

16th February 2012

Briefing note for West Central Area Committee on 1st March 2012

Update on Improvements to Cambridge Market

Introduction

This briefing note is in response to the following oral question raised by Mr E Cearní at the West Central Area Committee on 5th January 2012:

“Can the committee give an update on the progress of the planned improvements to the Market Square? Recent events and activities around the market Square have had an adverse affect on the regular traders. Examples include, a craft fair held in the Guildhall on a cold winter day taking trade away for similar stalls on the open air Market Square and the Christmas Light switch on which encouraged noisy crowds rather than shoppers.”

Background

Cambridge Market is an extremely important part of the city’s heritage and one of the very few markets in the country that continues to trade successfully 7 days a week. The City Council is committed to working with Market traders on an ongoing basis to proactively seek opportunities to improve the market.

Markets Improvement Plan

For a number of years there has been considerable debate about ways in which the Market square area might be improved to make it a more attractive area both during the day and the evening. In 2010, recognising that in the current economic climate large-scale environmental improvements would not be possible in the short term, the City Council, worked closely with market traders to develop a “Market Improvement Plan. “This is a constantly evolving piece of work where projects are added each year.

The plan sets out a range of projects designed to improve the Market both visually and operationally. In 2010/11 these included new stall canopies on all stalls, a wide range of marketing initiatives (delivered through Love Cambridge, the City Centre Partnership), and improvements to the fountain area through seasonal planting. Projects for 2011/12 include an upgrade of the electrical infrastructure, a public art project and participation in “National Markets Day-Love Your Market,” a national campaign that has come out of the recent high profile government led “Mary Portas High St Review.”

The Markets are actively promoted through all Love Cambridge Marketing material as a key component of the “Cambridge offer.” This includes a dedicated

Markets guide, profile in the city centre shopping guide and extensive coverage in both the Spring/Summer and Christmas Love Cambridge publications. In the recently launched “Love Cambridge Voucher” book, over 23% of the offers have been contributed by market and street traders. New banners have also been developed promoting Cambridge Markets and are now being displayed at all Park and Ride sites and in car parks across the city centre.

Events around the Market Square

Once a year the “Christmas Lights Switch on” is hosted in the Market Square in front of the Guildhall. This event and the Christmas Lights are organised and delivered by Love Cambridge in partnership with the City Council. Over the past 5 years this event has developed into a wonderful celebration of local community talent and includes participation from a wide range of local dance drama and music groups from across the city. In order to ensure that the benefits of this event are spread right across the city centre additional performance areas are located at the Grafton, Lion Yard and the Grand Arcade where a full programme of activity is organised throughout the day.

The market square is at the very heart of the city centre and provides great linkage to all the surrounding historic streets where many of our independent retailers are located. Whilst it is recognised that this location is far from ideal it is extremely important that the event’s central focus is in the heart of the historic core.

The event attracts around 4,000 local people and whilst this might not always translate into an immediate increase in sales on the day for market traders, it is a great opportunity to showcase the market to a large captive audience. We will continue to try to work closely with traders to offer guidance and support in helping them to take advantage of this opportunity. The same could be said of any event in and around the market square that encourages increased footfall.

Emma Thornton

Head of Tourism and City Centre Management