



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Markets Update – St George’s Market Usage
<b>Date:</b>	14 September 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	St George’s Market currently operates three very successful markets each week, Friday, Saturday and the new Sunday. The three markets vary greatly from the traditional variety market on Friday, with the assorted mix that attracts thousands of visitors each week. The award winning Saturday Food and Garden market has a fusion of tempting speciality foods from around the world as well as high quality handmade crafts, flowers, plants and local artwork. The Sunday Market, which is relatively new and started in July 2010 has a special emphasis on local arts and crafts, offering more local crafts people the opportunity to show off and sell their talents.
1.2	The three market days support around 350 small independent businesses, which create approx 500 jobs each week and welcome an estimated 600,000 shoppers every year. St George’s has an estimated annual income from trader stallage to Council of £360,000, and an estimated economic benefit to Belfast City of over £15m.
1.3	The markets are also a base to promote local musicians, artists and crafts. They are also a regular meeting place for thousands of customers and visitors each week from various generations, cultures and backgrounds.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Since the renovation of St George’s Market in 1999 it has also been used as a venue for a variety of events.
2.2	Currently no bookings have ever been taken for Friday or Saturday as regular market days preference was always being given to these days over any event, nor

	<p>have bookings been taken for a Thursday due to the Friday Market having to get set up and be ready for the early start on Friday morning which opens its doors at 05.30.</p>
2.3	<p>The Sunday market is relatively new, starting 4 July 2010, and as such any pre-booked and confirmed event bookings for 2010/2011 were honoured.</p>
2.4	<p>Officers though are aware that requests for events to be held on St George's market days, especially a Sunday may increase; and there could be the potential for such requests to also include a Friday and/or Saturday market days. Therefore going forward it is felt there is a need for Council to articulate a clear policy on the usage of St George's Market.</p>
2.5	<p>Officers are conscious that offering any of the markets days out as hire are very contentious with both the traders and their representatives. Regular meetings take place with traders representatives and they, along with the traders regularly voice their concerns. One of their main concerns is that the inconsistency of any market day may lead to loss of regular income and traders may then prefer to leave the Market, (especially Sunday), if there is not the consistency of the regular weekly market, as there currently has been for Friday and Saturday.</p>
2.6	<p>St George's Market currently has 350 traders over the three days with the Sunday market accounting for 120 traders and with employees the total employed for Sunday market is approx 150. Approximately 50% of the Sunday traders are new start businesses and some started on a Sunday as it was the only day they could attend due to other commitments. It also gave some others who were on the waiting lists for Friday and/or Saturday the opportunity to start trading at the Market.</p>
2.7	<p>Average weekly stallage income is just under £7000, below outlines stallage income for the Markets over a three week period from 17.06.11 to 01.07.11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Friday: - 17.06.11 = £2875; 24.06.11 = £2846; 01.07.11 = £2803 total = £8524</li> <li>- Saturday:- 17.06.11 = £2275; 24.06.11 = £2283; 01.07.11 = £2401 total = £6959</li> <li>- Sunday: - 17.06.11 = £1704; 24.06.11 = £1697; 01.07.11 = £1909 total = £5310</li> </ul>
2.8	<p>Market stallage income to council is estimated at £360,000 per annum, with Sunday Market income to council estimated at £90,000 per annum.</p>
2.9	<p>The traders and their representative's state the Friday and Saturday markets have built their reputation and customer base on the consistency of being regular weekly markets and not closing or changing for other events.</p>
2.10	<p>A survey carried out in 2010 also indicated that visitors to the Friday and Saturday markets were more likely to be weekly attendees, with inclines in weekly visits since 2008.</p>
2.11	<p>The survey also indicated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 75% of Friday market visitors were from Greater Belfast, 22% were from rest of NI, while both rest of GB and out of state visitors made up 5%.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 61% of visitors to the Saturday market were from Greater Belfast, 31% were from rest of NI, while both rest of GB and out of state visitors made up 7%.</li> <li>- Sunday market visitors were more likely to visit the market on a monthly basis.</li> </ul>
2.12	The survey results indicate that consistency of market days assists in the building of a regular customer base and increase in customer visits to the Market.
2.13	There have been four cultural organisations which have used St George's Market in the past on a Sunday to host their events. These are, Chinese Welfare Association, ArtsEtka, Indian Community and POBAL. The Polish Community also used St George's Market as a venue in the past but they have since used other venues such as Council parks, as do other cultural groups such as ArtsEkta for other events. Whilst the 4 of these organisations have declared they would be keen to continue hosting their events in St George's on a Sunday, Councils Good Relations Unit have advised that if Council were to allow only these 4 organisations, Council could be deemed as being discriminatory against any others who may also wish to use the facility.
2.14	Only three cultural events took place during 2010/2011 due to one of the organisations double booking their agreed date and because of this they used an alternative venue. The Indian Community held their rescheduled event in Custom House Square on Sunday 7 August 2011.
2.15	Estimated visitor numbers attending the four cultural events in St George's are estimated to be in the region of 18,000 over the 4 events.
2.16	Council spends a large amount of money advertising the three market days, promoting they are open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Concerns regularly raised from traders and their representatives are;
2.17	Changing from market day to event causes confusion with visitors and customers who come to the market. When these other events are on instead of market days extra money has to be spent to try and notify people that the market will be closed for that day due to an event. (It has been noted that people still arrive to the market when another event is on and we have advertised as such, especially tourists). And as the organisations who hire the market charge an entrance fee we have had complaints from people expecting free entry to the Market.
	Therefore Members are asked to consider primacy of access to markets on Friday, Saturday and Sundays.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Loss of approx £12,650 in revenue if four current Sundays events continue instead of the four Sunday Markets, with possible loss of approx £90K income in trader fees to Council if Sunday Market fails.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	To allow only a select number of agencies to access the Market could be perceived as discriminatory - would either have to allow none or allow all.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members consider giving primacy to markets for Friday, Saturday and Sundays.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Time-frame: September 2011      Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay	