

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

At the Cabinet meeting on 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.

The Economic Development team continue to process permit applications for the use of Council owned town squares, in line with the Council's most current Town Centre Trading Policy. 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	£ Budget	£ Income
2016/17	4,000	7,600
2017/18	4,000	10,115
2018/19	7,500	8,524
2019/20	10,000	9,457
2020/21 (to 1st August 2020)	12,000*	-280
Cumulative Total		35,416

Of the £9,457 income received in 2019/20, 98% was from commercial bookings and market permits at Beeston Town Centre.

The 2020/21 budget for income received from Council owned town squares is £12,000.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

Current Financial Year

Based on the first two quarters of 2020/21 and owing to the temporary closure of all town squares due to Covid-19, it is accepted that the income received for financial year 2020/21 will be significantly less than previous years. However, enquiries from regular booking parties have now resumed, showing there is still a demand for outdoor trading space in Town Centre locations. Furthermore, the Beeston Farmers' market returned in July, with additional Covid-Secure measures in place.

The Council will not charge during the remainder of the financial year 2020/21 for permits issued other to external market operators, to further encourage markets of different types. Other commercial bookings, to include; promotional companies, utilities companies, standalone food vendors on non-market days and fundraising teams carrying out direct debit capture, will continue to be charged at full commercial rates (examples below, but are negotiable).

- Beeston Town Centre - £400+vat per week.
- Stapleford and Kimberley Town Centre - £150+vat per week.

As per the 'Financial Implications' section, there is currently a deficit of £280, which is a result of refunds issued against pre-paid bookings from financial year 2019/20, where year-end accounts were already settled.

Following the recent decision by external market operators to cease the regular Monday and Wednesday markets (cited as being financial unviable), the Council have since taken the decision to recruit a part-time Markets Officer on a temporary contract. The new post will look to reinstate the popular weekly general market in Beeston and establish a regular market presence in other towns. As a result of the Council running a number of its own markets, the income previously received from external market operator's permits will therefore be lost in the next financial year. It is estimated that the squares income will reduced by at least £1000 per annum going forward.

The Council will receive some ground rent from the individual stall holders attending the new Council managed market days, however this will only go some way to recoup the salary costs of the new Markets Officer. Ultimately the markets will not run at a profit and instead the majority of additional squares income will continue to be reliant on other commercial bookings.

There continues to be little demand for commercial bookings in town squares outside of Beeston, however this may change if markets in Kimberley and Stapleford can be established. There is no Council owned square in Eastwood, which would be subject to chargeable permits for the use of.

There have been no applications for permission to trade within the consents street area, however the intention of adopting a consents streets area, was predominantly to reduce the amount of illegal traders approaching shoppers in pedestrianised areas of Beeston, which the Council were previously receiving complaints about.

Town Centre Trading Policy Review

The current Town Centre Trading Policy is now due to be renewed. Changes to the policy will first be made in consultation with the Council's Licensing and Environmental Health Teams. This is to ensure any newly adopted policy is robust enough to assist officers in determining applications in light of Covid-19 and the latest safety guidance, as well as the implications following changes to the determination of outdoor seating licenses (now devolved to Broxtowe Borough Council). Revised wording of the policy will also reflect the role of the new part-time Markets Officer, who will be included in the process of determining squares applications.

The revised policy document is to be presented to Policy and Performance committee on 1 October 2020.