

Report of: Head of Markets

Report to: Director of City Development

Date: 13th January 2021

Subject: COVID-19 Coronavirus: Rental Support to Market Traders January to March 2021 due to lockdown 3

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): No, whilst the individual markets are located in individual wards the approach to rental support for COVID-19 is City Wide	
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

1. Summary of Main issues

- The COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis has resulted in significant pressure on all the markets across the City and traders. Whilst significant Central government support has been provided primarily to Indoor Market Traders, the Council has also provided support to Open Market traders by waiving fees during the period April – June 2020 and has offered a rental discount scheme for all market traders for the period July 2020 to March 2021.
- Whilst there were encouraging signs in footfall in the City Centre and in the retail areas across the city generally, due to the second lockdown in November and now a third lockdown from January 2021 there remains increasing pressure on all traders across the City's Markets.
- It is therefore proposed that the existing rental discount scheme of 25% for all traders be increased for the period 1st January to 31st March 2021 due to the government's lockdown. The position is to increase the single discount level of 25% on rent to 50% for all indoor traders, and to increase it to 100% for all outdoor traders. Given that Service Charge (where payable) reflects the Council's incurred costs, this will remain payable.

- It is proposed that the existing provision within the discount scheme for exceptional support being made available on a case-by case basis will remain to allow flexibility in assisting traders who are experiencing exceptional hardship as a result of COVID-19.
- The cost of increasing the existing scheme for the three month period, will be no more than £250,000, so approval is requested for a further £250,000 to fund the increased discount scheme for the period 1st January to 31st March 2021 which has been accounted for within the budget provision. Any approved exceptional hardship requests will be in addition to this funding envelope.

1.1 **Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The scheme contributes towards the outcomes of **Inclusive Growth Strategy**, including supporting the potential of independent retailers to remain a vital element of the City's economy during a period of unprecedented challenge.

1.2 **Resource Implications**

- The cost of increasing the existing scheme for the three month period, will be no more than £250,000, so approval is requested for a further £250,000 to fund the discount scheme for the period 1st January to 31st March which has been accounted for within the budget provision. Any approved exceptional hardship requests will be in addition to this funding envelope.
- The overall cost of the Scheme can be managed within the Directorate's current projected financial outturn position as at period nine. It should be noted however that the Directorate's budget remains under severe pressure as a result of COVID-19.

1.3 **Recommendations**

- The Chief Officer, Operations approves the proposals set out above and authorises the reduction in income outlined.

2. **Purpose of this report**

To request that the Chief Officer, Operations approves the proposals set out relating to support to market traders across the Markets Service and authorises the reduction in income arising from implementing the proposals.

3.0 Background information

- 3.1.1 The Council operates a number of markets across the city most notably Kirkgate Market in the City Centre, which is home to 245 independent businesses and forms a key element of the City's retail offer. Moreover the market has a special place in the history and affections of generations of Leeds' residents.
- 3.1.2 Nationally the UK is continuing to experience a difficult retail trading environment and whilst there has been increases in footfall post lockdown the overall trading position is fragile. Leeds City Centre and the Markets across the City are not immune from this challenge.
- 3.1.3 Whilst significant Central government support has been provided primarily to Indoor Market Traders, the Council has also provided support to Open Market traders by waiving fees during the period April –June 2020 and has offered a rental discount scheme for all market traders on a tiered discount basis (minimum 25% raising to a maximum of 100%, linked to ability to trade) for the period July to September 2020. This was then followed with a flat rate 25% discount for the period October 2020 to March 2021.

4. Proposals

- 4.1.1 In support of traders it is proposed that the existing rental discount scheme be increased for the period 1st January to 31st March 2021. The position is to increase the discount to 50% for indoor traders and 100% for outdoor traders. Given that Service Charge (where payable) reflects the Council's incurred costs, this will remain payable.
- 4.1.2 It is proposed that the existing provision within the discount scheme for exceptional support being made available on a case-by case basis will remain to allow flexibility in assisting traders who are experiencing exceptional hardship as a result of COVID-19.

5. Corporate considerations

5.1 Consultation and engagement

- 5.1.1 The Deputy Executive Member for Markets and the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment have been briefed on the proposals and are both supportive. Ward Members in areas with LCC Markets operating have been informed of the proposal.

5.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 5.2.1 An Equality Impact Screening document has been completed. The proposals do not bring forward any direct or obvious implications given the universality of the proposed discount.

6 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 6.1 The scheme contributes towards the outcomes of **Inclusive Growth Strategy**, including supporting the potential of independent retailers to remain a vital element of the City's economy during a period of unprecedented challenge.

7 Resources, procurement and value for money

7.1 Revenue effects

- 7.1.1 The cost of increasing the existing scheme for the three month period, will be no more than £250,000, so approval is requested for a further £250,000 to fund the discount scheme for the period 1st January to 31st March 2021 which has been accounted for within the budget provision. Any approved exceptional hardship requests will be in addition to this funding envelope.
- 7.1.2 The overall cost of the Scheme can be managed within the Directorate's current projected financial outturn position as at period nine. It should be noted however that the Directorate's budget remains under severe pressure as a result of COVID-19.

8 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 8.1 This decision is not eligible for call in.

9 Risk management

- 9.1 There is a risk that the COVID-19 Coronavirus results in a longer term disruption to activity. The current proposals for a three month period allows for a review which can be cognisant of changes to the overall position.

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 The provision of direct financial support to market traders affords the greatest opportunity for the Markets Service and individual markets to continue to trade during a continuing period of significant retail uncertainty.

11 Recommendations

- 11.1 The Chief Officer, Operations approves the proposals set out above and authorises the reduction in income outlined.

12 Background documents¹

- 12.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.