

## **AGENDA 12, Enc ix) PROPOSED MONTHLY SATURDAY MARKET — UPDATE REPORT**

### **1. Background**

At an earlier meeting (November), the Council agreed in principle to support the establishment of a monthly Saturday market on Station Road, operated by Brightside Events under a trial arrangement, and authorised the Executive Officer to write to the NCC Markets Manager, Neil Brown, to begin discussions. This report updates Members on progress and invites a decision on an alternative venue.

### **2. Current Position**

Following the Council's decision, Brightside Events and NCC Markets Manager Neil Brown have been actively exploring how the proposal could be delivered. This work has identified a number of operational and logistical challenges with the Station Road location:

- Safe set-up and pack-down for stallholders on Station Road presents practical difficulties that would need to be resolved.
- The existing Tuesday market operates under an informal arrangement. A formal Saturday market may require a formal road closure, which carries a significant associated cost and a requirement for staffing the closure.
- Safety Advisory Group (SAG) permissions would need to be satisfied about the about, adding to the complexity and lead time.

Station Road has not been ruled out entirely, and discussions between Brightside Events and NCC are ongoing. However, the challenges identified mean that an alternative venue may be necessary to bring the proposal forward in a timely manner.

### **3. Alternative Venue — John Street Car Park**

An alternative of John Street car park has been thought about. There is a historical link: markets were held on this site many years ago. The location would avoid the road closure and SAG complications associated with Station Road, however there could still be a car park closure fee.

The principal concern with this option is the temporary loss of town centre car parking on market days. Members are asked to weigh this against the wider regeneration and economic benefits a regular Saturday market could bring.

### **4. Longer-Term Option — Wansbeck Square**

It is noted that once the Wansbeck Square landscaping and public realm is complete, the 'meanwhile use' space could provide a suitable and well-located venue for a regular market. However, this is not an option in the short term.

### **5. Financial Implications**

Brightside Events would manage all operational, marketing, and licensing arrangements. However, the logistical challenges identified mean that a formal road or car park closure would be required, and this carries an associated cost. The indicative cost of a formal closure is a minimum of £500 per event, equating to a potential annual cost of approximately £6,000 for a monthly market.

The Council does not have the budget to fully fund a road or car park closure on a monthly basis. However, Members are asked to consider in principle whether the Council would be willing to make a contribution towards these costs from the events and engagement budget for the duration of a trial period, in order to make the proposal viable for the organiser.

A decision in principle at this stage would allow officers to explore the level of contribution required and bring a costed proposal back to Members before any commitment is made.

**6. Recommendation**

That the Town Council:

1. Notes the update on progress and the operational challenges identified with the Station Road location.
2. Confirms whether it would support a monthly Saturday market being held at John Street car park as an alternative to Station Road, subject to necessary permissions from NCC.
3. Agrees in principle whether it would be willing to make a contribution towards the cost of a formal closure (road or car park) from the events and engagement budget for the duration of a trial period, and authorises the Executive Officer to negotiate the level of contribution required, with expected contribution from NCC and organiser also, and bring a costed proposal back to Members.
4. Authorises the Executive Officer to communicate the Council's decision to NCC Markets Manager Neil Brown and Brightside Events to enable discussions to continue.