

Report to Leader of the Council

Subject: Council Service Changes Due to COVID-19 – Restrictions on Arnold Market

Date: 23rd March 2020

Author: Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected

Ernehale

Purpose

For the Leader of the Council to authorise, until further notice:

A restriction on the operation of Arnold Market, to limit the sale of goods to essential items only, namely food and grocery items, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

That the Leader of the Council:

- 1) Authorises, until further notice, a restriction on the operation of stalls at Arnold Market so that only essential retail is available for sale at the market such as grocery and food items, in line with government guidance, during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2) Delegates responsibility for operational decisions relating to this decision to the Assistant Director responsible for Arnold Market.

1 Background

1.1 Following on from the recent measures announced by the by government

in relation to isolation during the Covid -19 pandemic, and the requirement for certain business premises to close, it is now necessary to further review how Council operations and premises are operated.

- 1.2 Arnold Market currently operates on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Stall holders are given licences for up to 6 months to hold a market stall during whichever market sessions they chose. The current range of goods sold at the market includes clothing, plants and flowers, watches and accessories, books and DVDs, as well as food items such as meat, fruit and veg. In the summer months a flea market operates on a Wednesday evening from Arnold Market, however the flea markets have not yet commenced this year and no authorisation for their commencement has been given.
- 1.3 The licences issued to stall holders allow the Council to close the market at any time and require stall holders to comply with all relevant health and safety regulations and legislation.
- 1.3 On 23rd March 2020, the government announced enhanced measures to try and reduce the spread of Covid-19. One of the measures was that all non-essential businesses and premises must shut. As part of the government's guidance on this issue, reference was made to outdoor and indoor markets. The guidance indicates that market stalls which offer essential retail such as grocery and food can remain open. In response to this guidance, consideration needs to be given as to the continued operation of Arnold Market and the balance between reducing social contact whilst facilitating the provision of essential items to the public such as food.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that from Friday 27th March 2020, Arnold Market remains open but only essential retail items such as grocery and food be permitted for sale by stall holders. This is to comply with government guidance around business closure whilst still enabling food and other essential items to be sold. Stall holders are required to comply with the government's restrictions and so should not be operating stalls selling non-essential retail.
- 2.2 In order to enforce this restriction, it is proposed that authority is given to the Assistant Director responsible for the Market to determine which items are essential retail items such as grocery and food, as part of operational decision making and in line with government guidance.
- 2.3 It is proposed that these measures be kept under review and as soon as the market can return to normal operations it will.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative option is for operations to continue as normal with no restriction on goods sold. This would be contrary to government instruction.
- 3.2 A decision could be made to close the market entirely during the pandemic. This has been considered, however, it is felt that as the government has advised markets providing essential items can remain open, this does provide an opportunity to assist in the provision of essential items to the public during the pandemic.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Income from the rental of stores on Arnold Market are estimated to be in the region of £27,000 a year or £500 per week. If rental is restricted to the providers of essential items only it would have an impact on this income which would be a loss of up to £52 per week for each stallholder who doesn't trade (based on the stallholders operating 3 times per week).

5 Equality Impact

- 5.1 There are positive impacts on a range of service users who fall within the protective characteristics of disability and potentially age as facilities remain available for them to obtain essential items when they may be more at risk of infection.

6 Appendices

- 6.1 None

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 No specific background papers have been identified but government guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response> has been relied on.

7 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 To take proportionate action in relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic and follow government instructions in respect of business premises, whilst assisting in the provision of essential retail items.

To enable operation decision in respect of this decision to be dealt with without overburdening the Executive.