

DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2025

Present: Cllrs Piers Brown, Simon Christopher, Jed Germodo, Janet Hewitt, Rob Hughes, Stella Jones, Kate Reid, Molly Rennie, Roland Tarr and Sarah Williams

Apologies: Cllrs Dave Bolwell, Sally Holland, Fiona Kent-Ledger and Craig Monks

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Kevin Evans (Senior Accountant (Place)), Graham Duggan (Head of Community & Public Protection), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer), Hannah Massey (Lawyer - Regulatory) and Steve Newman (Town Clerk)

41. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 10 July 2024 were confirmed and signed.

42. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

43. Public Participation

There were no public questions.

44. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

45. Financial Outturn Projection 2024/25 & Proposed Budget 2025/26

The Senior Accountant presented the budget report, providing a summary of the details that were set out in the report. He explained that the report did not contain the most up-to-date figures for income from Fairfield Market, however these figures had since been sent over and the actual figures were slightly less than the estimated figures within the report. There had been no recent drawdowns to the Market Maintenance Reserve, which stood at £78,035.

The Head of Community and Public Protection explained that an update had been received from Ensors, who stated that there had been a 9% decline in market income from Fairfield Market.

In response to a question from one member the Head of Community and Public Protection stated that the footfall index showed the picture of markets nationally,

however no benchmarking had been done to compare Dorchester markets with other markets in Dorset.

The panel noted the current projected outturn position for 2024/25 and approved the 2025/26 budget proposals.

46. Fairfield and Cornhill Market Report

The Head of Community and Public Protection delivered a verbal update on Fairfield and Cornhill Markets. No information had been received for Cornhill market, however an update had been provided for Fairfield market. Trading income was down by 9% for Fairfield market, when compared to the previous year and the market operator stated that they were committed to work with the panel to ensure a smooth transition as their contract would come to an end in 2026.

The Chair assured the committee that the traders would be informed of any changes as the transition in the market operator took place over the next year.

47. FUTURE OPERATION OF FAIRFIELD & CORNHILL MARKETS

The Head of Community and Public Protection provided a verbal update on the future operation of the markets. It was explained that the sub-group, that had been established at the last Panel meeting had explored the option of Dorchester Town Council taking over as the operator of the market, following the end of the current contract in 2026. Legal Services at Dorset Council had also provided advice on the legal agreement that would need to be drawn up. The general Heads of Terms were shown to members and it was explained that any details could be outlined within the sub-group meetings. The Town Clerk provided an initial timeline of events, which covered the transition in the market operator over the next 14 months.

The following responses were provided to members questions by the Head of Community and Public Protection and the Lawyer:

- A lease of 7 years or more would require notification of the Land Registry, which is why an alternative legal agreement was being considered.
- Financial arrangements between the two councils hadn't been explored yet, but it was thought that they would follow a similar approach to the current financial split.
- The contract would give the Town Council permission to run the market for a specified period of time and clauses could be included to allow the early closure of the agreement if both parties wished to do so.
- A length of time for the contract hadn't been decided upon yet.
- The infrastructure liability of Dorset Council referred to the structures of the market, such as the walls, rather than the existing buildings on site.

One member raised a concern about the current condition of the buildings on site and whether Dorset Council and Dorchester Town Council would be taking on potential liabilities in older buildings, that required refurbishment or removal.

Proposed by Cllr Brown and seconded by Cllr Tarr.

Decision: That the panel recommend that a survey is commissioned of the operator's structures on the site for consideration by the panel.

48. **Dorchester Artisan Market Update**

The Town Clerk delivered a verbal update to members on the monthly artisan market and he noted that the operator had provided positive feedback on the level of visitors to the artisan market in Dorchester.

The panel noted the update.

49. **Car Boot Fund Update**

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on the Car Boot Fund, which had been distributed by the Car Boot Panel in December 2024. The panel distributed awards totalling £12,000 and 44% of the applicants received the full grant that they applied for.

50. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.17 pm

Chairman

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