

REPORT TO: Corporate PPB
DATE: 10th June 2014
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise
PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment
SUBJECT: Markets Update
WARD(S) Appleton and Mersey

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a further update to Members on the management and operation of the borough's markets. The report also sets out future priorities and actions.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

i) Members note the contents of the report.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATON**

In January Members considered a report which outlined the changes and improvements that have been made at the markets during 2013. The report also focused on future work priorities including: refurbishment work to the public toilets; review of energy consumption; Wifi access and the Traders' Committee. A summary of progress on these areas is provided as follows:

Refurbishment Work to the Public Toilets.

This work was completed in March and has received positive feedback from customers and traders.

Wifi Access

This work was completed in April 2014.

Traders' Committee

The Traders' Committee has met two times in 2014. The Portfolio Holder for Physical Environment attends the meeting. Meetings have been very positive with Traders' presenting views on the operation of the markets in a constructive way and have been supportive in the implementation of new initiatives within the markets. One good example of this is the development and refinement of the Commodities Panel Meeting which meets to discuss new trader applications and amendments to commodity lists. Traders asked if these meetings could be more frequent and also requested an amendment to the arrangements to allow traders to express an opinion on potential applications. These changes have been made.

Marketing and Promotions

Love Your Local Market (LYLM) Promotional Event

The LYLM event took place between 14th May and 28th May 2014. This event was opened by Mayor of Halton Cllr Margaret Ratcliffe, followed by a charity auction in the outdoor market to raise funds for Marie Curie UK. Within the indoor market during the fortnight extra stalls were given to Cheshire Police, Halton Women's Institute and Halton Vision. Further indoor stalls in the indoor market were provided to internal Council services such as Trading Standards, Library Services and Halton People Into Jobs to enable them to advertise their offer. Riverside College also advertised their courses and facilities within the market. Live music was also the main feature at Runcorn Street Market during the final Tuesday of LYLM fortnight. New market traders were given the opportunity to rent outdoor stalls at the cost of £10 for two days to encourage new businesses to start up within the market.

Widnes on Sea Promotional Event

The Widnes on Sea event will take place between 23rd July and 26th July 2014. This event will commemorate the start of World War One by theming the rides and activities to a typical Edwardian entertaining day at the market. There will be strong men, escapologists, policeman and a recruiting sergeant set up in the market to entertain shoppers. A fun fair will take place with further activities planned for children.

Power Supply

A review of Power Supply and Power Consumption in both the indoor and outdoor market has been undertaken. This review has considered the electricity metering arrangements in the market; key users; and a categorisation of usage in relation to commodities.

This is an important piece of work because power supply within the market is close to full capacity and as a result this has a negative impact on the ability to diversify the commodity offer. For example, vibrant markets tend to have a good mix of food/dining outlets, but power capacity reduces our options in this regard.

This work has a bearing on the review of market hall rents described below.

The Operational Director for Economy Enterprise and Property will provide further details at the meeting.

Future Priorities and Actions

In addition, Members were also advised that as part of its on-going review of its services, the Council would need to carry out a cost benefit analysis which links to exploring ways of increasing the commercial viability of the markets.

This analysis to date has focused on the following areas:

- Occupancy/Vacancy Rates;
- Rental Income;
- Rental Arrears;
- Expenditure;
- Return on Investment i.e. an opportunity/cost analysis

A review of market hall rents has also taken place. The review has focused on a payment system that more accurately reflects an equitable distribution of expenditure/costs across the market, and satisfactorily distinguishes between popular or, conversely, difficult to let stalls.

There are a number of considerations arising from this review, including the introduction of an updated pricing policy.

It is proposed that the Operational Director for Economy, Enterprise and Property will provide more detail at the meeting.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no further policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Whilst the Council makes a small profit in regard to the operation of its markets Members are asked to balance this with the wider benefits that the markets provide. For example, there are currently 83 traders in the indoor market, which represents a significant contribution to supporting self-employment in Halton. Equally, when a customer survey of the markets was carried out in July 2011 of the 227 residents of Halton who completed the questionnaire 86.3% (196) said they had used Widnes Market in the last 12 months.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

N/A

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The markets allow potential entrepreneurs and fledgling businesses the opportunity to set up in a supportive and low risk environment.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

N/A

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

N/A

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Markets contribute to supporting the respective town centres. It also encourages local residents to 'shop local'.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There is a risk that the Council does not see a return on its investment through increased footfall in the markets and wider town centres and an increase in traders paying rent.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Access to the markets has improved to ensure that our markets remain accessible for all.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.