

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO CABINET**

**Cabinet**  
**17 October 2023**

**Report Title:** Future High Streets Fund – Improvements to the Market

**Submitted by:** Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery

**Portfolios:** Finance, Town Centres and Growth

**Ward(s) affected:** Town; All

**Purpose of the Report**

To seek the approval of Cabinet for proposed improvements to the market in Newcastle

**Recommendation**

That Cabinet:-

1. Approves the proposed Phase 1 improvements to the market in Newcastle
2. Authorises the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, to finalise detailed plans for the proposed Phase 2 improvements to the market in Newcastle and consult with traders
3. Authorises the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, to invite and award tenders for the works, up to the value of the available Future High Streets Funding of £396,851
4. Offers a free market to traders on Mondays to seek to boost trader numbers on this day

**Reasons**

To improve the appearance of the market stalls and public realm in the market area, to facilitate the ongoing success of specialist market events and the Antiques Forum Group market and create an opportunity for the general market to grow as demand increases.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Reinvigorating the historic market in Newcastle Town Centre has been a priority of the Council in recent years. It has created a Town Centre Officer role to support existing market traders and bring new and different market offers into the town. This has been promoted via social media and has helped to establish the successful Castle Artisan Market, Vegan Festival, Greyhound Gap and Record Fair specialist markets on Sundays throughout the year. The Antiques Forum Group, which has been operating for a number of years, has recently renewed the licence and is seeking opportunities to expand onto additional days.

Further work is in progress to gauge interest from other specialist market operators, building on the success of the specialist markets commissioned to date.

- 1.2 The Council has been successful in securing Future High Streets Funding from the government, with one of the projects in the programme being focused on improving the market stalls and public realm in Newcastle market.
- 1.3 Funding totalling £396,851 is allocated to the project, which must be spent by 31 March 2024.

## 2. **Issues**

2.1 Currently, there are 45 fixed market stalls, with 24 (including 5 smaller sized stalls outside the former W H Smiths store) in the upper market (north of Hassall Street) and 21 in the lower market (south of Hassall Street). 40 have an electricity supply (19 in upper market, 21 in lower market). The infrastructure for the market is generally good from a market trader perspective, but does not contribute positively to the “look and feel” of the town centre during periods when they are either wholly or partially unoccupied.:

- The stall canopies are aging and in need of replacement;
- The public realm in the lower market consists mainly of tarmac with no street furniture to provide interest or encourage dwell time.
- The market can look uninviting and sterile when the stalls are empty for much of the time.
- The empty stalls are also used as informal seats by groups and individuals, and can create the perception of anti-social behaviour at certain times. This is particularly prevalent on the 5 small stalls outside the former W H Smiths store.

2.2 In addressing these issues, consideration is given to the 3 main market types to consider:

2.3 **General Market** - operates on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Occupancy is currently at a level where traders opt to spread out between the upper and lower market, which creates a sub-optimal impression. The full array of 45 stalls are never occupied on these days. Consideration is being given to offering a free market for traders on Mondays to seek to boost numbers on this day.

2.4 **Antique Market** - operated under licence by the Antiques Forum Group (AFG) on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Occupancy varies seasonally but tends to be up to 100% during the summer months (45 stalls) falling to around 50% in winter (22 stalls). Tuesdays are the busier of the 2 days.

2.5 **Specialist Event Markets** – operating on 24 Sundays throughout the year, these markets have been successful in driving footfall to the town centre and creating an event atmosphere. The main provider is Castle Artisan Market (CAM) which holds 13 events each year. This is supplemented by Greyhound Gap (3 occasions), Vegan Festival (2 occasions) and Record Fair (6 occasions). CAM regularly exceeds 100% occupancy of the 45 fixed stalls and is supplemented by up to 15 (on average) temporary stalls. These markets regularly exceed the allocation of fixed stalls and are supplemented by temporary stalls either owned or hired in by the Council.

2.6 It can be seen then that the full array of fixed stalls are required for a minority of the time which the market is in operation, and given the issues set out in paragraph 2.1 the opportunity exists to improve the overall impact of the “look and feel” of the town centre by reducing the number of fixed stalls, improving the public realm freed up by their removal,

whilst ensuring the ongoing success of the market by maintaining the same number of trading pitches, using temporary stalls. This opportunity is expanded upon below.

### Proposed Improvements:

2.7 In order to address the issues set out in paragraph 2.1 it is proposed to make the following changes, which will be the subject of consultation with key market stakeholders.

2.8 Phase 1 – complete by November/December 2023:

- Remove 5 small fixed stalls from upper market outside the former W H Smiths store. These are the least frequently used stalls, and do not have electric connection supplied; they are dated and attract perceived anti-social behaviour related to people gathering and sitting on the stalls;
- Remove 13 fixed stalls from the lower high street area, retaining/relocating 8 fixed stalls in the Natwest Bank/Poundland vicinity;
- Replace the canopies on all 27 fixed stalls retained throughout the market;
- Purchase sufficient temporary stalls which can be made available to replace the fixed stalls which are being relocated;
- Install a Voucher Recycling Bin (Reverse Vending) in the area vacated by the 5 small stalls;
- Offer a free market on Mondays

2.9 This initial phase will facilitate the concentration of the market traders, improving the sense of vibrancy on all but the quietest days. The purchase of temporary stalls will ensure that at peak times there will be no reduction in the overall number of market pitches. The Voucher Recycling Bin is designed to be an incentive for people to recycle their waste and promote the retail businesses in the town centre.

2.10 Phase 2 – complete by March/April 2024 (see indicative plan at Appendix 1):

- Mark out temporary stall pitches which can be used to site temporary stalls.
- Create a central feature area with landscaping/planting in lower High Street;
- Improve the public realm in lower High Street, resurfacing part of the tarmac area in a coloured wearing course;
- Creating provision for 4 short stay (20/30 mins) “nipper” parking bays;
- Install a digital screen for advertising and screening events
- Installing street furniture in lower High Street.

2.11 The following costs are estimates only at this stage - to be confirmed following receipt of tenders/quotations

Item	Estimated Cost	Comments
Remove & relocate fixed stalls	£16,740	Quotation received
Purchase temporary stalls & ancillaries (c.30)	£45,000	Quotation received
Temporary pitch markings	£5,000	Estimate
Replace canopies (27)	£27,000	Quotation received
Performance space temporary structure	£5,000	Estimate

Resurfacing	£40,000	Estimate
Central lawn and planting	£60,000	Estimate
Kerbed setting for digital screen with landscaping	£5,000	Estimate
Street tree and grille	£2,000	Estimate
TRO and short stay car park marking out	£5,000	Estimate
Street furniture (seating and bollards)	£65,000	Estimate
Survey (topographical/utilities)	£5,000	Survey commissioned and received
Planning Application	£1,000	Estimate
Digital screen - contribution to total cost	£115,111	Balance funded from separate source
<b>Total FHSF</b>	<b>£396,851</b>	

2.12 Consultation with traders and specialist market operators, both current and potential future operators, is underway and will continue as the draft proposals are refined. When the proposals are approved, costs will need to be firmed up, and options for the erection and dismantling of temporary stalls confirmed. It is proposed that the improvement works are phased, with work to the upper market area taking place in the latter part of 2023, with works to the lower market programmed for January to March 2024.

### 3. **Proposal**

3.1 That Cabinet approves the proposed Phase 1 improvements to the market in Newcastle

3.2 Authorises the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, to finalise detailed plans for the proposed Phase 2 improvements to the market in Newcastle and consult with traders

3.3 That Cabinet authorises the Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Town Centres and Growth, to invite and award tenders for the works, up to the value of the available Future High Streets Funding of £396,851

3.4 That Cabinet offers a free market to traders on Mondays to seek to boost trader numbers on this day

### 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 To improve the appearance of the market stalls and public realm in the market area, to rationalise fixed stall provision, and to develop a new operating model which facilitates the ongoing success of specialist market events and the Antiques Fair Group market, and creates the opportunity for the general market to grow if demand increases.

### 5. **Options Considered**

5.1 A number of options were considered in developing the proposed option which is set out in section 2 of this report.

5.2 There is a do nothing option, which has been discounted as this would not deliver the Council's commitment to defray the Future High Streets Funding for market stall and public realm improvements.

## 6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Council is the operator of the market in Newcastle Town Centre and has the ability to make changes to the market infrastructure and operating model.

6.2 Planning permission is not required to remove the existing fixed market stalls, nor to put up temporary stalls. However, planning permission is required to relocate stalls to a new position, and for any permanent structure to accommodate outdoor screenings and advertising.

## 7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 There are not considered to be any adverse impacts on equality related to this report.

## 8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The Council has secured Future High Streets Funding of £396,851 for market stall and public realm improvements to Newcastle market.

8.2 There may be additional annual revenue cost for erection/dismantling of stalls in the future depending on the model arrived at through consultation. If this is the case, a separate report to Cabinet will address this issue.

## 9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The major risks relating to this report, and potential mitigation measures, are as follows:

- Risk of failing to defray FHSF by the stipulated deadline of 31 March 2024. This risk is being mitigated by developing a proposed option for delivery during 2023/24.
- Risk of a period of uncertainty for traders as new arrangements become established.

## 10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 The proposed improvements to the market stalls, public realm and operating model will contribute to goals 8, 9 and 11





11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This is a key decision as it entails the expenditure of £396,851 in external grant funding, additional revenue costs of up to £57,000, and impacts on a number of wards across the Borough, principally town ward. It has been included in the Forward Plan.

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 None.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 None.

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None.