

Report of the Chief Executive

UPDATE ON TOWN SQUARES INCOME1. Purpose of report

To update the committee on income generated from charging for the use of Council owned town squares.

2. Background

Cabinet 19 April 2016 agreed to amend policy so that Council owned squares would fall under the remit of the Town Centre Management team who would encourage bookings for commercial use in order to generate much needed additional income. There was previously no policy in place to charge for square usage and the permits for any activities were issued by the Council's Licensing section. Square usage was previously reserved for community and non-profit making purposes with some consideration to commercial uses on a case by case basis.

Further details are set out in the appendix.

3. Financial implications

The table below shows the income received since the Council began charging for the use of squares.

Financial Year	£
2016/17	7,600
2017/18	10,115
2018/19 (to 19 Oct 2018)	5,312
Cumulative Total	20,331

Of the £10,115 income received in 2017/18, a sum of £9,230 was received from commercial bookings and market permits at Beeston. The remaining income was achieved from ground rent at our other squares and use of electrical supplies at these locations.

The 2018/19 budget for income received from Council owned town squares is £7,500.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Based on the first two quarters of 2018/19, it is likely we will see a similar squares income at 2018/19 year end, compared with the previous year.

This is positive as the Council received fewer applications in Q1 2018/19, compared with Q1 2017/18, but are now on target to reach a year end figure matching the previous year. Feedback from space management companies has shown the current charges at Beeston may have acted as a deterrent to some previous applicants, with their clients requesting to stand in locations within the Consent Street Area, where we do not permit activity. It is worth noting a large proportion of the previous bookings were on behalf of national charities looking to secure fundraiser presence in Beeston Town Centre.

The Council could explore the option to reduce the amount of ground rent in order to increase the amount of bookings at The Square, however this would not necessary increase the uptake of space and could result in the Council achieving the same income (or even less) than that is currently projected, with more bookings to manage and permits to issue.

Benefits of the Consent Street policy adopted for Beeston and our ability to offer space at The Square has enabled us to better manage the amount of charity fundraisers attending with fixed structures, their positioning and reduced the number of complaints received from the public about aggressive sales tactics. During the notification process of the Council's intent to adopt a Consent Street policy in Beeston, multiple space management companies were informed, whom we have since formed new relationships with and received non charity based bookings from.

At this stage £400 plus VAT per week ground rent is now appearing too expensive for regular charity based bookings and it is doubtful Beeston is a lucrative enough location in terms of yielding the required donations and general campaign awareness to justify such an outlay. Charity bookings will potentially seek cheaper locations going forward, as street fundraising is still an important means for charities to increase charitable giving. It is hoped we continue to receive bookings from space management companies for those looking for promotional space in the absence of charity based bookings, a few examples include utility bill switching, home phone and Broadband providers, cash and carry memberships.

There has been little demand for commercial bookings in town squares outside of Beeston.