



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5 September 2023

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,
Deputy Leader of the Council and
Cabinet Member for Finance and
Economic Development

South Kesteven District Council Street Markets Review

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report informs Members of a recent review of South Kesteven District Council operated street markets. The review includes factual data gathered during visits to the markets in Bourne, Stamford and Grantham. It also proposes a potential way forward for developing street markets.

Recommendations

It is recommended the Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 1. consider and comment on the contents of this report; and**
- 2. create a 'Task and Finish' group to oversee a consultation regarding the future of markets.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

- Growth and our economy
- Healthy and strong communities
- Clean and sustainable environment
- High performing Council

Which wards are impacted?

All (although the Council's markets are within specific wards, the scope of the report is districtwide)

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are clearly financial implications to whichever decision is reached regarding the future of South Kesteven District Council operated markets. As identified in the main body of this report, currently all three markets identify a varying degree of operating deficit to the Council and whilst this has been apparent for some time and the Council have carried this deficit it needs to identify how sustainable any new model of operation is and whether costs can continue to be incurred.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Assistant Director of Finance

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal and governance issues relating directly to this report. A fee is currently levied against the District Council for a Market Charter, allowing it to operate a street market in Grantham.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Health and Safety

- 1.3 The Council holds both a legal and moral duty to ensure the provision of robust health and safety measures, including the maintenance of existing equipment/ provision of new equipment and ancillaries, to control any potential risk to staff,

traders and the public who use the markets. Failure to manage risk could result in fines and prosecution along with reputational damages.

Completed by: Philip Swinton, Health and Safety Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 As highlighted in the Corporate Plan (2020-2023), delivering growth of the economy is fundamental to the success of the District, its businesses and residents. It is important for the Council to work closely with market traders across South Kesteven in order to maintain their viability and maximise their potential.
- 2.2 Kesteven District Council's markets play a central role in the town centres. The visibility and profile of a good market can attract footfall and aid other businesses in a town to flourish.
- 2.3 On 6 September 2022, Culture and Visitor Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on the Council's markets. This provided details on their operation. Since then, the Council's political make up has changed. Street markets remain a vital part of South Kesteven life and continue to contribute to wider social, economic and environmental strategic goals.
- 2.4 On 14 June 2023, a further report was presented to a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee. This outlined the findings of a review of the operational aspects of the Council's markets service. The Committee approved an action plan (see **Background Papers**), agreed to receive an update on the actions undertaken within three months of the meeting, and recommended the review of the market service be given further consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5 This report is intended to be a starting point for conversation. It outlines the current situation of the traditional open markets at Bourne, Grantham and Stamford.
- 2.6 The weekly market held in Market Deeping, while equally important to the character and offer of the town, is not operated by South Kesteven District Council and therefore does not form part of this review.
- 2.7 In preparation of this report, members of the Economic Development Team periodically visited the markets in Bourne, Grantham and Stamford to observe stall occupancy levels, product offering, customer footfall, car parking movements and the general ambience of market days.
- 2.8 For ease of reading, the remainder of this report is structured as follows:
 - A. A brief history of South Kesteven markets
 - B. South Kesteven District Council markets in operation
 - C. An analysis of the review undertaken

A: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTH KESTEVEN MARKETS

- 2.9 South Kesteven's markets have been a vital part of the commercial and social life of the District for over 1,000 years. There is evidence of regular markets being held in Stamford and Grantham as early as 972. It is reasonable to assume most large settlements would have held regular markets centuries before they received formal recognition through market charters.
- 2.10 Market charters were issued throughout the medieval period either granting permission for new markets or formalising existing ones. The charters outlined when markets and fairs could be held, who was responsible for collecting taxes and tolls (and who had to pay them) and any rules which traders had to follow. They acted as a form of protectionism, preventing other towns and traders within a specified distance from holding markets or fairs on the same day. To this day, the regulations outlined in many market charters are still enforceable.
- 2.11 The first market charter awarded in (what is now) South Kesteven related to Market Deeping. The charter was awarded by Henry III in 1220 to William Briewer for the fee of one palfrey horse (although this debt was later waived). In 1304, the charter for Market Deeping's markets and fairs passed to Joan Wake, who later married Edward, the 'Black Prince'. Joan Wake later held the rights over the fair at Bourne. Following her death, the market rights reverted to the Crown.
- 2.12 Bourne's Market Charter was granted by Edward I in 1281, along with rights to hold a fair on Holy Trinity Sunday. By the end of 19th Century, Bourne's Charter allowed for four annual fairs to be held. Historically, Bourne's marketplace was in the area which is now the crossroads between West Street and North Street, and continued to be held kerbside until the 1990s when traffic conditions made it necessary to relocate the market.
- 2.13 Stamford's market was formalised by a charter from King Edward IV in 1481, along with permissions for two annual fairs; one to be held on the feast day of St Stephen and St Jude (28 October), and another on the Monday after Corpus Christi (during Lent). The location of the market was not specified but there is evidence of markets being held in Broad Street from 1595. The cattle market was also held there until 1887 when it was moved to the area currently known as 'Cattle Market'.
- 2.14 Similarly, Grantham long-standing market was formalised by a Charter from Richard III in 1484. The charter also allowed for two fairs to be held: one on Passion Sunday (fifth Sunday in Lent); and the second on the feast of St Nicolas (6 December). Grantham's markets were originally held outside the west front of St Wulfram's church, likely moving all or in part to the current Market place from the 1300s when the expansion of the church building restricted the space available for the market.
- 2.15 Markets were not simply opportunities for trade, they were also places for social gathering and entertainment.

B. SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL MARKETS IN OPERATION

- 2.16 South Kesteven's markets have been a focal point of local business for centuries, playing a key part in the social, cultural and economic life of the District. However, the threat of decline has increased in recent years because shoppers have greater choice in how and where to purchase the goods, food and services traditionally associated with a street market. Supermarkets, high street chains, low-cost retailers and online retailing all offer alternatives to the traditional street market.
- 2.17 The financial impact on the Council in providing the market offering in Bourne, Grantham and Stamford is detailed in **Appendix A**. This information shows the net cost of the markets has increased by £16k between 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.
- 2.18 **Appendix A** also details the percentage change in traders at each market between 2019/2020 and 2022/2023. The data shows there has been reduction in the number of traders across all the markets except for the Saturday market in Stamford.

Bourne Market

- 2.19 Bourne Market takes place each Thursday at the car park North of the Corn Exchange building.
- a) Bourne is the smallest of the three Council-operated markets. Unfortunately, on the weeks visited, the inclement weather may have had a negative impact on attendance of stalls and visitors.
- b) Generally, the market consisted of seven stalls made up of:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 x fish seller (from van), | 1 x bakery items, |
| 1 x vintage collectables | 1 x pies and cakes. |
| 1 x plants | 1 x fruit, vegetables and |
| 1 x dog food and treats | groceries |
- c) On each occasion visited, there were a further two stalls which were unoccupied.
- d) Around 80% of the footfall visiting the market comes from the Burghley Centre car park, with the remainder mainly from the Abbey Road entrance, which is less welcoming as one effectively enters the market from behind the stalls. Only a small number of customers came through the archway by the Town Hall.
- e) Observing the stalls, most owners were engaging with customers and interaction was good.
- f) At no point could the market have been described as busy, however, there was a steady flow of customers and generally the footfall ranged from 12 – 21 shoppers within the market area and spread around the stalls, at any given time.

The fruit and vegetable stalls were most popular, followed by the bakery. However, all stalls were generating trade.

- g) The Burghley Centre car park provides the first two hours free parking (for which visitors must get a ticket). The time limit this clearly influenced the dwell time of visitors to the market (and wider town) with visitors leaving before it became necessary to pay for parking.
- h) It was observed many customers who parked in the Burghley Centre carpark were storing purchases from the market in their cars, before going on to visit the main retail areas.
- i) It is not immediately obvious to visitors to Bourne that a market was happening. There does not appear to be any signage to indicate when or where the market is in operation. Consequently, the market might be difficult to find from the main retail streets in the town. Some signage would assist in this respect.

Grantham Market

2.20 Grantham Market takes place every Saturday on Narrow Westgate (with Farmers' Market every second Saturday of the month on Butchers Row).

- a) Across the dates observed, it was apparent the second Saturday of the month (when the Farmers' Market is also in operation) was the busiest in terms of numbers of stalls and as well as footfall.
- b) The numbers of occupied stalls observed ranged from 16, rising to 25 on the day of the Farmers' Market. Similarly, footfall increased on those days from circa 35 visitors to the Market at any given time, to over 50 on the day of the Farmers' Market. However, there were several empty stalls which did not enhance the appearance of the market.
- c) On a standard market day, the market was made up of:
 - 2 x flowers / plant stalls
 - 2 x sweets and bakery stalls
 - 3 x fruit and vegetable stalls
 - 1x dairy
 - butcher
 - fishmonger
 - pet supplies
 - craft
 - key cutting
 - records
 - clothing
 - refreshments
 - miscellaneous gifts
- d) On Farmers' Market Day, the offering whilst not varying greatly in structure, did increase the number of sweets and bakery stalls to five; butchers stalls to four, miscellaneous gifts stalls to three and saw the addition of one further fishmonger.

- e) Observing car park usage on market day in Grantham is interesting and very much supports the case around how difficult it is for Council-operated car parks to attract users in the face of such strong competition from other private and Lincolnshire County Council operated spaces in the town.
- f) Across the days, the various parking options were observed. The Lincolnshire County Council operated on-street parking in Westgate was permanently at full occupancy with people visibly circling in the hope of a securing a free space. Other car parks identified at full capacity were the supermarket car parks at Lidl, Asda and Morrisons surface level. All offer free parking typically ranging from up to 90 minutes to a couple of hours (dependent on the supermarket).
- g) Council-operated car parks were noticeably much quieter with all car parks operating at below 50% occupancy. Conduit Lane was the busiest with 47% occupancy and Wharf Road quietest with only 48 of the 260 spaces occupied (i.e. 18%).

Stamford Market

2.21 Stamford Market takes place every Friday on Broad Street and Ironmonger Street (with a smaller Saturday market).

- a) Without doubt, on a Friday the market stalls and the town as a whole, are very busy places indeed.
- b) On the occasions the market was observed there were many stalls operating, with the following offering available:
 - Broad Street - 3 x bakery stalls, 3 x fruit and vegetable stalls, 3 x flower stalls, 2 x butchers stalls, 2 x clothing stalls and further stalls including carpets, wood crafts, fish, shoes, metal crafts, sweets, fabric, pillows, antiques, olives and sundries, hats, wall art, conservatory sales, cups and tea pots, boots, spices, jewellery, watches repair, wooden signs, bags, scarfs, hot food, hats and socks, silver oak coffee, jewellery, paintings, honey and preserves, records, canvas art, and upholstery.
 - Ironmonger Street - dog bowls/wooden crafts, dog treats, records, candles, specialist bakery (gluten free), general gifts, clothes, hot food, fruit and vegetables, jewellery, honey, socks and pillows.
 - High Street - Greek food, vegan and vegetarian foods, Spanish food, Lincolnshire cheese, handmade Caribbean foods, fish, free range eggs.
- c) Footfall in and around all areas of the market was extremely high with queues formed at several stalls, most notably the artisan food and fresh produce offerings.

- d) Through speaking with a small section of stallholders, it is clear many traders travel long distances to secure a pitch on the successful market. Conversely, a few Stamford Friday traders travel a long way south on Saturdays to secure pitches at bustling and affluent town centre markets.
- e) The feeling and perception of Stamford Market is that it has a very local handmade feel with a strong independent offer. There was no evidence of mass-produced goods which it was felt was a major contributor to the overall positive vibe of the market.
- f) Regarding car parking, it is evident occupancy at all Council operated car parks increases on 'market day' especially at Wharf Road and Cattle Market Car Park. A steady increase is evident throughout a Friday morning which peaks around mid-day where it was observed people were occasionally having to wait a short time before a space became available.

C. AN ANALYSIS OF THE REVIEW UNDERTAKEN

- 2.22 The review undertaken by the Economic Development Team has provided an in-depth analysis of: the current market offering across the three towns, how this is supported through footfall and visitor patterns, and how it is underpinned by car parking availability and commuter patterns.
- 2.23 Unsurprisingly, Stamford Market, long considered as the 'jewel in the crown' of the South Kesteven visitor economy, demonstrated a high volume of car park usage and increased footfall on Friday mornings and early afternoon.
- 2.24 Bourne and Grantham markets. have comparatively lower numbers of stalls and visitors.
- 2.25 The financial information presented as part of this review are of obvious concern but there are positive elements to the review,
 - ✓ All the markets generate footfall, not only for the traders but also for the wider town centre. Given the consistency of numbers measured over a period of time, the markets appear to command loyalty from many of their customers. Longevity is a feature of the traders at the markets. This would not be the case if they were not able to generate an acceptable level of income.
 - ✓ All the markets operate in the heart of their town centres where they complement and support other retailers.
 - ✓ A strong transport and car parking infrastructure exists allowing easy access to the markets.
 - ✓ Evidence exists that when and where a more varied offering is made available, there is an increase in footfall and the willingness of traders to take a stall. This

is most evident in the numbers identified for Grantham Farmers' Market and the increase in operators at Stamford Saturday Market.

D. THE FUTURE OF COUNCIL-OPERATED MARKETS

- 2.26 If the Council wishes to maintain and develop the existing markets, it will need a coherent markets strategy. This would set the direction of the markets across the District and provide a template against which to measure future activity.
- 2.27 Before commencing work on the strategy, there are several actions proposed to support the scope and direction this could take, including:
- Engage with all market traders to understand their current thoughts and ideas on how the markets could be improved.
 - Run a series of consultation and engagement events with traders, retailers, residents, customers, key stakeholders, elected Members and others. This could include a series of focus groups, workshops and public consultation events held at the markets themselves, supported by an on-line customer survey. This would enable a better understanding of how markets and street trading operations can become more robust and resilient. It would also generate suggestions for improvements to the markets and options to boost town centres.
 - The consultation process would be used to determine key areas for consideration in the development of the Strategy, perhaps relating to the following twelve items:
 - Location
 - Frequency
 - Product offering
 - Incentivising diversification
 - Promotional activity
 - Customer experience
 - Appearance, landscaping, and public realm
 - Opening and closing times
 - Fees and charges
 - Car parking and other complimentary services
 - Stall designs and overall market layout
 - Accessing additional funding (such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF))

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Over many years in Bourne and Grantham, retailers and traditional markets have struggled against competition from online shopping.
- 3.2 The town centres have increasing issues in terms of their ability to cope with the requirements for sizeable retailers, with a lack of footfall identified as the greatest inhibitor to attracting nationally recognised brands.

- 3.3 To enable the proposed consultation process, it is recommended a working group be formed with members drawn from traders, retailers, residents, customers, key stakeholders, elected Members and other consultees and facilitated by the Council.
- 3.4 Consideration should be given to developing the tourist appeal of street markets.
- 3.5 The working group should consider whether to appoint external professionals to lead on the development and production of the South Kesteven Markets Strategy.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 It has been several years since a review took place to assess the role they have and the impact they have on the towns, there is now an opportunity and appetite to bring forward a change in the way the Council's markets are presented and operated, and in the way they are promoted as a key and integral part of the town centre offering. It is for this reason the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Markets play an important role in the vitality and viability of local economies. The Council acknowledges the need to support the District's town centres as they try to deal with extreme competition in the current retail environment.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 This review is intended to be the starting point for conversation and consultation into the future of South Kesteven District Council operated street markets. The consultation process should be broad and inclusive of all key stakeholders in order that markets continue to be a successful and integral part of the life of our market towns.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 *Update on Council Markets* – Report to Culture & Visitor Overview and Scrutiny Committee, published on 6 September 2022 and available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s35411/Update%20on%20Markets.pdf>
- 7.2 *Market Service Operational Review* – Report to Governance and Audit Committee, published on 14 June 2023 and available online at:
https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s38055/Markets_Operational_Review.pdf
- 7.3 *Market Service Operational Review Action Plan*, available online at:
<https://moderngov.southkesteven.gov.uk/documents/s38049/Appendix%201.pdf>

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Markets analysis