

Asset management - Ramsgate Market

Meeting	22nd October 2020
Report Author	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer
Portfolio Holder	Cllr-Ruth Duckworth, Cabinet Member for Estates and Economic Development
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	Sir Moses Montefiore, Eastcliff, Central Harbour, Clifsend and Pegwell, Nethercourt and Newington Ward

Executive Summary:

This report details the outcome of the market trial month at Staffordshire Street Car Park, Ramsgate and makes recommendations for future dispositions.

Recommendation(s):

1. To agree to cease the current arrangement, and procure a new market operator that will operate capably, maximising the benefits for the market traders, consumers and the wider community.
2. To agree to market proposals for the market under the "Canterbury model" outlined below at paragraph 2.2.
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Estates, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Estates and Economic Development, to choose an appropriate operator following the procurement exercise and enter into the relevant Agreement(s) with them, on terms to be agreed.
4. To give delegated authority to the Director of Estates to agree the Heads of Terms for the Agreement(s) under which the new operator will operate.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report and value for money will be derived by following the Councils procurement process to find a new market operator.

Legal

Procurement will involve the advertising of the proposals in line with appropriate regulations and the award of a Concession Contract to the market operator. Otherwise the proposal has no legal implications.

Corporate

The council's Corporate Statement sets out its commitment to, 'Constructively explore approaches for Community Wealth Building and Maximise the return on our assets and services'.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty:

- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The procurement of a new market will have no impact under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

The new market will be of benefit to the community and will support our commitment under these acts to continue to provide inclusive community facilities.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Growth
- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The Ramsgate market was relocated in June 2020 to allow for safe social distancing which would not have been feasible in its long-standing position on the junctions of Queen Street and King Street. This is because of the need to provide queuing spaces in front of each commercial unit whilst still allowing for pedestrian thoroughfare.

Even after the easing of the restrictions on social distancing in July, down to 1 metre where 2 metres isn't possible, keeping the market in that location still didn't allow for safe social distancing.

The council recognises the role a market can play in supporting footfall into a town and acknowledges the affiliation for the current provision by local residents, as well as the need to support the established traders in these difficult times.

As an alternative, Staffordshire Car Park was proposed and intended to provide a market facility on a Friday and Saturday. There were, however, no traders willing to attend on a Saturday.

Although historically the Ramsgate Market was successful, there is evidence that the income generated by the market has been decreasing year on year. This downward trend was consistent even prior to COVID-19 restrictions or change in location.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 Staffordshire Car Park was introduced as an alternative location for the market on a trial period of four weeks.

This trial required the suspension of car parking in part, and temporarily relocating the disabled parking bays throughout the remaining car park.

The trial market was widely advertised via posters, leaflets, banners, social media and newspaper articles.

The early stages of the trial had identified a severe decrease in traders willing to participate in the market, with no traders willing to attend on Saturdays.

The low numbers of traders and low income generated has left the market operator prepared to cease trading.

The Council incurs a cost of £16,604.23 Per Annum on business rates for the Ramsgate Market at the High Street location. The market operator is required to pay a 50% split of the net income to The Council.

Annexe 1 attached below details the breakdown of costs to The Council and the loss generated by the market.

As the market operator is no longer able to operate the Staffordshire Street market due to a decrease in traders willing to participate in the market, alternative locations for the market have been considered, but they would not comply with existing COVID restrictions.

2.2 The Council acknowledges the benefits of a diverse market on the local community, consumers and traders alike and remains determined to restore a market in Ramsgate.

It is therefore proposed to market the opportunity in 'new format' (e.g. Canterbury Model - with diverse themes on different days, high-quality goods, coordinating gazebos), and subsequently extend the exercise to local tender to grant a service concession contract to operate the new market.

3.0 Options

- 3.1 To cease the current arrangement, and procure a new market based on the canterbury model, that will operate capably, maximising the benefits for the market traders, consumers and the wider community as per the recommendation above.
- 3.2 To cease the current arrangement and not reopen a market.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 The procurement of the new market to develop within the next six months. Careful consideration will be given to the location elements, potential COVID-19 restrictions, diversity of market goods with periods of specialist market (Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc.).
As part of the new market development exercise, the council will engage with Ramsgate Town Council as well as welcome input from all potential vendors.

Contact Officer: Andreea Plant - Estates Surveyor
Reporting to: Victoria Kellet - Director of Property

Annex List

Annexe 1: List of costs

Background Papers

Title: Strategic Asset Management Plan - Thanet District Council Website or contact estates@thanet.gov.uk.

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Matt Sanham, Financial Services Manager

Legal: Estelle Culligan, Director of Law and Democracy