



# Northumberland

## County Council

### **CABINET**

DATE: 10<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2018

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Northumberland Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023

**Report of** the Executive Director of Place, Paul Johnston

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Glen Sanderson, Environment and Local Services

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#### **Purpose of report**

To provide Cabinet with an update on achievements against the 2010 - 15 strategy action plan, an update on the process taken to review the strategy and to seek approval of the proposed Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023.

#### **Recommendations**

That Cabinet approves the Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023 and the Markets Strategy Action Plan.

#### **Link to Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the “We want you to love where you live” and “We want to attract more and better jobs” priorities included in the Corporate Plan 2018 - 2021.

Markets can help shape distinctive vibrant places which people value, and reasonably priced market stall pitches are often the first opportunity an entrepreneur will have to create a thriving business.

#### **Key issues**

1. It is proposed that the vision informing the development of Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023 be “To create a diverse, vibrant market experience that has a positive economic, social and cultural impact”
2. The revised strategy includes a clear public statement setting out the powers under which all Northumberland’s markets have been established and continue to

operate.

3. The strategy action plan has been arranged thematically against four headings:
  - i. Sustaining and growing income
  - ii. Promoting markets more effectively
  - iii. Policy developments
  - iv. Improving the management of markets
  
4. Where workshops held to engage local stakeholders in the review of this strategy received good input from local stakeholders the same groups will be used as a platform to develop new market partnerships.
  
5. A single set of market rules were developed and communicated to traders. They have not been reviewed or updated during the last three years so reviewing these is in the action plan.
  
6. It is proposed to develop and implement a Balance of Trade Policy that takes a proactive approach to controlling the balance, quality and regularity of markets within Northumberland.
  
7. It is proposed to maintain a neutral stance and not allow any political party to hire a pitch on any council run market.
  
8. Performance against the action plan will be monitored throughout the year and updated at the end of each year to ensure it continues to deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy.

## **Background**

The table below outlines the programme of activity that has taken place to review the strategy and develop an updated action plan.

<b>Summary Task</b>	<b>Description of Work</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Review of Action Plan	Undertook an assessment of progress against each action from the existing strategy and produced a summary of progress	June 2017
Review & Research – Policy Review	Reviewed local policy and gathered and reviewed regional and national policy ensuring that all relevant documents were captured	February 2017
Scoping and Vision	Defined the scope and reviewed the vision for the strategy 2018 – 2023	January 2018

Stakeholder Engagement	Held a series of workshops with key stakeholders to determine the focus of the strategy going forward and some of the detailed actions required under each theme	Various dates in 2016 and 2017
Analysis and Evaluation	Evaluated stakeholder feedback of the strategy	January 2018
Finalise Strategy & Action Plan	Produced draft strategy document, action plan and associated policies, sought comments from Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee	June 2018
Adopt Strategy	Seek approval of Cabinet	July 2018
Implement Strategy and Monitor Progress	Report to Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide annual review and update against action plan and key performance indicators to ensure action plan remains appropriate.	Annually each July

The action plan in the 2010 – 2015 Strategy was written in a different economic climate and the strategy taking us beyond 2018 needs to achieve a better balance between aspirations for growth with economic reality. The key points from the review of the previous action plan are:

- Good progress has been made in developing the web page for traders and the public, working with partners to tackle illegal street trading and introducing a standard set of trader rules.
- Progress has also been made in promoting markets and developing the Morpeth market partnership but more promotional activity is needed and more partnerships require developing.
- Little progress has been made in harmonising stall designs or encouraging traders to develop business plans.
- The most effective way of harmonising stall designs is to provide the stalls but there is insufficient resource available to purchase and maintain those stalls.
- Most traders do not have, nor do they want a written business plan and there is no dedicated resource available to assist traders in developing business plans.

Other issues that have been raised and addressed when developing the new strategy include updating cash collection arrangements and dealing with requests for the hire of stalls by political parties.

Collecting cash, in person from stall holders on market days is currently the way rents are

collected and the only way traders can pay for their stall is in cash on the day of the market. A cashless payment system has been developed and trialed and traders will be offered alternative methods of payment (e.g. direct debit, paying online etc.) that can be paid in advance of market days.

Around the time of local and national elections, requests to rent space for a market stall are occasionally received from various political parties. The council has always declined these requests to ensure that a council ran market is not perceived to be in support of any political party. It is proposed to maintain a neutral stance and not allow any political party to hire a pitch on any council run market and to formalise this in the new market strategy.

### **Key Aims of the New Strategy**

Northumberland County Council aims to ensure that market operations are professional, financially viable and add value to the community. The key objectives of the new strategy are:

- To reverse the decline in trader numbers operating in Northumberland.
- To work with local stakeholders, especially town and parish councils, to ensure that each existing market reflects their local needs.
- To identify opportunities to improve the promotion of our markets.
- To clarify the legal powers under which markets are operated and improve how balance of trade principles are applied.
- To identify opportunities to improve the management of our markets.
- To identify opportunities for new markets where there is a local demand for this.

### **Structure of the Strategy**

The new strategy document and its action plan are attached as Appendices to this report.

The strategy confirms why markets are important, articulates the vision for markets in Northumberland and outlines the aims and objectives of the strategy.

The process for developing the strategy is described and the legal framework under which markets are operated is explained, there is then a detailed description of each of Northumberland's markets and the rules under which traders operate.

The action plan then outlines the key actions that will be taken to deliver the new strategy.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	A balance of trade policy will be developed to support the strategy. A policy to maintain a neutral stance and not allow any political
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	party to hire a pitch on any council run market will be formalised as part of this strategy review process.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Income from operating the market service more than offsets the cost of service provision, however there has been a downward trend in the level of income and sustained action is required to address this trend to ensure that markets continue to support the council's overall revenue position. Action has already been taken to reduce the cost of managing and supervising the markets by integrating this activity more into the locally based Neighbourhood Services teams to improve the overall efficiency of this service. However it should be noted that markets should not be evaluated solely on their financial performance as they provide a wider economic and social contribution to their communities in respect of jobs, attracting visitors to the towns and providing business start-up opportunities.
<b>Legal</b>	If approved the proposed actions in this report will produce a markets policy that clarifies which legislation each individual market is ran under and formally clarify how we manage the ' <i>balance of trade</i> ' on our markets to mitigate the risk of legal challenge.
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	The arrangements for provision and erection of stalls vary from one market to another. A balance needs to be struck between the need for local branding and a high standard of appearance for stalls, whilst ensuring the costs of operating the markets are minimised to ensure their financial sustainability. The provision of ground anchors within some public open spaces where markets are held is also desirable to reduce the likelihood of markets being cancelled due to high winds.
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report, the balance of trade policy will require an impact assessment. The availability of disabled bays in Marygate Berwick during market days is the subject of a separate Equality Impact Assessment which is currently being consulted upon with key stakeholders.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The main risks associated with markets are financial and reputational. The downward trend in revenues from markets challenges the viability of continuing to run Northumberland's markets if this position can't be stabilized or reversed. Reputationally we must continue to ensure trader compliance in respect of stall safety and the goods they sell so that all visitors to our markets are safe.

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder</b>	In addition to routine compliance checks the management of markets work closely with trading standards and the police to prevent illegal goods from being offered for sale on any market stall. None at this stage.
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The Council's customers in respect of markets are the traders and the general public and this strategy aims to support their businesses by providing good trading conditions and to improve the experience for those visiting markets. The traders customers are predominantly Northumberland residents and visitors to the county so successful markets benefit a wide customer base.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None at this stage.
<b>Wards</b>	As markets draw in visitors to the main shopping centres and are part of the county's history and culture any changes are of interest to all wards.

**Background papers:**

Northumberland Markets Strategy 2018 - 2023 Final Draft

**Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

	initials
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Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	
Relevant Executive Director	
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