

TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report To: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BRIEFING
6 October 2008**

Lead Member: Lead Member for Environment (Cllr. Ossie Hedley)

Ward Member: All

Subject: Barnard Castle Wednesday Market

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Executive Committee asked for consideration to be given to ways in which the Wednesday Market could be given a boost in order to increase the uptake by stallholders. Currently there are approximately 12 regular stall holders with a capacity of about 20 stalls subject to size.
- 1.2 A meeting of the Lead Member, the relevant officers, Barnard Castle Members and a representative of Barnard Castle Town Council, (the "Working Group") was held on 1 September which considered the key issues and agreed that recommendations be made to the Executive Committee. It was acknowledged that to be effective urgent executive action was required if the position were to be improved prior to the demise of this Council in April 2009. Some of the issues raised would require expenditure that has not been anticipated and has therefore not been included in budgets for 2008/2009.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
- 2.1.1 The charges for the stallholders are reduced in accordance with the schedule attached as appendix 1.
 - 2.1.2 That the frequency of the Market is maintained but that consultation is undertaken with the stallholders, traders in the town and the public as to the desirability and feasibility of increasing this to include the 3 Saturdays in the month when the monthly Farmers' Market does not take place.
 - 2.1.3 That the current location for the Market remains
 - 2.1.4 That improved traffic management is introduced as set out in paragraph 3.4 of the report.
 - 2.1.5 That the provision of a 'Portaloo' for the use of the stallholders is agreed subject to their agreement.
 - 2.1.6 That car parking charges at the 'Hole in the Wall' car park are reduced in accordance with Appendix 3 of the report.
 - 2.1.7 That the Trade Press and other means of promoting the Market such as the local Press and Radio is used

- 2.1.8 That further discussions are held with Barnard Castle Vision and Teesdale Marketing to see if there are other measures that can be introduced to support the Market.
- 2.1.9 That additional costs estimated at £7,500 are met from unallocated balances.

3.0 KEY ISSUES

3.1 Charges

The Working Group felt strongly that the key to increasing the number of stalls taking up the facility was to reduce current charges. It was also felt that this would also assist the remaining stallholders to maintain their trading position. The informed view of the responsible officers was that reductions in charges would be effective in attracting additional stallholders and that this ought to have a neutral financial effect on the Council's income. Obviously this cannot be guaranteed.

A copy of the existing charges and those proposed form Appendix 1.

For comparative purposes a schedule of charges levied at other markets in the region is included as Appendix 2.

3.2 Frequency

There was a consensus that the current weekly frequency of the Market ought to be maintained. There was also a viewpoint that the Market would benefit from being held on those additional 3 Saturdays when the Farmers' Market is not held. There was a recognition however that there may be concerns about this from other traders in the Town and that the stallholders themselves may not wish for that to happen. It was therefore felt that this is an issue upon which there needed to be further consultation.

3.3 Location

It was the view of the Working Group that the existing location of the Market was best for all concerned.

3.4 Traffic Management

There are currently arrangements for the slip road alongside the Market to be closed to traffic on Market Days. Previously telescopic bollards have been fitted at one end, however these have fallen into disuse due to their weight and the difficulty in handling them. Plastic traffic cones are used to variable effect to discourage motorists from ignoring the Road Closure Order and the Police have an on-going problem trying to enforce the Order and face criticism from drivers and traders alike. The Police Inspector has asked the Council to address the problem. An interim arrangement has been put into place to use the existing bollards but it is time-consuming and is not cost-effective. Ideally the bollards need to be replaced with lighter versions. It ought to be noted these cost in the region of £1,000 each.

Clearly the Council must discharge its responsibility properly and hence It is recommended that the replacement of the bollards be implemented and that agreement is reached with the Police on how to manage the unauthorised car parking on the Cobbles which takes place while the Order is in place and the Market Stalls are being taken down.

3.5 **Facilities**

Consideration was given to the improvement of the facilities presently being provided to stallholders. It was felt that the most effective and welcome improvement would be the provision of a 'Portaloos' because the stallholders need to rely on the goodwill of other providers and endure the inconvenience of leaving their stalls in the care of others. Such a facility is provided at the Farmers' Market for approximately £40 per day.

Consideration was also given to providing stalls which could be of a better standard and appearance than the stallholders' own equipment. It was felt that needed further discussion with the stallholders.

3.6 **Car Parking Charges**

The Working Group felt that the reduction of charges at the 'Hole in the Wall' car park would increase its usage and would help to attract customers to the Market. The Council's position on this has been that it would review the charges in the light of income and usage. Additional signage for the car park is in hand and the County Council have been asked to expedite this. Income and usage is however significantly below what has been estimated and improvement of signage alone is unlikely to improve the position. Reduction of the charges may have the effect of increasing usage similar to the argument in favour of reducing charges for stalls. The effect is difficult to predict accurately but it merits consideration. It is therefore recommended that the charges be reduced in accordance with the schedule attached as Appendix 3. details of the actual receipts from the car park are included in Appendix 4.

A related issue is the access to the car park. Under the Barnard Castle Vision Streetscape Strategy it is suggested that a new entrance could be created through the wall at Newgate which will be much easier for visitors to find as this area is directly accessible from the A67 West and the Westwick Road approaches to Barnard Castle. However that is clearly a longer-term improvement for which there is no current budget but which is identified as a priority for design and possible implementation by BCV depending on costs and competing priorities.

3.7 **Advertising and Promotion**

The officer who supervises the Market, Julie Fletcher, promotes the Market with stallholders at other locations in her own time and on her own initiative. This is much appreciated but clearly can only be of limited effect. The Working Group considered that advertising the

reductions in charges and the other improvements in the Trade Press alongside using local Press and Radio should be tried. This could be done at relatively low cost.

Barnard Castle Vision could have a part to play in helping to revive the Market as well as Teesdale Marketing and the Working Group felt that both organisations should be approached to that effect.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Risk:

Risk	Category	Implications
That the future uptake of Market stalls continues to decline.	Service delivery	A traditional community facility that draws visitors and trade to the Town will decline and possibly be lost.
That the proposals will incur costs and may not be effective.	Financial	Expenditure would have been ineffective.
The proposals may not be well-regarded by the stallholders, other traders in the Town or the public	Reputational	Consultation ought to provide a guide to the way forward on some of the issues.

4.2 Equality and Diversity: The proposals will help to promote diversity in the retail opportunities within the District and provides products at affordable costs.

4.3 Human Resources: None

4.4 Community Safety: None

4.5 Legal Issues: None

4.6 Financial Issues: The costs to the Council are difficult to quantify accurately. The proposals to reduce charges to stallholders and for car parking at the 'Hole in the Wall' are designed to be cost neutral. The costs for traffic management, advertising and promotion and improvement to facilities are expected to amount to approximately £7,500 which can be met from unallocated balances.

Background papers: Barnard Castle Vision Streetscape Strategy

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