



Market Sub Committee

Date: 2 December 2021

Title: Farmers Market Review

Purpose of the Report:

To present ideas for enhancement of the farmers market.

Contact Officer:

Vivien Cannon, Head of Cultural and Economic Services

Corporate Objective/s	LLTC Five Year Plan No 23. To continue to manage, promote and develop the street market.
Implications:	
Financial	No
Human Resources	No
Operational/Service delivery	Yes – amendment to type of trader/products recognised for a farmer’s market
Procedural/Legal	Yes – amendment to farmer’s market criteria to be approved by Policy & Finance committee
Risk/Health and Safety	No
Environmental Aims	No

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

1.1 To recommend changing the name of the farmers market to ‘Farmers and Producers Market’ to help explain the market’s product offer better to traders and consumers alike.

1.2 To recommend the amended Farmers and Producers Market Policy to Policy and Finance Committee for endorsement as set out in **Appendix A (attached)**.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The market service annual workplan includes the task to review the farmer’s

market. The concern is that the farmers market remains low in trader numbers and there is a desire for this market to grow.

2.2 The farmers market is a speciality market which runs alongside the Charter market on the 3rd Saturday of each month all year long. It has been running for over 20 years. Since the lifting of Covid restrictions (August 2021) the Farmers Market has had 3 new traders join, with 2 of them attending each month. The current offer is around 7-8 stalls (8 in August, 7 in September, 8 in October, 7 expected in November).

2.3 Farmers market traders leave the market at 1.00pm, 2 hours earlier than the Charter market traders. This is due to some traders having animal welfare responsibilities. Given that the market now opens at 8.30am, this provides a trading period of 4 ½ hours. This length of trading for a farmers market is not uncommon yet this will vary across markets with some running longer.

2.4 The farmers market pitches are located separately, and distinctively from the Charter market pitches to emphasise its uniqueness and a quality expectation of 'farmer' products. As above, there is no definitive day for a farmers market to operate with some on Saturday and others running on Sundays.

2.5 The Council secured the Market Rights in 2012 and the state of the farmers market had already declined. An attempt to simplify the criteria took place in 2017 along with updates of all market policies. Unfortunately, over the 4yr period, this has not significantly affected change or an increase trader numbers.

3. INFORMATION

3.1 The key principles of the farmers market are for the consumer to have direct access to and relationship with the producer of any product sold. Included is the understanding of distance travelled, i.e., within a range that serves the locality – a 'market town'. The criteria for Leighton Buzzard Market's farmers market are listed below and follow the principles of a food-based farmers market:

- Goods are produced within 50 miles from the market.
- A representative directly involved in the production process will be attending.
- Produce sold is grown, reared, caught by the stall holder.
- Produce has been brewed, pickled, baked, smoked or processed by the stall holder using at least one ingredient grown or reared within the defined local area.
- Information is available about the production methods and ingredients.

3.2 The naming of farmers markets varies as does the products for sale. The language of 'producers' and 'artisan' is often used under the same umbrella as farmers leading to a broad non-food product range on offer. The essential principle is that the consumer has direct contact with the producer. A comparison is to consider a farm hosting its own farm shop. A farm shop often hosts a café and will

also sell non-food products. This association means that it is well established that today's consumers expect both food and non-food products on a 'farmers' market.

3.3 A recent article on Stroud's farmers market, considered a trailblazer of farmers markets, shared the view of the founder that he aims to maintain a contingent of non-food products like arts and crafts because he asserts consumers dwell longer and browse if the offer is more than the staple food purchases. When Leighton Buzzard's farmers market began, it is understood that there was a diverse range of products for sale.

3.4 Given the speciality market runs alongside the Charter market, it could be considered that the Charter market offers the wider attraction however, farmers market traders would stress that there is an expectation of 'artisan', implying quality bespoke products hand crafted by the attending producer.

4. FARMERS MARKET TRADER ENGAGEMENT

4.1 In March 2021, officers surveyed farmers market traders to explore their views on the market. We learnt that our farmers market traders:

- a. attend farmers markets on a Saturday and/or a Sunday
- b. travel up to 30 miles to attend a farmers market
- c. attend both types of farmers markets, i.e. food only or a mix of products
- d. would welcome complimentary non-food products.

4.2 To follow up on the survey, officers met informally with representatives from the farmer's market to further explore issues. When asked how the Leighton Buzzard Farmers market ranked in comparison to other markets attended by the traders, it was felt that the market sat in the middle meaning takings were fair, so traders continue to attend.

5. EXPLORATION OF IDEAS

5.1 Expansion - various ways of expanding the farmers market to increase the offer have been considered: -

- a) Combine the current farmers market with the handmade and craft market – this would lead to having one huge market per month, which was ruled out for several reasons:
 - i. logistical reasons of not having enough gazebos, tables, etc.,
 - ii. the rest of the month the market would look sparse in comparison,
 - iii. it was considered to be detrimental to the current market offer
 - iv. the handmade and craft market may not meet consumer expectations of artisan products.

b) Change the day/timing of the farmers market:

- i. this was ruled out as the current traders on the farmers market already trade elsewhere, in a regular rotation of local markets. Changing the day offered would risk losing existing traders, particularly those who are longer-standing.
- ii. changing the day, e.g., Sunday, would mean that stall erecting staff are not available to set up and dismantle gazebos. Trader own stall equipment is often not robust enough to manage inclement weather.

c) Run an 'artisan' market of farmers and high-end crafts:

- i. this is problematic as a very specific definition of what 'artisan' does (and doesn't) include would be needed. Research into the definitions of 'artisan' for this purpose was undertaken and found to be too subjective. Concerns were raised about alienating existing traders who may disagree about whether their wares were 'artisan' or not.
- ii. it could have a negative effect on the handmade and craft market if too many of the traders changed over to the farmers market.

d) Change the name of the market to broaden the appeal and attraction for consumers and traders alike to: 'Farmers and Producers Market'.

- i. the farmers market already includes a wider range of food 'producers', e.g. ready-to-eat street food, locally-made packaged foods, etc. however it is felt that this message could be much stronger.
- ii. this is considered a more natural evolution and continues the current trend of new traders having recently joined. They are small-scale 'producers' who are making in relatively small batches - so don't want a weekly stall, they live locally and are making the food locally.

5.2 The proposal is to change the name to 'Farmers and Producers Market' to better inform traders and consumers alike what products can be expected to be for sale.

5.3 Alongside the change of name, would be the need to further simplify the policy and guidance notes for the newly named market. The current policy and guidance notes can be seen at **Appendix A (attached)** and are annotated to show where changes are proposed. It is proposed to delete the guidance notes and only have the amended policy document.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Committee is asked to consider the renaming of the farmers market to become 'Farmers and Producers Market'. Officers consider this in keeping with the ethos of local producers selling local food directly to the consumer. It is a natural progression of the evolution of the market. In recent months, we have had new traders join who fall within these boundaries, offering a broader range of products whilst maintaining the hands-on production and local ethos. This approach honours the core criteria yet helps to explain the market's product offer better to traders and consumers alike.

6.2 Committee is asked to recommend to Policy and Finance Committee the changes to the farmers market policy set out at **Appendix A** towards furthering the simplification of this speciality market and enabling a more fluid response to trader enquiries.

End