

Report to: Events and Town Centre
Management Committee

Report Ref: E1915
Meeting Date: 27th January 2020
Agenda Item: 7
Prepared By: Town Clerk



Subject: Makers Market

1.0 BACKGROUND

A town centre property owner attended the January council meeting and stated he felt that he had not received an adequate response to a letter to the council from the Chairman of the Events and Town Centre Management Committee. It was expressed that he felt the committee imposes the market on the town centre residents without consultation and that it presents danger and disturbance to residents. It was suggested that the market be relocated to the Princess Street car park.

The letter is contained in Annex A.

2.0 HISTORY

The Makers Market was first trialled in October 2012. Following positive feedback from residents and businesses, a further trial was then held for one year in 2013. The Town Council consulted to all households and businesses affected by the road closure in August 2013; this included a survey to businesses and the then Chairman of the committee, Cllr Tony Dean, visiting households affected by the closures and delivering a feedback form. The feedback was considered in September 2013 and the committee resolved to make the event permanent.

In June 2014 a trial of the Market on King Street took place and on review the Events Committee resolved (E14/029) that the market only take place on Princess Street. The main reasons for this decision were that the road closure/diversion was problematic, there was no place for hot food that did not cause disruption e.g. outside houses, or outside shops or in a place where customers could be behind etc), the road was too narrow in places and there was no visibility from the main roads.

The council has received few direct complaints from residents about the Makers Market; those which have been received have principally been in relation to frustration of access to their homes and emergency access. Other issues raised have included disturbance during set up, which was addressed through the adoption of an SLA with the Makers Market.

The SLA was adopted in 2019 and formalised the arrangements for the market. It required the Makers Market company to undertake an emergency plan, which is published on the council website. The Council has received assurances from both North West Ambulance Service and the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service that they can access all areas should an emergency arise.

In April 2019 Council considered a report outlining the introduction of the new SLA, concerns raised by residents and the suggestion that the market be relocated. It was resolved to continue the market in line with existing arrangements and the new SLA.

Following this decision, the Town Centre and Marketing Officer hand delivered a letter to all affected households and invited residents to contact her with any queries. No responses were received.

3.0 RELOCATION OF MARKET

The organisers of the Makers Market have previously considered the suggestion of relocating the market to the Princess Street Car Park and advised they believe it could only accommodate in the region of 50-75 stalls and would reduce footfall to town centre businesses and the market generally.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider whether any changes to the arrangements for the Makers Market are required.

ANNEX A: LETTER TO COUNCILLORS

A possible solution may be available to satisfy all parties over the siting of the makers market. Richard Cussons of KPS Management, who manages property in the town centre, has had conversations with a number of interested parties, and has proposed that the market be moved to the Princess st car park where there is the same amount of space for stall as there is currently in princess st.

Concern has been expressed about the siting of the market for the following reasons:

- Town centre residents were not consulted about the market and find it very intrusive , one resident even being too scared to stay in her own house on makers market days, so gets her daughter to pick her up and go to Northwich over those weekends, at some inconvenience to her and her daughter. This cannot be right.
- Town centre residents have expressed their alarm over the fire that happened on 1st November in Silkmill St, and was caused by an electrical fault, and attended by two fire engines (incidentally, on a seperate issue, the corner of Silkmill St and princess st MUST be painted with three stripes to prevent people parking there and inhibiting access for emergency vehicles). If this had happened on Makers market day, then there could have been a serious incident, as smoke was coming out of the manhole cover underneath a car parked there, which could have exploded petrol everywhere, leading to a major incident. (see photo of subsequent works). The bank employee could still smell the smoke later on that Friday.
- This has exacerbated their concerns over emergency vehicle access during the Makers Market. On makers market days, the town centre is closed off to the emergency services. No amount of persuasion by the Town Clerk has allayed these fears. Some of the residents of the Silkmill st cottages are not in good health, and rely on the ambulance being able to reach them in an emergency, and of course, fire is an all too present risk, as the incident on Friday showed. There can be no excuse to shut off Princess st for mere entertainment.
- I understand that the Town Council do not commercially benefit hugely from this event, as it is commercially managed and the profit goes to the licence holders of the event. Many shops are shut on Makers market days, and the Co-op and Waitrose have told me that their takings are actually down on these days. So who is actually benefitting commercially? It seems like it is the company that arranges the event and not many others. It is therefore false to claim that this event is helping the town centre. Certainly not town centre residents.
- Residents of the regent St complex and the Silkmill st carpark cannot use their vehicles on these days. I ask you would you be happy to have this restriction placed on you?
- The logical solution to this situation is to move the makers market to another location. This location must surely be the Princess st car park where it will be out of the way of the main st Princess st, allow emergency access to the town centre, and not disturb residents in the town centre, allowing them free access to Regent st and Silkmill sts.

Please treat this matter as urgent. I am not clear why there seemed to be so little consultation to set up this event, and yet there seems to be great resistance to moving it to a more suitable location. Please, please, consider the residents concerns, and move it to Princess st car park.

