



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



# Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

30 November 2023

Report of Councillor Paul Stokes,  
Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure

## Grantham Mid-Lent Fair – Consideration of Event Dates Extension

### Report Author

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### Purpose of Report

To consider a request to extend the dates for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair for 2024 and beyond.

### Recommendations

**The Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:**

1. Consider the proposal received from the Showman's Guild to amend the event period for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair in line with the results of the consultation undertaken to assess support from local residents and businesses.
2. Provide guidance to Officers whether the proposal to change the dates for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair should be accepted, and an application be made to the Secretary of State for approval.

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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 Housing that meets the needs of all residents Healthy and strong communities Clean and sustainable environment High performing Council
Which wards are impacted?	Grantham Wards

## 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 The Showman's Guild pay the Council a hire fee to hold the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair. In addition to this the costs the Council incurs in relation to setting up and taking down the fair and Officers time to undertake stewarding duties, are recharged to the Showman's Guild. Therefore, there is no financial burden on the Council in relation to the Fair.
- 1.2 Should the dates of the Fair be changed for 2024 the Council would incur costs in relation to making an application to the Secretary of State and amending the waste collection rounds. These, together with any other costs or loss of income identified, will need to be agreed in advance with the Showman's Guild for reimbursement to the Council.

**Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer**

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.3 The authority to hold the Mid-Lent Fair is contained within the Royal Charter of Grantham 1484. The Charter contains a restriction that the Mid-Lent Fair shall be held in each year on the fifth Sunday of Lent and the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday following. The Charter was subsequently amended by an Order dated 26 February 2001 made by the Home Office under Section 6 of the Fairs Act 1873. This Order provides any changes to the current opening and number of days the

Mid-Lent fair is held in Grantham would require an application to the Secretary of State.

- 1.4 There would be a cost involved in applying to the Secretary of State for an Order to amend the days for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair for 2024, if granted the Order is temporary and can only remain in place for that year. A further application would be required in subsequent years to either revert to the dates previously used or for any other alterations to the dates.
- 1.5 The timeframe to make an application and receive a decision would be between eight to twelve weeks.

**Completed by: Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive**

#### ***Health and Safety***

- 1.6 Historically the Mid-Lent Fair in Grantham has been supported by Council Officers who ensure that the fair is safely set up and taken down and undertake stewarding duties. In 2023 there were significant instances of anti-social behaviour which Officers had to respond to with the assistance of the Police.
- 1.7 The Council has a duty of care to protect its employees and a debrief meeting was held with the Showman's Guild to share these concerns. During this meeting it was agreed that trained professional stewards are to be employed for future years who are more able to deal with the incidences of anti-social behaviour which were encountered for the duration of the Fair in 2023.
- 1.8 The Council's Health and Safety team provide support to ensure that all activities and procedures in relation to the fair conform to health and safety standards.

**Completed by: Phil Swinton, Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Lead**

#### ***Waste Service***

- 1.9 The proposal to move the dates for the Mid-Lent Fair would have a serious impact on the Council's Waste Service. It is essential for the Council to maintain the continuity of our services whilst addressing the needs of local businesses and residents and the necessary road closures to accommodate the revised dates would prevent or hinder regular refuse collection rounds.
- 1.10 The proposals would necessitate the Council exploring alternative arrangements for refuse collections in the affected areas which include Union Street, Conduit Lane, Market Place, Wide Westgate, Narrow Westgate, Welby Street and part of Guildhall

Street. This would involve rescheduling collection dates or providing temporary collection points outside of the closed off streets.

- 1.11 Any changes to the Council's routine waste collection arrangements would cause significant disruption to local residents and businesses, and alternative arrangements would be an additional cost to the Council.

**Completed by: George Chase, Waste and Recycling Operations Manager**

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan (2020 – 2023) contains a key priority of 'Growth and our Economy' with a vision to developing the centres and high streets of our towns.
- 2.2 Historically, Mid-Lent Fairs have been held in Grantham and Stamford and are arranged by the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain (the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Mid and South Lincolnshire section). To date the Stamford fair has been held over six days, and the Grantham Fair over four days.
- 2.3 The Council have received a request from the Showman's Guild to extend the number of days for the Grantham Fair by one day to a total of five days and for the duration of the fair to cover a weekend. If this request is approved the Mid-Lent Fair would run from Wednesday 20 March 2024 through to Sunday 24 March 2024 rather than the fair arriving in Grantham on 17 March 2024 to Wednesday 20 March 2024.
- 2.4 Should the change of dates be accommodated, to enable rides and stalls to be safely erected and dismantled, road closures would be in force from 5pm on Tuesday 19 March 2024 until 8am on Monday 25 March 2024.
- 2.5 The authority to hold the Mid-Lent Fair in Grantham is provided by The Royal Charter of Grantham 1484. This grants the rights for ordering, governing, and assigning of stalls in relation to the fair. Therefore, should the Council agree to any changes to the dates of the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair, this decision would need to be referred to the Secretary of State for final approval.
- 2.6 The Council receives a payment for the Stamford and Grantham fairs which includes an element of rental for the space, and in addition the Council is recompensed for the associated staffing costs in relation to the setup and takedown of the fairs, and any stewarding resource provided.

### **Consultation Methodology**

- 2.7 To ensure Members can consider the views of residents and businesses which may be impacted by the changes, especially in relation to the extended road closure, a robust consultation exercise has been undertaken.

2.8 The objectives of the consultation have been to:

- Communicate the changes which will happen if the proposal is approved to local businesses and residents.
- To allow those impacted, and the wider population, an opportunity to submit their views.
- Establish what stakeholders think of the proposal to extend the duration of the Mid-Lent fair in Grantham.
- Ask statutory agencies for their views on the proposal including Lincolnshire Police, Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, and Lincolnshire County Council.
- Identify any issues which may occur as a result of the changes.

2.9 The consultation was well publicised, this included a press release launching the consultation, social media posts, and details were also provided on the Council's website. All content included links to an on-line survey via a web link or QR code. The consultation ran for a four-week period from 4 September 2023 to 2 October 2023.

2.10 In addition, a flyer was hand delivered to 520 businesses and residents in Grantham who would be most impacted, the flyer promoted the consultation and included a printed copy of the survey. This was made up of 272 businesses and residents, 208 taxi operators and 40 market traders. The flyer contained information relating to the survey with recipients being given the option to complete the survey online or complete a paper copy.

2.11 All statutory consultees received a letter detailing the request to move the dates for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair, the letter requesting feedback and comments.

## **Results of Consultation**

2.12 Following the end of the consultation period the survey responses have been analysed and **Appendix One** provides a copy of the Consultation Report. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the key information.

2.13 A total of 222 survey responses were received, of which 213 were via the online link and 9 were printed copies which were input manually.

2.14 The first question asked whether residents and businesses agreed or disagreed with the proposal to move the fair dates. The initial response was that 55% either strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal, with 38% disagreeing and 7% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

2.15 However, when an analysis was conducted against the postcodes of respondents who would be most affected by the road closure order, then 78% of the respondents disagreed with the proposal.

2.16 Respondents were asked why they either supported or objected to the proposal, an analysis of the responses is highlighted in **Table One** overleaf:

<b>Table One – Analysis of Comments provided to support or object to the proposal to move the dates for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair</b>	
Support	Objections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will generate more trade</li> <li>• It gives people more opportunity to visit the fair</li> <li>• It's good for the local community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The negative impact on trade</li> <li>• The disruption and congestion caused in the centre of Grantham</li> <li>• Difficulties with access</li> <li>• Cost of the fairground rides</li> </ul>

2.17 When respondents were asked how they might be affected by an extension to the Mid-Lent Fair dates, most comments centred on the disruption and congestion which would be caused by traffic, especially as Saturday is the busiest day for businesses, market traders and taxi firms. In addition, comments were received the proposal would cause access issues for residents, customers and retail deliveries.

2.18 Analysis of the survey responses demonstrated 49% of respondents supported the proposal put forward by the Showman's Guild to change the dates of the Mid-Lent Fair, with 36% who did not agree. However, when these responses were further analysed against the postcodes of respondents who would be most affected by the road closure, 8% agreed with the proposals and 69% did not agree.

2.19 When asked if changing the days of the Mid-Lent Fair would affect respondents or their businesses, 71% stated it would not and 20% thought it would impact them. The businesses who responded were concerned about the impact on trade, with residents being more concerned about access as well as noise and light pollution from the fairground rides. Some of the quotes received are provided below:

*“Yes of course it will .... not only in Westgate and the Market Place but all traders in the town as footfall will be down considerably”*

*“... the rides are right in front of my gates and my customers don't like the noise or disruption”*

*“.... The Grange now has more light pollution from strobe effects”*

2.20 85% of responses received were from those who were not contacted directly. This is important to note as it may mean residents and businesses who would be most affected, are underrepresented in the survey results.

2.21 The Council's Corporate Facilities and Events Supervisor contacted the statutory stakeholders and the following feedback was received:

- Lincolnshire County Council did not formally comment on the proposal. The feedback received centred on operational requirements, including the need for additional road signage and a requirement for a formal traffic management plan.
- The District Safety Advisory Group (SAG) did not object to the proposals. Unfortunately, the Police, Lincolnshire County Council Emergency Planning, Grantham area Fire and Rescue or East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) were not in attendance at the meeting when this issue was discussed. These organisations were subsequently contacted individually, however no responses have been received.

2.22 Should the proposal from the Showman's Guild be accepted then this would necessitate a relocation of the Grantham market on Saturday 23 March 2024. There are options to relocate the market including on St Peter's Hill, however not all the stalls could be accommodated within the available space and a further road closure would be required.

2.23 Guildhall Street is also an option for a relocated market, but this would also require a road closure, and would restrict access to the Council's pay and display car park, the private car park at the rear of Boots and the private car park for the George Centre. Access for deliveries within the Issac Newton Centre, and for Boots and B & M Bargains would also be impacted. The road is narrow, and to ensure the 4 metre emergency route can be maintained, again not all of the stalls could be accommodated.

2.24 A further option for the relocated market could be Greenwoods Row car park which would not require a road closure but would involve loss of car park income for the Council which would need to be recharged to the Showman's Guild.

2.25 Buckminster Estates hold the Charter for the market and were contacted and had no objections. Furthermore, ASDA were also approached for their views but no response was received.

### **3. Key Considerations**

3.1 Any changes to the current opening and number of days of the Mid-Lent Fair would require an application to the Secretary of State under Section 6 of the Fairs Act 1873.

3.2 The application process for the necessary road closures for Stamford and Grantham Fairs is a total of thirteen weeks. The road closure application for the Grantham Mid-

Lent Fair therefore needs to be submitted by Friday 8 December 2023. An application to the Secretary of State could run in parallel to awaiting this decision.

- 3.3 Any impact on the operation and financial performance of the market requires careful consideration alongside the Council's ambition to improve the operation and viability of Grantham market.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1 This report details a proposal from the Showman's Guild to extend the opening times for the Mid-Lent fair in Grantham for 2024. Should this proposal not be supported, the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair would remain on the traditional days as set out in the Royal Charter of Grantham 1484.

#### **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny are requested to consider the proposal received from the Showman's Guild to change the dates for the Grantham Mid-Lent Fair in 2024 and considering the results of the consultation which has been undertaken, determine whether this proposal should be supported.

#### **6. Appendices**

- 6.1 **Appendix One** – Results of Grantham Mid-Lent Fair Consultation.