurial talent in the area but there don't seem to be spaces for businesses to develop on our high street - despite it being under occupied - and those businesses that do develop do not seem to be designed to serve the needs of our community. Why?

#### **Work so far**

We have been gathering anecdotal evidence of experiences in the two years since we incorporated and have tried to mediate between landlords and potential tenants where possible but with little or no avail.

#### **Involvement so far**

Levenshulme Market CIC has led on all projects to date. We have worked closely with South Manchester Regeneration in developing our plans for a market that directly benefited the high street

#### **Consultation so far**

There is a highly active Facebook group of residents of the area (5000 members) who are aware of this application and are broadly supportive. There is also research available on shopper needs/wishes for the area, conducted by a resident.

#### **Programme outcomes**

Understanding the economic reality of our high street is the only way we can hope to effect some meaningful change to it - that change will mean more opportunities for local entrepreneurs, a stronger local economy and employment opportunities for residents.

### **Specific Proposals Comments**

We believe that we cannot help our high street move forward as a community until we understand what is really happening and therefore we are applying for funding to commission some independent research into retail space ownership, value and intentions in the district centre - creating an economic map of the current picture and a route to a future which will allow residents to take back ownership of the high street.

### **Research Brief**

#### **I) Key activities**

1. To carry out desk research, including
  - a. Sourcing and assembling data already collected by other agencies about the high street / retail environment
  - b. Tracing ownership structures and contact details for landlords, for commercial premises in the high-street
  - c. Identifying potential interviewees amongst local landlords, for a possible second research phase exploring barriers and enabling factors to regenerating the high street
2. To carry out up to four face-to-face, qualitative interviews with local high street traders
3. To co-ordinate the collection of new data through a face to face survey with local high street traders (collating data collected by volunteers)
4. To co-ordinate and processing data collected through an online survey with local market traders
5. To work with the Levenshulme Market CIC steering group to analyse the data collected and identify further research questions

#### **II) Research questions and methods**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Role</b>
1.a) What are the general characteristics of Levenshulme's High Street retail environment? - Vacancy / occupation ratio - Costs – psm (need to benchmark this again other local areas) - Rates and available rate relief from the council	Desk research, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Liaising with Local Authority to access relevant data sets and information sources</li><li>- Identifying other sources of relevant data and assembling data from these</li></ul>	Carry out research

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current landscape of high street</li> <li>- Mediums used for advertising rental space (private, agencies, websites etc)</li> </ul> <p>1.b) What is the ownership and rental status of the retail premises in Levenshulme High Street?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ownership details – landlord (local resident?, when purchased, how much for)</li> <li>- Type of tenancy including any restrictions (terms, length, conditions etc)</li> <li>- Class of use on each building (council)</li> <li>- Landlord restriction on class of use</li> </ul> <p>1.c) How does the Levenshulme environment compare to similar areas elsewhere in Manchester?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have other areas, e.g. East Didsbury / Chorlton, developed a good retail mix in their high street?</li> <li>- What are good practice examples of approaches to developing the high street that are replicable in Levenshulme?</li> <li>- What are possible reasons why no chains have been established in Levenshulme?</li> <li>- Benchmarking average psm rental costs against Chorlton, Didsbury, Northern Quarter, Spinningfields, Cheetham Hill and Withington.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Other research methods as needed, including making direct enquiries with businesses or agencies, reviewing companies house data, submitting FOI requests, etc</li> </ul>	
<p>2) What are the barriers, and enabling factors, to new small businesses opening premises in Levenshulme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Online survey with Market Traders</li> </ul>	<p>Project manage the collection of data through survey (survey will be written and publicised by Levenshulme Market CIC steering group)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face survey with existing high street traders</li>   <li>- Interviews with 3-4 local traders</li>   <li>- Potentially, telephone interviews with landlords</li> </ul>	<p>Project manage the collection of data through survey (survey will be written and carried out by Levenshulme Market CIC steering group and volunteers)</p> <p>Carry out and analyse data from interviews</p> <p>Carry out and analyse data from interviews</p>
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### **Costs**

Remuneration is available for this work for up to 15 days work at a rate of £200.00 per day to be undertaken by a freelance individual who must be registered as self employed. Reasonable additional costs will be covered if agreed in advance with the project lead (Levenshulme Market CIC).

### **Applications**

Interested individuals should contact Helen Power by emailing [helen@levymarket.com](mailto:helen@levymarket.com) and attach a copy of their CV and a supporting document outlining any related experience. Suitable candidates will be asked to commence work as soon as they are available and it is anticipated that all research should be complete before 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.