

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 5 June 2025

Report of: Helen Coombes, Matford Centre Manager

Title: Exeter Markets Update

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

An update on markets and street trading in Exeter, including the Council's functions and responsibilities and how markets/street trading are supported.

2. Recommendation:

To note.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Well run and commercially viable markets can make a valuable contribution to the City Council's corporate priorities on the local economy, a healthy and active city, net zero and culture.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources

There is a limited capacity to organise markets. City Council Markets aim to run at no cost to Exeter residents. The expenditure incurred in making markets available is offset by stall fees, consent income and the hiring out of market equipment. In recent years, the Council has moved towards issuing Consents to others to organise markets and providing advice.

Staff from the Matford Centre and Corn Exchange support the Fore Street market on Thursday's, including setting up and taking down the stalls.

The City Council has not identified a budget to develop a strategic approach to markets, and there is no budget to support delivery of new markets.

5. What are the legal aspects?

Streets in Exeter are designated for Street Trading, (for the selling of or offering to sell things on the street), as follows:

- Consent Streets – These are controlled by a licence
- Prohibited Streets – Trading is not allowed on prohibited streets at any time.
- Licenced Streets – Trading granted by Markets team.

Pedlar's certificates for trading in Exeter are applied for via Devon & Cornwall Police and comply with the Pedlars Act.

The definition of a market is a gathering of five or more traders selling items.

6. Report details:

The City Council operates a successful Livestock Market at the Matford Centre. A weekly Farmers Market operates at the top of Fore Steet, which is also very popular, but there is a lack of demand from any traders to fill this space.

The City Council has identified one area at the Fore Street/South Street junction in which it can organise markets (Licenced Street). This is subject to business rates. It is used for the weekly farmers market and other occasional markets such as visiting markets, craft markets, and previously Christmas markets. A limited number of daily traders can trade from this area, but casual traders selling food for immediate consumption or produce (and which would compete with the farmers market) are not allowed.

In the past, the Council has accommodated visiting markets and introduced anchor points to reduce the risk of markets having to be cancelled because of extreme weather conditions. A dedicated electricity supply at the Fore Street/South Street location, has also been installed.

The Council ceased operating the Sidwell Street market area in 2024. Sidwell Street was used for a daily pannier market for which stallholders applied for a licence for a period of 3, 6 or 12 months allowing them to trade daily. The Council has in the past also sited visiting markets in this area. The Council worked with and supported InExeter who took on the market and regenerated the area to launch Eastgate market but unfortunately found the recruitment of traders to the area difficult mainly due to the poor footfall.

The Council has previously organised a small Christmas market in Castle Street adjoining the High Street from the start of December until Christmas. This market reduced in size as a response to complaints received from independent retailers in Castle Street who felt that its existence adversely affected their turnover because of visibility issues. The same was true of the Fore Street Christmas Market, with complaints received from independent retailers in the Fore Street area, which resulted in fewer applications being received for the market. Traders felt that the scale of the smaller market didn't work for them, meaning that it is now no longer held, and support for the market was no longer received. The viability of the smaller Christmas market in Fore Street was also affected by the introduction of the Cathedral Christmas Market, and other Christmas Markets in and around the city with other opportunities now available for those looking to trade at a market.

The Council also operate a Sunday market and car boot sale at the Matford Centre (livestock centre) in Marsh Barton and that market is now externally organised. This is an open market with no restrictions other than 'ready-to-eat' food which is provided by the Matford Centre caterer as part of their lease/catering agreement, the current caterer has declined the option to cater at the market currently.

7. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

Priority: Local economy, a Healthy and Active City, Net Zero and Culture.

8. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

The key risk is that Exeter is unable to fulfil its potential to operate and support markets, and this could have a detrimental impact on the local economy. One option could be to attract a commercial market provider. This could be considered as part of the emerging City Centre Strategy.

9. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must consider the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 No potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because the report is for noting only

10. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendation.

11. Are there any other options?

N/A

Director: Ian Collinson, Strategic Director, Place

Report Author: Helen Coombes

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

No Background papers.