

Extract from minutes of –

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14th APRIL, 2010

“St. George’s Market

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

‘Relevant Background Information

This combined report comprises two items:

1. **Proposal for Sunday Market in St George’s**

Update to Members on the proposed Sunday Market in St George's Market.

2. **Requirement for mobile wash hand facilities**

The Markets Unit currently supply a small number of shared mobile wash hand facilities to food traders who currently trade at the markets.

At a recent meeting with Environmental Health Food Safety Unit, Markets management were informed that to meet current Chartered Institute of Environmental Health requirements some of these traders need their own individual mobile units, due to possible risk of contamination and/or risk of food poisoning.

Key Issues

1. **Proposal for Sunday Market in St George’s**

Members will be aware from previous reports that the traders in St George’s market have been championing plans for an additional market on a Sunday to be added to the existing weekly schedule. Research into the level of interest in a Sunday market has been undertaken with 84 existing traders having confirmed their intentions to date.

The traders who have shown interest are eager to acquire approval and support from Council as quickly as possible in advance of the summer season to enable them to forward plan their trading commitments from June onwards. A number of the traders have been approached by other markets across the region and beyond, regarding trading at other Sunday markets; their preference is largely to trade at St George’s however should this not be agreed by Council they wish to know as soon as possible to allow them to avail of opportunities at locations outside Belfast.

St George's Market traders propose to trade from 10am to late afternoon on a Sunday. They are mindful of Council's work in encouraging Sunday leisure activities through our work in cultural tourism on creating things for locals and visitors to enjoy on Sundays in association with our other programming that is underway or planned. The type of market envisaged is a mix between Friday and Saturday traders. However, space permitting other traders not currently part of St George's will be included.

A number of external organisations have already made bookings for use of St George's on a Sunday throughout the year including some which are now annual events. Precedence will be given to existing bookings and to supporting cultural festivals including Chinese New Year, Holi and the India Festival which use St George's on a Sunday.

Feasibility of Market

Given the level of interest from existing traders in operating a Sunday market, the proposal would appear feasible. At this point, the operational costs directly pertaining to the market would largely be covered from income generation via stall hire fees for Sunday.

Fees per stall are proposed at the present rate of £13.00 per stall plus £3.00 for electricity usage. Quarterly payment in advance would also be encouraged to encourage regular attendance by traders and assist with cashflow.

Car parking is an issue that would require management in order to avoid any adverse consequences from neighbouring communities.

Other costs which would require coverage include car parking and marketing; assuming the optimum level of trade interest of at least 120 stalls being used, then these costs would also be covered by the income from a Sunday market or met from a re-alignment of existing budgets.

The Principal Solicitor is of the view that the proposed market is unlikely to fall foul of current legislation in relation to Sunday opening hours. There may however be concerns on the part of Councillors, members of the public, businesses or residents within the Markets area in relation to the market operating from 10am or on a Sunday at all. These concerns may include, amongst other issues, the Council's role in enforcing Sunday trading legislation which only permits shops above a certain size to operate between the hours of 1pm-6pm. To measure opinion informal consultation with local Churches and Community Groups is underway. There may also be other legal issues in relation to the operation of a Sunday market. Approval for the Market will be subject to the result of the informal consultation and to any requirements or steps deemed necessary by the Principal Solicitor.

In order to ascertain local support for the opening of a Sunday Market in St George's, informal consultation has been undertaken with the following:

Markets Development Association
St Malachy's Church
Markets Community Centre (This is for display on notice boards)
Chinese Community Centre
May Street Church
BCCM
Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Cathedral Quarter Steering Group
Donegall Pass Community Forum
South West Neighbourhood Partnership

Updates will be presented at Committee on feedback received to date.

Assessment of Proposal

Given the interest of existing traders in operating a Sunday market there is the potential for a new and additional 'Sunday' activity to be added to the events programming within Belfast. Members are aware that criticisms have been made by tourists over several years about the lack of activity in the city on a Sunday especially in the mornings and early afternoon.

Having examined the legal and financial implications, the proposal for a Sunday market in St George's also appears feasible. Traders are anxious for an early decision in advance of the summer so as not to compromise their earning capacity over these months. Consultation with local stakeholders has been instigated with no early signs of significant dissent however Members will be fully updated at Committee. The only apparent issue giving rise to some debate is around the opening hours of the market

Resource Implications

Finance:

Approximately £1,550 per week extra income which should cover all operational costs.

Recommendations

Members are asked to support the operation of a Sunday Market in St George's for a trial basis from June to September 2010 for either the hours of:

- a) 10.00am to 4pm/5pm
- b) 1-5pm/6pm

Decision Tracking

Further to Committee agreement and subject to the results of the informal consultation and to any legal requirements or other additional steps deemed necessary by the Principal Solicitor, to hold a Sunday Market in St George's.

Time Frame: June 2010.

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

2. Requirement for mobile wash hand facilities

The Markets Unit currently supply a small number of free mobile wash hand facilities to food traders currently trading at the markets. One unit is shared between two or three traders. At a recent meeting with Environmental Health Food Safety Unit Markets management where informed that to meet current Chartered Institute of Environmental Health requirements many traders need to have use of an individual mobile unit, i.e. not shared, due to possible contamination or risk of food poisoning. Food safety has advised Markets Management that it is the responsibility of the trader to supply their own facilities. Food traders' regulations require them to have proper washing facilities at their stall when trading.

Mobile hand wash facilities cost approximately £600 per unit. Markets Management would offer food traders the following:

Option 1

Traders provide or purchase their own mobile unit which they bring to and remove from the market at end of each day of trading.

Option 2

The markets unit purchase the units and rent to the trader at a cost of £5.00 each trading day (this fee will include electricity). This charge will also be attached to existing, fully serviced, wash hand facilities which are currently provided.

If all the mobile units are rented out, the Markets unit would recoup the initial expenditure in just over one year. The markets unit currently has 12 mobile units.

Markets Management will write to all food traders concerned and inform them of the new Environmental Health requirements and the time lines involved. Markets Management are working closely with Environmental Health Food Safety on this issue

Resource Implications

£26000 initial cost to purchase new mobile wash units. This amount would be recouped with rental charges.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members agree to the purchase of the mobile units and further agree to rent the units to the Markets Traders at a fixed fee of £5.00 per unit per trading day.

Decision Tracking:

Further to agreement the MDO purchase additional wash hand units for rental to Markets traders

Time Frame: April 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

NMTF – National Market Traders Federation

MDO – Markets Development Officer

BCC – Belfast City Council

MPEL – Market Place Europe Ltd.’

After discussion, the Committee agreed to:

- (i) the opening of a Sunday market in St. George’s for a trial basis from June till September, 2010 during the hours of 10.00 a.m. till 4.00/5.00 p.m.; and
- (ii) purchase mobile wash hand units for St. George’s market and that these be rented to the market traders at a fixed fee of £5.00 per unit per trading day, with a report, detailing the number of units purchased and the total cost and potential income, being submitted to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.”