

PRINCIPAL SELECT COMMITTEE

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Wednesday, 10th April, 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Kier Barsby in the Chair;

Councillors Jamie Bell, Jodine Cronshaw,
Julie Gregory, Warren Nuttall, Phil Rostance and
John Smallridge.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Sarah Daniel, Mike Joy,
Trevor Middleton and Shane Wright.

In Attendance: Councillor Dave Shaw.

PS.21 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

PS.22 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 February 2024,
be received and approved as a correct record.

PS.23 Select Review: Markets Update

The Chairman introduced the item and welcomed the Council's Assistant Director for Regeneration, Sarah Daniel and the Town Centres and Markets Manager, Trevor Middleton, to the meeting. Both officers were in attendance to give an update on how the various markets in Ashfield were operating, recent successes, any challenges the markets were facing, and what future plans the Council had in relation to the markets.

The Governance Manager reminded Committee that at the February 2024 meeting Members had asked for a Markets update which encompassed the following sites:

Indoor Markets

- Idlewells Shopping Centre in Sutton-in-Ashfield
- Moor Market in Kirkby-in-Ashfield

Outdoor Markets

- Hucknall
- Kirkby-in-Ashfield
- Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Committee Members then received an update from the Assistant Director for Regeneration and the Town Centres and Markets Manager in respect of the following aspects of the Council's markets provision:

Website Information

The Council's website offered a wealth of information regarding its market facilities, including days and times of trading and arrangements for special events.

Occupancy Rates

Post Covid, some markets had struggled with their occupancy rates and many traders had not returned following the pandemic. Currently the outdoor market at Hucknall was proving to be the most popular market site for traders with Sutton as the lowest. Nationally a reduction in market stall occupancy rates had been seen as customers shopping habits had changed and predominantly moved online. However, some speciality market events were still bucking the trend where artisan and speciality foods/goods were on offer.

Footfall

Hucknall figures continued to reflect the popularity of the High Street and the success of the pedestrianisation scheme. In Sutton, the closure of the large Wilko store had seen a reduction in footfall to the town and shop vacancies in Kirkby had impacted the success of the markets.

Updated Market Stalls

It had recently been acknowledged that some of the Council's market stalls looked tired and some had received an upgrade with new display tops and skirts. Fifteen new stalls had also been purchased (from Post Covid 'Welcome Back' funding) for use at the weekly Sutton Outdoor Market.

Costs

With the current climate, it was acknowledged that the Council needed to remain vigilant with their spending and some market days had been ceased to save money wherever possible.

Planned Events

The Council's plant & garden fairs and the food & drink festivals were popular and there was always a good market stall presence at the Council's Christmas festivals. These events were promoted widely and had fantastic support from officers with regard to the organisation and ultimate success of the occasions.

Following the Sutton town centre development works (with completion around November 2024), it was hoped that the Council could relaunch the market over the busy pre-Christmas period. Appropriate incentives were being considered to attract new traders including new stalls and favourable fees for start up and pop up businesses.

Idlewells Indoor Market

Occupancy rates were currently good at the indoor market and remain reasonably stable at around 90%. Traders continue to be supported by officers and the Council was currently looking at other ways to offer business support including some digital training as required.

Sutton Outdoor Market

For most of 2024, Sutton Outdoor Market would be relocated whilst the Towns Fund improvement works were being carried out on Fox Street and Portland Square. The market would be trading from Low Street close to the Costa Café.

Moor Market

The Council had struggled to attract traders to the new indoor market and so the location had been earmarked for the new banking hub with works commencing at the end of April 2024, to prepare the site for its new occupants.

Following the update, a lengthy debate and question and answer session took place and Members considered, amongst other things:

- the costs associated with erecting and taking down market stalls and the length of time to complete the process
- the provision of reduced or introductory rents for market stalls following the pandemic, whether such incentives were still available and what criteria was used for allocation
- the impact of rising energy costs for traders within the Idlewells Indoor Market
- an acknowledgement that the trader community was very supportive of fellow traders generally
- concerns surrounding the continuing loss of income from the Council's market provision, particularly following the pandemic, and whether it was sustainable in the longer term
- the importance of changing with the times and offering more specialised/artisan markets to meet customers changing desires and demands
- the support offered by the Council to new traders to assist them with their initial applications through to helping them build sustainable businesses
- the hidden costs of running indoor market stalls including energy provision and regular legionella and portable appliance (pat) testing
- possible reasons as to why the Kirkby market has failed to thrive including loss of shops in the pedestrian area, less footfall and the restrictive fence around Morrisons supermarket
- the competitiveness of the Council's market fees against neighbouring authorities
- the possibility of working with other local organisations and community partners to support the markets and provide extra funding

- the importance of the Levelling Up Funding for Hucknall being invested wisely to elevate the prosperity of the town
- ideas for the relaunch of the Sutton Outdoor Market late 2024 following completion of the Towns Fund relocation works
- acknowledgement that from a political perspective, decisions relating to reductions or closure of markets were difficult with a balance needing to be achieved.

Following the debate the Chairman thanked both officers for their attendance at the meeting and for their contribution to the discussion and insight into the Council's current market provision.

RESOLVED

that the 'Markets Review' be continued by the Principal Select Committee and both the Leader of the Council and the Executive Lead Member for Growth, Regeneration and Local Planning be invited to the next meeting of the Committee, to enable Members to gain insight into the Council's markets provision, and its impact, from a political perspective.

The meeting closed at 8.46 pm

Chairman.