

Economy Scrutiny Panel

DATE	10/01/2023
REPORT OF	Sharon Wroot, Executive Director Environment, Economy & Resources
SUBJECT	Freshney Place Market Hall Update
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The successful operation of Freshney Place and Grimsby Top Town Market, together with the delivery of the planned leisure scheme will contribute to the Council's "Stronger Economy" and "Stronger Communities" priorities by securing a strategic economic and community asset which is critical to the town centre's success. Freshney Place, Top Town Market, and the Leisure scheme align with the ambitions of the Local Plan, the Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan, and the £20.9m Grimsby Town Investment Plan. The importance of developing the town centre to enhance and diversify its current offer, increase footfall and boost both the day and evening economy is widely acknowledged.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the current operation of Top Town Market and latest plans regarding the future of the market.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Economy Scrutiny is asked to consider the current operation of Top Town Market and the future market being developed as part of the wider Freshney Place Leisure Scheme.

1. BACKGROUND

Grimsby Top Town Market

1.1 Top Town Market in Grimsby Town Centre has a rich history and was seen as a mainstay of the area's economy historically. It operates alongside Freshney Place adding a diverse mix to the town centre's retail offer, providing eighty-one stalls and nine units. Current traders provide a mix of fresh, local, and quality food produce, plus a range of non-food items including shoes, clothing, gifts, key-cutting services, electrical and home goods, amongst others. The main market hall is open four days a week from 9am to 4pm on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

Freshney Place Leisure Scheme & Market Hall

1.2 Following reports and support of both Cabinet and Full Council, the acquisition of Freshney Place Shopping Centre was completed on 4th August 2022.

1.3 As outlined within the report to Cabinet on 21st September 2022, this acquisition means that the Council is now in control of a significant town centre asset which is a core component of its infrastructure. Furthermore, the acquisition enables

the Council to enact the transformational change it seeks within Grimsby town centre, including the Freshney Place Leisure scheme and new Market Hall, as also outlined within the report to Cabinet on 21st September 2022.

- 1.4 Cabinet approved progression of the leisure & market hall scheme on 21st September 2022, including matters connected with land assembly, planning, and procurement of a construction contractor.
- 1.5 Subsequently, the Council's professional delivery team who are supporting the scheme have submitted a planning application in respect of the leisure & market hall scheme and commenced the procurement exercise.

Grimsby Top Town Market

- 1.6 It was recognised at the beginning of January 2022 that Market traders were facing significantly difficult trading conditions. The National Market Trader Federation (NMTF) and the Market Management team met to discuss the challenges for Market traders across the UK and how they can be supported.
- 1.7 In January 2022 occupancy at Grimsby Top Town Market (GTTM) was 55.29%, with forty-seven occupied stalls and footfall figures were down by 52.4% compared to pre-pandemic footfall in 2019. In response to the ongoing challenges the financial support packages and the marketing strategy was reviewed.
- 1.8 A rent incentive scheme to attract new traders onto the market was introduced in March 2022. The scheme is based on a four-month period at 50% rent, two months at 75% rent and after six months the trader would pay full rent. Since launching the scheme, the market has attracted seven new traders, five of which are still trading but subsequently two ceased trading due to the business not being viable.

Occupancy January to November 2022

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
55%	48%	43%	43%	41%	43%	43%	42%	43%	45%	49%

- 1.9 The occupancy figures declined in the early part of 2022 and remained consistent through the summer and autumn months. We are now seeing an increase in enquires with occupancy steadily increasing and is currently at 49%.

Footfall January to November 2022

	2022	2021	+ / -	% increase/decrease
January	31126	18717	12409	40%
February	32241	16652	15589	48%
March	38630	22372	16258	42%
April	33785	29133	4652	14%
May	34438	31217	3221	9%
June	34545	35436	-891	-3%
July	37296	43617	-6321	-17%
August	35777	36822	-1045	-3%
September	35158	35939	-781	-2%
October	32429	34925	-2496	-8%
November	41703	42565	-862	-2%

Marketing & Events

1.10 To strengthen the GTTM marketing and social media campaigns, a budget of £10k was made available to increase events on the Market to drive footfall. A marketing communication plan was produced showing planned advertising and promotion to increase our reach and five key events were identified for key trading times throughout 2022, as outlined below.

Easter Event

1.11 The first event was held on Saturday 16 April, to celebrate Easter. The event featured several children's activities like themed games, make your own Easter basket, face painting, an Easter egg hunt, and colouring competition. Positive feedback from families included *"My son's first experience of face painting - he absolutely loved it thank you!"* *"My daughter really enjoyed it thank you"* and *"My son loved designing his egg."*

Jubilee Celebrations

1.12 The second event invited customers to join the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, "Jubilee Party at The Market" which was held on Saturday 4 June, the market hall was decorated with flags and bunting, and many families came along to celebrate the Queen's jubilee with traders. The entertainment was planned to draw in the crowds, including Tom Wright's magic show, family jubilee-related arts and crafts, a best flag and crown competition, face painter and traders' tea party. More than fifty children took part and the feedback from parents and grandparents was positive. Traders donated raffle prizes which also generated a lot of customer interest and £60 was raised for the local charity FLAG.

- 1.13 Targeted marketing for the event included traders sharing leaflets with their customers, leaflet drops were made to businesses in Freshney place, the Beachcomber, and Thorpe Park. Media statistics - The targeted Facebook posts reached 6956 accounts with over 15,414 views.

Halloween

- 1.14 The Halloween event was held on 29th October hosting several fun family-friendly Halloween themed events, including the Magic Kingdom monster puppet show, balloon animals, facepainting, fancy dress competition, spooky colouring, and art activities, as well as a spooky trail around the market was part of the day's entertainment. Traders kindly supported the event by donating several prizes for the competition winners. Positive feedback from one customer was *"I was looking for something different to do this weekend, before Trick or treating on the Monday. We saw an advert on Facebook, so I decided to bring my little girl to the market with a couple of her friends and they had a fantastic time. The puppet show was absolutely brilliant."* Media statistics - The targeted Facebook posts reached 5914 accounts with over 18,109 views.

Christmas Trading

- 1.15 The market has again extended its opening hours in December to support traders to benefit from the busy Christmas shopping period. The Christmas opening hours will see the Market opening every day from Thursday 15th December through to Christmas Eve.
- 1.16 To capitalise on the busy Christmas period the Market team have been working in collaboration with the Culture House and the Council's Economy and Growth team to co-ordinate events in December to attract customers and increase footfall. A Pop-Up Christmas market was held across St James square and the Grimsby Market during small business Saturday weekend on 3rd December, which was well received by customers. The event has led to three new trader enquiries considering taking a permanent stall on the Market. Several Christmas themed arts and craft events have taken place on the weekends in December which will be supported by carols singers joining the market on Saturday 17th December to spread some festive cheer. Media statistics - The targeted Facebook posts reached 45,247 accounts with over 71,673 views.

Current Position

- 1.17 The footfall levels will be reviewed following the Christmas trading period to understand and compare previous trading periods. The new year is a difficult trading period for Market traders and the Council will be working closely with traders during this time to assist them to a Spring recovery. Marketing and social media activity will continue to promote the market to drive footfall, and attract new traders such as Haberdashery, Pet Stalls, Hairdressers, Barbers, Tattooists, Fabric stall, hardware stall and niche food items.

Future Leisure Scheme and New Market Hall

- 1.18 As outlined within the Cabinet report dated 21st September 2022, Freshney Place Leisure & Market Hall Scheme, will see the development of a new market hall, situated within the former BHS store, see appendix one for proposed designs of the new market hall. This will provide an opportunity to enhance GTTM's location and premises with the objective of further diversifying and improving the wider town centre offer.
- 1.19 The existing GTTM will remain operational until the new facility is developed, which is anticipated to be Summer 2024, and most traders will remain in-situ until the new market hall is ready.
- 1.20 To enable works to the wider redevelopment project to commence safely, there will be a requirement to relocate certain traders within the current GTTM building, primarily those nearest the entrance into Freshney Place. The Council and its delivery team will work with those affected and endeavour to ensure any disruption to those impacted will be kept to a minimum. The market and project delivery team will be in contact with those affected soon to work with them regarding this.
- 1.21 Cabinet will be asked to consider the leisure & market hall scheme works proposals in the Summer of 2023, which will see the wider development happen around the existing Market Hall building. The safety of traders and the wider public will be a key consideration in all of this, and further communication will be undertaken with traders and the wider public as the design develops and the plans are finalised.
- 1.22 In addition to the plans outlined above during the construction phase, further development work is ongoing regarding the layout and future market hall operations. Part of the leisure & market hall project delivery team includes market specialists who are preparing options that will be considered by Cabinet alongside the works proposals. Again, at the appropriate time, consultation will be undertaken on these proposals.
- 1.23 Whilst there will be the risk of disruption during the construction period, the ultimate objective is to create a brand-new Market and Food Hall that will create a vibrant and attractive facility, which not only sustains the current operation, but makes it more attractive to new traders and supplements the wider regeneration happening in Grimsby Town Centre. However, during construction, the market and project delivery team will work closely with traders and plan communications and activities that continue to promote GTTM as per those activities outlined in paragraphs 1.10-1.17 in this report.

2. RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The key risks associated with the market operations moving forward are:

- loss of customers due to disruption during construction period:
- loss of traders due to disruption during construction period; and,
- wider market conditions affecting performance

2.2. The Council already has an experienced market team and appointed a professional delivery team to support this project. In addition, the Council will be procuring an experienced contractor to supplement the existing team, who have experience of developing schemes such as this one. The project delivery team also includes specialist structural, mechanical & electrical, concrete and building surveyors who have undertaken surveys, which have informed the proposed construction process. This will be further supplemented when the contractor is appointed and finalises the proposed construction method, which will be intended to minimise disruption to the GTTM and traders. In addition, the Council will ensure appropriate communications and signage are in place, promoting the market and access to it.

2.3. The market & project delivery team will stay in regular contact with traders to gain early understanding of any issues arising for traders and attempt to take measures to mitigate these where appropriate. This may include additional promotional and communication activities to support trading performance, for example.

2.4. It is recognised that market trading conditions have been difficult within GTTM and nationally. As also outlined, additional promotion and activities have taken place to mitigate this and will continue during the construction of the new market hall, to attract customers and new traders to the market. The objective of developing a new market hall is to create a new offer that will attract additional traders and customers alike. To support this, the Council has appointed a professional market specialist to its project delivery team who will be undertaking further analysis into the future proposed layout and operations of the new market hall, which will be subject to further consultation, aimed at promoting the market offer and viability.

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1. There are no financial considerations included within this report, beyond scrutiny's enhanced role in monitoring delivery of the council plan, budget, and medium-term financial plan.

4 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There is no direct impact on children and young people as a direct result of this report. However, a thriving local town centre is a contributor to the overall local economy. A successful local economy clearly has positive implications including future employment opportunities.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any actions which the council may undertake as a result of recommendations made by scrutiny will be the subject of further reports, which will include climate change and environmental implications by the author(s) concerned.

6. MONITORING COMMENTS

- 6.1 In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance, or physical assets). As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Freshney Place is situated within the West Marsh ward.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 15th July 2020 – Future High Street Funding Cabinet Report – <http://www.nelincs.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Future-High-Street-Funding-Cabinet-Report.pdf>
- 8.2 17th February 2021 – Future High Street Funding Cabinet Report - <https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/3.-Future-High-Streets-Fund.pdf>
- 8.3 16th June 2021 – Future High Street Funding Cabinet Report – <https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/12.-Future-High-Street-Fund.pdf>
- 8.4 20th October 2021 – Future High Street Funding Cabinet Report - [5.-Future-High-Streets-Fund.pdf](https://democracy.nelincs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/20.-Future-High-Streets-Fund.pdf)
- 8.5 Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan - <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2020/12/Grimsby-Masterplan-Report.pdf>
- 8.6 22nd June 2022 - Freshney Place Acquisition Cabinet Report - [4.-Freshney-Place-Acquisition.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2022/06/22.-Freshney-Place-Acquisition.pdf)
- 8.7 14th July 2022 – Freshney Place Acquisition Full Council Report - [Freshney-Place-Acquisition.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2022/07/14.-Freshney-Place-Acquisition-Full-Council-Report.pdf)
- 8.8 21st September 2022 – Freshney Place: Leisure Scheme - [4.-Freshney-Place-Leisure-Scheme-Design-Report-21.09.22-v7.pdf \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/assets/uploads/2022/09/21.-Freshney-Place-Leisure-Scheme-Design-Report-21.09.22-v7.pdf)

9 CONTACT OFFICERS

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