

ASSETS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

13 FEBRUARY 2017

MARKET OVERVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT ETC

General performance and activity 2016/17

Officers of the council continue to operate incentive schemes to encourage new, long-term traders, allowing them lower rent levels initially but increasing them gradually to full rent once it is clear that they will continue to trade.

The number of traders at Wisbech Market Place has remained fairly constant during the financial year 2016/17 to date. However, a number of new traders have begun trading at Wisbech Market in recent weeks and discussions are underway with other potential new traders. The council's Assets Manager will provide further details at the meeting.

Although Thursday, Friday and Saturday remain the busiest days currently, increases in trade are being seen on other days. Members will recall that it was decided at minute A4/16, having examined the outcome of the trial period of one year, that the Sunday Market would become a permanent arrangement. This means that Wisbech Market has become a seven days per week operation.

Since closure, in late December 2016, of the out-of-town, privately-operated Sunday market, the level of trading at the Wisbech Central Sunday Market has increased considerably; it is anticipated that this trend will continue. The council's Assets Manger will report in more detail at the meeting.

The level of income generated by the market has decreased; the income received in the period 1 October to 31 December 2016 was £15,939.82, which is at a lower level than for the same period in 2015 (at £16,641.02). The situation is being monitored by officers.

The level of expenditure on market operations (rates, maintenance and utilities) during the period 1 October to 31 December 2016 was £11,779.31, which shows a decrease over the same period in 2015 (at £18,084.56).

The council's Assets Manager will provide, at the meeting, an oral update on issues affecting the market operations in general.

It is RECOMMENDED that members note the current situation.

Community events

Wisbech Market Place continues to be used as the location for a number of community events and festivals.

Since the last meeting of this committee the Market Place was used as the location for the Christmas Lights Switch-on event (which took place on Sunday 27 November 2016) and the Wisbech Christmas Fayre 2016 (held on 11 December 2016).

In addition, were made by council officers for last year's Halloween Spooktacular event (which took place on 29 October) to "spill out" from the Horsefair Shopping Centre into the Market Place.

All of the events mentioned above, were extremely successful. At minute C8/16 the council's Community Events and Festivals Committee agreed the following programme of events – the majority of which would take place on the Market Place - for 2017:

- St George's event on 22 April
- WisBEACH day on 4 June
- Rock Festival on 6 August
- Christmas Lights switch-on on 26 November.

In addition to those events, which will organised by the Town Council, the council will also support others, such as Armed Forces Day, Arles Festival, the Halloween Spooktacular and the Wisbech Christmas Fayre.

Given the increasing success of the council's festivals and events and the permanency and increasing success of the Wisbech Central Sunday Market, it will be necessary to plan carefully any events which utilise the Market Place as a venue to enable the Wisbech Central Sunday Market to operate, with the odd exception, on those days. These events attract high levels of attendance by members of the public and, consequently, provide the opportunity for the council's regular market traders to achieve an increase in their income. This trading also adds to the range of activities available to the attendees at events held in the town centre.

Officers continue to look for other activities which could take place on Wisbech Market Place; any ideas from members would be welcomed.

It is RECOMMENDED that members note the situation and inform officers of any ideas they may have in terms of increasing/improving the use of the Market Place for community events.

Market Place enhancements

At the last meeting of this committee (on 1 November 2016) the Clerk updated members on the position with regard to the preparation of design concepts for enhancement of Wisbech Market Place (minute A8/16 refers).

At minute A8/16 members noted that a meeting between some members of this committee, the consultants which had been engaged to produce the design concepts and council staff (as agreed at minute A4/16) had taken place on 24 August 2016. At that meeting the consultants had presented a draft version of the "Wisbech Market Place: Scoping Study". Following the meeting, the consultants produced, having regard for comments made at that meeting, a final version of the document; this had

been circulated by the Clerk to all members of the council, who had been invited to submit their comments to him in relation to the content of the document and the recommendations contained therein.

The Clerk had reported, at minute A8/16, the two comments which had been received from members of the council.

At minute A/16 members had decided, having considered the content of the scoping study and the comments which had been received by the Clerk from two members of the council, that

- (1) the situation at that time and the content of the scoping study be noted;
- (2) a Task and Finish Group be established (to include not only town councillors but also appropriate representatives of the local community) to consider the content of the scoping study and feasibility of its implementation and to organise a public consultation exercise.

For various reasons, no progress regarding this project has been made since the last meeting of this committee.

RECOMMENDED that members provide a “steer” to council officers with regard to a terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group and its membership, as well as an indicative timescale for the project

Development plan for Wisbech Market

At minute M5/14 the Market Place Management Committee decided that it should produce a formal development plan (deliverable over three or five years) for the Market Place as both a community space and as a trading area.

The plan could be used to identify specific projects, which would help shape the council’s budgets for future years.

At minute M9/15 the Market Place Management Committee decided that it would commence discussions on this matter once enhancement/development “themes” begin to emerge from the consultancy work to be undertaken.

At minute A4/16 this committee decided that it would work on the production of a formal development plan following conclusion of the consultancy work relating to enhancement of the Market Place.

At minute A8/16 this committee had decided that this matter continue to be progressed in accordance with minute A4/16.

RECOMMENDED that the situation be noted.

Report author: Terry Jordan, Clerk to Wisbech Town Council