DORCHESTER MARKETS INFORMAL JOINT PANEL
30 JULY 2025
BRIEFING NOTE - FUTURE OPERATION OF FAIRFIELD & CORNHILL MARKETS

1. The Market Panel sub-group established to support the Panel in ensuring the operation of the markets after the contact with Ensors finishes, met on 10 December 2024 and 29 April 2025. The sub-group discussed a range of issues associated with the task and officers took away a number of actions to progress. Additionally, progress was discussed at the Market Panel meeting on 29 January 2025.

2. Dorset Council Legal Services is producing a second draft of the concession agreement proposed to govern the operation of the markets, an update on this will be given at the meeting. As a reminder, the agreement is built around the following principles;

   Dorchester Town Council
   - Have day to day control and management of the Fairfield Market and tolls at the sites and locations on which the same are existing or entitled at the 1 October 1978.
   - Have day to day control and management of Cornhill Market (or oversee an agent appointed for the purpose).
   - Determine hours of opening.
   - Provide for the nature and arrangement of stalls.
   - Provide agreements and licences for market tenants.
   - Arrange necessary insurance pertaining to Market days.
   - Provide financial operating accounts for the market(s), production of annual accounts and trading surplus distribution.
   - Provide democratic support services to the Market Panel.

   Dorset Council
   - Maintain the infrastructure of the market sites.
   - Arrange for the undertaking of any infrastructure development on the sites subject to necessary permissions and funding.

   Market Panel
   - Make policy in respect of financial matters including review of rents, fees, tolls and charges relating to market operations and other arrangements referred to in the 1984 Agreement relating to Dorchester Market.
   - Exercise any other powers resulting from the Market Charter including the levying of fees for markets within the prescribed distance of the Charter Market.
   - Provide oversight on the performance of the markets and arrangements with both Councils.

3. The terms of reference for the Market Panel will require amendment and work on this will commence when the draft concession agreement is complete. Both councils have indicated a willingness to reduce the size of membership of the Panel from its current 14 members. A proposal of 6 members, 3 from each council has been suggested. Views on this are welcomed and will then be considered further at the next meeting of the sub-group. Changes to democratic and financial support arrangements will also be included. Proposed changes to the terms of reference will need to be ratified by both councils in time for the new market arrangements commencing on 2 April 2026.

4. In relation to the structures at Fairfield Market. Legal Services at Dorset Council has indicated that there are no obligations on Ensors in relation to the buildings other than to remove any

signage and make good. Following discussion at the last Panel meeting, external surveys of the enclosed market building and the covered market structure have taken place and minor issues noted for repair. Internal and electrical surveys for the enclosed market building will take place shortly. Any urgent matters from these will be actioned directly and if there is proposed significant expenditure, the matter will be discussed with the chair and vice-chair of the Panel. The damage caused to the South Linneys by the fire in 2024 is due for repair this calendar year.

5. The Town Council has appointed a part time Markets Officer so as to ensure a smooth transition of the market operation once the Ensors contract ends and the Town Council's concession commences. The person appointed has significant experience in operating markets for a Town Council and is due to take up post on a date to be agree in late September / early October 2025.

6. The future of the enclosed market building can be discussed further at the Panel meeting and with the new Markets Officer once he has taken up his post.

7. Other outstanding matters have been identified where clarity is required. These include the following and are being followed up by officers;

   - Principles and process for managing investment proposals and requests
   - Review of parking income arrangement for Fairfield Market
   - Clarify rental income arrangements including annual uplifts for businesses within the Fairfield Market site
   - Wednesday Market and Car Boot site cleaning arrangements

   These matters will be reported upon to the sub-group at their next meeting.

8. A meeting has taken place with the current operators of Cornhill Market. They are in agreement for the current arrangement to finish on 31 March 2026 when the new Markets Officer will take up operational control.

Graham Duggan
Head of Community Protection
Dorset Council

Steve Newman
Town Clerk
Dorchester Town Council