



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	St George's Market Update
<b>Date:</b>	19 February 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	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.
1.2	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. It has also been used to complement conference exhibition space and events at the Waterfront.
1.3	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.
1.4	To enhance St George's during 2012 an improvement plan was developed in partnership with the Traders Committee and with input from traders themselves. The majority of recommendations from this plan have now been implemented (see the key issues section).
1.5	Unfortunately, the recent disruptions in the city centre have had a significant impact on traders. A delegation met with the Lord Mayor on Monday 11 February 2013 to discuss trader concerns. In addition, Council have been formally requested to approve an 8 week rent free holiday as a

	goodwill gesture due to business lost as a result of the disruptions.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>Many of the improvements introduced during 2012, in response to trader requirements, were delivered using existing staff time and resource. However, some of the improvements incurred additional expenditure, which had been budgeted for, primarily from the Council's building and maintenance budgets. The main areas are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upgrade of electrics and emergency lighting ~ £120,000</li> <li>- Refurbishment of toilets ~ £30,000 - £40,000 (started in Jan 2013)</li> <li>- New water heaters ~ £20,000 - £25,000</li> <li>- New mobile sinks ~ £3,000</li> </ul>
2.2	Estimated improvement costs for 2012 = £188,000
2.3	<p>Additional improvements introduced during 2012 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A loyalty points system has been implemented to avoid problems experienced by casual traders when trying to get a stall.</li> <li>- A shortened process time for the allocation of new permanent stalls.</li> <li>- Contacting people on the waiting list and removing those who are no longer interested.</li> <li>- An extra member of staff being taken on for Saturday mornings to, among other things, speed up the collection of rent.</li> <li>- Additional deep cleans and windows cleaning.</li> <li>- Servicing and repairing the air conditioning and windows as required.</li> <li>- Installing new recycling multi-bins and food waste bins. St George's Market has seen a great increase in recycling rate.</li> <li>- Launching ST George's on tour in Ballycastle. 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.</li> <li>- A cow was obtained for 'Cow Parade.'</li> <li>- Putting up new directional street signs to the market.</li> <li>- Setting up a mixed staff/trader/committee group to look at advertising, social media and music.</li> <li>- Putting in a new bay for Saturdays creating 11 additional stalls for trading.</li> <li>- A guide to trading in St George's has been produced and distributed to new traders (copies are available for existing traders).</li> <li>- Reminding Traders of permit conditions relating to trading hours, cleaning stalls and expanding beyond their allocated stall space.</li> <li>- Adopting the 'Real Deal' standard.</li> <li>- Acting on the results from the music survey and putting the required changes put in place.</li> <li>- Installing a defibrillator and market training staff.</li> <li>- Contacting the operators of a cash point franchise and investigating options.</li> <li>- Conducting a strategic level review of ST George's, which will look at whether we are using the building in the most effective way. A second stage of this review will look at detailed issues such as the layout of stalls within the market, how to improve the shopper's experience and how to best advertise St George's.</li> <li>- Introducing a number of new communication initiatives including:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two separate out of hours meetings took place with traders. Both meetings were well attended with approx 160 traders attending.</li> <li>- Monthly meetings between Council officers and the traders committee.</li> <li>- A new St George's Market trader information pack has been introduced. It provides essential information for new and existing traders.</li> <li>- Introducing a St George's Market Trader newsletter, with the Traders Committee. This goes out every 1 to 2 months, depending on issues that need to be relayed.</li> </ul>
2.4	<p>The traders Committee and Traders have highlighted several new issues that they would now like to be considered. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Rent Rebate or some additional free trading days (around Easter or St Patrick's) to compensate for the lost trade during the demonstrations. The cost of an 8 week rent free holiday has been calculated at £65,179.</li> <li>- A freeze on rent for 2013/2014 &amp; 2014/2015. Last year officers made a recommendation to increase stall rent by £1.00 from £13.00 up to £14.00 but Committee decided to hold rents at £13.00/stall. The last increase on rent was in 2010 when it increased by £1.00 per stall. It is not possible to calculate the exact total value of £1.00/stall as stall occupancy levels do vary. However, based on figures from previous years, £1.00/stall is approximately £25,030 per year.</li> <li>- Support to help restore shopper confidence and get them to come back to the market.</li> <li>- Ongoing support to increase footfall and spend at St George's.</li> <li>- Further work to improve communications and decision making between traders and staff.</li> </ul>
2.5	<p>Members may wish to note that we have also received requests both verbal and in writing from the tenants at Smithfield Market. They have asked for a rent reduction and/or other financial assistance because of the recent disruptions. While the rent at Smithfield is agreed by Strategic Policy &amp; Resource Committee, Members should be aware that any decision made about St George's may set a precedent and create an expectation for further rebates elsewhere.</p>
2.6	<p>As mentioned previously, work is already in hand to undertake a detailed review of St George's in terms of what can be changed to enhance the 'shopper experience' and increase footfall. In the short term, St George's is included in the 'Backin' Belfast' campaign. The main specific activities are shown below which comprise a partnership approach between BCC and the Traders Committee:</p> <p><u>February</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sat/Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> - 10% off- nearly every trader's stall is carrying a poster saying "We are Backin' Belfast with 10% off at the stalls." A lot of the traders are also wearing the Backin' Belfast tee shirts.</li> <li>- Sat/Sun 9<sup>th</sup> &amp; 10<sup>th</sup>- 14<sup>th</sup> Valentine's Day- traders will decorate parts of the market with balloons etc and dress some stalls. (As part of this some Belfast Castle staff will be in attendance this weekend to promote the Castle and Malone House as wedding/hire venues)</li> <li>- Sat/Sun 16<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup> - Prizes under your seat- traders are going to run a 'spot prize' competition and will be giving out some prizes on the Saturday and Sunday. There will also be a cookery demonstration of Chinese food as part of CWA New Year Celebrations.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sat/Sun 23<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 24<sup>th</sup> - Family Weekend- one of St George’s Market traders will provide free face painting. There will also be a hamper as a prize (the goods will be donated by traders). In addition to live entertainment, BCC will put on other types on animation, as part of the ‘Backin’ Belfast’ campaign.</li> </ul> <p><u>March</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sat/Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> &amp; 3<sup>rd</sup> - Cook Off- BCC aim to get one of our local celebrity chefs to have a cookery demonstration with one of the St George’s market trader chefs.</li> <li>– Sat/Sun 9<sup>th</sup> &amp; 10<sup>th</sup> - 10th Mother’s Day - “Bring your Mum to the Market” - Part of this programme is to include ‘a day of pampering with some local businesses taking part, offering booking for manicures, pedicures, etc. There will be some free flowers, mother’s portraits etc at a reasonable price plus a jazz singer.</li> <li>– Sat &amp; Sun 16<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup> - St Patricks Day– BCC will provide a Ceili Band, Irish Dancers and Ulster Scots music over the 2 days. The traders will decorate parts of the market and their stalls.</li> <li>– Sat &amp; Sun 23<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 24<sup>th</sup> - 10% Off plus Prizes under your seat. Continuing to support the ‘We are Backin’ Belfast campaign with 10% off’ at the participating stalls. Traders also hope to run another ‘spot prize’ competition and give out some prizes on the Saturday and Sunday.</li> <li>– Sat &amp; Sun 30<sup>th</sup> &amp; 31<sup>st</sup> - Easter Weekend – subject to market opening on the Sunday. (A Survey will determine interest). On the Saturday traders will decorate the market and have an Easter bunny. BCC will look at ways it can try and enhance the Easter bunny celebrations.</li> </ul>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The additional activities will be paid for out of the existing marketing budget for St George’s and the ‘Backin’ Belfast’ programme.
3.2	The cost of an 8 week rent free holiday is approximately £65,179.
3.3	The cost of a £1/stall freeze on rent for 2013/2014 & 2014/2015 is approximately £25,030 per year.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to consider the traders’ requests for an 8 week rent free holiday and/or their request for a rent freeze and for Members to agree the preferred way forward.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BCC – Belfast City Council NMTF – National Markets Traders Federation	

