

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMITTEE

Date 14 March 2019

1. **REPORT TITLE** Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre Market
- Submitted by:** Markets & Regeneration Officer
- Portfolio:** Finance and Efficiency
- Ward(s) affected:** Town directly (and wider borough indirectly)

Purpose of the Report

To report to the Committee the responses to the market consultations.

Recommendations

- a) That Members consider the consultation responses.
- b) That the view of the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee members received at this meeting are reflected in the findings of the review of the town centre market.

Reasons

The Council is committed to improving the market as part of a wider package of support for the town centre. One of the first stages is to consult on what the members of the public and traders think of the market in order to influence the options available for improvements. Scrutiny Committee have asked to review the consultation responses as part of the market review.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 At its meeting of 7 November 2018 Cabinet considered a report on Newcastle market and resolved to undertake a review of its operation in cooperation and consultation with interested local parties. Work to complete the review is underway and two key elements of the consultation are now complete.
- 1.2 The first element was a consultation with the general public, which was conducted by the Council's Communications Team in co-operation with members of the Council's Market Team. This attempted to reach both people who shop on the market currently and also those who use the town centre but do not shop on the market. For those who shop on the market the consultation measured what was valued about the market and also what could be improved. For those who do not shop on the market it evaluated why this was the case and what might attract them as market shoppers. The full report is Annex 1 to this report.
- 1.3 The second element of the review was a consultation with market traders. This element was completed with the support of the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) who attended the market on a Friday and Saturday in February 2019 to conduct semi-structured interviews with a number of market traders. The report is Annex 2 to this report.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 To develop effective improvements to the market it is important that the Council considers the views of our customers and traders. The Customer consultation was actively promoted via a number of methods which included:
- I. The Council's website;
 - II. Social media;
 - III. Through Newcastle-under-Lyme Business Improvement District;
 - IV. Via QR codes which were displayed on the market and in reception at Castle House and Kidsgrove Customer Service Centre;
 - V. Distribution of paper copies of the survey by market traders and at the Guildhall.
- 2.2 287 customer questionnaires were submitted in the customer consultation period. Responses were received from every ward except for Talke and Butt Lane. A number of responses were also received from residents of Stoke on Trent. Whilst a number of the responses dealt with wider town centre issues the majority of responses concentrated on the market itself.
- 2.3 25 market traders took part in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were used to find out some background on the traders themselves, what it is like to trade on the market and then the opportunity for additional comments was given.
- 2.4 Key emerging themes are:
- i) That some of the general market days are valued more greatly than others and this may provide us with the opportunity to focus the trading days to those that are more popular.
 - ii) Whilst it is generally felt that the market is in the right location in town the stalls are too spread out and do not encourage a sense of enclosure and busyness that is generally associated with market shopping. This will give us the opportunity to consolidate the market over a temporary period to see how customers and traders respond to this.
 - iii) There is an appetite for themed or specialist markets in Newcastle town centre such as the artisan markets which have proved very popular and have encouraged new customers
 - iv) The need to better promote the market both to new market traders and to customers to the market. This may provide us with the opportunity to actively recruit new traders that complement existing ones to provide products and services currently not available such as street food, barbers, fabric, speciality foods such as cheese, homeware and IT services. We can build on past experience to promote the market through branded products such as sustainable bags and use this branding for other products to raise the profile of the market.
- These are described in more detail in the Annexes attached.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 If the town centre market is to be revitalised then officers will need to complete the review as proposed in the November 2018 Cabinet Report with a view to making recommendations on the future of market provision in Newcastle town centre.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 That Members endorse the Council's commitment to improve the markets and as part of this consider the consultation responses in the appendices.

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 To pursue the revitalisation of markets in Newcastle town centre it is appropriate that Scrutiny Members consider the consultation responses and make any other recommendations as part of the consultation stage of the market review.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

6.1 It is considered that the future success of markets in Newcastle town centre contributes to the following priorities in the Council Plan 2018-22.

- a) Local Services that Work for Local People
- b) A Town Centre for All

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

7.1 The Council has an ancient Charter right to operate a market within Newcastle but no Statutory obligation to run one. The ancient right is supported by provisions within Part III of the Food Act 1984.

7.2 The Council is not obliged to consult on the future of Newcastle market but it is in line with Council corporate priorities to do so in the interests of producing a locally responsive service.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

8.1 There is no identified equality issues as the review of the market is intended to seek an improvement of the service to all customers. It could be considered that by retaining a street market in Newcastle town centre the Council is retaining a highly accessible form of retail in the town centre.

8.2 The market consultation was widely promoted and open to all sections of the local community to respond to.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

9.1 The market review is being conducted using the existing resources of the Council including the Council's membership of NABMA.

9.2 It is appropriate to consider the financial and resource implications of the market review at a later stage as its findings and recommendations are developed.

10. **Major Risks**

10.1 The major risk at this stage is that if no action is taken to improve the performance of the town centre market then it will continue to face challenges and decline.

10.2 Any significant risks identified as a result of the market review will be recorded in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

11.1 Markets remain a sustainable retail option. In particular Newcastle market operates in a town centre location that is accessible by public transport and is within easy walking distance of a number of residential areas. The fresh produce on offer on the market uses less packaging than is commonly used by larger retailers and so offers consumers a less plastic intensive shopping option.

12. **Key Decision Information**

12.1 This is not a key decision item. The town centre market is in the Town Ward; however market customers will be drawn from a wider area of the Borough.

12.2 The market review is on the agreed reporting schedule for the Economy, Environment and Place Scrutiny Committee.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 7 November 2018

14. **List of Appendices**

14.1 Newcastle Market Survey

14.2 Newcastle under Lyme Trader Survey

15. **Background Papers**

15.1 None.