

# **FOR PUBLICATION**

## **PROPOSED OPEN MARKET RECONFIGURATION PROJECT** **T000**

---

MEETING:	1. COUNCIL 2. CABINET 3. EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, TOURISM & CULTURE
DATE:	1. 17 DECEMBER 2014 2. 16 DECEMBER 2014 3. 9 DECEMBER 2014
REPORT BY:	VISITOR AND CULTURAL SERVICES MANAGER
WARD:	ALL
COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY:	ALL
KEY DECISION NUMBER	471

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To outline the issues that inhibit the development of the open market in attracting more traders and shoppers.
- 1.2 To request funding to appoint a consultant to undertake a feasibility study which will evaluate and analyse the open market and present a number of development options, with estimated costs, for consideration.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To approve, in principle, that Market Place environment and facilities need to be upgraded if the open air market is to continue to be an important shopping destination for Chesterfield.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of £15,000, from the Service Improvement Fund, to pay for a consultant to undertake a feasibility study and provide options with estimated costs for the redesign and upgrade of Market Place.

2.3 That after the necessary consultation, a report on the consultant's proposals will be presented to Cabinet for consideration, with suggestions on how the development could be funded.

### 3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The current layout of Market Place comprises 151 stalls set out in 12 horizontal rows. This is split into quarters by walkways from north to south and east to west, with the east to west walkway having seating and weather cover protection (**Appendix 1**).

3.2 Only the top row and bottom row have stalls that face outwards onto Market Place, all the rest face inwards into the aisles. Therefore, out of 151 stalls only 27 can be classed as having a prominent position with clear sight lines and good footfall. Of these, 10 are permanently occupied by 2 fruit and vegetable traders and 17 are occupied by the same traders each week, through a licensing agreement. The next best positions are at the end of rows and we only have 19 in total of these. This results in a lack of interest by traders on the remaining 105 stalls, and this is reflected by their poor occupancy.

3.3 There are also 40 stalls in New Square with similar stall occupancy levels to those in Market Place. This report focuses, however, on Market Place as this is where it is felt the greatest potential for future stall demand will develop. In addition, New Square has a more open aspect and some of the issues that inhibit the development of the Market Place are not as apparent in this area of the market.

3.4 The popularity of a stall location is reflected in the stall rents which range from £7.80 to £28.60. A full list of the 2014/15 rents is attached in **Appendix 2**. The multiple pricing options for stalls, in reality, do not truly address the income worth of that stall in relation to its position and size.

### 4.0 **CURRENT SITUATION**

4.1 Because of a lack of prominently placed stalls, new traders find it extremely difficult to establish themselves and, therefore, do not stay. They may trade for short periods on the aisle facing stalls in the inside of the market but few find it a successful and viable option. The market, in common with many markets throughout the country, is experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining new traders.

- 4.2 An analysis of each market day currently shows that on Mondays, out of 151 available stalls in Market Place, 78 (52%) remain empty on a regular basis. On Fridays 75 stalls (50%) remain empty. On Saturdays the occupancy is slightly better with 62 stalls (41%) remaining empty. The Thursday Flea Market has an occupancy rate of around 90%.
- 4.3 The public have the impression that the market is 'empty', even though there are at least 70 stalls occupied every market day in Market Place. Chesterfield market, unlike many other markets, has permanently fixed stalls and unused stalls cannot be removed. In many markets, such as Bakewell, the stalls are temporary structures, and only the stalls that are occupied are set up for the day, giving the impression that the market is fully occupied, busy and vibrant when, in fact, there are fewer stalls than on Chesterfield market.
- 4.4 The Market Manager has adopted different strategies in an attempt to keep market traders, the main one being the development of street positions such as Central Pavement. This does cause issues as it can impede access around town and isn't popular with many residents but, more importantly, it looks like the street markets are taking traders away from Market Place. The reality is, however, that we need the street markets to retain traders. The obvious answer of putting street traders back into Market Place will not work. They will not accept the poor footfall, poor access and poor sightlines that come with aisle facing stalls. They will simply trade in other towns.
- 4.5 If we are to persuade traders, who are currently located on the streets, back into Market Place, and if we are to retain new market traders, we need to address the issue of footfall and sightlines, so that we can provide good trading conditions to all our traders and not just to those that are licensed.

## 5.0 **IMPORTANCE OF THE OPEN MARKET**

- 5.1 Chesterfield is a historic market town and the success of the town as a shopping destination depends to a great extent on the market, both outdoor and indoor. The market sets Chesterfield apart from most other towns of a similar size, not just in appearance, but it results in the town centre having a significant number of independent traders. Busy market days see the town centre become a lively, dynamic and social place.

- 5.2 Internet shopping and out of town shopping centres are taking greater numbers of shoppers away from town centres. Markets have a key role to play in attracting shoppers and visitors, who want to shop in a traditional way, buy locally sourced products, seek bargains and build relationships with traders, back into the town centre.
- 5.3 The Market Hall has recently benefited from a multi-million pound refurbishment which has resulted in attracting new businesses and increasing footfall. As part of this project stronger links were also established with the outdoor market. For the open market to fully benefit from this development it also needs investment to improve the quality of the offer and to attract new traders.
- 5.4 A sustainable future for the outdoor market is key to the future role of Chesterfield as a sub-regional shopping centre. Improvements to the layout and facilities of the market will not, however, guarantee success for the market but, if no changes take place, the market will not be given the opportunity to develop and compete for both new traders and shoppers.

## 6.0 **CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 As stated earlier in this report the open market suffers from poor sightlines and falling footfall. These issues need to be addressed if the market is to retain its importance to the town and the local community. They are not the only areas for improvement:
- The power supply to stalls needs to be increased, lighting is available but there are limited supplies for tills, credit card facilities, refrigerators, etc. An upgrade in the power supply could attract more food stalls to the market, a potential area for growth, and would modernise payment methods for both traders and shoppers.
  - There is no weather protection for traders or shoppers, poor weather results in fall in numbers of traders attending the markets as their stock can get damaged. Equally the footfall through the market also declines as shoppers do not want to shop in inclement weather.
  - The aisles are narrow; it can be difficult for members of the public to penetrate the market, particularly with push chairs and wheelchairs.

6.2 Market traders, through the Markets Consultative Committee, have been consulted on the future of the market and their aspirations for the market can be summarised as follows:

- Change to the market is required but need to retain the character of the market, including the cobbles. There should be wide pathways to help with accessibility and footfall.
- A central feature should be included in any new layout to attract footfall
- Vehicular access to the site, for loading and unloading, would be beneficial.
- Water supply on site would help food traders comply with current environmental health standards and would be of assistance to other traders.
- To accommodate the high stall occupancy on the Flea Market the final layout should be flexible and have the capacity to increase the number of stalls for different market days.
- The new layout should recognise that traders sell in different ways eg walk in stalls, trade from boards. Fruit stalls need more space for onsite storage. Not one size fits all solution.
- Consideration to be given to more permanent stalls on the edges, with onsite storage.
- Strong links need to be maintained between the Market Hall and outdoor market.
- Space between stalls is very narrow, not sufficient space for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

6.3 It is likely that any reconfiguration of Market Place would result in a reduction in the number of stalls but it is important that the market remains financially sustainable for the Council and has the potential not only to retain the current levels of income but to grow and develop.

6.4 The Thursday Flea Market is the busiest day of the week with virtually full occupancy. It is therefore important that the final layout must be flexible enough to accommodate all traders.

## 7.0 **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

7.1 As part of the feasibility study, the appointed consultants will be required to analyse the existing operation of the open market, present a number of options for the reconfiguration of the market layout, provide estimated costs for these options and evaluate them. They will also be asked to assess if there is a business case to support the necessary investment that would be required to deliver the options.

- 7.2 It is not possible at this stage to estimate the cost of a scheme to reconfigure the Market Place but in 2005/6 a total of £250,000 was spent on the redevelopment of the market which included the replacement of all the market stalls and general improvements to the market environment. The consultants would be asked to provide estimated costs for all options that they would put forward and to assess if there is a business case to support the necessary investment.
- 7.3 The anticipated stall rent income from both the general and flea markets in 2014/15 is £597,000. The projected income from a reconfigured Market Place must ensure, that going forward, the income streams cover all future expenditure. The open market must be financially sustainable.
- 7.4 As part of the process the appointed consultants, will be required to consult with elected members, traders and local residents for their comments and endorsements. The Community, Customer and Organisational Scrutiny Committee have been consulted on this project and they support the appointment of consultants to take it forward.
- 7.5 Based on work carried out for the Council by other consultants it is estimated that a fee of approximately £15,000 would be required to carry out this work and this could be funded from the Service Improvement Fund.

## 8.0 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

<b>Description of Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Action</b>	<b>Resultant Likelihood</b>	<b>Resultant Impact</b>
Lack of support from traders and the public	M	H	Extensive consultation to take place on a number of options	L	M
Consultants do not develop a scheme that is acceptable	L	M	Seek specialist consultants with track record in this area	L	L
Funding for the scheme not available	H	H	Sound business case to be developed	M	M

## 9.0 **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

- 9.1 An EIA has not been carried out at this stage of the project. Improved accessibility to the Market Place for people with mobility problems will be a consideration for the consultants when developing the proposed new layouts. It is suggested that the Equality and Diversity Forum should be engaged in this project.

## 10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 No changes could be made to the market layout and the open market could continue to operate as it is at present. This would not, however, address the problems of poor sightlines and declining footfall and, over time, there is a risk that this could result in a decrease in the number of market traders to such an extent that the market is no longer viable .

## 11.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 To approve, in principle, that Market Place environment and facilities need to be upgraded if the open air market is to continue to be an important shopping destination for Chesterfield.
- 11.2 That the Cabinet recommends to Council the approval of £15,000, from the Service Improvement Fund, to pay for a consultant to undertake a feasibility study and provide options with estimated costs for the redesign and upgrade of Market Place.
- 11.3 That after the necessary consultation, a report on the consultant's proposals will be presented to Cabinet for consideration, with suggestions on how the development could be funded.

## 12.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 To help secure a sustainable future for Chesterfield's outdoor market.

You can get more information about this report from Andy Bond (01246 345991).

Officer recommendation supported.

Signed

Executive Member

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A Surjeant". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned below the "Signed" label.

Date: 4 December 2014

Consultee Executive Member/Support Member comments (if applicable)/declaration of interests