



Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel

Date: Wednesday, 27 January 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: MS Teams with Outside Broadcast

Membership: (Quorum 3)

Jean Dunseith, Alistair Chisholm (DTC), Janet Hewitt (DTC), Susie Hosford (DTC), Tony Lyall (DTC), Robin Potter (DTC), Dave Bolwell, Simon Gibson, Jill Haynes, Nick Ireland, Molly Rennie (DTC), Jane Somper, Roland Tarr and John Worth

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, South Walks House, South Walks Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UZ (Sat Nav DT1 1EE)

For more information about this agenda please telephone Democratic Services on 01305 or David Northover, Democratic Services Officer 01305 224175 david.northover@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



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MS Teams Outside Broadcasting Service Virtual meeting link –

<https://youtu.be/nMlu0FUift0>

Members of the public are invited to make written representations provided that they are submitted to the Democratic Services Officer no later than **8.30am on Monday 25 January 2021**. This must include your name, together with a summary of your comments and contain no more than 450 words.

If a Councillor who is not on the Board wishes to address the Board, they will be allowed 3 minutes to do so and will be invited to speak provided that they have notified the Democratic Services Officer by **8.30am on Monday 25 January 2021**.

Please note that if you submit a representation to be read out on your behalf at the

committee meeting, your name, together with a summary of your comments will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Please refer to the guide to public participation at committee meetings for general information about speaking at meetings included as part of this agenda (see agenda item 4 - Public Participation).

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A G E N D A

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1 APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2 MINUTES

5 - 10

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To receive any public questions or statements on the business of the Dorchester Market Joint Informal Panel.

5 CORNHILL MARKET ARRANGEMENTS

To receive an update from Grant Jones of Cornhill Market on what arrangements there are for the operations, management and delivery of the market in Cornhill,

6 FINANCE REPORT

11 - 16

To consider the Finance report.

7 APPOINTMENTS TO CAR BOOT FUND PANEL

To appoint to the Car Boot Fund Panel in its role in assessing and allocating proceeds to successful applicants.

8 ADMINISTRATION OF THE PANEL

To receive an oral update on the provision of how, and by whom, the Panel is administrated in the future.

9 THE FUTURE OF DORCHESTER MARKETS

17 - 18

To receive a report by the Town Clerk on what options there are for the future of Dorchester Markets.

10 URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

**THE FORMAL MEETING TO BE FOLLOWED BY AN INFORMAL
AND CONFIDENTIAL PANEL SESSION ON FUTURE
ARRANGEMENTS FOR DORCHESTER MARKETS**



DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Cllrs Jean Dunseith, Alistair Chisholm, Janet Hewitt, Susie Hosford, Tony Lyall, Robin Potter, Dave Bolwell, Jill Haynes, Nick Ireland, Molly Rennie, Jane Somper, Roland Tarr and John Worth

Apologies: Cllrs Simon Gibson

Officers present: Adrian Stuart - Clerk to Dorchester Town Council, Graham Duggan, Bill Wilberforce and David Northover

1. Election of Chairman

Resolved

That Councillor Mollie Rennie – Dorchester Town Council – be elected Chairman for the remainder of the year 2020/21.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Resolved

That Councillor Jill Haynes – Dorset Council – be appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the year 2020/21.

3. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Gibson – Dorset Council.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 were confirmed.

5. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

6. Public Participation

There was no public participation at the meeting.

7. Terms of Reference

The Panel's Terms of Reference was noted. Whilst understanding the need for and importance of political proportionality on both Council's Committees and Panels The panel recognised – if at all practicable - the need for it to be representative of those with a affiliation for Dorchester and the wards served by it Whilst this was provided for in the TOR , currently this was unable to be put into practice. This was acknowledged with the means for this being achieved in the future being actively pursued so as to ensure the Panel was as representative of the town as it could be.

8. **Presentation of an overview of Dorchester Markets**

The Panel received a presentation updating on the fundamentals of the market – its purpose its heritage and its legacy – and what it had to offer to the town in terms of economic, social and civic benefits. How it had been managed, how it was being managed and what visions there were for its future were all detailed.

As a market town, of the County Town, it was something of which to be rightly proud and was considered an asset, on Council owned land, in supporting other Council activities. It provided an opportunity for traders, a boost for the local economy and was a business seedbed. It attracted footfall locally and from visitors afar and acted as a social service - providing value for money goods that were not necessarily able to be sourced by other means. It was community focused, vibrant and stimulated local contact, being adaptable in reflecting changing needs and trends.

In terms of finances, the net surplus distributed was allocated 65% to Dorset Council, 35% to the Town Council, this being some £123k in 2018/19, with the net surplus from the Car Boot being distributed as community grants – some £19k in 2018/19.

However, there were issues which needed to be addressed these being falling footfall and income; Ensors' contract ending in 2026 and the management arrangements at Fairfield, with limited offer and loss of retail offer being of concern at the Cornhill site.

To address these issues, engagement in partnership with Dorset Council was needed on an asset review so as to:-

- develop a strategy for the markets
- improvements to the communication with the Fairfield operator
- planning for the end of the current Fairfield operator contract
- a review of markets management arrangements
- engagement with stakeholders about Cornhill/South Street offer and how to improve this.

The Panel appreciated this review of issues considering that, as well as the economic benefits to be gained, the social and welfare benefits of the market were of considerable value too.

It was accepted that the Fairfield market should be invigorated so as to provide something unique and relevant to the customer of today, to meet their

expectations - were that be more street food outlets, demonstrations or heritage exhibitions.

This would go a long way to ensuring the market's viability was maintained and gave a valid reason for people to continue to visit it in the numbers previously seen. It was accepted that the pandemic had seriously affected what could be done in the recent past, but they saw no reason why this trend couldn't be reversed going forward.

Given that during that period the market still operated as best it could and attracted custom, there was an obligation to ensure this loyalty was recognised in the coming months and years so that it remained a place attractive to go and spend time.

The Panel noted the differing scenarios with regard to trade and performance of the different market entities. It was disappointing to see the decline in performance and returns from the weekly Dorchester market but the reasons for this were understood and recognised. However, the Panel considered that, in recent years, significant investment had been made in the infrastructure of the site to benefit Ensors and what it was able to offer. What options there were for the market's operations and management in the future and how this could be best achieved needed to be identified and assessed, which would serve as some basis for how the market could operate successfully going forward.

The Panel acknowledged the benefits of the market and what it not only had to offer in itself as an entity – as a means of trading goods, services and produce which might not otherwise be readily accessible directly between suppliers and public - but its wider value and contribution too, in attracting visitors to the town and what that too had to offer. Moreover, in being an historic market town, the essence of maintaining a viable and successful market was critical to the fabric and vitality of Dorchester. Issues for consideration would be how the market operated; how it could best adapt to meet the needs of today's consumer; what the means of doing this would be; what arrangements were necessary to achieve this; what rental, licencing and contractual arrangements were necessary to secure its continuation; and how it could improve its efficiency to ensure its viability was maintained. The Panel wanted it to be successful and continue contributing to the economy of the town and be seen as a social and community asset for years to come.

Whilst recognising the challenges the market faced as a commercial enterprise the Panel considered that there was a considerable will to see it succeed. Maintaining a positive relationship between both Councils and Ensors was essential in this being achieved and members saw no reason why this shouldn't be the case. It was in the interests of all parties for this to happen and, it was anticipated that a means of doing this might be identified so as to ensure the long term successful future of this valued asset.

The Panel considered that issues at their meeting in January should be made readily accessible as normal, and as far as practicable, but it was recognised that some part of that meeting should be held in confidential session so that

finances and commercial contract arrangements could be discussed whilst respecting the sensitivities of this.

9. **Financial Outturn 2019-20**

The Panel considered the Financial Outturn 2019/20 and were asked to approve the income and expenditure statement for 2019/20.

What the operational issues had been, the reasons for this and how these had been managed were described, together with what influences there had been on the accounts being presented - with the total income for the year being £160,546 compared to the budget of £182,374. The main variance was a reduction in the fee paid by the market operator, with the decrease from the Cornhill Traders related to a credit note of £4,329, relating to 2018/19. How these issues were being managed and addressed were noted.

What was happening with town centre retail and custom and significant changes to retail habits accounted for much that was being seen, as well as the part the pandemic was to play in the ability to operate the markets as before and the consequent reduction in footfall.

Whilst disappointing, the Panel recognised, and accepted, the reasons for this and the bearing this had on the budget.

Resolved

That the income and expenditure statement for 2019/20 be approved.

Reason for decision

To enable the Panel to consider and approve the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2020 and ensure the budget was being managed as well it might.

10. **Market Management Report**

The Panel received the Dorchester Market Operator's Report from Ensors' for the period 1st April to 30th November 2020, with the:-

- Income and Expenditure – Wednesday Market - the gross income totalling £44,167, compared with a figure of £ 91,367 for the same period in 2019.
- Income and Expenditure – Sunday Car Boot Sale - the gross income totalling £12,883, compared with a figure of £32,267 for the same period in 2019.

Understandably this had been an exceptionally difficult year for trading due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which had necessitated the closure of the market for short periods during lockdown followed by lengthy periods of restrictions on selling “essential items” only, resulting in a substantial drop in income.

Given this and in view of the substantial reduction in income of the market this year, and the fact that restrictions were to be in place until at least Spring 2021, the operators considered that their monthly payments on account should be agreed at £3000.00 per month.

That being said, they hoped that normality would resume during the latter half of 2021 and were committed to discussing the future of the market and making any necessary improvements.

Ensors' report confirmed that they were wholly committed to the market and were avidly trying to encourage new traders to attend to support the market.

The Panel were pleased to see this commitment and noted the benefits this would bring. It was recognised that trading in open air markets during the pandemic was seen to be safer than shopping in-store and that the operators had rigorously ensured compliance with the Covid-19 regulations in the working practices of its traders.

The Panel noted that with the hiatus in trading of the Farmers Market and Cornhill operating when it was able, the Fairfield site provided a regular weekly commitment in ensuring locally sourced produce, goods and services could still be obtained during the pandemic and what benefits were gained from this. Whilst this was a long established location, it was recognised that a high street setting might lend itself more readily to attracting more modern retail practices in meeting the needs of passing trade.

Officers confirmed that they would assess the request for a monthly payment reduction and report to the January Panel meeting on this.

The Panel considered this to be a practical and reasonable way forward in managing the situation.

11. **Car Boot Fund**

Distribution of Grants from the Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund for the Financial Year 2019/20

The Panel received an update on the distribution of grants awarded from the Dorchester Car Boot Fund during 2020, together with an illustration of the type of organisations; local projects; initiatives and activities which benefited from the fund, as a result of the income generated by the weekly Sunday Car Boot Sale held at Dorchester Market. The Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund was financed entirely by the income from the car boot sales.

The Grant Awarding Panel had met during the summer to consider the applications, and assessed them against the necessary criteria and on the merit of each, being allocated on their relevant necessity and benefit. How initiatives were being delivered and the benefits they brought were critical considerations in the way in which the fund was allocated. In total, 11 community and voluntary organisations had been successful, and the total amount awarded was c. £13k.

The Panel were pleased to see how the fund was being used and how beneficial this would be to the viability and success of projects and initiatives in them being able to contribute towards what Dorchester had to offer.

Resolved

That the distribution of the Dorchester Market Car Boot Fund for the financial year 2019/20 be endorsed.

Reason for Decision

So as to ensure the available funding was allocated so as to be as beneficial as it could be to Dorchester.

12. Market matters

The opportunity to raise other market matters was not needed as all had been covered previously in the meeting.

13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 27 January 2021.

14. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items for consideration at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 4.00 pm

Chairman

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Dorchester Markets Joint Informal Panel 27th January 2021 Financial Outturn Projection 2020/21 & Proposed Budget 2021/22

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr J Haynes, Customer and Community Services

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

Report Author: Kevin Evans
Title: Senior Accountant
Tel: 01305 225188
Email: kevin.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That Members of the Panel note the current projected outturn position for 2020/21, and approve the 2021/22 budget proposals.

Reason for Recommendation:

To Panel need to agree a budget for 2021/22.

1. Executive Summary

Markets in Dorchester have operated since Anglo Saxon times, and are prescriptive. Under an agreement dated 1984 the markets are managed by Dorset Council for the benefit of Dorset Council and Dorchester Town Council with operational oversight carried out by the Dorchester Markets Joint Informal Panel. The Markets income and expenditure is held within the accounts of Dorset Council. The Panel receives a report on the annual budget and the annual outturn.

2. Financial Implications

As detailed in the report

3. Well-being and Health Implications

None

4. Climate implications

None

5. Other Implications

None

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: LOW as the fall in income was anticipated

Residual Risk: MEDIUM as there could be a further loss income

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

None

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Budget 2021/22

9. Background Papers

Management Accounts from Market Operator.

1. Projected Outturn 2020/21 (Appendix 1, Column C)

1.1 The total projected expenditure is forecast to be marginally over budget, currently looking at a potential cost of £44,118 against a budget of £41,958. The main reason behind the slight overspend is due to Electricity costs, of which there is no specific budget. This has been addressed as part of the proposed 2021/22 budget. The projected outturn assumes that the full £19.6k R&M budget will be spent. Although current R&M actuals are minimal, it is assumed the unspent R&M budget will be transferred into the earmarked R&M reserve at year end (as per 2019/20 outturn).

1.2 There is projected to be a significant deficit on the gross income budget. Current projections indicate potential income of £79,530, against a budget of £123,240. The most significant element of this

relates to a loss of income from the Market Operator's Contract (Ensors) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ensors have supplied Management Account information up to end of November 2020, which indicate a potential income to the panel across the Market Operator Contract, and Car Boot, of £33,500, against a budget of £69,000. Other rental income, such as for Cornhill and the Café, are assumed as on budget, although there are a number of outstanding invoices in relation to these.

- 1.3 At Ensor's request, it has been agreed that the monthly on account payments received from them will be reduced from £5,000 to nil per month with immediate effect, for the remainder of 2020/21. Payments will then revert to £3,000 per month from April 2021. This better reflects current trading conditions at the Market and assists Ensors with their cashflow. This has no impact on the sum due from Ensors at the end of the trading year and will be reviewed again once trading conditions return to normal.
- 1.4 There is a projected charge of £4,800 against the Farmers Market income budget. This is due to a 100% bad debt provision for unpaid invoices form 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- 1.5 Overall, this means the sum available for distribution to the panel is forecast to be £79,530, against a net budget of £123,240. The relevant shares would be split as follows : Dorset Council - £46,722 (against a budget of £67,821), Dorchester Town Council - £25,158 (against a budget of £36,519) and transfer to the Car Boot Reserve of £7,650 (against a budget of £18,900).

2. Budget 2021/22 (Appendix 1, Column D)

- 2.1 The proposed expenditure budget is £43,968.
- 2.2 The proposed income budget is £165,165. This assumes that the market operator's contract income (Ensors) is the same as 2020/21 original budget, £48,000. (The projected outturn for 2020/21 is likely to see significantly reduced income due to the Covid-19 pandemic.) Members will be aware this income has declined steadily from £117,915 in 2014/15.
- 2.3 This means the budgeted surplus for distribution is £121,197, with Dorset Council due £66,493 and Dorchester Town Council £35,804. The budgeted top up to the Car Boot reserve would be £18,900.

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Dorchester Markets Joint Informal Panel

Budget 2021/22

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
	Outturn 2019/20	Approved Budget 2020/21	Projected Outturn 2020/21	Proposed Budget 2021/22
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>				
Premises				
Repairs and maintenance	19,600	19,600	19,600	19,600
Electricity	3,052	0	3,150	3,250
Water	-173	0	250	0
Insurance	880	2,200	880	880
2/7 share of actual costs of toilets	1,978	2,200	2,200	2,200
	25,337	24,000	26,080	25,930
Supplies and Services				
Subscriptions	716	636	716	716
	716	636	716	716
Recharges				
Dorset Council	15,327	15,634	15,634	15,634
Dorchester Town Council	1,655	1,688	1,688	1,688
	16,982	17,322	17,322	17,322
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	43,035	41,958	44,118	43,968
<u>INCOME</u>				
Rents				
Market Operator's Contract	-48,225	-48,000	-25,000	-48,000
Car Boot	-15,992	-21,000	-8,500	-21,000
Cornhill Traders	-21,645	-25,974	-25,974	-25,974
Rents- Corn Market and Cafe	-21,150	-21,150	-21,150	-21,150
Farmers Market	-4,800	-750	4,800	0
Rival Markets Fee	-910	-500	0	-500
Fairfield Car Park	-47,824	-47,824	-47,824	-48,541
TOTAL INCOME	-160,546	-165,198	-123,648	-165,165
SURPLUS	-117,511	-123,240	-79,530	-121,197
DISTRIBUTION OF SURPLUS				
Sunday Market Reserve	14,393	18,900	7,650	18,900
Dorset Council	67,027	67,821	46,722	66,493
Dorchester Town Council	36,091	36,519	25,158	35,804
	117,511	123,240	79,530	121,197
<u>Market Maintenance Reserve</u>				
Opening Balance 1/4/19	7,986			
Transactions 2019/20	15,079			
Balance c/f 31/3/20	23,065			
<u>Sunday Car Boot Earmarked Reserve</u>				
Opening Balance 1/4/19	22,160			
Transactions 2019/20	14,606			
Transactions 2019/20	-10,444			
Balance c/f 31/3/20	26,322			

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DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

27 JANUARY 2021

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF DORCHESTER MARKETS

1. There are a number of markets in Dorchester operating under the control of the Markets Panel, including
 - The Wednesday Market based at Fairfield – while this has declined significantly since its peak in the early 2000’s, the weekly market operated by Ensors as the Panel’s agent is still one of the larger markets in Dorset, with between 80 – 120 traders operating from the internal shed and from outdoor stalls depending on the season
 - The Sunday Car Boot Sale – again operated by Ensors, also smaller than it has been in the past, the Boot Sale is currently generating a surplus of c. £15,000 pa which is distributed to local community groups
 - The Monday-Saturday Cornhill market with a changing mix of up to 12 stalls trading, this has been a success story in recent years, offering many of the benefits that NABMA attributes to a well run market and paying a rent of c.£25,000
 - The Panel also benefits from income from car parking at the Fairfield Car Park on a Wednesday (£48,000) and from two properties on the site (c. £25,000). It receives occasional income from Dorset Farmers Market and “rival” markets
2. For some years the Panel has been considering options relating to the future of the Wednesday Market
 - The current operator, Ensors, approached the Council some years ago with proposals to invest in the Fairfield site in exchange for a longer lease and increased trading days. The Panel was initially receptive, but no progress was made as West Dorset DC officers were concerned about the impact a long term arrangement might have on alternative uses for the site
 - West Dorset District Council received advice from consultants regarding the relocation of the Wednesday Market to an alternative site, the Acland Road Car Park, which would require significant new investment in infrastructure – this option has been dormant for c. 2 years
 - Following the repaving of lower South St five years ago the Town Clerk has noted the potential for an improved offer in South Street on a more regular basis, which might in the long term present an alternative location for stallholders from the Wednesday Market. It’s weakness is lack of space for larger traders
3. None of these options has ever commanded the shared support of the two Councils, the market operators and traders, so no progress has been made to set the market on its next phase of operation. The current Ensors agreement ends in 2026 and Ensors have recently outlined plans for a move away from their historic Wimborne

site, signalling a change in their approach to market operations. One of the historic strengths of Ensors to the Panel has been the synergy between their offers in Wimborne and Dorchester.

4. Noting all of the above, and also the number of new Members on the Panel, a separate briefing session has been arranged to allow Members to increase their understanding of the current position and to express a view on which of the options for managing the market should be examined in more detail.
5. This in turn would allow officers to gather evidence to answer Member questions and develop options that might be considered more formally at a future meeting. It will also allow a more detailed proposal to be discussed when Dorset Council commences its Asset Review programme.

Adrian Stuart
Town Clerk