

Overview & Scrutiny Report



REPORT TO : **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **14th July 2020**

SUBJECT: **Bury Market COVID-19 Recovery**

REPORT FROM: **Department of Operations**

CONTACT OFFICER: ***Donna Ball (Executive Director of Operations)***

TYPE OF DECISION: For information

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:

SUMMARY:

This report provides an update on a range of initiatives aimed at supporting the recovery of Bury Market, which is of interest to Overview and Scrutiny.

OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION IMPLICATIONS:

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:

Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework?

Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:

This is an update report so there are no new financial implications. The financial support to date is explained in the body of the report and we continue to monitor the associated financials and give financial advice and support where required.

Statement by Executive Director of Resources & Regulation:

Equality/Diversity implications:

Considered by Monitoring Officer:

This is an update report and there are no legal implications arising. Legal advice and support

has been and continues to be provided on many of the initiatives noted, including market lease and licence issues.

Wards Affected:

Scrutiny Interest:

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on a range of initiatives aimed at supporting the recovery of Bury Market, which is of interest to Overview and Scrutiny.

2.0 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

- 2.1 The report outlines the support that has been given and offered to Market Traders since COVID-19 lockdown measures were introduced by the Government, the COVID-19 control measures that have been implemented to ensure the Market is not only a comfortable shopping experience for customers, but also to ensure the safety of staff and Traders, the recovery plan that is being implemented by Market Management, the Market Task and Finish Group and Cross Party Working Group that has been established to consider the future opportunities that exist for the Market, and the Capital Programme that is underway for upgrades to the Market over the next 4 years.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report provides an update on a range of initiatives aimed at supporting the recovery of Bury Market, which is of interest to Overview and Scrutiny.
- 3.2 The Market reopened for non-essential retail on 15th June 2020, apart from businesses for which restrictions were extended to 4th July 2020; including cafes, hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons and barbers, as the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is higher.
- 3.3 Bury Market has been outperforming its peers for many years in terms of profile, and providing a healthy financial return. However, the decline of Town Centres in general due to the threat of the internet, retails parks and budget supermarkets, has led to recent Trader unrest and requests for rent reductions.
- 3.4 Following the enforced closure of Bury Market, due to lockdown measures introduced by the Government in response to the Coronavirus, all Market Traders were given a two month rent free period from 16th March 2020 to 16th May 2020, which was subject to a review on completion. A decision was subsequently taken to continue with a rent free period from 16th May 2020, to the end of June 2020 (6 weeks), and to 18th July 2020 for businesses that started trading on 4th July 2020 (8 weeks).
- 3.5 A cross party task group was set up to consider the long term future of Bury Market in order to ensure that it remains at the heart of the town's retail experience for the next 20 years and beyond. The remit of this group is set out in 7.1 below.

- 3.6 The Executive Director of Operations has written a letter of support to Market Traders including a commitment to attend the formal trader consultation meetings. This is in response to a “splinter” trader group who are questioning the validity of the formally recognised Bury Market Traders Association.
- 3.7 The table below outlines the occupancy rate pre and post COVID-19: -

Date	Daily License Open Market	Market Parade	Leasehold
Week ending 21/3/20	92%	53%	99%
Week ending 27/6/20	92%	54%	99%

As shown above, there is minimal impact of COVID-19 on occupancy rates. There is a reduction of 1 stall on Market Parade due to social distancing measures.

4.0 MARKET TRADER SUPPORT TO DATE

- 4.1 The initial two month rent freeze for all Traders equated to a loss of income of £400,600. The additional rent free period from 16th May 2020 to the end of June 2020 (6 weeks), and to 18th July 2020 for businesses that started trading on 4th July 2020 (8 weeks), equates to a loss of income of £318,850. The total rent concession to date therefore is £719,450.
- 4.2 The Market has remained partially open (approximately 12 stalls) throughout the lockdown to support food Traders providing a service to our vulnerable residents, including home deliveries. Social media support has also been provided.
- 4.3 Regular updates have been provided to Traders throughout the lockdown, signposting them to various Government websites to assist with understanding government guidelines, good practice and the financial support available to businesses, including how to apply for financial assistance. The Markets team have also made courtesy calls to all traders to offer support, and enquire as to their wellbeing.
- 4.4 Markets staff have been acting as stewards controlling entry to the Fish and Meat Hall throughout the lockdown on behalf of Traders. The Market recovery plan includes additional stewards assisting from other departments within the Council to control entry and exit to the Market Hall, Fish and Meat Hall and the Public Toilets. Additional stewards will monitor hotspots on the Open Market to ensure social distancing measures are adhered to.
- 4.5 Social distancing signage and floor markings are in place to ensuring Government guidelines are adhered to, and protecting Traders, staff and customers.
- 4.6 Following the initial Government Support, the Council is processing and allocating Discretionary Funding, which includes Market Traders. Although Daily Licence Traders do not fall within Government guidance as they do not have fixed property costs, but do hold a longer-term property occupation, Bury Council will award the equivalent of 3 months’ rent. Open Market Leasehold applications will be based on annual rent payments.

4.7 Annual inflation increases have been absorbed for the last three years as daily licence rents have been frozen.

5.0 COVID-19 CONTROL MEASURES

5.1 A number of measures were taken to ensure the Market met the Government guidance when it reopened on 17th June 2020. These measures included; social distancing signage and floor markings across all areas of the indoor and outdoor Market, and stewards controlling entry to the Market Hall and Fish and Meat Hall, with a maximum number of shoppers at any one time being 65 and 25 respectively (as advised by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service). All Traders were required to complete a risk assessment prior to reopening, ensuring social distancing would be maintained on and around their stall, and the open Market public toilets are open on a controlled entry basis with "one in, one out", controlled by a steward. Seven sanitisation stations are also in place across the market.

5.2 The Markets team have also undertaken / implemented the following: -

- Liaison with Traders to identify individual issues, including social distancing measures and review of build out in pinch point areas.
- Clear guidelines have been communicated to traders outlining control measures which were required to be implemented prior to recommencing trading.
- Café owners are required to submit a written plan, including a map of stall/shop, demonstrating how they will adhere to social distancing and government guidance, including risk assessments.
- Variations to build out are to be agreed with Open Market Traders, resulting in necessary limitations.
- Stalls within narrow aisles are notified of build out being suspended.
- All stalls with walk in areas are required to submit a working plan, including risk assessments.
- There is strictly no build out permitted in the Market Hall.
- Consultation undertaken with BMTA to consider amending opening hours and enforcement issues.
- Complete Risk Assessments for Market Operatives in line with Government guidance.
- No changing rooms permitted within Stalls.

6.0 RECOVERY PLAN

6.1 For the Markets team the challenge in the long term is to attract footfall to ensure the markets viability whilst simultaneously ensuring the safety of visitors to the market. A thorough and detailed recovery plan has been developed by Market Management to ensure Bury Market remains at the heart of the town's retail experience.

6.2 A range of marketing, communication and public relations activity is planned / already underway, including: -

- Promotional events to bring animation to the Market (phased in line with national guidance)
- A local advertising campaign including radio, print and social media to support the programme of animation to negate the threat of limited/no coach visitors
- Marketing campaign to raise awareness of relaunch, targeting local residents to include radio, print, press releases and social media channels (it is recommended that signage is to be erected in prominent locations across the Borough (roundabouts/key high visibility locations – Safe, open air shopping

- message)
- Encourage Traders to engage in social media to stimulate on line activity.
- Liaise with Bury College to offer website development training for Traders.
- Social Media programme to include Trader offers to drive traffic.

6.3 Amendments are proposed to the Markets Rules and Regulations, including a review of current opening/closing times, ensuring consideration is given to the government guidelines to ensure compliance.

6.4 As stated above, significant planning was undertaken to safeguard Traders, staff and customer safety, ensuring the Market is a comfortable and pleasant shopping experience. (Including signage, sanitisation stations, social distancing, stewards, open public toilets).

6.5 Other avenues are also being explored including the opportunity to utilise the coach drop off area as a delivery/pick up area, for which Mill Gate consent will be required, and the proposed to introduction of cashless payments at the Market Office.

7.0 MARKETS TASK AND FINISH GROUP AND CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP

7.1 The above group has been established to: -

- To agree a strategy for Bury Market to ensure that it remains at the heart of the towns retail experience.
- To help create a vision for how the Market evolves to meet changing consumer tastes and preferences.
- To identify big investment opportunities that can ensure the future of the Market.
- To identify how the Market can better connect with local residents that don't currently use it.
- Identify how the Market can adapt.

An initial presentation was made to Overview and Scrutiny in March 2020.

7.2 Phase 2 of the Cross Party Working Group, which was set up to review and deliver the recommendations made in the Task Force Report of March 2020, has commenced. A feasibility study has been approved to identify the opportunities, and investment options that exist for the Market. At this stage, further investigation will be undertaken in respect of: -

- The regeneration of the Market, its existing site, site flexibility, and operable basis.
- Widening the appeal of the Market to all residents in the borough and seeking further diversity of products and services as a unique selling point of the Market.
- Future planning in line with the retail strategy for Bury.

Next steps are as follows: -

- There will be short-term actions designed to underpin the future performance of the Market.
- There will be larger plans for some major regeneration projects associated with the market and the wider retail area.
- A formal paper with clear recommendations will be generated.

8.0 CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- 8.1 It was agreed at Cabinet in May 2020 that £50,000 is allocated to develop a Masterplan for the Market and the Town Centre as a whole, an indication the Market is seen as vital to the future success of Bury Town Centre.
- 8.2 A Capital Programme is underway with £1.38 million to be invested in the Market, phased over 4 years. The work could include: -
- Replacement of Market Hall glazing panels
 - Open Market roofing issues
 - Market Hall toilet refurbishment
 - Lift replacements
 - Signage
 - Market Hall air conditioning
 - Basement refurbishment
 - Upgrade of market parade area
 - Angouleme Way boundary railing repairs
 - Market Hall door maintenance
 - Additional security shutters and gates

It is to be noted that roofing works in the Western End of the Market are complete, and a contractor has been appointed to carry out additional security measures along Angouleme Way.

- 8.3 Other scheduled works include the refurbishment of the Market Hall toilets and the replacement of the Market Hall lifts are at tender stage, but have been delayed due to the lockdown.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The support offered to Market Traders since COVID-19 lockdown measures were introduced by the Government, has been acknowledged as one of the best support packages in the Country. COVID-19 control measures have been implemented to ensure the Market is not only a comfortable shopping experience for customers, but also to ensure the safety of staff and Traders. A recovery plan has been developed by Market Management and a Market Task and Finish Group and Cross Party Working Group has been established to consider the future opportunities that exist for the Market. In addition the Capital Programme is underway for upgrades to the Market over the next 4 years. All necessary steps are being taken to ensure Bury Market remains at the heart of the town's retail experience.

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
6/7/20			
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	

