

## Market Place Shopping Centre – Leader Update 4

The building that is the Market Place Shopping Centre is approaching 35 years since construction started and it is beginning to show its age, at least in those areas that are unseen by the public. Recent events in 2024 have highlighted the problems the Centre Management face, whilst at the same time trying to keep the building open for shoppers to enjoy.

Burgess Hill Town Council, through its Leader, is in regular contact with the Centre Manager and that enables us to understand the issues that have caused so much speculation and misinformation in recent months. The fact is, there is a risk assessment in place that cannot be overridden under any circumstances; remember it is a legal requirement for all businesses when works are being carried out. It not only protects staff and public but also the contractors doing the works.

The north walkway past Pets Corner and Grape Tree is closed due to an expansion joint in the building wall having failed. This was only discovered after masonry was found on the floor one morning. What is an expansion joint? In building construction, an expansion joint is a mid-structure separation designed to relieve stress on building materials caused by building movement. In the case of the Market Place, this has occurred where the walkway takes an angle towards the west doors. **Specialist material to repair the joint is on order. Once received, works will be scheduled with the aim to reopen the walkway; whilst Market Place do not have a date confirmed, this is expected soon.**



A recent survey has found that certain parts of the roof need attention, again due to age. To mitigate against risk to the public, **installation of netting is programmed, as are works on roof areas in September and October.**

**Plans are in progress for customer seating but details are yet to be finalised.** When this happens it will take away the frustration of shoppers who need to rest a while and have missed this feature of the Market Place. **Risk assessments remain active and under review as changes commence.**

The barriers that are placed in front of the pillars inside the Centre are there to give a visual warning to the operators of 'cherry-picker' vehicles, whilst they are manoeuvring inside the building.

**The area in the public car park, currently suspended, is due to an issue identified in the Sussex Heights building being managed by The Martlets.** There is a significant safety risk at this point and the barriers should not be removed. Market Place has no control over when this will be resolved.

As a Council, we are not able to interfere with the decisions made by businesses; that is not in our remit and may be seen as not caring, which is not the case. Having regular dialogue with the Centre Manager does mean we can be kept up-to-date on these important public issues.

**Whilst the Centre understand exact dates are sought, they simply do not have them yet to share, but assure us things are progressing.**

**END**