

ECONOMY PDG

18th May 2017

FEASIBILITY OF RUNNING A FARMERS' MARKET IN TIVERTON

Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

Responsible Officer Alan Ottey, Town Centre and Market Manager

Reason for Report: To provide members with information on the feasibility of holding a 'Farmers' Market' in Tiverton Market and to appreciate the implications and to decide which option should be adopted.

RECOMMENDATION: That additional research be carried out to establish the feasibility, options and costs arising from proposals to hold a farmer's market

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The economy is one of the council's key corporate priorities within the Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications: None at this stage but could require a small investment dependent on decision over which action to take.

Legal Implications: There are no legal implications

Risk Assessment: Dependent upon decision

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on the 16th March members of the Economic PDG requested that a 'Feasibility Study on the establishment of a Farmer's Market in Tiverton' be carried out.

2.0 Summary of Feasibility Study

2.1 Many towns around Tiverton hold successful Farmers' Markets, including Crediton and Cullompton.

2.2 This study considers the effects of such markets and their localities; the days and times when they operate; the possible success/failure for Tiverton and the financial implications if one was introduced.

2.4 The study gives a small number of options which should be considered.

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Circulation of Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton

Feasibility of holding a Farmers' Market In Tiverton

Introduction

Farmers' Markets are now common place across the country in a variety of towns and cities. There are normally quite stringent guidelines as to which traders can trade and what goods they can offer for sale. These include the following:

- Fresh produce must be locally grown within a certain radius of the market (decided normally by the market).
- The trader must be based within the agreed radius of the market.
- Any local crafts must be made locally and mainly from local sources.
- The hours of operation are specified (these may vary from place to place)
- The 'traders' are covered by liability insurance.
- The trader (if required by law) is registered with Environmental Health.

There was an attempt to create a Farmers' Market in Tiverton some years ago but it was not sustainable.

Rival Farmers Markets

There are a number of Farmers Markets' in the vicinity of Tiverton which have been operating for a number of years. These include:

Town	Distance	Frequency	Day	Operating time
Cullompton	7 miles	monthly	1 st Saturday	9:30 – 12:30
Crediton	12 miles	monthly	2 nd Saturday	10:00 – 13:00
Dulverton	14 miles	monthly – from April to Sept	4 th Saturday	10:00 – 16:00
Exeter	15 miles	weekly	Thursdays	
Wellington	16 miles	twice a month	1 st and 3 rd Saturdays	9:00 – 13:00
South Molton	19 miles	monthly	4 th Saturday	8:00 - 13:00
Taunton	21 miles	weekly	Thursdays	9:00 – 15:00

The majority of these are on a Saturday and operate for a period of three-four hours Those not on a Saturday also operates for about the same times.

Traders in these do come from different areas and some are really full time market traders whereas there are a few who are 'part time' and it is complimentary to their main business i.e. farming.

Customers

It has been noted that the attraction of a 'Farmers' Market' is still, to a large extent, fairly popular but, in certain areas they have become less popular.

The success of the market is very dependent upon the demographics of an area and the amount of promotion that is done. This point is very important in my experience having run Farmers' Markets in other locations. Examples where it was successful

were market Bosworth and Hinckley, Leicestershire which the current Market Manager established in the late 1990's and early 2000's and still operating on a monthly basis. On the other aspect one established in Nuneaton, Warwickshire failed due to lack of customers and goods and produce being too expensive as the demographics did not compliment such a market.

Opportunities for Tiverton

There is the possibility of organising a Farmers' Market in Tiverton but there are issues that have to be overcome. These are:

- Is there a demand from the customer? In general having talked to current customers of the market there is a mixed response. With some stating that all the goods could be sold on the normal market. Is a Farmers' Market then going to affect the normal market?
- Attracting the customer. There is the population within the catchment area of Tiverton to enable a market to be established but the type of person attracted to using Farmers' markets currently do not visit the town centre so there would have to be an investment in promotion in an effort to attract these customers.
- Identification of day to operate market. This is going to be a crucial factor in the success or failure of the market and should it run alongside the normal market or stand alone. The majority of the surrounding Farmers' Markets tend to be on a Saturday, but these places do not have a normal market on this day or indeed have a market at anytime. In various parts of the country a Sunday is a popular day to hold them when there is a retail Saturday market. Another suggestion could be a Friday late afternoon/early evening when it could be attached to the normal market if they were to stay open. There are other days of the week when it could operate but with the current trend on the footfall of Tiverton suggests that it would not be sustainable (as was shown by the previous Farmers' Market in the town).
- Recruitment of traders. This is also a time consuming issue and also links with the selection of the day. Many of the local Farmers' Market traders already stand on various markets around the region so it is so linked with the selection of the day as to their availability. Traders have been spoken to at nearby Farmers' Markets and there is some interest but very dependent upon the day and their current commitments and workload.
- Identification of core principles of the Farmers' Market. To achieve a successful Farmers' Market there has to be some defining principles on the type of goods and produce acceptable and on the distance i.e. locality, they originate as they are markets basically started to promote local produce and goods. This to some extent would depend on the availability of the goods or produce in the surrounding area i.e. fresh fish would be sourced further afield than meats that can be obtained locally. There is a national association which tend to set a standard for farmers' Markets is the National Farmers' Retail and

Markets association (FARMA) and they recommend the core principles that can be adopted.

Options

Having considered the various issues around Farmers' Markets for Tiverton it is recommended that consideration be given to the following options and a decision as to which one to follow as each one could be feasible in its own right but all would need further planning (except one) to ensure its success. There would also be the need to establish a budget and appreciate there would have to be an investment.

The return on that investment could take 2 to 3 years if it is successful in becoming sustainable. The earliest that one could be trialled would be September but this would need support and resources (1 member of staff on extended leave from May to mid-July).

Options

1. To carry out a further study and obtain more feedback from potential customers and from potential traders looking at establishing one either towards the end of the year or starting them in April 2018 (as January to March are poor months for markets in general). Also establish which day it would need to operate on.
2. To trial a Farmers' Market on a Sunday for a 4 month period with 'attractive rents' for the traders during this period. This would be from the end of July dependent on sourcing suitable traders. This should be once a month.
3. To trial a Farmers' Market on a Friday evening for a 4 month period with 'attractive rents' for the traders during this period. Again this would be from the end of July again dependent on sourcing suitable traders. This should be once a month and work alongside the normal market (there is a trial Friday evening late night market listed for the 23rd June open till 8pm)
4. Encourage trade on the normal retail market to encompass all goods and produce found on a Farmers' Market and promote it as part of the offer of Tiverton Pannier Market.
5. Look at establishing the Farmers' Market when resources and budget become available and the market management believe the time is right to establish one.
6. Take no further action as the opportunities for success and return on investment may have a limited chance of success.
7. Source a private market operator and potentially negotiate the creation of a Farmers' Market. This may not be easy and it could be they would want to locate other than in the Market Place. If this was adopted then it potentially could be done without any budget necessary.

Budget

To create a Farmers' Market there would need to be an initial input of funding to provide a promotional budget in the region of £1,500 to £2,000 to ensure suitable publicity and get the market off to a good start.

Given that the Farmer's Market would involve additional market hours, either as an additional day, or extension of the normal market hours into the evening, there would be the cost of the extra officer time needed to cover the opening and closing of the market. If the Farmers Market was to be on a Sunday once a month then one would need at least 7 hours for the actual market allowing for the market to be erected and then dismantled and open for at least 4 hours, giving a salary cost of approximately £140 / month or £1,680 annually over and above normal running costs. Any more than once a month would obviously increase this amount.

The potential income would depend on the number of stalls and the fee charged. Initially you would want to set a reasonably low charge to attract traders and make it viable to them. If the same price was charged as for the normal market (£14) and initially attracting 12 traders, then the monthly income would only be £168 which would just about cover the increased staffing costs. To make the market viable over the long term you would need to aim at having in the region of 20 stalls. The success would depend on the quality of goods and produce, the amount of stalls and the amount of promotion given to it.

Should a private operator be found then there is potential to charge them a licence fee and thus create an income from it, but I would suggest this would have to be £0 for the first year to enable the market to get established and it may be the council would have to invest in assisting with promotion.

General Comment

The potential for holding a Farmers' Market in Tiverton is reliant on political support and the availability of the necessary resource to develop and operate. The task is not as simple as it sounds and does require considerable thought and planning. They are popular in the right places and held on the right day and between the right hours. They need to have regulations and standards with a strong commitment to the principles of a real Farmers' Market.

There is certainly potential for holding a Farmers' Market in Tiverton, but it will need sound systems and processes in place to ensure principles are enforced and will need good promotion. This will require a suitable budget and resource to enable the market to happen and there must be a realisation that the return on the investment will take some time.

It is essential that there is continual emphasis on ensuring the regular retail market becomes sustainable and eventually profitable to the District Council as well as promoting other attractions such as a Farmers' Market.

The Market Manager therefore requests that the Economic PDG make a decision as to which option should be recommended as to the establishment of, or not, a Farmers' Market.

