



Lichfield City Council

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Town Clerk: Anthony Briggs

11 November 2019

To: Members of the Markets Working Group

Councillors J Checkland (Chairman) and P McDermott, D Robertson, J Smith, C Spruce and M Warfield.

Also to:

LCC Markets Officer (Jordan Appleyard)

LCC Deputy Town Clerk (Sarah Thomas)

Dear Councillor

Markets Working Group

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Markets Working Group to be held in The Moulton Room, Guildhall at **3:30pm on Monday 18 November 2019**.

Yours sincerely

Tony Briggs
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

To note the terms of reference of the Working Group as approved by Council on 21 October 2019 (attached as **APPENDIX 1**).

4 MARKET INCOME, EXPENSES AND ANALYSIS

To consider the Town Clerk's report covering income, expenditure and an analysis of the Market function at **APPENDIX 2**.

5 MARKET OPTIONS

This agenda item allows for a wide-ranging discussion on the current operation of the market, the options for the future, recommendations to Council and further avenues that this Working Group would like to explore at future meetings.

6 CITY COUNCIL FARMERS' MARKET

To consider the Town Clerk's confidential draft report for December Council (**APPENDIX 3**, attached) and to agree any comments/recommendations the MWG may wish to make in order that they may be incorporated into the report.

7 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be decided by the Working Group.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN.

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MARKETS WORKING GROUP - BACKGROUND AND DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 9 September 2019 during discussion of the three month financial update for the 2019/20 financial year, it became clear that there was cross party support for the establishment of a small, member-led Working Group to look in to the decline of the City's historic markets and to investigate potential options to aid in a reversal of this trend and make recommendations in this regard to Council. The Town Clerk prepared draft Terms of Reference for consideration by Leaders of the respective political groups within the Council. The draft terms and membership were adopted and formalised at the City Council meeting of 21 October 2019.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DESIGNATION

Markets Working Group (MWG)

MEMBERSHIP

The Working Group to consist of a maximum of six Councillors with cross-party representation and the City Council's incumbent Market Officer. Additional members may be appointed by resolution of the Working Group, including and a maximum of three Traders representatives to be drawn from the existing Market traders Liaison Committee. Chairman and Deputy Chairman to be decided upon by Council resolution and reviewed annually.

In the event of a Member or Members resigning from the Working Party, new appointments to be confirmed by resolution of the City Council.

MWG OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the reasons for the decline in income from the City Council's historic markets, farmers markets and 'ad-hoc' Market Square hire
2. To seek the views of third parties as appropriate (to include Traders, the public etc) regarding the market 'offer'
3. To draw upon research and initiatives from other markets, both regionally and nationally, and to enlist the assistance of industry bodies (such as NABMA) as appropriate
4. To investigate options that could lead to a revival of the markets and general 'ad-hoc' hire of the Square and to make recommendations to council in this regard
5. To oversee the implementation of such measures as adopted by Council following recommendations of the MWG
6. To assess the effectiveness of such measures and make recommendations following that assessment.
7. To work in co-ordination with the existing Market Traders' Liaison Committee in achieving objectives 1-6 above.

DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE

All recommendations of the MWG to be subject to confirmation by resolution of the City Council. MWG meetings will be governed by the City Council's Standing Orders.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Meetings of the MWG are informal and, whilst they are not open to the public, members of the public can be invited to participate.

The MWG to meet as often as is considered appropriate for the conduct of its business, but no less than once in any given financial year.

Informal notes of each meeting will be taken by the Clerk or nominated representative and circulated as soon as is practicable. Any formal recommendations or reports emerging from a meeting of the MWG to be submitted for consideration by the City Council at the earliest opportunity.

BUDGET AND FUNDING

The cost incurred in servicing this Working Group will be met by general council funding, but there is no further specific budget allocated.

TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

The MWG may appoint task and finish groups consisting of Councillor(s) and/or community members. Each task and finish group to be Chaired by a member of the MWG who is also a City Councillor, and all decisions subject to confirmation by the MWG and subsequent council resolution.

CONDUCT

All members of the MWG or any task and finish group associated with it are required to abide by the principles and practice of the City Council's code of conduct.

CHANGES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

Recommendations for changes to these terms of reference can be made by the MWG by resolution. The recommendations will be subject to confirmation by resolution at a meeting of the City Council.

DISSOLUTION

Recommendation for the dissolution of the MWG can be made by resolution of the Working Group and is subject to confirmation by resolution of the City Council. The MWG can be dissolved by resolution of the City Council without prior recommendations for such action by the MWG.

Markets Working Group 18 November 2019: APPENDIX 2

MARKET INCOME, EXPENSES AND ANALYSIS

<u>Net Expenditure</u>	ACTUAL 2013/14	ACTUAL 2014/15	ACTUAL 2015/16	ACTUAL 2016/17	Actual 2017/18	Actual 2018/19	6-month Actuals 2019/20	Forecast 2019/20
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Markets								
Employee costs	39,865	36,731	36,864	42,453	40,227	45,885	22,731	47,455
Central administration	12,394	12,099	13,037	13,655	13,697	13,013	8,695	14,651
Repair/Maintenance	776	1,515	2,779	1,965	400	3,001	35	2,310
Energy	491	1,021	1,236	1,479	1,400	1,543	497	1,400
Rates and Water	15,250	15,586	17,008	16,899	18,772	20,625	11,946	21,240
Supplies & Services	49,103	49,458	56,228	57,625	57,127	51,919	26,094	56,390
Misc. lettings	-6,342	-14,608	-18,034	-14,495	-16,598	-21,002	-7,483	-15,090
Friday market income	-54,914	-56,361	-54,165	-52,381	-47,229	-43,383	-23,905	-48,250
Saturday market income	-53,475	-53,885	-54,803	-58,607	-54,204	-55,085	-27,400	55,450
Farmers market income	-15,006	-15,062	-11,196	-8,173	-5,945	-5,617	-2,790	3,500
Tuesday market income	-25,539	-27,099	-27,120	-28,568	-26,299	-29,622	-15,176	31,280
Total	-37,397	-50,605	-38,166	-28,148	-18,652	-18,723	-6,756	-10,125

1. General Analysis

The figures above demonstrate the varying income from the market that is possible on a year-on year basis but also the decline in income that is particularly evident during and since 2016/17. The six-month figures for 2019/20 are provided as they are the most up to date figures available for the current financial year.

2019/20 Current and Forecast

The performance in 2019/20 may appear relatively strong but with the coming Winter months the possibility of cancelled markets increases markedly. 'Casual' or hobby traders will also be far less likely to stand during the Winter than the Summer, further reducing income opportunities. The City Council also has a longstanding 'attendance incentive' for the months of January and February; this involves a 25% reduction in prevailing hire rates for permanent traders if they attend the market. If they do not attend, they are charged full arrears. The second half of the year will therefore always generate less income than the first.

Income from the Farmers' Market reflects the current arrangement with Cocker Hoop Creative; they pay a set fee for the Square on Farmers' Market days and then sublet the Square to Traders. This arrangement is currently profitable for the Council but is unsustainable for Cocker Hoop; in charging £15 per Trader and paying £400.00 to hire the Square, Cocker Hoop are making a loss of over £300 on each Farmers' Market. Assuming the agreement does not continue beyond December, the forecast figure assumes difficulty in securing a high number of Traders for the February and March Farmers' Markets and recognises that there is no Farmers' Market in January.

There are positives, however. With the return of traders such as Bella Dame on some non-market days the impact of street trading regulations on the Square may not be as severe as first appeared (further detail at point 3 below). Ad-hoc hire, recorded in the table above as 'Miscellaneous Lettings', was forecast to grow considerably in 2019/20 due to proposals to replicate the previous Wednesday 'market' arrangements on a Thursday. Such proposals were abandoned once it became clear that street trading would apply as traders withdrew their support. The initial reaction of all traders was to abandon non-market day trading, but it may be that some are now reconsidering their position. Though the growth has been lost, the forecast is for a return to 2015/16 levels of ad hoc hire; this is

some £15,000 below the 2019/20 budget but at around £7,000 behind the 2018/19 actual figure it does still represent a strong income stream.

Additionally, there are some signs of growth in the Friday Market though these are slight currently and could easily be reversed. As with the non-market day hire figure above, this is susceptible to inclement weather during the remainder of the financial year.

2019/20 Costs Comparison

Many of the costs associated with the market have remained relatively stable when inflation is taken into account though some increases such as rates do defy the trend. The Staff costs appear to have increased markedly but it should be borne in mind that there has been a vacancy in one or both market officer posts on a semi-regular basis over the past four years or so and this shows as reduced costs at year end when compared to appropriate staffing resources being in place across the period.

The costs associated with running the market also vary considerably from year to year, notably in regard to repairs and maintenance, advertising costs etc. For example, the 2019/20 'Supplies and Services' forecast includes approximately £4,000 for advertising as mentioned under point 10 below and this is reflected in the overall forecast surplus. It is therefore recommended that the figures are viewed in three separate ways;

- firstly, on the basis of overall surplus (the 'Total' figure above) to analyse the contribution the market function makes to LCC budgets
- secondly, the total costs associated with the Markets function to explore cost saving opportunities and to note 'one off' costs that may influence the overall total surplus
- thirdly, the income figure for each separate market to allow analysis of the baseline income and identify trends in that income before they are obscured by other costs and pressures.

2. Supplies and Services

The major cost is **stall erection and dismantling** which totals around £38,000/year. For 2019/20 around £2,000 has been saved on this contract through a robust stance in regard to certain clauses, with further savings due to the Farmers' Market traders utilising their own stalls during the period of the agreement with Cocker Hoop Creative. This contract runs to 1 January 2022 and includes provision for an RPI increase on 1 January each year.

Traders at the Tuesday market bring their own stalls and pay a reduced rent, so while the income from the Tuesday Market is half that of a Saturday Market, the costs to the council are also considerably lower. This model could be explored for the Friday and Saturday Markets.

The other main cost is the **Market Square skip**. A procurement exercise was undertaken in 2017 as Jones waste were then charging £140 per lift and this seemed excessive, especially given the frequency of collection and the nature of the rubbish that is deposited. Briers quoted £75 per lift for the same service, generating a considerable saving. Briers is also a 'zero waste to landfill' contractor. The issue of whether or not skip provision should be retained was discussed by Council in July 2019.

The cost of the skip and other extras is covered by the additional service charge that traders pay to stand so it is broadly cost neutral to the Council under the Briers contract. The service charge is subject to VAT to ensure separation between pitch hire where VAT does not apply, and additional charges where VAT does apply. This service charge was revised in 2018 from £2 to £3 (Friday and Saturday) and £1 to £2 (Tuesday) to more accurately reflect the true costs of the services that are provided. With the previous skip contract and service charge rates as collected from Traders, it was clear that LCC was heavily subsidising these extra provisions.

The 'Supplies and Services' heading also includes one-off costs such as market advertising (as discussed further under point 10).

3. Miscellaneous Lettings

This heading demonstrates the income from 'ad-hoc' hire of the Square, i.e. hire that is not related to a Charter, Statutory or Farmers' Market. Officers made a concerted effort to grow this area of income over the past five years or so. The ad-hoc hire of the Square makes good use of a prime location in the City and generates additional income for the Council. It also served to offset the decline in income from the Markets; the overall income figure for 2014/15 is greater than the 2013/14

figure largely because of this increase in ad-hoc hire, spearheaded by a 'Wednesday trading' day where some permanent traders would stand and form an extra (though not statutory) market. It was hoped this would be replicated on a Thursday in 2019/20, in anticipation of which the budgeted income from ad-hoc hire was increased for this year.

Street Trading legislation imposes another layer of cost onto all trading activities on the Square that do not relate to a Charter or Statutory market. The introduction of the policy on the Square by LDC saw the costs of standing double for many traders and the ad-hoc hire of the Square suffered greatly as a result.

The implications of street trading legislation on the Square are reflected only in the half yearly figures provided for 2019/20 as it was introduced on the Square on 1 May 2019, therefore reflecting one month of income when street trading fees did not apply (April 2019) and five months where they did (May-September). These figures hopefully illustrate the worst of the impact; there is now some ad-hoc hire returning to the Square, notably by Bella Dame, though as yet no market traders have expressed any interest in restarting Wednesday trading.

Notwithstanding the welcome return of Bella Dame it is difficult to envisage income from ad-hoc hire returning to the levels enjoyed in the past couple of years or so.

4. Friday Market

Along with miscellaneous lettings, the performance of the Friday Market provides the clearest evidence of decline with income dropping by around £10,000 over the past few years, despite the slight growth in 2018/19 and potential for a further slight growth in 2019/20.

The major cost associated with the Friday Market is the erection of the stalls, but changing the Friday Market to the Tuesday model (where traders bring their own stalls) would not reduce costs; the stalls set out on the Friday are also used for the Saturday market so would need to be erected anyway. The only way to save stall costs would be to change both the Friday and Saturday Markets to the Tuesday Market model.

5. Saturday Market

Saturday Market income has remained relatively stable over the past few years and the market is often either full or has only one or two empty stalls. The Saturday Market is the most successful of the City Council's markets.

6. Farmers' Market

The City council's Farmers' Market was established in the year 2000 and was previously very successful. Taking place on the first Thursday of the month (except January) and with an extra Farmers' Market held in December, the Market takes place 12 times each year. Traders began to drift away from the Market in 2015 with a resulting reduction in footfall that led to more traders leaving. The result was that by early 2019 it was rare to have more than 8 stalls at a Farmers' Market where there would have been 30+ a few years ago.

In an effort to reinvigorate the Market the City Council agreed to work with Cocker Hoop Creative who organise many of the City's festivals. It was hoped that with their marketing, contacts and record of success in the City they would be able to attract new traders and increased footfall.

Unfortunately to date the arrangement with Cocker Hoop has been a relative failure. Despite a reduction in stall prices to £15 there has been no improvement in attendance, and the November Farmers' Market saw only five Traders stand, the lowest number on record. Communications with Cocker Hoop have also proven difficult at times and the amount of marketing provided has been very disappointing. The income figures above reflect the fact that Cocker Hoop pay a set fee for the Market Square and then sublet; based on attendance, all Farmers' Markets held during the trial period have generated a loss for Cocker Hoop.

However, there are some positive aspects to draw from this experience. Prior to the Cocker Hoop partnership, the stalls for the Farmers' Market were erected and dismantled by the City council's contractor in the same way as the Friday and Saturday Markets. Cocker Hoop changed this to mirror the City Council's Tuesday Market model and while it did save some money (the stalls would need to be erected for the Friday market the following day anyway, but usual practice previously was that the

contractor would return on the Thursday night to set up the remainder of the stalls and thereby incur a cost) it also prevented the Square from looking quite so bare with a multitude of empty stalls that made the market look neither inviting nor well stocked.

The future of the Farmers' Market is in a state of flux at the time of compiling this report. At its December meeting the City council will be asked how it wishes to proceed following the completion of the initial pilot period in partnership with Cocker Hoop Creative and the MWG has been asked to have an input into this process within a separate agenda item.

7. Tuesday Market

As mentioned above the Tuesday Market operates a slightly different model in that pitch fees are considerably less than the Friday and Saturday Markets, but Traders are expected to provide their own stalls. Income from the Tuesday Market has remained relatively stable over the past few years and as with the Saturday Market it is often the case that few pitches are empty. While on face value the income from the Tuesday Market is relatively low, the costs associated with it are also greatly reduced.

8. Cancelled Markets

Markets are only cancelled where it is considered that to hold them would be an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of traders and/or members of the public. The decision to cancel a market is usually taken due to high winds (above 45mph) or because of ice and snow. As cancellation is weather dependant by far the greatest number occur during the winter months.

The number of cancelled markets during recent financial years is provided below:

Financial Year	No. of Cancelled Markets
2019/20 (to date)	0
2018/19	7
2017/18	7
2016/17	3
2015/16	6

9. Current Pitch/Stall Fees and Additional Charges

The prevailing fees for a Market stall/pitch are set by Council at its January meeting each year. The fees are comprised of two separate elements; the fee for the pitch and the service charge for the additional facilities provided. The reason for the separation of charges is due to VAT; pitch fees are not subject to VAT but additional services provided to traders (such as the skip and the kitchen/toilet facilities) are. The pitch/stall cost was increased by 50 pence at the City Council meeting of January 2019. A £1 increase in service charge was levied by Council at its meeting of January 2018 following an analysis of the actual costs of the additional services provided.

Market	Pitch/Stall cost	Service Charge	Total per stall/Pitch
Friday	£21.00	£3.00 VAT Inc.	£24.00
Saturday	£22.00	£3.00 VAT Inc.	£25.00
Farmers'	£15.00*	£0*	
Tuesday	£14.20	£2.00 VAT Inc.	£16.20

*During the partnership with Cocker Hoop the stall fees were reduced to £15; the agreement with Cocker Hoop provided for this as Cocker Hoop pay to the Council a fixed sum for the hire of the Square and do not make use of the skip. The normal charge for the Farmers' Market would be the same as the Saturday Market.

10. Overview of Actions Taken to Revitalise the Markets

Officers and members have been aware for some time of the issues that affect the markets. Some of these issues are reflected at a national level, notably the decline in high street shopping in favour of online purchases, leading to a decline in footfall to town and City centres. Equally, the increase in out of town shopping centres, often with free parking, has made town and City centre shopping less attractive. Any change in the way people shop that leads to reduced footfall to the City centre will impact on the performance of the market.

Additionally there is a gradual shift from the professional trader to the hobby trader; it is hard to see where the next generation of professional market traders will come from, instead being replaced by hobby traders who may well have other careers and attend a market for a little extra money. One of the main implications is that hobby traders are far less likely to rely on their market income alone, that being the case they are less likely to stand on a market when the weather is poor or more generally during winter months. This leads to higher vacancy rates, more empty stalls and a resulting loss of footfall to the market.

Specific examples of proactive action taken by LCC to improve the performance of the Markets over the past two years or so include:

Social Media Presence

The City Council's Markets have an active Facebook page that is regularly updated, and more recently a Markets Twitter account was created. The Facebook page has been very useful for publicising events on the Square as well as the general markets. Individual Traders have been profiled as a 'Trader of the Week' on the page and good feedback has been received. Posts on the Facebook page typically reach between 500 and 1000 people.

The Twitter account has proven particularly useful for promoting market square events such as the 'community day'.

NABMA Health Check

The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) offers free market 'health checks' to its member authorities; this involves an experienced market officer visiting the council for a day to discuss particular issues, view the market and its administration and then make recommendations for improvement. LCC requested the health check in 2018 and it proved useful both in terms of new ideas and confirming that LCC's markets are well run.

Buddy Scheme

One key recommendation of the NABMA health check was the 'buddy scheme'. This allows for a permanent trader to introduce a new trader to the market with both traders paying only 50% of the prevailing stall fees for a three-week period. This is revenue neutral to the Council and has been trialled on the City Council's Friday market with some (albeit limited) success.

Love Your Local Market

The City Council takes an active part in the annual 'Love Your Local Market' which is organised by NABMA and backed by national advertising and branding. The Square is decorated with bunting and many Traders create special offers for the event, which could be obtained by quoting, ***"Love your local market."***



Advertising

In the spring and early summer of 2019 around £4,000 was spent on advertising the Lichfield Markets at train stations and on the rear of busses. The campaign was led by then Councillor Peter Hitchman. The project included designing advertisements in keeping with the wider 'Visit Lichfield' theme that is promoted by LDC. Posters were placed at train stations in Burton, Lichfield and Tamworth and on various bus routes that travel through the same towns. An example of the advertising is provided below:



The weakness of campaigns such as this is the difficulty in quantifying whether they actually made any difference to footfall. The campaign did however generate publicity for the market, but whether it represented value for money based on an evidential increase in footfall/traders is a different matter.

In 2015 new leaflets were designed for the markets together with new posters that are permanently on display on the Market Square. The leaflets are distributed to tourist Information Centres, libraries etc across a wide radius that includes (for example) Leek, Leamington Spa and Burton. The Markets are also advertised as a matter of course within LCC's City View supplement in City Life Magazine and in coach tour magazines.

Contacting Lapsed Traders

The City Council retained details of traders who had traded on the market previously but had either recently or during the past few years decided that they no longer wished to trade. As part of GDPR related data cleansing all lapsed traders were contacted and asked whether they wished to trade on the market again at potentially reduced rates, or on a casual basis, or if they wished instead for their details to be kept on file or indeed removed from the system. This exercise was a success in terms of GDPR compliance but generated little in the way of additional traders.

11. Conclusion

A great deal of effort has been expended attempting to maintain those markets that are performing well and revitalise those that are – relatively speaking - failing. Some schemes have been successful to a degree, but others have either failed or cannot be easily evidenced as having been a success.

The three priority issues are the Friday Market, Farmers Market and the loss of income from 'ad-hoc' hire due to street trading legislation. There is little that LCC can do about the latter and as a result LCC should adjust its ambitions for market square related income accordingly and reflect that in its budgets. The decline in this income stream needs to be wholly separated from the performance of the statutory/charter markets in order that their performance can be reliably assessed.

The Farmers' Market and Friday Market would perhaps benefit from new incentives, perhaps being combined and/or greater promotion. The signs of improvement in Friday Market income are encouraging and may provide the clearest illustration that some of the measures outlined above have been effective. The Farmers' Market is rapidly becoming something of a blank canvas that the City council may wish to either try to revitalise or abandon.

It may be that money is indeed the best incentive and the best way to attract new traders is to offer a stall at very little cost. The potential problem with such a decision is that longstanding permanent traders then question why they, as loyal traders, should be expected to continue to pay full price for their stalls when new traders pay very little. There is also the possibility that such a tactic would signal desperation.

The major external costs to the Council are business rates, the skip provision and stall erection/dismantling. There has been a concerted effort to reduce costs and ensure additional costs incurred are reflected in charges applied to traders. Successes in this regard are the skip and stall erection/dismantling contracts. Further significant cost savings within the existing market structure and operation would seem difficult to achieve.

It may be that the City Council considers moving all its markets to the current Tuesday model whereby traders are expected to provide their own stalls and are therefore charged a lower sum per pitch. Such a step would require considerable consultation with existing traders who may not have access to their own stalls and could result in a further loss of traders.

Business rates costs will fall if revenue falls but they are likely to remain significant and there is a not inconsiderable time lag in these reduced costs being evident.

Another possibility is to rationalise the market offer by removing those markets that are struggling with the hope of benefiting those that remain. The Farmers' Market was set up less than 20 years ago so is not a traditional feature of the City. However, the Friday Market is a Charter Market and its closure could be seen as an insult to the City's history and tradition. It is also possible that public opinion would be against such a move and considerable negative publicity is generated by those who do (and perhaps some who do not) currently use the particular market that becomes earmarked for closure. The current income figures for the Friday Market in particular would indicate that such a measure is premature.

The possibility of combining the Farmers' Market and the Friday Market could be investigated, but it may be difficult to retain any of the identity of the Farmers' Market in such a scenario; the Friday Market instead becoming the Friday Market with (possibly) a couple of additional traders.

In the background to these issues are other pressures over which the Council can exercise little control; these include the changing nature of high streets, the general decline of markets both locally and nationally, the rise of online shopping, the impact of out of town shopping centres and the apparent shift from career traders to hobby traders.

Given the decline in markets nationally it may well be that the City Council's markets are a relative success story, but whether or not this is the case it is clear that they will continue to require considerable support from the Council in order to maintain current performance – and hopefully grow – in the coming years.

Markets Working Group 18 November 2019: APPENDIX 3

[DRAFT FOR COUNCIL 2 DECEMBER 2019]

CONFIDENTIAL

LICHFIELD CITY COUNCIL FARMERS' MARKET

Background

The City Council's Farmers' Market was established in the year 2000 and operated successfully on the Square for many years. The Farmers' Market is currently held on the first Thursday of each month (with the exception of January) and an additional Farmers' Market is held in December.

Unfortunately, in the past three years or so there has been a notable decline in attendance, with occupancy rates struggling to better 50% despite concerted efforts to encourage new traders.

The decline in Farmers' Market activity also sees a reduction in income to the City Council, for example Farmers' Markets in 2013/14 generated £15,000, in 2015/16 this had reduced to £11,000, in 2017/18 the figure was £6,000 and 2018/19 £5,600. When stall costs (circa £150.00 per occasion) and staff costs are taken into consideration, the market is rapidly becoming unviable.

At its meeting of 23 April 2019 the Council considered a report by the Town Clerk regarding the decline of the City Council's Farmers' Market and the potential to work in partnership with Cocker Hoop Creative (CHC) in order to reinvigorate it; Members will be aware of CHC's track record in successfully promoting, organising and hosting festivals within the City.

It was resolved at that meeting that an agreement with CHC be entered into for a trial period, but that the Town Clerk provide an update to the December 2019 meeting of the City Council in order that the success or otherwise of the agreement could be judged. This report is presented below.

Analysis of LCC/CHC Farmers' Market Performance

In terms of attendees and reinvigoration of the market, the pilot scheme has been a failure. It was hoped that CHC, with their ability to fill the City with traders for festivals, would be able to fill the Square with traders relatively easily. Unfortunately, this has proven to not be the case; usual attendance has been in the region of eight traders which is far below the 25+ needed to create a bustling market. The November Farmers' Market attracted only five Traders.

Within the original CHC proposal there was great emphasis on social media promotion of the Farmers' Market. LCC officers have seen little evidence of any marketing through social media and this has no doubt contributed to the poor attendance.

Communications with CHC have also been difficult, though it is acknowledged that this is in part due to CHC staff illness. However, the detailed spreadsheet of attending traders that was promised by CHC in their original proposal failed to arrive prior to most Farmers Markets, often leaving the LCC Markets Officer to chase CHC regarding who was attending, what goods they would be selling and whether their paperwork (Public Liability Insurance etc) was up to date. This is perhaps exemplified by there being no contact from CHC prior to Wednesday 2 October in readiness for the market that was held the following day, despite repeated chasing by LCC officers. Similar issues occurred in November.

The original CHC proposal also stated that CHC employees would monitor activity throughout the day of the market and address any issues, needs or requirements. This was frequently not the case, with such duties falling to the LCC Markets Officer.

CHC were contacted on 25 September 2019 in regard to this report and a request for their input to it. Although the contact has been acknowledged by CHC, no further response has been received to date; this can also be attributed at least in part to CHC staff illness.

While this outcome is extremely disappointing there are nevertheless some positive aspects that could be taken forward:

1. The Farmers' Market previously relied upon the Council's stall contractor erecting and dismantling the stalls; the CHC model instead asked Traders to bring their own stalls (similar to LCC's Tuesday Market) and this cuts costs considerably
2. In an attempt to attract new Traders, the cost of trading on the Farmers' Market was reduced by CHC to £15.00 per stall. Given the reduction in overheads, and if well publicised, this could be a good incentive to new traders.

Future Options

Broadly speaking, there appear to be four options:

1. Extend the agreement with CHC for a Further Period

CHC do not appear to have promoted the Farmers' Market to the extent they indicated and their communications with LCC have often been poor – in part due to CHC staff illness. These issues could perhaps be overlooked if the result was a thriving Farmers' Market, or at least a Farmers' Market where signs of reinvigoration were evident. However, this is not the case, and it is therefore difficult to compile an argument to Council that recommends a continuation of the current agreement with CHC, though of course the Council may resolve to do just that if it so wishes.

2. Return the Farmers' Market to Sole LCC Control

This option would see LCC return to previous arrangements in regard to the farmers' market and a severing of the agreement with CHC.

If this option is decided as the most appropriate way forward it is recommended that the Council also agree a new pricing structure to encourage traders to stand (the current £15 charge seeming a reasonable starting point) and retain the current system whereby Farmers' Market Traders bring their own stalls rather than utilising LCC's stall service in order to ensure costs to LCC are minimised.

3. Combine the Farmers' Market with the Friday Market

Of the three weekly markets that the City Council provides, the Friday Market is under the most pressure due to reducing Trader numbers and income. Relaunching the Friday Market as a combined Farmers' and General Market may attract more Traders and footfall.

4. Abandon the Farmers' Market Provision

The City council may resolve to end the current Farmers' Market provision in its entirety.

RECOMMENDED: That the Farmers' Market provision return to LCC control; the existing pricing structure (£15 per stall) and requirement for Traders to bring their own stalls to be retained and reviewed by the Council no later than its meeting of January 2021.