



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: St George's Market Update

Date: 20 November 2012

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>St George's Market is an important asset for the Council. In particular it provides a venue for small businesses and entrepreneurs to test their ideas and gain valuable experience. Of course, it also facilitates significant employment for the city. Increasingly the market is being recognised as a major tourism asset for the City, particularly on Sunday mornings. It has been nominated for numerous local and national titles and awards for its fresh, local produce and great atmosphere.</p>
1.2	<p>Although St George's is primarily used as a market, it may also be used for a range of other events including food festivals, art initiatives, exhibitions, charity launches, fashion shoots and live music gigs. The market has also hosted contemporary crafts and healthy living fairs as well as a two day motorcycle exhibition. More recently it has been used to complement the conference exhibition space and events at the Waterfront Hall.</p>
1.3	<p>In summary, the market provides a place to trade and grow for over 170 small businesses, including 6 shop units and a restaurant. It supports roughly 385 jobs and welcomes approximately 600,000 visitors each year. The total value to the Belfast economy is estimated to be £15,761,500pa.</p>
1.4	<p>The success of St George's has created its own pressures in terms of its infrastructure and operation. Additionally it has created new opportunities in terms of marketing and promoting the market to tourists and shoppers. To address these, Market Staff have been working very closely with the Traders Committee, traders and other departments across Council to deliver an Improvement Plan. The key issues section highlights some of the achievements so far.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>In association with the Market Traders Committee, two open meetings were held with casual and permanent traders. Approximately 160 traders attended these meetings. The issues and suggestions from the meetings were noted and an action plan to address them developed. Improvements that have already been made include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Introduction of loyalty points</u> Concerns had been raised by traders about the current approach to allocating casual stalls. These included people having to queue earlier to be sure of securing a stall. There was wide spread support for a loyalty point system. Loyalty points were introduced from 5 October 2012 and have been a great success. This has helped those loyal traders ensure they do not have to queue up from the night before to ensure they get a stall. 2. <u>Recycling</u> Market Officers worked closely with BCC Waste Management section to seek ways to improve recycling. Different types of collections were arranged including a 'dry waste collection' which took the compactor waste to a transfer site and recyclable waste removed. This started in May 2012 and has seen an increase in waste recycled. In May we recycled 75%. In June this increased to 80% (14,710kg of waste collected and 11,768kg was recycled). In July the percentage was maintained at 80% with a slight reduction in total actual waste (13,200kg collected and 10,560kg recycled). St George's Market has seen a great increase in recycling rate. There has also been a food waste collection introduced and markets officers continue to work closely with BCC Waste management in increasing recycling. 3. <u>Increase the speed of allocating stalls</u> A new electronic process has been introduced to quicken the allocation of stalls to new permanent traders. The response time has been shortened from 1 week to 3 days. This gets vacant stalls filled more quickly and the opportunity for new traders to begin earlier. 4. <u>Toilet Refurbishment</u> Due to age and usage of toilets in St George's it is essential that the toilets needed to be upgraded/refurbished. Initial discussions have taken place with BCC Projects and Assets Building Services Unit who are currently finalising the specification for the toilet blocks. After discussions with Environmental Health Food Safety Unit there will also be an area where traders can obtain fresh hot and cold water and facilities for washing utensils and equipment. 5. <u>St George's Market on Tour</u> BCC played a leading role in negotiating with Moyle District Council for 38 traders from St George's to attend this year's Ballycastle Lamas Fair. This was the first time the traders have been "on tour" and it proved to be a great success and it is hoped that more traders will return next year. Opportunities to attend other events are being considered. As well as providing extra trading opportunities, these events also provide great publicity for St George's. 6. <u>Additional Issues Resolved</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An extra staff member was introduced on a Saturday morning to

	<p>assist with stall allocation, waste removal and other operational issues that may arise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A joint staff and trader working group was set up to look at future advertising, social media and a music policy. – The market has adopted the Real Deal programme. – A defibulator has been installed and market staff trained. – We are currently investigating the introduction of a free cash machine franchise. – Extra external directional signage to direct people to the market. – A new bay has been made, introducing an extra 11 permanent stalls on the Saturday market. <p>7. <u>Communication</u></p> <p>A number of new initiatives for better and more effective communication have been introduced they are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two separate out of hours meetings took place with permanent and casual traders. Both meetings were well attended with approx 60 attending the casual trader meeting and over 100 at the permanent traders meeting. Concerns were discussed at length, noted and verbal and written feedback was given. All the concerns have since been addressed through the action plan. – Monthly meetings between Council officers and traders committee. These provide an opportunity to discuss issues and work together to address them. At these meetings an agreed Markets action plan was agreed and updates are given on a monthly basis. – A new St George’s Market trader pack has been introduced. This pack includes a welcome letter from BCC and the National Markets Traders Federation (NMTF) traders committee. There is also information on how to apply for a permanent stall, the different categories of goods at each market day, payment details, what the minimum requirements are to trade at the market, example application forms and floor plans for each market day. This provides all of the essential information for new and existing traders. – With the Traders Committee we introduced a St George’s Market/Trader newsletter which goes out every 1 to 2 months, depending on issues that need to be relayed.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	There have been no significant resource implications and the work has been covered by the existing Market Unit budget

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the information contained in this report.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
BCC – Belfast City Council NMTF – National Markets Traders Federation	