

WARDS: ST BARTHOLOMEW, ST JOHN & ALL SAINTS AND ST MICHAELS

CABINET

7 DECEMBER 2011

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

25 JANUARY 2012

WINCHESTER MARKET UPDATE

REPORT OF HEAD OF ESTATES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[CAB 2100](#) - Management of Winchester Market - 9 February 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report reviews the first seven months of operation of the Markets in the High Street, notes the significant increase in the numbers of traders booking stalls in the Markets, and recommends some adjustments to take account of a number operational issues which have arisen during the initial period of operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the Market Manager be thanked for achieving a rapid improvement in the numbers of traders attending the Winchester Markets.
- 2 That the BID be thanked for their feedback on the Market.
- 3 That the number of stalls on the section of High Street between Marks & Spencer and Laura Ashley be reduced from a maximum of 20 to 14 with immediate effect, to improve the visibility of the adjoining shops and to facilitate the pedestrian flow during busy periods.
- 4 That the trial siting of up to six stalls above the Buttercross during the

Christmas period be reviewed early in the New Year before deciding whether to make this a permanent feature.

- 5 That further consultations be held with the BID, retailers, market traders and the Market Manager over the potential to develop a themed approach to the range of stalls in the High Street on certain days. (Saturday would remain a general market, albeit the Market Manager would, as now, continue to locate individual retailers where he thinks most appropriate.)
- 6 That the above consultation include consideration of reducing the number of days the market is held in the pedestrianised section of the High Street, for example by, ending the Thursday Market, subject to consideration of any impact on the overall success of the Market.
- 7 That only traders offering high quality products and standards of service be licensed to trade on the pedestrianised section of the High Street, and that issues of what constitutes high quality products and service be determined by the Head of Estates.
- 8 That a professional survey of residents and market users be commissioned into perceptions of the Market, to be used in connection with a further review of the Market to be presented to Cabinet in March.
- 9 That standards for the dress of stall holders trading on the weekday and Saturday markets on the High Street be agreed by the Head of Estates with the Market Manager and implemented from March 2012 to allow time for discussion with traders.
- 10 That if (as expected) the Awards System introduced by the Food Standards Agency for the management of food hygiene is extended to markets and street vendors, the implications of its implementation be considered with the Environmental Health Team and traders and that it be adopted as soon as practicable.
- 11 That monthly meetings take place between officers of the Council and the BID to ensure regular and clear communications as these recommendations are implemented.
- 12 A further report on the Markets be brought to Cabinet in March 2012.
- 13 That the report be referred to the Winchester Town Forum for their consideration as to whether they wish to raise any issues with the Leader or Cabinet.

CABINET7 DECEMBER 2011WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM25 JANUARY 2012WINCHESTER MARKET UPDATEREPORT OF HEAD OF ESTATESDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9 February 2011 Cabinet considered a report on the future of the traditional Winchester Markets. The report noted that the Market had seen year on year decline for the previous four years, that the Thursday Market was no longer cost effective to operate and that consideration would be given to its future. The report authorised the Head of Estates to enter into a one year incentive-based management agreement with SMTC.
- 1.2 Members will be aware of events that are impacting on national economies throughout Europe and it is worth noting the statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) relating to the British economy in October 2011.
- 1.3 The ONS figures demonstrate that the economy has suffered its greatest contraction since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Household spending has reportedly fallen to its lowest levels for almost a decade, with consumers spending £620 million less on food during the three months to June, the lowest quarterly figure since the spring of 2002. The total spent on living expenses such as holidays, clothing, eating out and entertaining fell by £1.6 billion in the second quarter.
- 1.4 Major national retailers, including Tesco, John Lewis and Dixons, have reported marked falls in turnover. During this period company failures have reached a two year high. In the three months to September, liquidations rose to 4,242, up 6.5% compared to the previous year.
- 1.5 Winchester is surviving the recession better than many towns, and demand for retail floor space remains positive, with only four empty shop units available in the High Street in November. Recent footfall figures produced by the BID for The Square and the Lower High Street were as follows:-

The Square

Month	Total	Month	Total	Variance
Apr-10	50,269	Apr-11	52,691	4.82%
May-10	50,039	May-11	49,303	-1.47%
Jun-10	51,289	Jun-11	48,005	-6.40%
Jul-10	62,162	Jul-11	62,040	-0.20%
Aug-10	56,910	Aug-11	55,694	-2.14%

Lower High Street

Month	Total	Month	Total	Variance
Apr-10	370,199	Apr-11	410,020	10.76%
May-10	428,662	May-11	430,853	0.51%
Jun-10	418,480	Jun-11	433,453	3.58%
Jul-10	506,938	Jul-11	496,226	-2.11%
Aug-10	477,090	Aug-11	425,518	-10.81%

- 1.6 The City has a long history of operating markets. Traditionally towns grew up around their markets, and to be successful a street market has to be located either in a traditional market square or in the main high street. If markets are not located in the main pedestrian footfall they are seldom successful, and it must be remembered that Winchester Market declined when it was situated in Middle Brook Street alone.
- 1.7 The footfall in Winchester follows very clearly defined patterns which can be observed very quickly. The main flow of pedestrians is up and down the pedestrianised section of the High Street. The section which is still open to traffic from Maison Blanc to Sainsbury's forms a barrier to the continuation of the pedestrian foot fall in the City. Considerably smaller numbers of pedestrians visit this section of the street compared to the pedestrianised area. Although The Square is situated parallel to the High Street and has many high quality shops, the numbers of visitors is only around 12% of the numbers that visit the High Street. Middle Brook Street, despite the attraction of The Brooks Shopping Centre and the convenience of the surface car park, also attracts considerably fewer pedestrians than the pedestrianised High Street.
- 1.8 Following a trial in December 2010, the Market was introduced to the High Street in May. The footfall figures for the lower High Street show increases in May and June over the same period in 2010. Footfall declined in July and August, coinciding with the impact on retail sales reported across the country

by a range of businesses, including nationally significant quality retailers, who reported significant falls in turnover during August. Many retailers ran significant sales promotions during the month as a result.

- 1.9 Footfall data from Chichester shows a reduction in footfall in that City of 5.15% between July and August, while the annual trend for regional cities showed falls in August 2010 of 5.4% and 4.1% for August 2009. Footfall data for Southampton is counted annually in June over two days. The data for 2011 showed a 6% increase on the Friday and an 8% decline on the Saturday, an overall reduction of two percent. Data from Salisbury shows that footfall fell month on month from January to July where there was a fall of 6.2%. In August there was an increase of 3.9% in visitor numbers over the previous year.
- 1.10 Locally, jewellery retailer Zoo reported a fall in trade during August, and the Winchester Business Improvement District (BID) has reported that a number of national chains disclosed that sales rose in May but fell in June. Despite requests for data from retailers, little evidence has been provided to suggest that the Markets have had an impact on the trade at the adjacent retail premises. It is likely that many retailers have seen a fall in sales, but this can as reasonably be attributed to the state of the economy nationally as to the impact of the Markets. Again anecdotally, traders in food establishments/cafes have reported increased sales, but again it is not possible to state categorically that this is as a result of the Markets.

The BID Perspective

- 1.11 In June, the BID wrote to members of the partnership raising concerns about the Markets including: and raising the following issues:
- The quality of the products being sold ; there were some exceptions where a high quality range of local foodstuffs and artefacts were being sold
 - Stall holders benefiting from trading in Winchester without apparently paying NNDR or BID levy contributions
 - The apparent desire by the City Council to generate income rather than to support the wellbeing of the year-round business community
 - Concerns about power cables, access to shops, rubbish disposal and disability access
 - The impact on The Brooks and other retailers in Middle Brook Street without the added attraction of a resident Market
 - The impact of the Market on the branding of the City as an elegant and distinctive visitor destination

- Concerns that although footfall had increased (in the High Street) it was not converting into increased revenue for existing retailers.

1.12 In July, the BID wrote to the Council setting out a number of observations regarding the Market. These included a mix of positive comments, such as:

- People are in favour of the market
- The increase in footfall is noticeable
- We can celebrate that which we have
- We should join up the market to different local businesses.

There were also negative comments about:

- The need for more planning and communication
- A loss of footfall in Middle Brook Street
- The regularity of pressure on the same shops on four days each week
- General congestion.

1.13 In August a meeting was held between officers and a BID working group to discuss the growth of the Markets. The key findings of this were:

- Concerns relating to the number of stalls on the High Street
- The proximity of the stalls to the adjacent shops
- Having markets in the City Centre five days a week
- The quality of the products being sold
- Issues relating to deliveries to the shops.

1.14 The meeting noted that some shops had been given more space, but was of the view that a reduction in stalls would be beneficial. The possibility of moving stalls up the High Street was discussed to enable a reduction to 14 stalls. It was noted that consultation would need to be held with the nearby retailers.

1.15 The minutes noted that the working group were very keen to explore the potential relocation of a small number of stalls to the top end of the High Street and there was a strong sense that BID members further up the street might be very supportive. Some retailers at the top end of the High Street had

already signalled that they might be interested, and that might encourage circulation to the upper High Street and along Southgate Street.

1.16 In November, the BID wrote that:

- They were opposed to any market stalls on the High Street, preferring them all to be sited on Middle Brook Street and in the Silver Hill area when it was complete, and
- Requesting a reduction in the number of stalls on the High Street, and a reduction in the number of market days.

1.17 The Market Manager has sought to address the practical concerns raised by the BID members as fully as possible. In this respect the following has already been undertaken:

- In consultation with the Fire Officer, stalls have been moved further toward the centre of the street, allowing a standard width pavement area between the shops and stalls
- The stalls trade on both sides, except in the Broadway where there are safety reasons for allowing trade from the pavement side only
- Spaces have been left in front of Hobbs, Laura Ashley, Thorntons and Superdrug
- Arrangements have been made with retailers for deliveries of stock
- Traders are encouraged to set up and take down stalls as quickly as possible
- Markets have ended early on days with major events in the town, e.g. Bonfire Night procession and the switching on of the Christmas lights
- Stalls are made available for BID use at events
- Stalls are now being provided in large numbers in Middle Brook Street as more traders have been attracted due to the overall success of the Market. Management of The Brooks Shopping Centre are pleased with this development
- The Wednesday Market offers high quality food, and one Sunday a month the Arts Market is attracting an average of 70 artists as stall holders.
- 60% of weekly market traders are residents of Hampshire

- Consultation with shop managers in the upper High St demonstrated support for trial of market in that location for the Christmas period
- The quality of traders is continuously reviewed. Those stalls not meeting desired standards for the High Street are moved to alternative locations or leave.
- Consultation with local Fire and Police officers about safety issues

It is also worth noting that contributions for both NNDR and the BID levy are made from the Market.

Market Success

- 1.18 The Market has been a huge success compared to when it was sited in Middle Brook Street alone. Many more stalls have traded than was ever achieved before. The monthly Sunday Antiques and Retro Market began in June and has rapidly established itself. Set out below are the take-up details for this new venture.

June	29 Traders
July	45 Traders
August	52 Traders
September	62 Traders
October	61 Traders

- 1.19 Markets have attracted considerable trade and there is a waiting list for pitches. Currently the Markets are providing employment for the following numbers of people each week:

Wednesday	26
Thursday	27
Friday	41
Saturday	48
Art Market (Monthly)	70

- 1.20 Food traders operating in the High Street who previously attended the trial food market held in Middle Brook Street have reported that they were unable

to sustain a business in the latter location, but are now trading successfully in the pedestrianised area.

Public Comments

- 1.21 There have been some letters from traders and members of the public commenting on the Market. Concerns relate to the impact of stalls on a number of shops in the High Street and in The Square. Practical issues, such as a desire on the part of retailers to keep the frontage of their premises clear, have been addressed as far as is possible. Concerns relating to the impact of Market trade on shops have been explored, and in one case a trader was removed from the Market because the crowds the stall attracted were considered to have a detrimental impact on access to the adjacent shop. One local retailer has written to confirm that they have taken a stall on the Market and that it has been beneficial for trade.
- 1.22 Some members of the public have written in expressing concerns about the Market. A few letters have praised the operation of the Market, but the majority have raised concerns about the impact on accessibility, particularly for older people, those with disabilities and those with young children in pushchairs. A few people do not like having a Market in the main High Street. One person has written in complaining about the fruit & vegetable stall calling out the availability of products. Others have raised concerns about the quality of some of the products on sale and whether they are suitable for the High Street.

Proposed Actions.

- 1.23 The Christmas shopping period is extremely busy in the City and it is considered appropriate to use the opportunity to carry out some re-structuring of the Market layout, to take account of a number of the issues raised over the last seven months of operation. Actions proposed are as follows:
- Permanently reducing the number of stalls in the stretch between Laura Ashley and Marks & Spencer from a maximum of 20 to no more than 14 with immediate effect. This will help deal with congestion.
 - Locating up to six stalls in the paved area to the west of the Buttercross with immediate effect. The Market Manager would be asked to group together stalls with a coherent offer. This arrangement will be subject to a review after Christmas in the light of experience.
 - Only traders offering high quality products and standards of service to be allowed to trade in the High Street. Issues of what constitutes high quality products and service are to be determined by the Head of Estates.

- Standards for the dress of stall holders trading on the weekday and Saturday Markets on the High Street to be agreed by the Head of Estates with the Market Manager and implemented from March 2012, to allow time for agreement to be reached with traders.
- If (as expected) the Awards System introduced by the Food Standards Agency for the management of food hygiene is extended to markets and street vendors, the implications of its implementation be considered with the Environmental Health Team and traders, and be adopted as soon as is practicable.
- A professional survey to be commissioned into perceptions of the market, to inform a further review of the Markets in time for a report to Cabinet in March.
- Monthly meetings to be established between officers of the BID and the Council to discuss latest feedback and developments relating to the Markets.

1.24 These actions will allow for the continued fine tuning of the Market offer, and should meet many of the concerns raised by retailers and members of the public. The Leader also proposes a consultation with the BID, the shop traders adjoining the Market, the Market traders and Manager and through the survey the public, over whether the following more extensive action might be considered with the Market. This might include:

- Reducing the number of days which the Market trades on the pedestrianised section of the High Street, for example by, ending the Thursday Market. On the one hand this may help address concerns about perceptions of excessive use of the High Street, although it could also have an impact on the success of the Market.
- Developing a 'themed' approach to the range of stalls present in the High Street on certain days, for example building on the quality food theme that Wednesday already offers. Saturday would remain a general market, albeit the Market Manager would, as now, continue to locate individual retailers where he thinks most appropriate.

1.25 It is suggested that the proposals contained in paragraph 1.23 be given three months to develop, and that the Market be subject to a further report to Cabinet in March. This will be based on evidence rather than anecdote, as far as possible, take account of the economic circumstances prevailing at the time and also the outcome of the consultation.

1.26 When the market stalls were first brought into the High Street the aim was to revitalise the flagging market in Middle Brook Street, as well as provide some additional colour and vibrancy to the Winchester experience. The fortunes of the Market have certainly been turned around, with increased footfall and traders keen to secure pitches. Winchester has been an historic home to

markets over many years, and a market presence in the High Street is a positive step for the Town. A return of the Market to Middle Brook Street alone is likely to result in a return to the decline that was seen in the previous four years trading.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 The Market meets objectives within the Active Communities and Prosperous Economy themes of the Community Strategy.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 The Market is managed on the Council's behalf by a contractor with assistance from Estates, Legal, Health and Access & Infrastructure teams. The current adjustments within the report will not have a significant budget impact. Any further changes arising from the consultation will be considered in the March report.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 The risk associated with the Market is that it has a detrimental impact on trade and visitor numbers. This can be monitored by reference to footfall counters and by reducing the numbers of stalls between Marks & Spencer and Laura Ashley, to improve visibility of the adjoining stores.
- 4.2 There is a risk that visitors may decline to visit the High Street due to concerns over the density of the stalls leaving insufficient space for pedestrians. This can be addressed by the proposal to move some stalls further up the High Street.
- 4.3 There is a risk that removing the stalls from the High Street back into Middle Brook Street will result in a return to a declining market, with reducing footfall and a large reduction in economic activity. This can be avoided by reaching agreement over the appropriate level of provision in the pedestrianised area of the High Street.
- 4.4 There is a risk that if precipitous action is taken with regard to the removal of stalls from the High Street that traders would object. This can be ameliorated by appropriate consultation with traders affected by any decision the Council made regarding the numbers of stalls and days to be traded in the pedestrianised section of the High Street.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Letters and correspondence held by Head of Estates

APPENDICES:

None