

**Cabinet – 16 June 2020**

**Re-opening of South Holland's markets, and Spalding market Stall provision (Minute)**

Consideration was given to the options for re-opening of the markets in South Holland and the market stalls provision at Spalding market.

The Cabinet voted to exclude the press and public under Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to consider the content of Appendix B. The press and public were re-admitted to the meeting for the remainder of the debate and the vote on the recommendations.

The impact of Covid-19 on the UK had meant that the government had to make the decision to introduce lock-down and shut certain outlets, including markets. On 24<sup>th</sup> March the decision was made to close markets in South Holland following government guidance and for the safety of traders, staff and visitors.

As the lock-down on England eased, the government announced on 24 May that outdoor markets could reopen from 1 June, so long as they were Covid-safe. Markets are an important part of the towns and should be opened as soon as they were safe to do so. However, changes to the way markets operate needed to be made in accordance with government guidance, dealing in particular with the requirement for social distancing.

Changes needed to be made to the markets including location, pitch booking and stall provision to make them safe and to provide confidence to those returning to the towns.

The Environmental Services Manager confirmed that there had been engagement with all traders, both regular and casual. The majority had continued to trade, stood on multiple markets and were comfortable with the level of support and engagement from the Council.

An additional recommendation was proposed by the Portfolio Holder and agreed as follows:

'That the Environmental Services Manager be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, to establish a Covid compliant market in the Market Place, Long Sutton if a road closure order can be obtained via the local Highway Authority and arrangements prove viable and achievable. If no such closure can be obtained the market to be established in the nearby council owned car park.'

The Portfolio Holder thanked the staff and ward members involved in the work detailed within the report.

**DECISION:**

1. That, in order to secure the safe re-opening of South Holland District Council markets, in line with government guidance introduced due to Covid-19,

- a) The current practice of erecting and dismantling SHDC stalls at Spalding Tuesday and Saturday markets be suspended;
- b) The removal of trade waste by South Holland District Council at Holbeach, Long Sutton and Crowland markets be terminated, thereby making the service equitable across all markets;

- c) A book and pay system for traders who wish to stand at any SHDC market be introduced to enable a planned approach to market layouts each week and remove the need for cash handling, both of which assist with the opening of Covid-safe markets;
- d) In the event that, following the consultation referred to in Appendix B of the report, the current practice of erecting and dismantling stalls at the Spalding market is ended, the fees for Spalding traders be amended as shown at paragraph 1.20 of the report;
- e) A rent free period be introduced for traders until 31 July 2020 to support the recovery of markets;
- f) Social distancing procedures be introduced at all markets including changing the layouts to accommodate the new government guidance;
- g) The market trader handbook be amended in line with the above recommendations;
- h) The following toilets be re-opened with an enhanced, hourly cleaning regime:
  - a) Spalding Vine Street and Winfrey Avenue, Tuesday to Saturday 8am to 4pm;
  - b) Long Sutton and Holbeach, Monday to Friday 8am – 2pm.

2. That the Portfolio Holder for Place be authorised to:

- a) designate a statutory market at Victoria Street car park should the volume of traders increase to such a point that it is deemed appropriate to enable the Spalding markets to operate safely in accordance with Governance guidance; and
- b) make a recommendation to Full Council or the appropriate Chief Officer (in consultation with the Chief Executive) in relation to any proposed impact on employment arising from the consultation process referred to in Appendix B; and

3 That the Environmental Services Manager be authorised, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, to

- a) Undertake the necessary consultation in relation to any proposed impact on employment referred to in Appendix B of the report;
- b) Change fees as set out;
- c) Procure and implement a book and pay system
- d) To continue to monitor the government guidance as part of the Covid-19 response and make amendments alongside guidance changes, as requested.
- e) Establish a Covid compliant market in the Market Place, Long Sutton if a road closure order can be obtained via the local Highway Authority and arrangements prove viable and achievable. If no such closure can be obtained the market to be established in the nearby council owned car park.

(Other options considered:

**Option One – Make changes as outlined to enable the opening of the markets in line with government guidance.** This will ensure that traders and customers can feel safe to return to our towns and shop locally, thereby supporting the local economy. Those changes include;

- Introducing an online book and pay system

- Changing layouts at Spalding and Long Sutton markets
- Suspending the provision of stalls in Spalding market
- Amending the fees for traders in Spalding should stall provision cease
- Ceasing the removal of trade waste at markets by SHDC
- Introducing a rent free period for market traders until 31st July 2020
- Re-opening of toilets in Spalding, Long Sutton and Holbeach with an hourly cleaning regime.

**Option Two – Do nothing and therefore markets cannot re-open safely in the current Covid environment.**

This option does not support our market towns, local economy, traders or residents to buy locally and is not the preferred option of this report.

Reasons for decision:

- The re-opening of markets is key to the vitality of our towns and local economy. The markets must open swiftly but safely and in line with government guidance. Ensuring the safety of our traders, businesses, town and market visitors and residents is of utmost importance to SHDC. Therefore we must make changes to allow the markets to open in line with guidance and provide confidence to those returning to our towns.
- Each of the recommendations feeds into the wider picture of a safe and secure market offer whilst ensuring that alternative approaches, which can create savings for the council, are implemented where appropriate.
- The introduction of an online book and pay system for traders is the first step in ensuring our markets are laid out safely and appropriate for each market's needs. The best way for us to be able to monitor these layouts and flex and grow in the coming months is to have an accurate picture of the traders that wish to stand, their required pitch size and also reduce the need for face to face interaction for money collection.
- Once we understand the numbers of traders wishing to stand, we must ensure that layouts are Covid safe. This means that we are complying with government and NABMA guidance. NABMA has a checklist of guidelines/considerations that can assist with making sure markets are safely re-opened and adhering to the 2m requirements. These include;
  - Limiting customer numbers
  - Managing aisle width
  - Considering stall layout and numbers
  - Creating one way systems
  - Using barriers
  - Installing signage
- We have considered all of the above and have implemented the guidance to ensure our proposed layouts address each of these areas for safe distances between stalls, businesses and pedestrian traffic.

The suspension of the current provision of stalls in Spalding is recommended whilst we review the impact of Covid and close proximity working and consider the financial implications for SHDC for maintaining the service. More detail regarding this is available in Appendix B.

- It is recommended that in light of the proposed stall provision suspension that the rent charges for Spalding be reviewed in line with the benchmarking exercise undertaken. This will support the traders and recognises that the removal of this service should result in a reduction in costs for traders where the costs have been reduced for SHDC.

- The removal of trade waste that is only currently available at some, not all, markets provides an inequity which should be addressed. The practice comes at a cost to SHDC which is set to increase following changes to the charges for disposal levied by LCC.

- It is important that we re-open the markets safely and that we support traders to return and therefore, the proposal to support traders with a rent free period until 31<sup>st</sup> July enables traders to return in the coming weeks whilst confidence is returned to the public to visit our towns. The re-opening of the toilets in these towns is important to support the public back to them. However, as with everything in a Covid climate, changes are required.

- It is therefore recommended that the Spalding toilets in Vine Street and Winfrey Avenue to re-open Tuesday to Saturday 8am to 4pm with an hourly cleaning regime. These hours are recommended as they fall across the towns' previously busy times and enable the restructuring of staff hours and duties to provide enhanced cleaning. For Long Sutton and Holbeach, the recommendation is to re-open Monday to Friday 8am to 2pm. Again these are considered the busy times in the towns and will enable the improved cleaning regime within current staffing levels. In Crowland, the toilets are maintained by the parish with support from SHDC and we have been in touch regarding our plans and suggested working practices.)