

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION OF:	Cabinet
DATE:	13/05/20
SUBJECT:	Markets Task Force Report
REPORT FROM:	Cllr David Jones
CONTACT OFFICER:	Paul Lakin
TYPE OF DECISION:	NON KEY DECISION
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	
SUMMARY:	<p>The cross-party Markets Task Force has completed its work and generated its final report. The report is attached as an Appendix 1.</p> <p>The Report from Leeds University is now available and attached as Appendix 2.</p>
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>It is recommended the Cabinet endorse the work undertaken by the Task Group.</p> <p>It is then proposed that a subsequent report is generated containing the response to the short-term improvement proposals which works through the costs and implications of implementing the shorter-term recommendations for the next Cabinet meeting.</p> <p>We request Cabinets approval to release of £50k of the £100k from the Bury Master plan capital budget granted 2019/20. In order to progress this work-stream and generate a plan for the regeneration of the Wider Markets Area. This will include some externally commissioned design and feasibility work.</p> <p>It is recommended that Cabinet keep the cross party task group in situ to monitor and follow the progress of the actions on a quarterly basis.</p>

IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes No
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The request for £50,000 funding can be met from within the capital allocation that is included in the council's capital programme for Bury market.
Equality/Diversity implications:	No
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Comments The current Market Regulations, leases and licence arrangements will need to be reviewed in due course to take account of any changes resulting from carrying out these recommendations.
Wards Affected:	ALL
Scrutiny Interest:	

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Joint Executive Team/CCMT	Cabinet Member/Chair Briefed	Ward Members (if necessary)	Partners
10/3/20	Yes	Cllr McGill	
Scrutiny Committee	Other Committee	Council	Comms

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Bury Market is a major asset for the Borough and has underpinned the success of Bury Town Centre (the third most successful centre within GM). In 2019 Bury Market won National Association of Recording Merchandisers Best Markets Attraction Award and has won numerous other awards. However Bury Market, along with markets and town centres nationally has to face the challenges of on-line shopping along with changes to the types of stores on the High Street (who increasingly sell products traditionally sold on Markets). Since the report was completed in February 2020, the outbreak of COVID 19 has occurred and this is likely to have major ramifications going forwards, which could have a significant impact on the Market.

- 1.3 During 2019 the Council received representations from market traders at Bury Market about difficult trading conditions and the operation of the Market. These representations included requests for rent reductions.
- 1.3 Following discussions with Market traders, including the Bury Market Traders Association, the Council agreed to invest in physical improvements to the Market and to establish a cross party Task Group to identify options for the long term future of Bury Market.
- 1.4 The membership of the Task Group was:
- Cllr J Black (Chair)
Cllr S Wright
Cllr G McGill
Cllr Y Wright
- Cllr Jackie Harris will represent the Conservative Party going forward should the group continue.
- 1.5 It was agreed that the remit of the Task Group should include:
- To agree a strategy for Bury market to ensure that it remains at the heart of the town's retail experience for the next 20 years
 - To help create a vision for how the Market evolves to meet changing consumer tastes and preferences
 - To identify the investment opportunities that can secure the future of the Market
 - Identify how the Market can better connect to wealthier local residents who don't use it
 - Identify how the Market can change without alienating its existing customer base
- 1.6 To complete its work the Task Group has:-
- Engaged Bury Market Traders and other stakeholders in Bury Town Centre including
 - A workshop was held in July 2019 with one of the outcomes being a Member led task group.
 - All Traders were also invited to the first Task Group in October 2019 although only one Trader attended.
 - All Traders were also invited to the Task Group meeting on 20 November with 6 Traders attending
 - Taken evidence from experts in retail, market trading and place marketing. To do this the Task Group has worked with Leeds University who are undertaking a nationally funded research programme on Markets. Bury Market is one of three case studies to underpin their research. This has given the Task Group access to data and research which has created an evidence base. <https://trmcommunityvalue.leeds.ac.uk/>
- 1.7 The Task Group has received evidence on:-
- The operation of the market
 - Occupancy rates

- The level of rents, which have been frozen over the last three years
- Footfall associated with the Market and the importance of this to the town centre as a whole
- Customer demographics
- Parking charges
- The financial performance of the Market
- The perceptions and image of the Market
- The diversity of goods offered
- Bury Market as a tourist attraction and the impact of coach visitors on trade

1.8 The Task Group report was completed prior to the outbreak of coronavirus in the UK. The long-term impact this may have on venues such as outdoor markets will not be known for some time, however, it would be prudent to assume it is likely to increase the pressure on many market traders who perhaps were already struggling. For the purpose of completeness this report includes a summary of the actions the Council has taken to provide immediate relief from the forced shut down of the Market (these are included in Section 2.4)

2.0 ISSUES

2.1 The Task Group had a challenging job in assessing how best to balance a Market which still clearly resonates with a traditional audience whilst seeking to evolve the Market experience so it can engage with a wider and younger demographic.

2.2 The report notes a number of actions which can be taken as relatively short-term measures to improve what is already there and to also respond to some particular challenges noted by traders (such as a pronounced drop-off in footfall late in the afternoon).

2.3 The report also highlights the need for the Council to consider a much bigger and more strategic intervention. The current Market operates on a constrained site with some of the poorest buildings in the town centre. There is an opportunity to work in partnership with the owners of the Millgate Centre to seek to remodel the wider markets area, including the Market offices and the retail parade. The report proposes a multi-use 'Flexi Hall' which would provide an enhanced visitor experience on market days but would be explicitly designed to be a seven day a week cultural, food and entertainment venue.

This development would be adjacent to the Interchange site, which itself will be subject to major redevelopment. The combination of sites gives the potential for the transformative level change that would help secure central Bury's economic foundation for the long-term.

2.4 Since the original drafting of this report the outbreak of Coronavirus has seen an unprecedented lockdown. The Council agreed to an immediate cancellation of rent payments due in April and May.

The Council has been promoting the availability of a range of Government backed financial support measures. A few of the Traders pay direct business rates and were therefore eligible for a small business grant. Many others didn't pay rates directly so were not eligible for a grant, in these circumstances traders were encouraged to apply for the Self Employment Support scheme, but the terms of this fund meant many fell through the cracks. After significant

lobbying, including by the Council, the Government announced that it would extend its small business grant scheme to those businesses whose rents incorporate a contribution to a pooled business rate. The details of this scheme are still being finalised at the time of writing, with Government currently advising Local Authorities on how to administer the grants.

3.0 KEY ACTIONS PROPOSED BY TASK GROUP AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Key Recommendations from the Task Group:

- The Council should fund pre-development costs and a business plan associated with development of a new indoor flexi-hall - £50,000 from the Bury Town Centre Master plan fund already approved last year.
- The Market should be subject to a remodelling once plans for the Hall are drawn up to take maximum advantage of a new facility
- The Council should make an allocation within our capital programme as part of a funding package, this would greatly aid the credibility of any proposal for grant funding from Government

3.2 Short Term Quick Wins from Task Group:

- To Build/Re-establish the Market Traders Association.
- Investigate a reduction in or free parking charges after 3pm on market days.
- Share capital investment programme with traders, Councillors and the press to show Councils long term commitment.
- Seek marketing opportunities that appeal to a wider audience and to do collaborative offers across the market. i.e. food hampers for Christmas
- Review trading days for example shorter trading day and increasing market days
- Cultural Audit to see what is happening within the town and find out what our strengths are. Build on the Town Of Culture legacy.
- Internet Access for Traders. Investigate options outside of the town centre full fibre roll out including Barclay Card offer to other markets and cost of Wi-Fi on market.

3.3 Medium Term Wins from Task Group:

- Data collection: independent rents reviews, trader information, customer surveys
- Connections with wider community, business, colleges, arts

3.4 Key Recommendations from Leeds University Study:

- Governance and management issues -- The Council should 'reward' the market by ploughing back more profits into repair and improvements to basic infrastructure.
- Stability should be brought to the market's organisational berth within the Council – there is no *perfect* home.
- The good work of the Task Group should be translated into a sustained attempt to reinforce the appeal to traders of their association.
- Facilities and infrastructure -- While some may see a big opportunity for change now, our findings suggest any change should be incremental and focused on the basics (toilets, benches, signage, etc.).
- Market offer and market users – Safeguard existing strengths and current customer base.

3.5 General recommendations From Leeds University Study

- Danger of being trapped into a discourse of change and of contracts with consultants who might have a different vision of a successful market. On all fronts, Bury Market is performing extremely strongly.
- Concern that the 'Altrincham model' might be applied unthinkingly elsewhere in the UK.
- Other markets that have been rebuilt provide an object lesson.
- Master planning for Bury town centre must put the market at the forefront of its concerns.
- A careful balance needs to be struck.

4.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 If the Cabinet decide to endorse this report it is recommend that a subsequent report is generated containing the response to the short-term improvement proposals which works through the costs and implications of implementing the shorter-term recommendations for the next Cabinet meeting.
- 4.2 At this stage we are seeking Cabinets approval to release of £50k of the £100k from the Bury Master plan capital budget granted 2019/20. In order to progress this work-stream and generate a plan for the regeneration of the Wider Markets Area. This will include some externally commissioned design and feasibility work.
- 4.2 It is highly recommended that Cabinet keep the cross party task group in situ to monitor and follow the progress of the actions and to work with the Town Centre Growth and Recovery Board on the wider Bury Town Centre plan.

Appendix:

Markets Task Force Final Report

Contact Details

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