

Report of the Chief Executive

TOWN CENTRE TRADING POLICY REVIEW1. Purpose of report

To seek committee approval to conclude the annual review of the Town Centre Trading Policy for the use of all Council owned squares.

2. Background

A comprehensive Town Centre Trading Policy was created and approved by the committee, on 31 January 2019. The policy took into account the findings of an Ombudsman investigation following a complaint against the Council in 2017. The development and adoption of a more comprehensive policy for town centre trading activities within an agreed timeframe, was one of the recommendations of the Ombudsman. Since the policy was established all applications for town centre trading activity have been determined under that policy. At the time the policy was instituted it was agreed that it would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Details of the proposed changes and the review process are included at appendix 1. The updated policy document, which includes a refreshed application form can be found in appendix 2.

3. Financial implications

The budget for town squares income in the current financial year is £12,000.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE:

- 1. that the amendments to the Town Centre Trading policy be approved;**
- 2. that powers be delegated to the Chair and Vice Chair to approve any additional amendments, should any be required – with the new policy to come into effect on 31 January 2022.**
- 3. that the policy be reviewed every two years, with the next review in January 2024.**

Background papers

Nil.

APPENDIX 1Changes to the Policy

In January 2021 a number of changes were incorporated following a detailed review of the policy by the Economic Development team, in consultation with the Council's Environmental Health and Licensing departments. Proposed changes to wording and the addition of further policy points were included. These changes took into account the current public safety challenges surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic and the Council's role in responding to those issues and due to the ongoing nature of the Pandemic no changes are proposed on this area of the policy. The Markets Officer's role, in administering town centre trading applications going forward, was also reflected in the policy wording.

The policy appears to be running smoothly and only a handful of extremely minor alterations are proposed. These are:

- (a) The replacement of the title of the senior officer with responsibility for the policy to "*Economic Development and Regeneration Manager*";
- (b) A minor amendment to the wording on the application form, which can be used for both markets and general trading applications.

Review Process

The Council now needs to conclude the review and agree the adopted policy. The consultation period with officers from other Departments concludes on the 21 January 2022. Any proposed changes will be reported verbally to the Jobs Economy Committee for their further consideration at the meeting alongside any further Member observations. Rather than attempt to make any ad-hoc changes during the meeting it is envisaged that changes, if any, will be made following the meeting and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee be given delegated authority to sign those off in accordance with the wishes of Members.

The operation of the policy appears robust enough to move the process to a bi-annual basis.