



<b>Subject:</b>	St George's Market update
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 31 July 2020
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lisa Toland, Senior Manager, Economy

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Some time in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The financial implications of any decisions to waive the stall fees for market stall holders at St. George's Market</li><li>• The ongoing work between the Markets Team and the Traders' Committee to assist with the economic recovery of the market.</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note the costs of waiving stall fees at St George's Market – based on figures for three and six month periods</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the ongoing work between the Traders' Committee and the Markets Management team to support the recovery of the market.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	At the July meeting of Council, members agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th June, under the heading "Recovery Programme", be amended in relation to the decision not to waive the stall fees for market stall holders at St. George's Market.
3.2	Members asked that a report be brought back on the cost of waiving the stall fees for market stall holders at St George's Market and to enter into discussions with the stall holders around their proposals to assist with the economic recovery of the market. They also agreed that the Council should invite a deputation of Market Stall Traders to discuss the issue at the next Committee.
3.3	Both Smithfield Market and St George's Market closed to the public due to COVID-19 on 22 and 23 March 2020 respectively. In line with NI Executive guidance, both markets have since re-opened, with St George's Market re-opening to the public on 3 July 2020. In preparation for re-opening, officers developed mobilisation plans and risk assessments, These took into consideration a number of factors to ensure the safety of staff, traders and customers and critically to give assurances to the public that the markets are safe buildings to enter. This includes arrangements to manage social distancing in open areas, engagement with traders to support them in ensuring compliance within their stalls and provision of additional equipment such as hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers as well as signage and messages to provide appropriate levels of assurance to the public. Staff also developed guidance for traders and customers and worked with the Facilities team to ensure that social distancing can be maintained within staff and office areas.
3.4	<p>Engagement with the National Market Traders' (NMTF) Committee was central to informing decisions around the operational elements of the re-opening of the market. This included discussions on the reduced level of capacity and how this could be managed; revised layouts to manage social distancing and changes to opening hours. Some of the key operational decisions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in the number of stalls: at a standard weekend market, St George's can accommodate up to around 200 stalls each day. The pre-COVID19 occupancy rates were 225 stalls on Friday, 189 on Saturday and 186 on Sunday. Taking account of</li> </ul>

social distancing measures, 84 stalls have currently been provided on the market floor

- Changes to opening hours: initial operating hours for each day were agreed as 10am to 3pm (note: current operating hours are: 6am-3pm on Friday; 9am to 3pm on Saturday and 10am to 4pm on Sunday). These mirror the reduced opening times in many retail units across the city centre
- Managing the movement of visitors: based on input from the council's Corporate Health and Safety Unit (CHSU), a one-way operating system was put in place, with limited points of access and egress. Additional staffing, security and cleaning cover was put in place to provide additional levels of assurance to the public. No seating areas have been provided for customers at this point.

3.5 It was agreed with NMTF that these decisions would be kept under regular review once the market was open. Any changes would be dependent on ensuring compliance with relevant NI Executive guidance and would be conditional on working within agreed financial projections.

3.6 In advance of the market opening in July 2020, the traders asked the council to provide an exemption period of six months from the payment of stall fees (currently £25 per stall for hot foot traders and £16 per stall for all other traders). St George's Market had budgeted for a small surplus (around £31,000) for the 20/21 financial year. Taking account of the loss of income during lockdown, the additional overheads required to operate the market post-COVID (in particular additional security and cleaning costs) and the reduction in income as a result of the social distancing constraints, the re-opening of the market will have significant financial implications for the council, with additional costs estimated at £346,150. A six month stallage freeze would result in a total cost to Council of £550,408 which is an increase of £204,258 against the operating budget of £346,150 agreed at CMT in June 2020. A three month stallage freeze would result in a total cost to Council of £440,408 which is an increase of £94,258 against the operating budget of £346,150 agreed at CMT in June 2020.

3.7 Since the re-opening of the market, the NMTF Committee continues to work with the Markets Management Team to support the recovery of the market. In line with the rest of the city centre, footfall levels in the market are currently around 30% of the numbers in previous years. It is important to note that the market has only been open for three weekends up to this point and that, week on week, visitor numbers have increased incrementally. These are

	<p>consistent with figures that have been monitored across the rest of the city centre – where retail units were open a number of weeks ahead of the market.</p>
3.8	<p>It is also important to note that the Committee and the Markets Management are working on plans to enhance the market, with new seating areas being introduced in the coming weeks (with additional management and cleansing regimes being put in place) and proposals for some animation and music to be re-introduced, once the regulations permit. There is also a phased plan to increase the number of stalls in the market once the social distancing guidelines are revisited. While indicative dates for these developments are in place, it is impossible to confirm these at this point, due to ongoing changes to guidelines and concerns about the possible need for additional restrictions at some point. There have also been negotiations around a revision to the initially-agreed opening hours, subject to support from all market traders.</p>
	<p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p>
3.9	<p>St George’s Market had budgeted to make a small surplus of £31,311 in this financial year. Taking account of the loss of income during lockdown, the additional overheads required to operate the market post-COVID (in particular additional security and cleaning costs) and the reduction in income as a result of the social distancing constraints, the re-opening of the market will have significant financial implications for the council, with increased costs estimated at £346,150.</p>
3.10	<p>A six month stallage freeze from 1 August 2020 would result in a total cost to Council of £550,408 which is an increase of £204,258 against the operating budget of £346,150 agreed at CMT in June 2020. There is currently no provision in any departmental budget to cover these increased costs and will increase the forecast corporate deficit by this amount.</p>
3.11	<p>If a three month stall fee holiday was to be applied, from 1 August 2020, the cost to Council will increase by an additional £94,258 to £440,408. There is currently no provision in any departmental budget to cover these increased costs and will increase the forecast corporate deficit by this amount.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>  No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None