



Market Sub Committee

Date: 2 December 2021

Title: Leighton Buzzard Market

Purpose of the Report: Market 12-month review

Contact Officer: Vivien Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic Services and
Adrian Harrison, Market Manager

Corporate Objective/s	No 23. To continue to manage, promote and develop the street market.
Implications:	
Financial	
Human Resources	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes, annual review of market
Procedural/Legal	
Risk/Health and Safety	
Environmental Aims	

1 RECOMMENDATION/S

Should members be minded, the proposal is:

1.1 To note the report.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The market was relaunched in late September 2017. This report provides the fourth annual review since that time.

2.2 The first 7 months of this review saw the market continue to go through various Covid related lockdowns. Only essential traders were allowed to trade and were not charged during this period. Non-essential traders were not able to trade. Casual traders (essentials) continued to be charged during this

period. All traders were able to trade from 12 April with non-essential traders having 12 weeks rent free period. The High Street has remained temporarily pedestrianised throughout this period. The table below provides the timetable of market activity during Covid restrictions:

2020	Key activity dates and changes
Oct	All traders able to trade
7 Nov	Government Covid lockdown – essential traders only
5 Dec	All traders able to trade
22 Dec	Tiers 4 and 5 lockdown, essential traders only (into 2022)
2021	Key activity dates and changes
12 April	All traders able to trade. Instigated graded return rents.
10 July	All traders on full rent
10 Aug	New temporary layout - Farmers and Crafters return to Market House

- 2.3 The High Street still operates under the experimental traffic road order (ETRO) and is subject to review in Spring 2022. Until then the market continues to operate traffic free. Market pitches were predominantly lined up on the South side of the High Street with a small number of traders on the North side. This changed on 10/08/21, moving to pitches located along both sides of the High Street with traders facing each other.
- 2.4 The current layout accommodates all permanent traders. It now allows for all speciality traders, i.e., handmade and craft, and farmers, to attend in their original location at Market Square. Space is now available to allow more casual traders to attend. It has also enabled the reintroduction of charity/ community pitches.
- 2.5 The public and trader surveys referenced in the report are reflective of this current layout.

3 REVIEW OF PITCH SIZES AND PRICES

- 3.1 Since 10th August a new temporary layout has been introduced with 80% of traders and public alike happy with the new look. Some traders remain in a different position from pre Covid times, a choice requested by them when reviewing the new temporary layout.
- 3.2 All traders are currently able to trade yet there remains uncertainty whether Covid restrictions will again be introduced. The future of the ETRO beyond 31/03/22 is unknown. For these reasons officers do not recommend any formal review of pitch sizes in the immediate future. Officers continue to liaise with traders individually and gain an understanding of issues, wants, and needs and have assisted traders adapt to circumstances.

4 MARKET RELAUNCH ORIGINAL ACTION PLAN

4.1 The original relaunch plan actions had some outstanding works to be achieved as listed below:

Action	Update
Extending and increase the electricity supply for the market.	Any placement of new supply would have to wait until the future of the temporary pedestrianisation is known. There is no budget allocation for this work
Ground fixings	To wait until the future of the temporary pedestrianisation is known. There is no budget allocation for this work

5 TRADER AND PUBLIC SURVEY FEEDBACK

5.1 Separate surveys were created for members of the public and traders.

5.2 Method

As part of our annual monitoring of the market, we undertook two surveys in September 2021, one specifically for traders and one for the public. They were both distributed primarily online, through SurveyMonkey. All responses were anonymous.

The trader's survey was distributed by emails with the option of having a paper copy or help to complete if needed.

The public version was distributed in the following ways: -

- online to the Markets mailing list,
- via social media over a period of 2 weeks,
- via the Council and the Market websites,
- via posters up in noticeboards around the town
- in person on a market stall on 21st September
- paper copies were available at:
 - the White House offices,
 - Gennaro's Hairdressers, Bridge Street.

Completed paper copies were collected in at both Gennaro's Hairdressers and the White House offices if people were not able to complete them during the running of the stall in the market.

5.3 Received Surveys

The trader's survey was sent out to both permanent and casual traders- a total of 84 traders listed (although only 80 have traded this year). We received 18 responses, all of which were online, with no requests received for paper copies or assistance.

The public survey received a total of 156 responses, of which 128 responses were online, with a further 28 paper copies - 13 being collected on the market stall, 6 being received at the White House offices and 9 received at Gennaro's Hairdressers.

The results of the surveys filled in online and on paper were compared, but the results largely followed the same trends, with one or two exceptions which are outlined in the breakdown.

5.4 **Survey Summary Points**

The collation of public and trader survey responses can be viewed at **Appendix A, attached.**

Customer feedback highlights:

- 80% of customers are happy with the current layout
- 54% of customers are shopping for specific items, 46% are 'browsers'
- 75% of customers deliberately seek out 'greener' products
- 70% of customers live in Leighton-Linslade

Trader feedback highlights:

- 80% of traders are happy with the current layout
- 80% of traders prefer the stalls facing each other
- 75% of traders take payments by card and cash
- 68% of traders sell online

Overall, both surveys received positive results about the market and a few recommendations could be taken from these. Some of which are quite straightforward, such as promoting it in other places and more widely – as the demographic broadens year on year.

The pedestrianisation remains an important topic for people, but as in similar recent market surveys, the overall response is positive with a few queries about public transport accessibility.

Considerations for the market in future are around appealing to younger people, both as shoppers and stallholders, and attracting a more diverse shopping base, without alienating the more traditional market shoppers. The Young Trader scheme was launched recently and will now need to be promoted and facilitated more.

In terms of future surveys, the response rate of the customer survey was higher than previously and the method of using paper copies seemed to assist gaining a wider result. The response rate from the traders was low (although higher than previous years) and may not be representative, however, there

were more responses from traders than in previous years and so traders seem to be a hard-to-reach demographic. Some being wary to participate and share any view.

Bite sized survey results have been announced via social media and following Committee's receipt of the full annual review, will be shared in full via the website, and by directing people through social media and the trader/customer newsletters to this location.

6 MARKET DATA

6.1 Footfall

The table below shows the footfall figures for the 12-month comparison market dates as listed at para 6.3, for the town centre. The footfall recording system counts up to 5 repeat visits by one device (mobile phone), within a day therefore two figures are presented - 'total visits' and 'total visitors'.



Tuesday 21 September – total visits: 4725 and total visitors: 4387

Saturday 25 September – total visits: 4952 and total visitors: 4280

Friday 24 September visitor figures are the nearest in total amounts at 4939 visits with 4595 visitors.

Footfall figures are influenced by weather conditions, time of year, e.g., holiday periods, national events, e.g., sporting cup finals and hosting of speciality/themed market days. The 12-month footfall impression can be viewed at **Appendix B, attached.**

Overall market days remain the busiest days suggesting that the market continues to have a significant role in attracting visitors to the town centre.

6.2 Closures and Covid-19 Impact

The table below shows the frequency for when weather conditions impacted upon the operational delivery of market between 1st October 2019 and 30th September 2020, as well as the impact of Covid restrictions.

1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021	Total Days Closed, Cancelled, per month	Total days per month: Adverse Weather Policy invoked.	Covid-19 impact	Comments
2020				
October	0	2	All traders	24.10.2020, 31.10.2020 Very high wind speeds and heavy rain both days
November	0	0	Essential traders only	Market open for 1 week followed by lockdown
December	1	0	5 Dec – all traders. 22 Dec - Essential traders only	-Closed Boxing Day. -Tier 4 lockdown from 22 Dec
2021				
January	0	0	Essential traders only	-Tier 4 lockdown from 5 Jan, then -Tier 5 lockdown
February	0	0	Essential traders only	Tier 5 lockdown all month
March	0	0	Essential traders only	
April	0	0	13 April - all traders return	-Adjusted market layout Southside of High St. -Instigated phased return rent collections
May	0	0	All traders	
June	0	0	All traders	
July	0	0	All traders	
August	0	0	All traders	-10 Aug – all Covid restrictions eased -Adjusted market layout/both sides
September	0	0	All traders	
Totals:	1	2		

As a comparison to the above figures, the total closures for review year 2019-2020 were 26 cancelled days (due to Covid-19) and 5 days when the Adverse Weather Policy was invoked.

6.3 Trader Market Day Attendance Numbers

Trader numbers are recorded on the nearest Saturday after the 2017 relaunch anniversary date at the end of September.

	26 September 2020	25 September 2021	Difference
Permanent traders	22	23	+1
Casual	1	4	+3 *
Farmers market traders	0	0	0
Handmade and craft traders	4	10	+6

* One casual trader ceased trading on Leighton Buzzard Market to take advantage of an empty shop located in the High Street. This is a beneficial outcome in terms of town centre vitality and viability with the market proving to be an incubator for new businesses.

a. The table below provides annual comparison trader numbers for Tuesday.

2012	Tuesday 25 September	mix of traders recorded at 23
2017	Tuesday 26 September	mix of traders recorded at 21
2018	Tuesday 25 September	mix of traders recorded at 21
2019	Tuesday 24 September	mix of traders recorded at 11
2020	Tuesday 22 September	mix of traders recorded at 21
2021	Tuesday 21 September	mix of traders recorded at 23

b. The table below provides annual comparison trader numbers for Saturday.

2012	Saturday 22 September	mix of traders was recorded at	27
2017	Saturday 23 September	mix of traders was recorded at	28
2018	Saturday 22 September	mix of traders was recorded at (inc 12 Craft traders)	28 =40
2019	Saturday 28 September	mix of traders was recorded at (inc 14 Craft traders)	22 =36
2020	Saturday 26 September	mix of traders was recorded at	23
2021	Saturday 25 September	mix of traders was recorded at (inc 10 Craft traders)	29 =39

6.4 Trader Registered to Trade on Market

a. The table below shows the number of traders on the trader registration list.

28 September 2019		26 September 2020	25 September 2021
Permanent Traders	30	28	35
Casual Traders	27	35	41
Farmers Market	8	8	8
Handmade & Craft	25	25	10

b. During the pandemic, craft market trader numbers have fluctuated. The limitations of space in the Covid-19 safe layout will have impacted on their ability to trade initially as can be seen above. However new casual traders have joined over the year. It is difficult to offer a definitive reason for the fluctuations only to say that it is not unusual for attendance of casual trader's to be intermittent according to festival seasons for instance. Given that festivals have not taken place, some traders will have chosen to trade on street markets to remain solvent. Officers have not surveyed the reasons for not returning to the market as contact with them has not received a response.

6.5 Trader Incentives

a. Any new trader can trade for 4 consecutive weeks and get the 5th free to encourage ongoing attendance either as a casual or permanent trader. The table below shows the take-up of the offer over the last review period October 2020 to September 2021.

Incentive	No. of traders taking the option	No. of traders opting not to take-up the option.
Trade 4 consecutive weeks and get 5 th free	0	18*

* During the pandemic, there was limited space for casual traders. The casual traders that traded had done so for over a year and had previously been offered the incentives so were no longer eligible during the review period. Since the easing of restrictions in August, some casual traders wishing to join the market have traded once or twice before signing as permanent traders to guarantee their position on the market. Some have just traded once or twice or return sporadically.

All traders are offered this incentive when they applied to trade. Some traders wish to have a casual status and some only want to trade for one day. Reasons for one-day trading can vary and anecdotally received reasons in the past have included, to see what the town is like, to sell a limited product line,

or attend somewhere when another market is unavailable to them. This incentive is often declined yet it remains in place for those who may wish to take it up which as has happened in previous years, e.g., 3 in the 2019/20. review year.

b. The permanent trader long-service discount pitch price incentive is adjusted annually to reflect trader's attendance. There were 8 traders reaching long service discount incentives in this 12-month review period.

6.6 Trader recruitment

Since restrictions have eased in August, there have been 7 traders signed up on permanent licences. Two of these traders have signed up for both Saturday and Tuesday markets. Casual trader interest has also increased.

Enquiries

During the review period (1 Oct 2020 – 30 Sept 2021) the breakdown of enquiries is as follows:

There were 63 enquiries for all markets (farmers, handmade and craft, Charity/Community, Charter), 31 of which were converted onto the market as follows (with some trading at least once):

- 3 new permanent traders joined the Charter Market
- 2 new traders joined the Farmers Market
- 2 new traders joined the Craft Market
- 2 New Start Up Traders (1 of which went straight to the Craft Market after 1 attendance)

Note: 4 new permanent traders (not recorded in the figures above) joined form being casual from the previous reporting year

Trader interest has come from:

- i. The dedicated website for the market using the online contact form. This continues to attract interest with 24 enquiries and 12 traders attending the market.
- ii. Social media platforms. Traders initially made contact through one of the three platforms used to promote the market (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.) and are then asked to use the website forms to make contact
- iii. Phone and email enquiries are either directed to the dedicated Market website or application forms are sent directly to the trader to complete.

Advertising

The market to traders continues through the dedicated website, through sharing other trader's feedback on social media platforms and advertising in About Town, Bee Local, and trader newsletters include listings of all markets.

6.7 Available pitch usage figure

April 2019 was the first year that pitch space usage was monitored thus setting the baseline. Comparison dates use the last Saturday in the month of September. The number of available pitches is 80 in non-Covid market layout circumstances. This excludes speciality market allocated pitches.

	Date	Pitches used	Comment
2019	Saturday 28 September	43 out of 80	
2020	Saturday 26 September	50 out of 51	Reduced pitches due to Covid layout
2021	Saturday 25 September	53 out of 80	

6.8 Market Product List

Below is the two-year comparison list of product categories as of Saturday 30 September 2021 – both market days combined.

The number of traders providing the product range; both market days combined.

Product List	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Trader Category	Perm	Perm	Cas	Cas	Farmers	Farmers	Craft	Craft
Food-Meat Fish	2	2	0	0	3	4	0	0
Food-Baked	1	2	2	4	0	0	0	0
Food-Hot	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Food-Fruit & Veg	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Food-Deli - cheese, olives /fudge	4	8	5	10	3	4	0	0
Food-Animals, pets	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Footwear	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Luggage, Purses, Bags, etc.	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Clothing	3	4	1	3	0	0	0	1
Clothing Accessories - belts, scarves, etc.	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0

Homeware	2	2	3	6	0	0	4	6
House Improvements	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personal Care-daily living aids, mobility	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
Personal Care-Grooming	0	2	2	2	0	0	1	0
Leisure & Hobbies-reading etc	1	2	3	8	0	0	4	0
Stationary-cards, paper pens etc	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Garden	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	0
Jewellery	1	1	2	4	0	0	3	0
Totals	29	35	23	41	6	8	16	10

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Whilst the market has shown post covid pandemic resilience, it remains important to continue to push recruitment, especially the new Youth Trader schemes only recently introduced.