



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	St George's Market Strategic Review
<b>Date:</b>	14 January 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	St. George's Market provides a place to trade and grow for over 170 small businesses, including 6 shop units and a restaurant. It supports around 385 jobs and welcomes approximately 600,000 visitors each year. The total value to the Belfast economy is estimated to be approximately £15m p.a.
1.2	The environment that St. George's market operates within has changed considerably in recent years. New office accommodation and facilities have been developed, additional trading days have been introduced and the Waterfront is due to be expanded. This has increased natural footfall in the area.
1.3	In response, 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. Improvements included:
1.4	<u>Operational</u> - reducing the time needed for the allocation of permanent stalls; a loyalty points system to avoid problems experienced by casual trader; a storage policy; and reducing the time needed for the collection of rent.
1.5	<u>Capital</u> – a number of upgrades have been made including upgrading the electrics and renovating the toilets.
1.6	<u>Marketing</u> - Launching St. George's on tour; erecting new directional street signs; adopting the 'Real Deal' standard; and updating the buildings external signage.

1.7	<u>Communications</u> – Three major out-of-hours meetings with traders; questionnaire/surveys on key issues; monthly meetings with the traders committee; and introducing a St George’s Market Trader newsletter.
1.8	<u>Other</u> - Installing new recycling and food waste bins; producing a guide to trading in St. George’s; installing a defibrillator and training market staff; and social media training for traders.
1.9	Our work with traders also identified a need for improving the shopping experience in the market so as to increase footfall, and hence spend, and also to make St. George’s an even more appealing attraction for tourists. Members will be aware that Committee approved an independent review of St. George’s to establish how this could be achieved.
1.10	Deloitte were appointed to undertake the major part of the review and they have been developing options in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marketing and branding of the market.</li> <li>- Market facilities.</li> <li>- Achieving the right balance of categories of stalls/products.</li> <li>- The effect of the layout of stalls within the market and how the layout could be improved.</li> <li>- Associated operational issues and impacts.</li> </ul>

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Deloitte have completed their review of St George’s Market. The review involved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- significant desk based research;</li> <li>- two major workshops with approximately 120 traders plus three meetings with the Traders’ Committee and Council staff;</li> <li>- completion of approximately 485 questionnaires from shoppers and traders;</li> <li>- research into good practice at other markets including Leeds, Newcastle, Leicester, Bury, Spitalfields and Borough; and</li> <li>- a special meeting with Development Committee Members on 8 October.</li> </ul>
2.2	Their research and analysis has revealed a number of conclusions with regard to how we could improve St George’s Market. The overall headline conclusions are that St George’s is an asset for Belfast that is successful and enjoyed by both locals and visitors. Therefore any improvements will be working from a strong starting position. Additionally, the market provides a good deal for traders but its potential is not fully realised.
2.3	Specific conclusions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A good market layout will encourage shoppers to spend longer in the market and to buy more. Factors contributing to a good layout include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Creating zones of certain types of products.</li> <li>o Colours or names for different areas of the market and clearly defined aisles should be employed to help shoppers find their way around the market.</li> <li>o There should be reserved space for leisure, entertainment, demonstrations, and hospitality type activities.</li> <li>o External space (such as stalls on the pavement) can be used to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>draw attention to the main market. There is scope to develop the space around the market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shoppers valued the quality and variety of food and the recreational and atmospheric elements of the market. This is different to what Traders supposed as they believed shoppers valued price as the most important aspect and that market improvements should focus on signage and marketing.</li> <li>- A significant portion of shoppers (24%) do not buy while in the market despite staying for a reasonable length of time. There is scope for traders to encourage those shoppers, who already visit, to spend more money.</li> <li>- There is some support among traders and shoppers to make adjustment to opening hours and trial an additional trading day.</li> <li>- The market is highly rated by customers. 65% rated it as very good and 28% said it was quite good. Only 1% said it was poor.</li> <li>- Most people surveyed felt that the Council should pay for any improvements though they did not think Council rates should be increased. There was some support from traders (57%) who said they may be willing to pay an increase in stall rental to fund market improvements. The average suggestion was for an extra £2/day per stall.</li> </ul>
2.4	Based on their conclusions Deloitte have developed a range of options and recommendations that will increase the appeal of St. George's to tourists and shoppers and so increase footfall. This in turn increases the potential for profit for the businesses within the market and ultimately supports employment opportunities. Over the longer term, enhancements to St. George's should help to support redevelopment in the area more generally. For the Council, this creates the potential for increased rental and rates income.
2.5	Deloitte will present a report of their recommendations in February.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Estimated costs will be included within Deloitte's report to Committee.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No equality or good relations issues have been identified through the consultation process.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to note this report and ask Deloitte to attend the next meeting of Committee in February where they will present their recommendations for St George's.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	February 2014
	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay