



REPORT TO:	CABINET
DATE:	27 th MARCH 2024
SUBJECT:	BOSTON MARKET UPDATE AND DEVELOPMENT/ACTION PLAN
PURPOSE:	TO PROVIDE A WORK PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITY DESIGNED TO SUPPORT SERVICE DELIVERY OF THE BOSTON MARKETS
KEY DECISION:	NO
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR DALE BROUGHTON – PORTFOLIO HOLDER TOWN CENTRES
REPORT OF:	PHIL PERRY – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEISURE & CULTURE
REPORT AUTHOR:	PHIL PERRY – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, LEISURE & CULTURE
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

This report seeks to provide an overview on how Boston's regular Wednesday and Saturday markets have been performing and it proposes actions for the further development of the service.

Markets were one of many industries that suffered during the COVID pandemic with only essential stalls allowed to stand. Since then markets across the country have adapted and tried to recover following the lifting of national restrictions.

The Council has an aim to move the Markets Service to a break even position and find savings year on year, and the Partnership Annual Delivery Plan includes two projects for the Boston Markets Service to undertake during the 2023/24 financial year. These are to review the Markets Policy and to undertake a review of the Markets Service, seeking to deliver savings, whilst also growing the Markets Service. The Council has also launched a Boston Town Centre Strategy, and the Development/Action Plan aims to support the strategy's aim to regenerate the town centre.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Consider the report and its appendices.
2. Agree the action plan.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable members to review, comment, and challenge the information presented.

So members are regularly informed of any changes and updates regarding the market.

The Boston Market service is an important Council asset which is managed within the Leisure and Culture Division of the Communities Directorate. The proposed action plan for Boston Market has been developed to support economic, efficient and effective service delivery

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To continue operating the service within current arrangements utilising the Council's generic policies and procedures for staff but without a tailored action plan to further assist the targeting of resources against strategic objectives.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Boston Borough Council has responsibility for a market that takes place twice a week (on a Wednesday and Saturday) in the Market Place. Markets are an important and historic part of Boston as a market town. Across the country, markets have faced many challenges over the years, including the rise of online and out of town shopping retailers, competition from unregulated car boot sales, as well as the recent COVID pandemic.
- 1.2 The new dedicated Market Manager has been in post since July 2022. The Manager has now had the time to grow into the role, establish positive relationships with traders and has started a full service review of both the Markets Policy and Markets service in line with the Partnership's Annual Delivery Plan.
- 1.3 The purpose of the market policy is to set out the matters the Council will take into account when considering and undertaking its duty to provide and manage its markets. It details the responsibilities of the Council in official guidance of the policy for the Council to act in a particular way and the expectation set of the traders. The Policy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.4 This report has been to Environment and Performance Committee on 13 February 2023, where the report was noted.

1.5 Current Operation and Market Stall Occupancy

1.4.1 Market Stalls are provided by a team of eight erectors. Seven of which are on ten hours per week contracts. One is on fourteen hours but also helps the markets officer for two hours on the morning of each market.

1.4.2 The current pitch fees are similar to other markets in the area. Boston regular traders pay **£22** per stall or **£1.50** per foot of frontage. While casual traders pay **£25** and **£2** per foot frontage.

Market	Regular Trader With stall	Casual Trader With stall	Regular Without Stall	Casual Without stall
Wisbech	No offer	No offer	£12 per 3m	£20 per 3m
Bourne	£21.60	£23.80	£18.40	£18.90
Grantham	£24.40	£27.70	£22.70	£23.80
Stamford	£28.10	£31.40	£24.90	£28.10
South Holland (Spalding, Holbeach, Long Sutton, Crowland)	N/A	N/A	£9 (£1.50 extra subsidy for Long Sutton)	N/A
Boston	£22	£25	£1.50 per foot Average 10ft(3m) stall £15	£2 per foot Average 10ft (3m) stall £20

1.6 Recent occupancy rates for Boston Markets are as follows:

2022/23

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Wednesday	70.2%	73.8%	74.6%	58.5%
Wednesday Green	51.4%	44.9%	45.8%	46.2%
Saturday	62.6%	59.7%	64.3%	54.7%

2023/24

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Wednesday	72.26%	63.2%	72%	
Wednesday Green	65.3%	58.3%	43%	
Saturday	63.2%	52.6%	64%	

2. REPORT

The Boston Markets have operated in its current format for over five years, and they now require both investment due to the current stalls coming to the end of their life cycle, and savings are needed to achieve a breakeven position. The service is therefore reviewing its operation. The Development/Action plan has written to achieve these outcomes and seeks to focus on: -

- Delivering modern traditional markets that are cost efficient delivering the best value for money.
- Delivering vibrant attractive markets that appeals to visitors and residents alike.
- Attracting new young traders.
- Increasing marketing activity.
- Working with the Council's Events Team and local partners to add value to markets with entertainment and events.

2.1 The action plan, as detailed in appendix 2, has been developed around four key objectives, each supporting a number of key strategic actions as referenced below:

Objective 1 – To deliver a sustainable Markets Service and become financially resilient

Objective 1 strategic actions under the, Sustainable & Financially Resilient theme, include:-

- To review delivery models
- To achieve efficiency savings
- To look for funding opportunities
- To review the Markets commissioning mechanism

Objective 2 – To deliver Modern Markets, improving both Infrastructure & Delivery

Objective 2 strategic actions under, A Modern Market – Infrastructure & Delivery theme, include:-

- Wednesday market restructure
- Review market stalls and Workforce requirements
- Introduce online/card payment systems

Objective 3 – The Boston Markets Service becoming known for its Specialist Markets and Events

Objective 3 strategic objectives within the theme, Known for Specialist Markets and Events, include:-

- To increase the number of specialist markets each year
- To work with partners to bring new activities and events to the markets
- To develop and improve the teenage markets

Objective 4 – The Markets Service is successfully Promoted and Well Marketed

Objective 4 strategic objectives within the theme, Adept at Promotion and Well Marketed, include:-

- To maximise promotion of the markets
- To continue to increase social media presence
- To develop the Boston Market UK brand

2.2 Actions with timescales have been developed to seek to deliver against the strategic objectives.

2.3 The draft plan is presented for consideration by Scrutiny, noting the importance of Scrutiny as part of the development of this document. It has been developed to date through engagement with the Portfolio Holder, Lead Officers and Partners and seeks to focus on: -

- Continuing to improve relations between the council and it's traders by involving them in the process.
- Competitive rents, happier traders and the potential to get more casuals with a reduced pitch fee offer.
- Boston's reputation should improve with its willingness to make improvements to the market, supporting traders and town centre.
- Developing on the opportunity for markets to thrive in our town. Markets are vital to our high streets, to offering local produce to our residents and supporting our local businesses to continue to grow and thrive. Markets can help to drive more people into our towns and create social hubs which are needed now, more than ever.
- A thriving market can only be good for the town. Increased footfall and more traders' benefits other shops in the town centre and money spent in the area.
- Sharing best practice across the three districts within the partnership will ensure all markets are sustainable.
- Boston market will continue to grow its identity across the borough.

2.4 Monitoring of the actions will be reported on a monthly basis to the Portfolio Holder Briefings, and quarterly to Members through the Council's performance monitoring processes.

The current lead officers to ensure delivery against the plan are:-

- Markets Manager
- Interim Cultural Services Manager
- Assistant Director for Leisure and Culture

3. CONCLUSION

3.1 The Boston Market Action Plan has been developed as a "live document" to be continually developed in order to support accountability within the service to strategically and operationally deliver what is required from this important borough asset.

3.2 The action plan has been developed to facilitate residents and visitors in deriving as much benefit as possible from Boston Market whilst achieving this through an approach that supports the most economic, efficient, effective working practices possible.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITS TO THE PARTNERSHIP

4.1 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 **SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS' PARTNERSHIP-** No key implications to be reported within this report. There is the opportunity to enhance the synergy between the market and events within the Partnership area which is to be further explored through the action plan.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

5.1 The proposed strategy aligns to the following Sub-Regional South and East Lincolnshire Council Partnership priorities:-

- Priority 1: Growth and Prosperity
- Priority 2: Healthy Lives
- Priority 3: Safe and Resilient Communities
- Priority 4: Environment
- Corporate Priority: Efficiency and Effectiveness

6. STAFFING

6.1 The action plan includes an action to seek to improve resilience in the service through a remodelling of staffing arrangements.

7. WORKFORCE CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The remodelling of staffing arrangements referenced in point 6.1 includes consideration of the capacity for the workforce to deliver the required service.

8. CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council's Markets are required to conform to the requirements of charters granted in 1308 for weekly Wednesday and Saturday markets, and 1545 through Boston's Charter of Incorporation

9. DATA PROTECTION

9.1 There are no specific data protection implications to report as a consequence of the development of the action plan. Where projects/actions relate to matters that have implications for data protection, the appropriate information governance safeguards will be considered and applied as appropriate.

10. FINANCIAL

10.1 The budget for 2023/24 is £148,031. Last year the service achieved income of £96,600.45 - including £21,620.85 of S113 money from South Holland District Council (SHDC).

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

11.1 There are no key risks to report as a consequence of the development of the action plan.

12. STAKEHOLDER / CONSULTATION / TIMESCALES

12.1 The action plan has been developed following engagement work with the Environment and Performance Committee, Portfolio Holder, Lead Officers and Partners.

13. REPUTATION

13.1 The action plan supports work to uphold the reputation of the Council by promoting an efficient and effective service that safeguards the appropriate use of the Boston Market for members of the public.

14. CONTRACTS

14.1 N/A

15. CRIME AND DISORDER

15.1 There are no key implications relating to crime and disorder as a consequence of this report.

16. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS/ SAFEGUARDING

16.1 An equality impact assessment will be provided to support the action plan.

17. HEALTH AND WELL BEING

17.1 There are no key implications with respect to Health and Well-Being to consider regarding the development of the action plan. The positive use of Boston Market by the public helps support matters relating to community cohesion and health and wellbeing.

18. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

18.1 There are no direct climate change and environmental implications.

19. LINKS TO 12 MISSIONS IN THE LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER

MISSIONS	
This paper contributes to the following Missions outlined in the Government’s Levelling Up White paper.	
Pride in Place	By 2030, pride in place, such as people’s satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
Wellbeing	By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

20. ACRONYMS

BBC – Boston Borough Council

SHDC – South Holland District Council

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Boston Markets Policy 2023

Appendix 2: The Draft Boston Market Action Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Yes

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Environment & Performance Committee Report 13 February 2023	BBC Website

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

This is the first publication of this report.

Name of body	Date

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	Ian Dunn, Markets Manager
Signed off by:	Phil Perry, AD – Leisure & Culture
Approved for publication:	John Leach, Deputy Chief Executive (Communities)