

	Meeting (No)	Market & Town Hall Committee (2)	
	Date	10th September 2024	
	Document	Ref No	
	Market & Town Hall Manager's Report	MTH2/22	

Summer Market

The Summer Pirate Market, on 26th July, was very successful and was delivered at a cost of £896.91, less than the approved £1000 budget.

The footfall was increased on the day and there was a great community atmosphere. Traders reported an increase in takings and we hope that many first-time visitors to the market will return again on a normal trading week.

Unfortunately, the timed events such as the book reading and the fancy dress competition were not well supported and I feel we should take into consideration for the future that this was a themed 'special' market rather than an actual event.

The market is now in the fortunate position where most pitches are filled each week, depending on traders' holidays. However, this means that space for activities and entertainment for the special markets has become very tight. For the summer market we were forced to stop any casual traders from trading on that week, which was not received well by some more regular casual traders. Going forward we will have to carefully consider how much space is available for the activities and entertainment, to deliver a successful themed market for community benefit without affecting the running of the market.

Lower Community Office & Town Hall Works

Our caretaker has now completed the refurbishment of the lower community unit and CWaC property services have been notified.

The Town Hall back door has been repainted and edging strips have been painted onto the police fire escape steps, and the steps into the basement and in the kitchen/side hall area for safety reasons.

The sensor lights in the kitchen/side hall area have been replaced and re configured so that they are now more sensitive, and illuminate the stepped area quicker improving safety. The broken light fittings in the kitchen and my office have also now been replaced.

A 'keep clear' area for the police fire escape, encompassing the fire escape from the side room has been clearly marked out in the yard in advance of the start of the roof work, to maintain safety.

Work has taken place to improve the main community notice board, outside the former post office. A new cork backing has been fitted and new 'signage' put up. However, the notice board is in a bad state of repair and will need to be replaced in the next financial year.

We have been informed by CWaC that work to replace the small platform lift on the steps in the entrance hall has been delayed, this is now expected to be done by the end of September. The work is likely to take around 3 days.

Following the recent tragic events in Southport I have been in touch with all of our regular hirers to suggest that they update their hire risk assessments, to provide us with a copy and let us know if there is anything the council can do to improve their security. The main outcome is that hirers will now be locking access doors while their sessions are taking place.

An unannounced fire safety audit was carried out by the Fire Service on 23.8.24. this was an inspection of the building and our procedures to check that we are complying with our legal responsibilities imposed by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005. They reported that there were no issues and that everything was in order.

Town Hall Roof Work

CWaC have kept us updated regarding the roof work, this was delayed and work is currently due to commence on 4.9.24. I will keep the committee updated with the progress of this work.

Market Square Handrails

The market square handrails have now been ordered; we hope to take delivery very soon so that our caretaker can begin the process of replacing them. This will take several weeks to complete and is obviously weather dependant.

Market Square Bollards

The Market square bollards were repaired on 17.6.24, as the middle bollard was not rising, the engineer requested that the oil was changed with each service. However, we do not have a service schedule for the bollards, despite this being highlighted in the past. I have requested again that a service schedule for them is set up and passed on the request for the oil change, which would also have been reported to the help desk as a matter of course.

The same fault occurred in late July and was logged on 30.7.24. and I was informed by the Qwest/Engie (CWaC) help desk on 12.8.24 that the company dealing with the repair were recommending a replacement of the middle bollard. This is causing issues and with the middle bollard stuck permanently down, vehicles can easily drive onto the market square, preventing the Town Council from securing the area.

I am now informed that the quote for this work is with the head of Service Delivery and I am awaiting the outcome. The Chief Officer has also chased this up with Property Services directly in late August.

Christmas Lights Switch on Event

Plans for the market side of the event are progressing well. We are at maximum capacity of 20 stalls inside the Town Hall and have 14 traders outside with 4 food vans. We also have activities such as face painting booked as well as musical

entertainment, which is being provided free of charge. We also plan to have a Christmas trail activity for the children, with prizes.

It would be appreciated if any Cllrs could volunteer to help during the day particularly to assist with setting up at The Cross for the light switch on and with clearing away after the switch on both at The Cross and inside the Town Hall. This will help to keep the overall cost of the event down.

Free room hire (Minute 10b M&TH 27.6.23)

No free room hire has been provided since the last meeting.

Reduced Pitch Fees (Minute 10a M&TH 27.6.23)

Reduced pitch fees have been given to 'Koala North West', Breastfeeding Service, on 2.8.24 to help promote their service following feedback from the 'Neston and Willaston Community Partnership – steering group meeting' attended by Cllr Braithwaite.

The maximum agreed figure of £200 per quarter for free or reduced pitch fees, to community or charitable organisations where there is community benefit, has not been exceeded.

It should be noted that due to the very high winds on 23rd August the few traders that attended the market were given a 25% reduction to pitch fees, those that made the decision not to attend did not have to use a holiday week due to these exceptional circumstances and safety concerns regarding the use of gazebos. In recognition of this, those that traded have also been given an extra week to trade with free pitch fees. To be clear, this was strictly one-off situation and decisions were made in consultation with the Chair, we felt that the few traders that were able, and who made the decision to try to trade should be rewarded for their support to the market and not disadvantaged compared to those that did not trade. The HRGO agency staff hours for the day were also reduced from the usual 9.5 hours to 4 hours in an effort to reduce expenditure.

Equals card expenditure

The total expenditure for the Equals card from 1.6.24 to 31.8.24 was £192.30.

Exceptions – Town Hall Lift Maintenance (Minute 67 M&TH 13.2.24)

There has been no further update on the GSM/Safe line issue and installation since the last meeting, despite chasing the issue with the help desk and property services.

It should be noted that we have had 2 lift breakdowns since the last meeting:

- On Thursday 11.7.24 - engineer attended and fixed on Friday 12.7.24
- Further breakdown occurred on Sunday 14.7.24 during the Little Actors Theatre Festival, luckily no one was in the lift as it was being called to transport equipment between floors. Equipment therefore had to be carried downstairs which caused some issues. The lift was eventually fixed late Thursday 25.7.24. Causing issues for Officers and forcing them to have to leave early or work from home on some days as when bookings were taking place in the hall there was no alternative disabled exit.

- The Locum Chief Officer compiled a timeline of breakdowns and temporary solutions which was submitted to CW&C in late July, and followed up in late August. Discussions with Property Services are ongoing.

**Delegated Authority - Market Square Handrails
(Minute 14b M&TH 25.6.24)**

Further enquiries regarding sustainability and expected lifespan of the timbers were made and we were informed of the following:

- Both timbers are certified: FSC TT-COC-003324. PEFC BMT-PEFC-0925. VERIFIED BMT-COC-0138
- Lifespan depends on how they are maintained, if well maintained then around 20 to 25 years.

Therefore, the most cost effective, sapele, timber was ordered. After a site visit, to check measurements, it was recommended that the profile was changed slightly to give a 90-degree bevelled top rather than a curved one to allow for better run off of rainwater, there was no change to cost for this. Also, Sikken's Cetol Filter 7-Plus was recommended as a finish for the timber, this should give between 3 and 5 years protection for the timber at a cost of £66.85 for 2.5L, obviously the timber will be monitored during this time.

2nd September 2024

**Nicky McMahon
Market & Town Hall Manager**