
PROPOSED RENT FREE PERIOD FOR MARKETS

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker,
Consumer and Environmental Services Portfolio**

Responsible Director - John Buxton, Director of Development and Environment

Purpose of Report

1. As a result of changes to the programme for the Pedestrian Heart works along West Row it is proposed to offer the market businesses a rent free period.

Information and Analysis

2. At the end of the Summer discussions took place with the representatives of the Market businesses to discuss the programme for works up to Christmas 2006. At these meetings the Market businesses made strong representations that no works should be undertaken along the frontage of the Market until the New Year as such works could significantly impact on their trade over the key Christmas period.
3. The programming of the works that was undertaken at the end of the Summer was able to take into account the views that have been expressed by the Market businesses and the programme that was issued did not include any works to the frontage of the Market until the New Year.
4. During mid-November a review of the programme was undertaken with the aim of bringing forward the completion date of all of the Pedestrian Heart works. The review concluded that revised traffic arrangements requiring the earliest possible completion of West Row would save several weeks on the programme and bring forward the completion of the Pedestrian Heart works and reduce projected costs by up to £100,000.
5. The reprogramming of the work will have a significant impact on the market traders and although it is not possible to calculate the impact on individual traders it is proposed that to offset potential losses in trade a four week rent free period be granted to the traders in the covered and outdoor markets. The “cost” of the reduced income will be accommodated within the overall capital scheme costs and this will be more than compensated by the savings due to the reprogramming of the works.

6. The Council does not have the powers to consider compensation for town centre businesses but has provided advice to the town centre businesses as to how they can seek a reduction in the business rates. The Council will continue to do as much as it reasonably can to support town centre businesses whilst the works continue, the recent changes to parking charges being an example.

Outcome of Consultation

7. Representatives of the Market businesses have been consulted on the changes that were proposed and have accepted them with the offer of the goodwill gesture of four weeks free of rent.

Legal Implications

8. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

9. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

10. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

11. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does represent an urgent matter as the offer for a rent free period is for immediate effect and the works have commenced.

Conclusion

12. That the Council, as landlord offers as a gesture of goodwill a period of four weeks free of rent to the Market businesses that trade within the Indoor Market building and the Outdoor Market on the normal market days of Monday and Saturday.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that a rent free period of four weeks be given to all the traders within the Indoor Market building and the normal Outdoor Market of Mondays and Saturdays and that the estimated cost of £40,000 be met from savings on the Pedestrian Heart capital scheme that will result from the reprogramming and earlier completion.

Reasons

14. The recommendation is supported to enable reprogramming and earlier completion of the Pedestrian Heart works.

John Buxton
Director of Development and Environment

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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