



## Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel

**Date:** Wednesday, 23 February 2022  
**Time:** 2.30 pm  
**Venue:** The Town Hall, Corn Exchange, Dorchester

**Membership: (Quorum 3 )**

Laura Miller, Stella Jones (DTC), Frances Hogwood (Dorchester Town Council), Jean Dunseith, Janet Hewitt (DTC), Susie Hosford (DTC), Tony Lyall (DTC), Dave Bolwell, Simon Gibson, Nick Ireland, Molly Rennie (DTC), Jane Somper, Roland Tarr and John Worth

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**Chief Executive:** Matt Prosser, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

**For more information about this agenda please telephone Democratic Services on 01305 or David Northover, Democratic Services Officer**  
**[david.northover@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:david.northover@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)**



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# **A G E N D A**

## **Page No.**

### **1 APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

### **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

To appoint a Vice-Chairman to the Panel.

### **3 MINUTES**

5 - 10

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2021.

### **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or personal interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their decision councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.

If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

### **5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

### **6 FINANCIAL OUTTURN PROJECTION 2021/22 & PROPOSED BUDGET 2022/23**

11 - 16

To consider a report by the Executive Director of Place.

### **7 FAIRFIELD LINNEYS**

17 - 18

To consider a report by the Market Panels' s Officer Group.

**8 MARKET STRATEGY**

19 - 22

To consider a report by the Market Panels' s Officer Group.

**9 EXEMPT BUSINESS**

To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.

**10 CORNHILL MARKET**

23 - 24

To consider a **confidential** report by the Market Panel's Officer Group.

**11 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.



## **DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL**

### **NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 2021**

**Present:** Cllrs Jean Dunseith, Susie Hosford, Tony Lyall, Dave Bolwell, Simon Gibson, Jill Haynes, Nick Ireland, Molly Rennie, Jane Somper, Roland Tarr, Frances Hogwood and Stella Jones

**Apologies:** Cllrs Janet Hewitt and John Worth

**Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):** Adrian Stuart - Clerk to Dorchester Town Council, Graham Duggan, Bill Wilberforce, Kevin Evans, Karyn Punchard and David Northover

#### **Public Guest Speaker**

Grant Jones

#### **26. Election of Chairman**

##### **Resolved**

That Dorchester Town Councillor Mollie Rennie be elected Chairman for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Councillors Chisholm and Potter for their valued contribution to the Panel over the years and welcomed Councillors Stella Jones and Frances Hogwood to the Panel from Dorchester Town Council.

#### **27. Appointment of Vice-Chairman**

##### **Resolved**

That Councillor Jill Haynes be appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year 2021/22.

#### **28. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Janet Hewitt (Dorchester Town Council) and John Worth (Dorset Council).

#### **29. Minutes**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 were noted with a correction being made to minute 21 - Appointments to Car Boot Fund Panel – to delete reference to the Mayor/Deputy Mayor.

30. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

31. **Public Participation**

There was no public participation at the meeting.

32. **Financial Outturn Report 2020/21**

The Panel received the financial outturn report for 2020/21 and considered what it entailed and were being asked to approve the income and expenditure statement for 2020/21.

The total income accounted for during 2020/21 was £87,303 against a budget of £165,198, leaving a significant income deficit of £77,895. The main underlying reason for this shortfall was the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, and in particular the effects of the numerous lockdowns & restrictions imposed during 2020/21.

Officers took the Panel through the report explaining that, at present, there was a significant debt outstanding relating to Cornhill Market. Preliminary discussions with the operators had identified that the operator was unable to operate the market for significant parts of 2020/21 and that much of this debt would therefore not be recoverable.

The operator had also highlighted that there was significant risk that they would not be able to make payments during 2021/22 due to the impact of the pandemic on local retail and footfall. Accordingly, a recommendation was included that a reduced fee be negotiated with the operator and it would be prudent to assume no further income from this source until negotiations have been concluded.

Given the circumstances the Panel were 'minded to' agree with the principle of this recommendation.

**Resolved**

1) That the Head of Community and Public Protection (Dorset Council), in consultation with the Town Clerk (Dorchester Town Council) and with support from the Property and Finance Divisions of Dorset Council, be authorised to agree a reduced fee for the years 2020/21 and 2021/22 with the operators of the Cornhill Market.

2) That the panel approve the income and expenditure statement for 2020/21.

3) That the Head of Community and Public Protection (Dorset Council), in consultation with the Town Clerk (Dorchester Town Council) and with support from the Property and Finance Divisions of Dorset Council enact the Panel's 'minded to' decision.

**Reason for Decision**

To enable Members of the Panel to consider and approve the Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### 33. Market Operations

The Panel took the opportunity to consider Market operations, what these were, how these should be delivered and what could be done to make the most of this asset so as to ensure the markets in Dorchester would be viable and a successful attraction. They were pleased to hear from Grant Jones – on behalf of the Cornhill market traders – about what was happening in Cornhill; how things were being done there and what his experiences – and those of other traders - were.

Given the limitations in being able to run the market as had been done prior to the pandemic, trade - in terms of sales, browsing and passing trade – had all been curtailed significantly over the recent months. Whilst this was generally understandable, every effort had continued to be made to ensure what trade possible was maintained, with social distancing rules being applied. Despite the hardships experienced, there was still a keen appetite for pitches when these became available. Mr Jones had met with officers to see how best the Cornhill market could be run, what might be offered and where best this might be situated.

Options for how this market – and Dorchester markets generally – could remain vibrant and viable going forward were considered and where any expansion might be able to be accommodated and how this might be done.

The Panel saw this as welcomed news and, in recognising how popular the Cornhill market was, were pleased to see that there had been some resurgence in trade and interest now a degree of normality had returned. They acknowledged there was a loyal and dedicated patronage of the stalls and saw no reason why his shouldn't continue to thrive into the future. The Panel thanked Mr Jones for his valued contribution and continuing positive approach.

The Panel considered what options there were for the future of Dorchester markets - in terms of trading activities; locations; popularity and footfall; access; legal and contractual commitments and obligations; and cultural and social community considerations - with a presentation from the Town Clerk facilitating this discussion and the panels understanding.

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 together with how it had been managed, how it was being managed and what visions there were for its future, were all considerations.

As a market town, of the County Town, it was something of which to be rightly proud and was considered an asset in providing an opportunity for traders, a boost for the local economy and was a business seedbed. The Panel understood they all played their part in attracting footfall locally and from visitors afar and acted as a means of 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.

The Panel appreciated having the opportunity to be able to 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.

Whatever options were available, it was accepted that the markets 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 their 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.

Consideration would continue to be given to the differing scenarios and various options with regard to trade, performance and management of the different market entities, in identifying and assessing how this could be best achieved so as to serve as some basis for how the markets could operate successfully going forward. What was being done at Bridport Market in bringing about its success was worth looking into.

The Panel acknowledged the benefits of what the markets brought to Dorchester and what they each had to offer in their own way, not only 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 their wider value and contribution too, in attracting visitors to the town and as a social and community asset. 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 markets operated; how they 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 their continuation; and how they could improve their efficiency to ensure viability was maintained.

Most importantly the Panel wanted to see them successful and continue contributing to the economy of the town and be seen as a social and community asset for years to come and there was a considerable will to see these valued assets succeed.

It was considered that the pandemic had provided the opportunity to reassess and re calibrate what was being done and the process for doing it. Whilst the principles on what to do, how to do it and, where it should be done were accepted, it was recognised that there was a need for any



further detailed discussion at this stage again should be held by a Working Group in confidential session so that finances and commercial contract arrangements could be discussed, whilst respecting the sensitivities of this.

An assurance was given that whatever options were considered, there would be a need for this to go through a formal decision process – in a public forum setting – with no decisions being taken discretely. For now, those options would be considered and assessed, with any recommendations being then formally considered by both the Town Council and Dorset Council before any implementation was considered.

The Panel considered that, in the circumstances, what was being proposed was as practicable as it could be in managing the way in which the markets operated and in them being prepared to meet future needs and trends.

**Duration of meeting:** 2.00 - 3.40 pm

**Chairman**

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## **Dorchester Markets Joint Informal Panel 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 Financial Outturn Projection 2021/22 & Proposed Budget 2022/23**

### **For Decision**

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr L Miller, 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 2021/22, and approve the 2022/23 budget proposals.

#### **Reason for Recommendation:**

The Panel need to agree a budget for 2022/23.

#### **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 of income

### **7. Equalities Impact Assessment**

None

### **8. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Budget 2022/23

### **9. Background Papers**

Management Accounts from Market Operator.

#### **1. Projected Outturn 2021/22 (Appendix 1, Column C)**

1.1 The total projected expenditure is forecast to be marginally over budget, currently looking at a potential cost of £44,218 against a budget of £43,968. The main reason behind the slight overspend is due to minor Water costs from Wessex Water Authority, of which there is no specific budget. This has been addressed as part of the proposed 2022/23 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 2020/21 outturn).

1.2 There is projected to be a significant deficit on the gross income budget. Current projections indicate potential income of £124,655, against a budget of £165,165. The latest supplementary management

accounts from the market operator (Ensors) cautiously points to an improved position compared to the 2020/21 outturn, which saw income severely suppressed due to Covid-19 induced restrictions. However, at the time of writing, Dorset Council has only received Ensor's management accounts covering the first quarter of 2021/22. Market income is therefore anticipated to be on budget, whereas the figures for Q1 indicate a potential shortfall on the Car Boot income. It needs to be noted that the final outturn will vary due to 9 months worth of figures still to be received.

- 1.3 It is currently anticipated that there will be zero income received during 2021/22 in relation to the Cornhill Traders, based on the assumption that the panel accepts a recommendation in the separate confidential report from the Town Clerk in relation to Cornhill Market. In addition, a re-allocation of income from the 2020/21 outturn has resulted in a debit of £4,824 against this line. There is an allocated income budget of £25,974, so the forecasted position is for a deficit of just under £31k.
- 1.4 The other sources of income are mostly expected to come in on budget during 2021/22, including the rents for the Corn Market & Café, and the full budget of £48,541 is anticipated in respect of the allowance for Fairfield parking income (it is worth noting that during 2020/21 it was agreed that only half of the Fairfield parking budgeted income would be transferred due to lockdowns and restrictions).
- 1.5 Overall, this means the sum available for distribution to the panel is forecast to be £80,437, against a net budget of £121,197. The relevant shares would be split as follows: Dorset Council - £45,388 (against a budget of £66,493), Dorchester Town Council - £24,440 (against a budget of £35,804) and transfer to the Car Boot Reserve of £10,609 (against a budget of £18,900).

## **2. Budget 2022/23 (Appendix 1, Column D)**

- 2.1 The proposed expenditure budget is £44,313. This represents a very minor increase on the approved expenditure budget for 2021/22, set at £43,968. The increase is due to an inflationary increase on the Electricity line, and a nominal budgetary allocation on the Water line to reflect expected actuals in the current year. The prevailing Dorset Council budget guidance, used in the preparation of 2022/23 budgets, doesn't provide for general inflation on expenditure budget lines, with the exception of utility costs.

2.2 The proposed income budget is £166,379. This assumes that the budgeted income from the Market Operator's contract (Ensors), and other associated rental / licence income is frozen at the 2021/22 budget levels. The exception is an increase in the estimated Fairfield Parking recharge, to reflect anticipated increases in parking income.

2.3 This means the budgeted surplus for distribution is £122,066, with Dorset Council due £67,058 and Dorchester Town Council £36,108. The budgeted top up to the Car Boot reserve would be £18,900.

2.4 Members will be aware that income was significantly suppressed during the 2020/21 Financial Year as a direct result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, including associated lockdowns and restrictions. There are early indications that income levels have improve for the 2021/22 outturn, and it is hoped trading activity may return to nearer normal levels during 2022/23.

**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 2022/23

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
	Outturn 2020/21	Approved Budget 2021/22	Projected Outturn 2021/22	Proposed Budget 2022/23
	(£)	(£)	(£)	(£)
<b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>				
<b>Premises</b>				
Repairs and maintenance	19,600	19,600	19,600	19,600
Electricity	2,836	3,250	3,250	3,345
Water	292	0	250	250
Insurance	-998	880	880	880
2/7 share of actual costs of toilets	808	2,200	2,200	2,200
	<b>22,538</b>	<b>25,930</b>	<b>26,180</b>	<b>26,275</b>
<b>Supplies and Services</b>				
Subscriptions	716	716	716	716
Security Costs	77	0	0	0
	<b>793</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>716</b>
<b>Recharges</b>				
Dorset Council	15,634	15,634	15,634	15,634
Dorchester Town Council	1,689	1,688	1,688	1,688
	<b>17,323</b>	<b>17,322</b>	<b>17,322</b>	<b>17,322</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>40,654</b>	<b>43,968</b>	<b>44,218</b>	<b>44,313</b>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>				
<b>Rents</b>				
Market Operator's Contract	-23,667	-48,000	-48,000	-48,000
Car Boot	-5,661	-21,000	-11,788	-21,000
Cornhill Traders	-25,974	-25,974	4,824	-25,974
Rents- Corn Market and Cafe	-10,823	-21,150	-21,150	-21,150
Farmers Market	4,800	0	0	0
Rival Markets Fee	0	-500	0	-500
Recovered Costs	-2,066	0	0	0
Fairfield Car Park	-23,912	-48,541	-48,541	-49,755
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>-87,303</b>	<b>-165,165</b>	<b>-124,655</b>	<b>-166,379</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>-46,649</b>	<b>-121,197</b>	<b>-80,437</b>	<b>-122,066</b>
<b>DISTRIBUTION OF SURPLUS</b>				
Sunday Market Reserve	5,095	18,900	10,609	18,900
Dorset Council	27,010	66,493	45,388	67,058
Dorchester Town Council	14,544	35,804	24,440	36,108
	<b>46,649</b>	<b>121,197</b>	<b>80,437</b>	<b>122,066</b>
<b><u>Market Maintenance Reserve</u></b>				
Balance b/f 01.04.2020	23,065			
Transactions 2020/21	4,589			
<b>Balance c/f 31.03.2021</b>	<b>27,654</b>			
<b><u>Sunday Car Boot Earmarked Reserve</u></b>				
Balance b/f 01.04.2020	20,974			
Draw down in advance 2020/21	-10,444			
Top Up 2020/21	5,095			
<b>Balance c/f 31.03.2021</b>	<b>15,625</b>			

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## DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2022

### FAIRFIELD LINNEYS

1. The Fairfield Linneys are two lengths of animal sheds, one backing onto properties in Great Western Road (North Linney), the other onto Fairfield Road (South Linney). Each linney is c.100m in length and consists of a tiled roof supported by wooden posts, subdivided by wooden/metal fencing. The Linneys were features of the site when it was a cattle market and continue to exist because of the Conservation Area status of the site.
2. The constructions themselves currently serve no practical purpose. South Linney is used for car parking. The western end of North Linney is accessible for some cars, while the eastern end has been chain-fenced off due to the low height of the stalls. They do, however, provide shelter and from time to time are used by rough sleepers and occasionally by young people for gathering. Sadly, the Linneys do suffer from vandalism and can also become littered. A recent occurrence of anti-social behaviour in January resulted in significant damage to the tiled roof and extensive and offensive graffiti in South Linney.
3. While immediate repairs have been actioned, including the removal of damaged tiles and painting over the most offensive graffiti, the Linneys are now in poor condition and still need a significant amount of work.
4. Dorset Council Property Services has obtained a quote for the repainting of the walls of both Linneys, c. 400m<sup>2</sup> metres in total, at c. £10,000 to make good and coat with anti-graffiti paint. Irrespective of the long term future of the Linney roofs, the N. Linney walls are essential as a boundary with residential properties in Great Western Road, and it is also unlikely that the wall bounding Fairfield Road will be removed. These works have therefore been actioned to minimise the risk of a repeat damage. The works can be accommodated by the Panel's maintenance budget.
5. Officers will also implement other remedial works aimed at limiting future damage
  - Litter will be removed from the caged area of the North Linney
  - Guttering will be removed from the Linneys – it serves no useful purpose and is an easy target for vandalism
  - Consideration is being given to extending the cage in the North Linneys to a natural break point where there is an existing breeze block wall.
7. When resources permit, Officers will prepare a report for the Panel to give more detailed thought to the long-term future of the structures, which are looking increasingly worn and will inevitably continue to suffer periodic bouts of anti-social behaviour.

Graham Duggan  
Head of Community and Public Protection  
Dorset Council

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## DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2022

### MARKET STRATEGY

#### Background

1. Markets have existed in Dorchester for over a millennia. The reasons for holding markets in Dorchester have broadly remained the same throughout, although at different times the relative priority for each of those reasons has changed
  - They have been a core component of the local economy, allowing local people to bring goods to market to sell to local people. Often sellers will use the market as a cheap way of trialling their product
  - They provide an opportunity for local people to buy goods at an affordable price, routinely in an atmosphere that breeds a sense of community
  - They generate an income for the local authority to deliver services - Dorchester's local Council(s) have benefitted from the toll revenue generated from markets activity within 6 2/3 miles of the town centre since their creation around 400 years ago
  - To stimulate interest in, and drive footfall towards, the town. Market and Fair days have always been among the busier days in the town's calendar, benefitting a much wider local economy than the market itself. Most recently the climate emergency has increased an added impetus to "buy local"
2. Since the resolution of a key disagreement resulting from local government reorganisation in 1972, in Dorchester two local authorities, the Town Council and West Dorset DC (now Dorset Council) share oversight of the markets through the Informal Joint Panel, with Dorset Council providing professional support and both parties benefitting from a net surplus generated from market activity (65% to Dorset Council, 35% to Dorchester Town Council). While technically entitled to benefit from all markets taking place within their area the primary focus is on activity on two sites:-
  - Fairfield – the Panel has a lease on the site that runs until 2078 and can use the site when it wishes for market activity. When market activity is not taking place the site is used by Dorset Council to provide parking. The activity currently taking place on site includes
    - The weekly Wednesday Market – a management agreement is in place with Ensors who operate the market, paying 80% of the net trading surplus across to the Panel. This agreement ends in 2026. The markets ethos has traditionally focused on essential and low value goods
    - The Sunday Car Boot Sale – also managed by Ensors on the same basis, the surplus from the Boot Sale is distributed by a Sub-Panel to local community projects operating within 6 2/3 miles of Dorchester
    - An assessment of the net Income generated from parking on site across the two trading days is paid direct to the Panel. This has been a fixed notional figure for the past 15 years
    - Tenants of the Market Café and the Corn Market building (Dukes Auction House) pay rent, which is received by the Panel
  - Corn Hill – potentially one of England's oldest market sites, with trading dating back to Roman times on and near to the site, the market is operated six days a week by Cornhill Market Traders Ltd on a licence agreement.
3. Markets change in response to the needs of sellers and buyers. The best markets adapt to these changes; those that don't fail but are often replaced. There are lots of examples of markets in Dorset that have failed, and just as many that have been re-energised. Sometimes change is driven by the local authority, sometimes by the traders themselves. There are no

examples of Markets that have remained the same and also remained successful over a long period of time.

Fairfield Market has been in gradual decline for over a decade, today generating only 30% of the pitch fees that it enjoyed in 2005. Cornhill Market was in decline until about 10 years ago, when it gained new energy, but has recently struggled as a result of changes in retail and work trends, exacerbated by Covid and lockdowns. Neither are in strong health at present.

4. Elsewhere, however, markets are being seen as an important part of economic stability and health. New “Independent” markets are catering to a new breed of seller, delivering arts, craft, food and drink to a new buyer, routinely at the weekend and in a location of character. In Dorset a number of new markets are taking place, although only Bridport’s Saturday market has successfully adapted away from its historic offer to offer a market with an “independent” feel. In 2021 an independent market took place on two occasions at Poundbury.
5. Until recently seasonal fairs had virtually disappeared from Dorchester. New one off opportunities such as the Dorset Food and Drink Fair at Poundbury, the Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair in the town centre, and most recently a revamped Dorchester Cracker, have demonstrated that there is an appetite from both sellers and buyers to create themed events that have wider benefits to the area where they take place.
6. Any strategy that the Panel develops needs to take account of all of the above issues. The primary role of the Panel is to ensure the continuance of the market tradition in Dorchester.

#### **Fairfield Wednesday Market (and Sunday Car Boot Sale)**

7. For many local residents Dorchester Market means the Wednesday market at Fairfield. The market is currently operated by Ensors, who until recently were also the owners and operators of the once highly successful Wimborne Market. The current lease dates from April 2001 and runs until April 2026. Ensors took on operation of the market at a low point, invested in the large covered area adjacent to Weymouth Avenue in 2001, and built income to a stage where the Panel received a distribution of £190,000 in 2005/06 at the Market’s peak.
9. Ensors have been offering to invest in the site in exchange for an extension to the lease for a number of years, and have also previously sought to acquire the site. Their view is that investment in buildings infrastructure is necessary to safeguard and rebuild the market, which had declined to a level where, even before Covid, the Panel distribution was £48,000 in 2019/20. For a number of reasons, at any time, one or other or both Councils have not supported a lease extension. The Procurement Officer at Dorset Council has confirmed that the lease itself does not make provision for an extension and that there do not appear to be grounds for an exemption to introduce an extension. Nonetheless Ensors remain keen for an extension to the lease.
10. Members are invited to consider the options available to the Panel:-
  - Explore grounds for an extension of the current lease beyond April 2026
  - Prepare for a new procurement of the market operation from April 2026
  - Bring management of the market in house from 2026 – note that neither Council currently has the skillset or resource to manage the Fairfield market
11. Irrespective of which long term solution is selected it is important that in the short term the Panel works with Ensors to ensure that the market is well managed and well promoted. At present there is limited resource allocated to this task.

#### **Cornhill Market**

12. The “Town Pump” market consists of up to 12 stalls, operating 6 days a week, within a marked area in the main shopping street of the town. Prior to Covid the market was operating successfully, providing an income of over £25,000 a year, with pitches full in the summer period

but quieter in the winter period and when weather is bad and footfall reduced. Once managed by West Dorset DC's Parking team, after a short period operating as a co-operative the market has been operated by Cornhill Market Traders (CMT, two directors, both trading at Cornhill) for the past 5 years. The option to choose a particular trading day presents opportunities for a wide number of existing and new traders, while the presence of the market helps to animate one of the more traditional gathering spaces in the town.

13. Covid and lockdown has caused significant damage to the trader base that sustained the market and its income. A separate report on the agenda discusses options to support the market and its current operator. If the Panel accept the recommendation contained within the report then officers will continue to support CMT to re-establish the market.
14. The Town Council is currently promoting a scheme to refurbish the Cornhill public realm, which will necessitate the temporary relocation of some stalls to elsewhere in South Street in the near future.

### Sunday Markets and Fairs

15. The Panel has hitherto focused its energy into its two traditional market offers, with no strategy to develop other forms of market. In recent years new groups of traders have emerged offering a new range of products to a different audience. The "Independent" brand, offering quality food and drink, arts and crafts and vintage is now well established elsewhere and the creation of the Poundbury Independent, which has now run two small but successful market days, demonstrates the appetite for such an offer in Dorchester. The Independent market sector has often grown to meet a demand, rather than being sponsored by the public authorities.
16. Meanwhile the Town Council has supported the development of new fairs operating along a closed High Street, based around Thomas Hardy and the town's Heritage, while the longstanding Cracker event moved successfully to Sunday this year. The August Poundbury Food and Drink Fair is also now well established.
17. Town Council officers have been exploring the potential to co-ordinate a monthly programme (March-December) operating in the High Street and at Poundbury to provide a consistent approach to traders and to provide a consistent message to visitors, and in addition to liaise with the local business community to ensure that footfall benefits are felt more widely. Advice has been sought from existing independent operators from other towns and several have expressed an interest in working in a consortium to share the load of organising a programme.
18. A new market programme also offers an opportunity to determine new standards regarding the way the events will operate, for example in relation the climate or how products are sourced. One key consideration is who would expect to benefit financially from operating the markets or whether, like the already established Boot Sale, any surplus income might be used to promote community initiatives. In the early days at least a surplus is unlikely.
19. Appendix 1 offers an early idea of a programme for 2023, that builds on some of the current events that are already pencilled into the calendar for 2022 and 2023. It also lists some possible new themed events that could be developed over time.

### Overall Strategy

20. It is **RECOMMENDED** that the following strategy is adopted

Market Type	Strategy
Wednesday Traditional Sunday Boot Sale	<b>?Decision re Ensors lease extension/Procurement in 2026?</b>

	Support the markets in their current method of operation for as long as there are sufficient traders and users to make it relevant and viable
Cornhill Daily	Support the operator to rebuild the market Respond to short term need for alternative pitches due to changes in footfall patterns and new public realm works
Sunday Markets and Fairs	Develop programme for 2023 by building partnership of existing and new event operators Focus on environmental and community benefits of the market, rather than income generation

Adrian Stuart  
Town Clerk  
Dorchester Town Council

## APPENDIX 1

### DORCHESTER SUNDAY FAIRS AND MARKETS PROGRAMME

Month	Market	Location
<i>March</i>	<i>Science themed</i>	<i>High East/West Street</i>
April	Independent Maker	Poundbury
<i>May</i>	<i>Community themed</i>	<i>High East/West Street</i>
<b>June</b>	<b>Thomas Hardy Victorian Fair</b>	<b>High East/West Street</b>
July	Independent Maker	Poundbury
<b>August</b>	<b>Food and Drink Fair</b>	<b>Poundbury</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Heritage Open Day</b>	<b>High East/West Street</b>
October	Independent Maker	Poundbury
<i>November</i>	<i>Halloween/Pre-Christmas themed</i>	<i>High East/West Street</i>
<b>December</b>	<b>Cracker</b>	<b>High East/West Street</b>

Status:            **Established**                      Emerging                      *To be developed?*

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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