



Council

Date: 27 July 2020

Title: Market update

Purpose of the Report: To provide Committee with a general update on market operations

Contact Officer: Vivien Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic Services

Corporate Objective/s	LLTC Five Year Plan	
Implications:		
Financial	✓	Within budgets
Human Resources		
Operational/Service delivery	✓	Market operations
Procedural/Legal		
Risk/Health and Safety	✓	Adhering to Covid-19 guidance

1. RECOMMENDATION

Should Members be minded, the proposal is:

1.1 To note the report

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Following the initial Covid-19 lockdown, the primary aim has been to ensure the Charter market is delivered. A food only market took place between 16/05/20 and 15/06/20 in Hockliffe St car park. The last few market days opened to all non-food traders as per changes to Government guidance. The Charter market returned to the High Street on 20/05/20.

2.1 At all times, the second aim has been to ensure the market operation adheres to Covid-19 rules for customers to feel confident to use the market, and for customers, traders, and staff to remain safe. This has involved securing individual trader risk assessments on how traders will each manage Covid-19 safe work practices on their pitch. Officers monitor that traders adhere to their stated safe work practices. Likewise, staff also undertake additional cleaning of equipment and monitor distancing practices.

2.2 The third aim has been to secure a way of allowing all traders including regular

casual traders and speciality market traders, to return to trading.

- 2.3 Once back in the High Street, the market ran from 9.00am to 2.00pm. Taking into account trader feedback and having confidently re-established the market observing the behaviour of traders and customers becoming accustomed to the new situation, the opening hours were extended on 18/07/20; 9.00am to 3.00pm.
- 2.4 Throughout this period, traders have enjoyed a sustained rent-free period to assist their return to trading and the issue of rents is presented to Committee in a separate report.

3. INFORMATION

- 3.1 Covid-19 has impacted upon the operation of the market. The main issues are:
- a) maintaining physical distancing between pitches:
The use of side panels on gazebos has facilitated traders remaining next to each other (creating a physical barrier), which assists more traders to attend within the available space. Traders bringing their own equipment must adhere to the same principles yet where equipment does not facilitate this, 2 metre distance between stalls is maintained.
 - b) maintaining space for safe distancing when queues form:
The occurrence of queuing is not consistent throughout the day, yet adequate space must always be maintained to ensure 2 metres safe distancing is maintained for whenever queuing occurs. At quiet periods, when queues are not in place, it can give a false impression of there being available space on the market for other pitches. Likewise, the queues for shops vary throughout the day and need to be monitored in case space is compromised.
 - c) accommodating the mix of traders within a limited space:
Charter market (Tuesday and Saturday), traders are our core traders who make up the regular market. Their commitment to being 'permanent' gifts them and the Town the stability of having a core market. The natural default therefore has been to allocate space to our permanent traders first. At the time of writing this report, all but 3 permanent traders had returned. Two had left the market.
 - d) additional Covid-19 required cleaning of equipment undertaken:
The stall erecting team now follow Covid-19 work practices which include cleaning of the equipment prior to erecting and before packing it away, and adjusting how they deliver work, e.g. one person per vehicle.
- 3.2 To facilitate the Covid-19 required physical distancing rules, road cones were put in place to offer customers a guide. The view of staff and traders was that customers are very aware of their own desire to remain safe and the cones were soon removed. This enhanced the impression of the market as it felt and looked less cluttered. Cones remain on hand to put out on every market day

should it get busy and customers need additional assistance to understand where to queue and the spacing need. Removing the cones may give a false sense of available space for other pitches. As queues grow and diminish throughout the day the distancing space must always remain available.

- 3.3 The market area is now focused on the road with limited use of pavement areas where it has greater depth around and near to the market cross. A 5 metre distance is maintained either side of the road to avoid and assist the passing of pedestrians and where queues form for shops, banks, etc. The stalls now face into the road to ensure market customers do not block the pavement areas and that we as market operator, can ensure safe queuing areas for market stalls. By the time of this meeting, 4 more pitches will be available in the turning circle. Two of which will be occupied by new traders who were due to start before lockdown halted their arrival in March. The other two pitches available will be offered to casual traders on a rotational basis.
- 3.4 The market space is therefore contained and along with Covid-19 restrictions it means that not all traders can attend. Permanent traders have been prioritised in the first instance.
- 3.5 The layout currently in place facilitates all the above as well as maintaining access for emergency vehicles. Officers took the opportunity to walk through the market with a representative of Bedfordshire Fire Service when they visited the market to observe the temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street.

4. CURRENT WORK FOCUS

- 4.1 The work focus of officers has been to identify a way that is safe and manageable within available resources to secure the return of non-permanent and speciality traders to the town. Officers have been successful. Central Bedfordshire Council, in an email received 16.07.2020, consented to allow the provision of an extra speciality market delivery day per month. At the time of writing, officers were confirming arrangements.
- 4.2 In addition, with the provision of satisfactory Covid-19 risk assessments, the privately run Street Food Heroes aim to return on Sunday 9th August, 12.00-4.00pm. Similarly, and for the first time Vegan Markets UK aim to join us on Sunday 20th September 10.30am–16:00pm.
- 4.5 Officers continue to monitor Government guidance and any changes to the market layout and operation will respect and adhere to this.

END