

# Markets Review Working Group Update

<b>Report number:</b>	<b>OAS/WS/22/002</b>	
<b>Report to and date(s):</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	13 January 2022
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**Decisions Plan:** **This item is not included in the Decisions Plan.**

**Wards impacted:** **All**

**Recommendation:** **It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Note the update report from the Markets Review Working Group.**

## **1. Context to this report**

- 1.1 In November 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed a work programme suggestion form, presented by Councillor Ian Shipp, encouraging a review of West Suffolk Council markets.
- 1.2 The purpose behind this review was to look at the strategic role of West Suffolk Council, aligning the operation of the markets to the council's strategic vision and supporting their development to meet the corporate priorities.
- 1.3 This report is an update of the progress of the Markets Review Working Group to date.

## **2. Progress so far**

- 2.1 The Markets Review Working Group (MRWG) has met three times. At its first meeting the Chair and Vice Chair positions were confirmed along with the terms of reference. Members of the working party received baseline information about the markets in each of the towns; had a discussion about the visions for the markets; and confirmed the expectations of the review.
- 2.2 The baseline information presented to the group was very comprehensive and covered the following information: details about each market including when, where, what size, charges; other markets, events and initiatives; how we promote the markets; how we attract new traders; market trends and external influences; Operations responsibilities including the services provided to each market, the role of the Market Supervisor, staffing levels etc; operational issues with the markets; what we did to make the markets COVID-19 safe; parking and traffic management; power supply; competition for space; and detailed information about the market finances including a breakdown of income from each market.
- 2.3 At the second meeting of the MRWG in September this year the group received information in response to their questions from the previous meeting; had a presentation on case studies of best practice markets elsewhere; and then agreed the proposals for the engagement plan.
- 2.4 In November 2021 the third meeting of the MWRG was held. The group received a presentation giving information regarding the market survey (see next section below); the proposals for bringing information to the group from expert witnesses; the timetable; and a presentation from Cllr James Lay regarding other markets he had researched and his main findings.

### **3. Market survey**

- 3.1 An online survey was created with seven bespoke elements to capture the views of different market stakeholders. Each of the surveys had questions relating to appearance, cleanliness, availability of food and drink, cycle storage, accessibility, transport options and other topics. These questions required the respondents to select how satisfied or otherwise they were with each of these elements. In addition to these questions a number of “free text” questions were asked so that respondents had the freedom to express the points they specifically wished to make. These questions included views on specialist or event markets; how our markets might be more sustainable; views on click and collect services; how we might develop our markets; benefits of markets; improvements to the markets to support the communities; anything spotted at other markets that could be trialled here; questions specific to stakeholder groups on their experiences and opinions of our markets; and a general question about improvements. The shoppers survey also enabled people to say that they did not shop on the markets, where they were then asked a question about why this was.
- 3.2 An email was sent to all existing traders on all of our regular markets asking them to follow the link to the online survey. To enable us to capture the views from the shoppers and visitors to our markets and people who were visiting the towns but not necessarily shopping on the markets we arranged face to face interviews. People interviewed were taken through the survey that was completed on their behalf online.
- 3.3 It was important to us to understand the views of the businesses that are adjacent to our markets and therefore letters were hand delivered to these premises requesting that the business owners follow an online link to the survey. We also sent emails to town and parish councils; Members; and young people, each with a bespoke link to the survey for completion.
- 3.4 In total, we received 428 responses. Respondents were able to complete the survey for multiple markets for example there are two markets in Haverhill, one on Friday and one on Saturday, which resulted in 542 responses for all markets as respondents could give their opinion on multiple markets. Respondents also didn’t have to complete the survey in relation to the market closest to where they live, they were able to select any one or more of the ten markets.

### **4. Next steps**

- 4.1 The next meeting of the MRWG is set for 7 February 2022. This meeting of the group will receive information from expert witnesses to assimilate along with the findings from the survey work.

4.2 The MRWG will work on their recommendations and at the meeting of the group on 10 May 2022 they will set the final recommendations that will then be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2022.

4.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be able to make its recommendations to Cabinet at its meeting in July 2022.

## **5. Background documents associated with this report**

5.1 Report number [OAS/WS/20/017](#) and [Appendix 2](#) Work Programme Update 2021 and work programme suggestion forms.