



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

**Tuesday 12th September
2023**

Subject: West Lindsey Markets Action Plan Update

Report by:

Director of Commercial & Operational Services

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To provide an update on progress with delivering the 3 year West Lindsey Markets Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. Prosperous Communities Committee welcome the progress to date in delivering the vision for thriving markets across West Lindsey.
2. Prosperous Communities Committee establish a 'West Lindsey Markets' Members Working Group in line with the draft terms of reference at appendix 1 and appoint members to serve thereon

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: There are no additional legal implications in this report

The Local Government Act (2000), Part 1 of the Act gives local authorities powers to take any steps which they consider are likely to promote the well-being of their area or residents.

Financial : This report provides an update on currently approved activity and therefore there are no additional financial implications. Further work will be required once the full operating costs of the new market stalls are understood.

Staffing : As set out in the West Lindsey Markets Action Plan, a 'Towns Manager' has been employed to support the delivery of the vision for markets across West Lindsey.

Any change to operational processes resulting from the procurement of new stalls would mean potential consultation with staff involved.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : There are no additional equality and diversity implications in this report.

This work will enhance the equality and diversity of the district by seeing markets as an important cultural, social and economic driver of footfall and an attraction for visitors and communities.

Data Protection Implications : There are no data protection implications in this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: There are no climate related risks and opportunities in this report.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: There are no Section 17 implications in this report.

Health Implications: There are no health implications in this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

There are a number of background papers which provide the strategic context and the approvals in place for the delivery of the West Lindsey Markets Action Plan. These include:

14th June 2021 Concurrent meeting of Prosperous Communities Committee / Corporate Policy and Resources Committee: *Levelling Up Fund Bid*

[Agenda for Concurrent Meeting of the Prosperous Communities and Corporate Policy and Resources Committees on Monday, 14th June, 2021, 6.30 pm | West Lindsey District Council \(sharedlincs.net\)](#)

13th July 2021 Prosperous Communities Committee: *Future of West Lindsey Markets and commissioning of phase 2 of 'Quarterbridge' work*

[Agenda for Prosperous Communities Committee on Tuesday, 13th July, 2021, 6.30 pm | West Lindsey District Council \(sharedlincs.net\)](#)

25th January 2022 Prosperous Communities Committee: *Future of West Lindsey Markets*

[Agenda for Prosperous Communities Committee on Tuesday, 25th January, 2022, 6.30 pm | West Lindsey District Council \(sharedlincs.net\)](#)

Risk Assessment :

At present the biggest risk to achieving the delivery of the outcomes of the action plan is the pause in work to develop and deliver the Gainsborough Market Place Public Realm improvements as part of the Levelling Up Thriving Gainsborough Programme. Officers are working urgently to deliver revised Public Realm options for members to review, this is impacting on timescales and funding availability. The risk is being managed through the Levelling Up Programme Board.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

Executive Summary

In 2021, as the country and the district emerged from the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic the future of Gainsborough Market was uncertain. The national retail picture was bleak and the impact locally was being felt through reduced footfall, declining trader numbers and a financially unviable position for the Council.

This paper sets out the work that has been delivered to date in order to establish a vision and work plan that delivers a sustainable future for West Lindsey Markets and recognises the importance and opportunity of a vibrant street market offering across the district. Importantly this has included no longer seeing 'markets' as a cost centre but as an important cultural, social and economic asset for the district which requires ongoing work and investment.

With support from industry experts 'Quarterbridge', West Lindsey District Council have adopted and embedded a strategic approach to the delivery of a 'markets function' which seeks to recognise the important cultural and economic role of traditional street markets as a driver of footfall and an attraction for visitors and communities.

By aligning capital funds to drive the physical transformation of our market places through heritage led regeneration, with available revenue resources which can provide the necessary wraparound support to traders, retailers and deliver an events and animation offer, we are starting to see a stabilisation in the markets offer across the district.

However, we are only part way through our journey. With much work still to be done and with other potential opportunities for consideration, the report proposes, at the request of the Chair of Prosperous Communities Committee, the establishment of a Members Working Group. The Member Working Group will provide oversight of ongoing delivery and develop new and further opportunities for the growth of this key element of our economic and community offering.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 West Lindsey is home to three key street markets, Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor.
- 1.2 In early 2021 as the country emerged from the effects of the pandemic this committee determined that there was an opportunity to consider the long term future of street markets in the district. For many years the delivery of the markets function in Gainsborough had been seen as a failing cost centre and a draw on resources. The functioning of Caistor and Market Rasen markets, led by the Town Councils was more mixed.
- 1.3 It was recognised that there was an opportunity to reframe thinking and consider options for enhancing the market function across the district as part of the cultural, heritage and visitor offer.
- 1.4 A comprehensive programme of work commenced in order to understand the current operational position, engage with traders, regular market goers and those we'd seek to attract into our town centres, alongside developing plans for the physical transformation and improvement of our historic market places.
- 1.5 This report updates Members on progress with work relating to West Lindsey Markets.

2 Background

- 2.1 To initiate the work to develop options for the future of West Lindsey Markets leading industry experts 'Quarterbridge' were appointed. Their brief was to outline options of the future of Gainsborough market in the wider context of supporting the regeneration of the town centre and to consider other markets across the district and how the District Council could support these markets to prosper further.
- 2.2 Quarterbridge are considered to be leading industry experts, having worked with many councils across the country to develop their markets offer, including locally Doncaster and Worksop.
- 2.3 The phase 1 report was considered by this committee on 13th January 2021. The reports set out that nationally, the shift in retail behaviours, the emergence of bargain and discount shops and the convenience of large supermarkets or deliveries have caused many markets to decline.
- 2.4 Gainsborough market was no exception, with a decline in trader numbers of over 50% in five years having a serious impact on both the viability of the market operation and it's ability to perform a community function.
- 2.5 Section 2.4 of the phase 1 report sets out the initial engagement that was undertaken with the then Leader of the Council, then Leader of the Opposition, a representative of Market Rasen and the Chief Executive.

The key themes of this stakeholder engagement formed the basis of the recommended next steps.

- 2.6 It was clear that intervention was required if Gainsborough Market were to continue to operate at all.
- 2.7 On 13th July 2021 this committee was presented with the outputs of the phase 1 work which set out 7 key interventions that would deliver the vision of 'Gainsborough should develop its offering into a small, well-formed market that encourages café culture and dwell time, supported by a wider events and speciality markets programme. Committee supported this and approved phase 2 and 3 of the consultancy work.
- 2.8 Phase 2 of the work delivered a programme of engagement. This included 19 trader responses and sought to understand the trader's current customer base, current operating environment, intentions for the future of their business, what support they could need, their views on stall design and layout and what could attract more customers and traders to markets in West Lindsey.
- 2.9 In addition to trader engagement, public engagement was undertaken with a view to capturing the thoughts and aspirations of both current and possible future customers. 381 responses were received providing a wealth of insight into the current and future habits of respondents. Respondents were clear that promotion, developing and improving the public realm, the delivery of events and music / entertainment would all be attractive ideas to be taken forwards.
- 2.10 The full results of the trader / public engagement can be found from page 12 onwards in the Phase 2 Quarterbridge study.
- 2.11 Phase 3 of the work sought to set out the future options for development and included the following key matters for development:
 1. District Trading Circuit
 2. New public realm and market layout for Gainsborough market / heritage regeneration in Caistor / Market Rasen
 3. Infrastructure options
 4. Events Programme
 5. Business Case
 6. Delivery strategy including the creation of a 'Towns Manager' role
- 2.12 Taking into consideration the findings of this work, at the meeting of this committee on 25th January 2022 the following recommendations were approved:
 - a) the vision for West Lindsey Markets, recognising that they are key cultural and heritage assets that perform a wide socioeconomic function in the District, be supported; and

- b) the proposal for a three year plan to regenerate markets across West Lindsey based on the principles in the report be supported; and
- c) the extension of the Marshall's Yard contract for a further 12 months, whilst the transition phase of the plan is implemented, be agreed; and
- d) it be recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee the proposed Market budget be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan.

3 Update on progress

3.1 Taking each of the approved recommendations;

1) *The vision for West Lindsey Markets, recognising that they are key cultural and heritage assets that perform a wide socio-economic function in the District, be supported;*

- The delivery of the West Lindsey Markets Action Plan is one part of a wider programme of works currently being delivered which will regenerate our Towns and ultimately support the development of the Markets offer. This includes the Levelling Up Fund projects, delivery of outputs from Shared Prosperity Funding, the Townscape Heritage Initiative work, the upcoming Cultural Strategy and the Market Street Renewals Joint Venture.
- Continuing delivery of this work will help create environments where our Markets can be used as a placemaking and cultural tool which can be invested in and used to develop a sense of place within the communities they serve.

2) *The proposal for a three-year plan to regenerate markets across West Lindsey based on the principles in the report be supported;*

- A three-year Action Plan has been developed led by the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities and Director of Commercial and Operational Services which is now being delivered collaboratively by Officers across the two Portfolios with support from other areas.

Year One - Transition

- The Market support contract with Marshalls Yard should be reviewed and extended through 2022/23 whilst internal capacity to undertake the work is created. Longer term, consideration should be given to developing a collaborative relationship with Marshalls Yard and Gainsborough Town Council.

- The Marshalls Yard contract was extended and they continued to deliver marketing and event support throughout 2022/23, including delivery of the monthly Farmers Market, a Food Festival and a Christmas event in that trading year.
 - The contract has now ended; marketing of West Lindsey Markets and delivery of associated events is now undertaken in-house. Members may have seen an increase in social media posts including individual profiles of regular traders.
 - Work continues, led by the new Towns Manager, to strengthen relationships with relevant stakeholders including Marshalls Yard and relevant Town Councils to collaborate on Market initiatives, evidence of this work includes joint funding and delivery of events in Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor.
- A Towns Manager position should be created to lead on the cultural development of the three centres and be the primary port of call for the Markets.
 - Following two unsuccessful recruitment campaigns, a third one was successful with a new Towns Manager was recruited in October 2022. The postholder brings experience of working in similar roles in neighbouring districts.
 - The post holder is building strong relationships with town councils and is working on building a business forum to support the towns, including new relationships with Tesco and McDonalds.
 - The monthly Farmers Market is being managed in-house including increasing social media and utilising other comms platforms. Facebook is the most engaged with platform and the number of 'followers' to the West Lindsey page is increasing by 100 per month, similar for the Discover Gainsborough page which has seen a 5.6% increase in followers since the beginning of the year. Whilst this isn't completely due to increasing the frequency and quality of Markets posts, it will have been a contributing factor.
 - The postholder is promoting West Lindsey Markets and building relationships with traders at other local markets through benchmarking visits including to Louth, Retford, Newark, Boston and Mablethorpe.
 - Trader terms and conditions and booking processes are being reviewed and will be refreshed when new market stalls are in place.
 - An integrated series of events for 2023/24 and the following year has been developed and is in delivery.
 - The postholder has produced and delivered event plans for the Revive Festival including engagement with the West

Lindsey Safety Advisory Group which advises on safety at major events.

- The post holder is forging relationships with local and national trade bodies to constantly update her knowledge in the sector. The Towns Manager has been accepted as a Member of the Institute of Place Management – providing access to research, seminars and learning opportunities.
 - Contact has been made with a potential supplier for regular speciality market, negotiations are at an early stage with a view to delivery in early 2024.
 - Visit to Tuesday market by representative from National Market Traders Federation in June.
 - National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) advice being sought which will help update our policy and procedures.
 - Ongoing challenges with Market Trader Car Parking is recognised as an issue and is a matter being prioritised for action by the post holder. This a balance between managing valued traders and maintaining the traffic free environment.
 - Wider vehicle access to the Market Place is also an issue. The post holder is in regular dialogue with Lincolnshire County Council who recognise the issue and have responsibility for the matter – however, there is a reluctance to tackle the matter until the public realm plans for the Market Place are finalised.
- Business support should be created by the Towns Manager, in order to streamline the bookings and payments processes for all the Markets. Also, a social media support package should be developed for traders and town centre businesses to allow improved engagement with wider audiences.
 - In addition to the work identified above, the Towns Manager is working with traders to support their business methodologies including profiling and payment processes such as Chip and Pin.
 - An innovative design for new market stalls should be developed ensuring they are attractive with West Lindsey Markets branding, sturdy enough to withstand poor weather, easy to erect and dismantle, be transportable and require little or no maintenance.
 - An intensive research programme was undertaken to investigate new market stall design. This work concludes that there are no stalls currently available which would totally eradicate the need for operational staff, one design has been found which would considerably reduce it. This stall design will be introduced to stakeholders in the

coming weeks for consideration. However a design for Public Realm improvements would need to be agreed before any new stalls could be sourced. A potential storage area for market stalls has been located which could reduce the need for vehicle support during operations. It is proposed that enough stalls would be procured to help support existing offerings at Market Rasen and Caistor markets.

- *A programme of supporting events should be developed ahead of the year two, to include speciality markets and family inclusive offerings for Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor;*
 - A range of supporting events has been programmed in since May 2023. Two major events have been organised in Gainsborough in 2023 (Revive Festival and a Christmas event).
Smaller offerings support the monthly Farmers Market and include local acts where available. A list of these can be found in Table 1.

Table 1 Events

Month	Theme / Entertainment
May	WLDC and Community Stall.
June	Relentless Rockabilly group.
July	Several cancellations on the day due to heavy rain forecast.
August	YMCA Climbing Wall and musician.
September	Literature Village and Street Theatre.
October	Meet the Dinosaurs.
November	Poppy Remembrance Saturday.
December	Christmas Market.
February	New Year, New You with Everyone Active
March	TBC

- Wherever possible officers seek to minimise the cost of supporting events, the Towns Manager is considering a "Friends of the Markets" initiative. A number of Council Officers have given up their time for free to support events and other volunteers have come forward. Voluntary children's entertainment has been provided by McDonalds over three markets (May, June, July) with outdoor games, facepainting, and a busker equating to 27 hours of free entertainment.
- Caistor Market had Relentless Rockabilly band in June to support an event. Market Rasen had the Learning Lab – Nature – for Gardeners' Fair in June. Both these venues have resource available to support Christmas events.
- Events are paid for using Shared prosperity Funding, there is no impact on the Markets revenue budget.

Year Two - Development

- *Roll out of new stall infrastructure, suspension of previous operations.*
 - As highlighted above, proposed new stall designs will be unveiled in coming weeks. Public Realm designs should be finalised before any stall procurement exercise gets underway as it is critical any stall design synergises with the street scene. It is anticipated any new stalls would be able to be transported to Caistor and Market Rasen to support the markets in those locations.
- *Roll out of supporting events programme, including at Market Rasen and Caistor.*
 - A current and future events programme is shown in Table 1 above.
- *Embedding of towns branding.*
 - to be developed alongside Public Realm designs
- *Large events proposals to be developed in line with Cultural Strategy and Visitor Economy Strategy.*
 - A new Cultural Strategy will be considered by Prosperous Communities Committee in the coming months. Revive Festival was well received and attended, plans being developed for Christmas events 2023.

Year Three - Delivery

- *Heritage-led regeneration in ongoing delivery across Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor.*
- *Consideration of District Trader Circuit including engagement of Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen Town Councils.*
- *Clear long-term business case demonstrating return on investment.*

3) The extension of the Marshall's Yard contract for a further 12 months, whilst the transition phase of the plan is implemented, be agreed.

- As highlighted above, the contract with Marshalls Yard was extended through the 2022/23 trading year and then terminated. Officers continue to work with Marshalls Yard to promote Gainsborough Town Centre markets and events.

4) It be recommended to the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee the proposed Market budget be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan.

- This action is complete.

4 Performance

4.1 The table below gives an indication of overall trader numbers attending Gainsborough Market since the Markets Report was approved by Prosperous Communities Committee in January 2022.

4.2 It should be noted that the original report highlighted that trader numbers would be unlikely to increase in Year One of the workstream. It is a combination of this work alongside associated initiatives which would bring results in the medium to long term.

4.3 Table 2 demonstrates trader numbers at Gainsborough Market since the original report was heard by Prosperous Communities Committee, the shaded area demonstrates numbers since the Towns manager was recruited. It can be seen that despite ongoing challenging conditions, and the fact that the public realm improvements are yet to be agreed and delivered, trader numbers are stable. Trader numbers are reported to Members via the Council's Performance and Delivery Framework.

Table 2 Trader Numbers

Number of Traders	Farmers Market	Tuesday Market	Saturday Market
Feb-22	9	36	10
Mar-22	18	60	11
Apr-22	10	41	13
May-22	15	55	14
Jun-22	11	56	11
Jul-22	15	41	9
Aug-22	12	60	4
Sep-22	3	47	4
Average	11.625	49.5	9.5
Oct-22	14	53	11
Nov-22	13	56	11
Dec-22	16	38	17
Jan-23	1	46	6
Feb-23	14	42	13
Mar-23	5	42	9
Apr-23	20	48	12
May-23	12	63	8
Jun-23	6	44	10
Jul-23	10	47	9
Average	11.1	47.9	10.6

4.4 With reference to the Farmers Market, data received from Marshalls Yard on handover was incomplete and compromised. More in-depth information is now being collected including trader numbers and reasons for coming to and leaving the Market.

4.5 Since May 2023 there have been ten leavers, reasons include insufficient trade for goods at the price point, illness and a desire for exclusivity for products. In this period, eight new traders have been recruited, reasons for attending include recommendation from other trades, recruitment from other Markets by the Towns Manager and one who saw the event on the West Lindsey website. Three new traders have also signed up to attend starting in October.

4.6 In the same period, three new traders have signed up to the Tuesday Market and one has left.

5 Next Steps

5.1 As set out above, significant progress has been made since the district emerged from the pandemic when, in particular, Gainsborough market was facing an uncertain future.

5.2 Delivering a viable, attractive, and vibrant street markets offering is now well embedded within the Council's strategic vision for our historic places, our economy and our communities. This work has been boosted by the opportunity to secure capital funds for the regeneration of our market towns.

5.3 In addition, the approved UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan provides revenue support for retailers to access business information, advice and guidance, for Town Councils to access funds for minor street scene and public realm improvements as well as funding the delivery of a comprehensive events programme. Work to develop a Cultural Strategy for the District will further strengthen our approach.

5.4 Whilst as can be seen above, progress to sustain the street markets offering is working, the initial plans were based upon a three programme of work, which we are only halfway through. There is still progress to be made, particularly with the physical transformation of our places, but also with strengthening the district wide offer and enhancing our trader base. The actions agreed are all mutually dependent and interrelated.

5.5 It is recognised that the new administration are keen to develop further the opportunities that street markets can bring to the district. To support this aspiration the Chair of this Committee has requested the establishment of a member working group to oversee the delivery of the remainder of the action plan and to support the development of

further proposals for markets across the district for the future consideration of this committee.

5.6 The draft terms of reference for the West Lindsey Markets Members Working Group are attached at appendix one.

5.7 Membership of the Working Group will consist of 5 Members, to include the Chair of Prosperous Communities Committee, 1 Opposition Member and 1 other Member, with appropriate representation to also include Caistor and Market Rasen. Membership to be drawn from Prosperous Communities Committee, Corporate Policy and Resources Committee or Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.8 The Member Working Group will meet six weekly and will be required to provide biannual updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee will provide oversight of the delivery of the agreed West Lindsey Markets Action Plan. The Member Working Group will support the delivery of the action plan and develop other ideas to support the viability and offer of West Lindsey Markets.

5.10 Any policy decisions, changes to the terms of reference or proposals with financial implications developed by the Member Working Group will be forwarded to the parent body, Prosperous Communities Committee.