



St. Helens Council

St. Helens Council's Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ST. MARY'S MARKET





January 2011

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Chair's Foreword and Acknowledgements



Councillor Wally Ashcroft

Chair of Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel

This report presents the findings of a Scrutiny Review into St Mary's Market, carried out by a Task Group made up of Members of the Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel between September 2010 and January 2011.

The market is an important part of St. Helens heritage and, although it has suffered a decline in recent years, we are confident that it can be brought back to a secure and prosperous position, both for the benefit of the traders, and also for the Council. A survey of the public reveals that the residents of St. Helens value the market as an important part of the town's identity, and that every effort should be made to make it viable and fit for today's shopping experience.

Our First concern was how we might encourage an increase in footfall, but we quickly realised that the main problem was how to attract more traders. Increase footfall would naturally follow if there were no empty stalls and a much greater choice. A perception of higher rents compared to neighbouring markets has had an effect on discouraging potential new traders. Many traders have stalls in more than one town and I am sure they could possibly be persuaded to come to St. Helens if they believe rents are comparable. It is worth noting that despite having higher rents, St Helens is the only market out of all those visited that shows a loss to its Council.

We have seen at first hand examples of thriving markets at Accrington, Widnes and Bury where they realise the importance that markets bring to their communities. They have vibrancy and vitality. There are many examples where the Arts, both visual and performing, are encouraged to attract extra visitors from the surrounding towns. We have seen examples of new start up businesses being encouraged and working closely with the Chamber of Commerce. Markets are unique. They are, in the main, owner occupied which gives them a massive personal advantage. With determination, and co-operation, there is no reason why St. Helens can't have a market to compete with the best, and one to be proud of.

I am extremely grateful to the officers who assisted with this review and the expertise that they shared with us. I would like to thank the managers of Accrington, Widnes and Bury Markets for their kind welcomes, and for enlightening us with the expertise and know how. Their contributions were invaluable. Thank you also to the members of the Chamber and the World of Glass, and to everyone else who gave up their time to speak to us and share their experiences and opinions of St Mary's Market.



Scrutiny Review of St Mary’s Market Summary

We wanted to.....look at St Mary’s Market to identify and consider opportunities to improve the vitality and vibrancy of St Mary’s Market.

During the boom in supermarkets there has been a decline in traditional markets across the country due to lower footfall and lower occupancy of market stalls. In recent years St Mary’s Market has seen a similar decline in stalls holders and footfall which has resulted in the Market making a loss. However there are lots of examples where markets have managed to thrive in these times. We believe St Mary’s Market has the potential to be vibrant and profitable.

Who did it? The Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel appointed a Task and Finish Group to look at the topic. The following people made up the Task and Finish Group;

Councillors

- Wally Ashcroft (Chair)
- Carole Ann Gill
- Stephen Glover
- Keith Roberts

Officers from the Council who assisted the Task Group:

- Kevin Gavin – Markets Manager
- Steve Littler – Estates Manager
- Rachel Bridge – Scrutiny Support Officer
- James Morley – Graduate

What we found out and what we recommend.....

What we found out....	What we recommend.....
<p>Creating a new flexible space within the market will bring opportunities to promote both the Market and St Helens. Due to imminent changes to the rates paid by the Council for the market building the vacant stalls should be removed as soon as possible to avoid the payment of rates on empty units.</p>	<p>That empty stalls at the Chalon Way entrance should be removed as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary costs. This will also create an open a flexible space which can be used to host various community events and part time markets.</p>
<p>There is a perception among some traders that St Mary’s is an expensive place to set up a business. The Council should address this once</p>	<p>That once the new system for rates payment is introduced in April a review should be carried out to address the perception that rents and rates at</p>



<p>the new rating system comes into place in April by conducting an audit of rents across the North West. With better information we can work on changing this perception making the market a more attractive place to trade goods.</p>	<p>St Mary's are more expensive than elsewhere in the North West.</p>
<p>Any marketing events held within the town centre should complement St Mary's. To ensure that this happens the task group feel the Market Team should be consulted or involved in planning to ensure such events help support the market.</p>	<p>That closer consultation between Marketing and Markets Management takes place when planning for future events.</p>
<p>St Helens Chamber has a strong interest in the market and has resources that will be able to enhance the offer of the market to both traders and shoppers. The Market Manager has instigated a relationship between the Chamber and the Market that allows both to benefit.</p>	<p>That links between the Market and St Helens Chamber continue to be strengthened in order to provide existing and future traders opportunities to develop their skills and their business expertise as well as exploit the Chamber's links to business starts up and other businesses that can enhance the market.</p>
<p>With the prospect of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme there are many possibilities to encourage new traders to the market in the future.</p>	<p>That consideration is given to the opportunities that could become available with the possible introduction of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.</p>
<p>The World of Glass also has a strong interest in the market and a relationship between the two is developing. The task group has identified various opportunities to the two to work together to bring mutual improvements to footfall and image.</p>	<p>That the Market's relationship with the World of Glass, continue to be developed in order to take advantage of opportunities to share marketing and promotions as well as share customers and increase the attractiveness of the Chalon Way area.</p>
<p>The task group explored possibilities for changing transport links in St Helens to improve the visibility of the market but discovered that there isn't much that can be done. The task group do feel that there are opportunities to improve the signage for St Mary's and that this should be explored further.</p>	<p>That improvements to signage around the town centre and on the roads leading to the town centre be considered to increase the visibility of St Mary's Market to shoppers and visitor in St Helens.</p>



<p>The Chalon Way entrance is impressive and contemporary but isn't been taken advantage of while there is only empty stalls on display. Removing these stalls would create a flexible space for events and specialist markets that will improve the image and attractiveness of the market.</p>	<p>That a variety of flexible market types be trailed in order to establish which will be most effective in increasing footfall to St Mary's Market.</p>
<p>If it is possible to implement some of the changes suggested, an accompanying marketing strategy should be considered to promote the changes to the offer at the market. The task group has noted several opportunities to promote the market once it has a strong offer to shoppers including taking advantage of Saints fans passing by on match days.</p>	<p>That promotion of the market is limited until the market's offer is improved.</p>
<p>The Café area could be improved to make it more appealing as it seems to have a poor image. The task group feel that investment to give the café a more contemporary and modern image would increase the attractiveness of the café and bring more customers to the market.</p>	<p>That consideration is given to investing in the image of the Café in St Mary's market to bring it inline with a more contemporary and vibrant image that will be able to draw more people into the market.</p>
<p>The task group feel the market would benefit from a greater food offer. An idea to occupy the empty space and address the lack of a food offer is to create a food court with communal seating that would host the café and other vendors, similar to that of Accrington market and commonly seen in shopping malls.</p>	<p>That the possibilities for creating a café mall or food court within the Market containing a variety of food offers and a collective seating area that would attract visitor and shopper's to the Market for lunch and other social gathering be investigated further.</p>
<p>Young people have a lot of money to spend but the market doesn't have an offer for them. Creating an offer for young people would open up a new source of income to the market traders.</p>	<p>That links with the market, schools and colleges to attract more young people into using the market be encouraged.</p>



1.1 Introduction and Terms of Reference

1.2 During the process of agreeing a scrutiny work-programme for 2010-2011, St. Helens Council's Regeneration, Housing, Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to look at St Mary's Market. The members of the Panel wanted to look at the market to identify ways to improve the image and performance of the market.

1.3 The aim was to review the current position and performance of the market and assess ways in which the vitality and vibrancy of the market could be improved to raise its profile and performance. The terms of reference for the review were as follows;-

- To gain a clear understanding of St Mary's Market and its management, operation and performance.
- To consider the; layout, facilities and versatility of the market and explore opportunities to expand the 'offer' of the market.
- To draw comparisons with markets provided by other authorities, with best practice and to consider trends in relation to the vitality of the markets.
- To take into account the views of the traders and local people about the vitality of the market.
- To investigate ways to encourage new traders and different product ranges to the market.
- To look at alternative uses for the currently unoccupied space in the market and ways to increase footfall through the market.
- To explore the branding and marketing of St Mary's Market.
- To make recommendations as appropriate in relation to St Mary's Market.

2.1 Method of the Review

- We looked at background information on markets. A House of Commons report on the future of markets gave us a national picture of the position of markets and a Scrutiny review of the operations of St Helens' markets supplied a local background.
- We conducted a trader's forum at St Mary's Market to gain the views of the current traders on what they feel the issues for St Mary's are and their ideas for improvements.
- We consulted the Head of Traffic and Engineering and the Principal Transport Officer on the routes to St Mary's, signposting and parking to consider ways to improve access and the visibility of the market in the town centre.



- We commissioned a survey of no-users of the market to be carried out by the Marketing Team who were also consulted on current and future promotion and advertising for the market.
- The Task and Finish Group made site visits to Accrington, Widnes and Bury markets to meet with their market managers and discuss their methods and facilities and comparisons with St Mary's and possible best practice.
- The Task and Finish Group met with the Executive Director of the World of Glass to discuss possible links between the World of Glass and St Mary's Market to enhance the promotions and attractiveness of them both. The Director of Enterprise Development and the Town Centre Co-ordinator from St Helens Chamber of Commerce as well as Business Location Manager for St. Helens Council also attended the meeting to discuss business links with the market and how the Chamber can support the market and its traders as well as help attract new traders.

3.1 Background

Why is the Market Important?

- 3.2 In a report by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee entitled "Market Failure?: Can the Traditional Market Survive?" they refer to the importance of markets due to the "multi-faceted nature of the benefits that successful markets can bring to local towns and communities." They identify five key benefits with economic being the most obvious but also the social benefits of markets as well as "assisting the regeneration of town centres, promoting healthy eating and in reducing environmental impacts in the retail sector."
- 3.3 Markets are important to many communities around the UK as they are part of the heritage of the town. Many towns and cities were founded and built around a market, some of which still exist today, and they are part of the identity of the town and cities. With the nationalisation of the high street and the growth of supermarket chains many towns and cities are losing the businesses and places that make them unique. Markets however remain a place for local businesses and community, and maintain the unique qualities and the heritage of their towns and cities.

National Context

- 3.4 Continuing with the House of Commons Report we can get a picture of what is happening to markets across the country. It appears that St Mary's Market is not alone in being a market that has struggled in recent years however there are many markets that are finding ways to adapt successfully to change.
- 3.5 "The number of markets in decline appears to be greater than the numbers that are more than holding their own." According to the report there are several reasons for decline:
- The main reason for decline appears to be increased competition from supermarkets and other alternative cheap retail outlets. House of Commons' sources gave a number of reasons why customers might favour alternative retail



outlets. These include a perception that supermarkets are cheaper, the fact that it is quicker to shop in one store and the convenience of supermarket parking and opening hours. Being able to pay by credit card and the provision of trolleys also rated highly on advantages to modern retail outlets.

- The internet has also been noted as a threat to markets by reducing footfall and the number of traders requiring a market stall. In the report St Albans Council commented that “many years ago the market stall was the first opportunity for entrepreneurs such as Alan Sugar, Jack Cohen (Tesco) and Marks and Spencer. It is the internet that offers most new business that opportunity now.”
- Other issues cited that have had an adverse effect of markets include the pedestrianisation of town centres and market areas meaning people have to travel further to bus stops and car parks with heavy shopping. Also noted was the apparent inability of markets to keep up with the times and slow development leading to markets being uncompetitive next to supermarkets.

3.6 However there are a lot of positives in the report and many examples that there are a lot of opportunities to turn around a market’s performances.

3.7 The key is whether individual markets are able and willing to adapt to changing circumstances, including the increased competition, to ensure that they remain a destination of choice now that they are no longer destinations of necessity for most people. The House of Commons report outlined the following key considerations which they believe contribute to a successful market.

- **Integration with the Town Centre and Local Community-** markets need to be relevant to the community and Councils should devolve governance of the markets through consultation with the community and the traders.
- **Good Management-** Good Management is needed to keep the market competitive and thriving. It is also important to maintain good relationships with traders and local partners to keep the market running smoothly and developing in line with change.
- **Promotion-** Markets have failed to keep up with supermarkets due in some part to visibility in the public eye. Supermarkets and high street retailers invest a lot of money in marketing to the public putting themselves at the centre of attention. Markets have faded out of people’s considerations as some where they can get cheap quality goods and value for money.
- **Unique Selling Point-** Promotion will not work unless there is something to promote. Combining shopping with other social and cultural activities is an obvious USP but consideration will need to be given as to what will make a market unique compared to other retail in a town centre.
- **Location-** A good location is perhaps the most important factor for a successful market. A convenient location for shoppers will encourage them to use the market and give the market excellent visibility. A poor location can make a market an unknown or undesirable place for shoppers.



Local Context

- 3.8 St Mary's Market operates from a purpose-built indoor market hall, which was opened on May 1998. The ground floor consists of 89 purpose-built trading units of differing sizes.
- 3.9 The occupancy level at April 2010 was 48 units or 55% of the total capacity of 89 units. This illustrates the trend of recent years whereby occupancy has been diminishing. The table below details units let as at each April:

Year	No of Units let
2010	48
2009	49
2008	66
2007	68
2006	73
2005	76

- 3.10 In November 2008 a decision was taken to address the decline in occupancy by effectively reducing the capacity of the market from 89 to 61. The area of the market opposite the World of Glass on Chalon Way is currently unoccupied.
- 3.11 In addition to the directly employed Market staff, there are ancillary functions carried out by a variety of providers:
- Security is provided by Sector Security Services at a cost of £37,500 per annum.
 - Cleaning of St Mary's (including Sunday Car Boot); provided by ISS Ltd costs £57,000 per annum.
 - Waste removal contract provided by Centrol Waste costs £6,500 per annum.

3.12 2009-10 Figures at April 2010:-

<u>Location</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Profit / (Loss)</u>
St Mary's	546,346	650,013	(102,901)
Newton	226,891	227,581	(690)
Chalon Way	128,439	129,495	(1,056)
<u>Total</u>	<u>902,442</u>	<u>1,007,089</u>	<u>(104,647)</u>

- 3.13 The figures show that St Mary's Market is in need of changes and investment to turn the losses into profit. Good work to reduce costs from the April 2009 figure has been done but income has continued to fall resulting in a similar loss to April 2009.
- 3.14 The projected figures for April 2011 look more promising with Newton and Chalon Way showing a surplus as they did in 2009 and St Mary's losses being reduced. This suggests that the Markets are heading in the right direction but St Mary's will need investment to start making a surplus and become a source of revenue for the Council.



4.1 Findings

Current opinions of St Mary's Market traders

4.2 The Task and Finish Group visited St Mary's Market to attend a trader's forum. There they met three traders and discussed possible improvements. Below is a summary of the points raised.

- Some traders have issues with the way the market is laid out. The layout of the market is unconventional and not laid out in aisles like most supermarkets and markets. Changing the layout of the market will make it easier for people to find their way around and improve the visibility of the stalls from St Mary's Arcade.
- The Location of the market isn't ideal as it isn't well placed to receive footfall from the town centre however it is worth pointing out that there has been a market on this location since 1968. Being on the edge of the town doesn't give shoppers any reason to pass through the market. There are very few buses that stop outside the market and no surface car parks that directly link to the market. However St Mary's multi-storey car park links to St Mary's Arcade. Shoppers choose to visit shops closer to the bus station and the car parks rather than the market. Also due to the location, the visibility of the market to shoppers is low and very few people who visit the town centre know much about the market.
- The traders would like to see a wider range of products on offer to increase interest in the market, particularly fresh food provision. They would also like to see; crafts and antiques, and art gallery, businesses such as optician, beauty therapist or web designer.
- A greater footfall would attract more traders however it is agreed that footfall will not improve until the attractiveness of the market is increased which involves bringing in more traders. So to attract traders to the market the Market Manager will need incentives other than good footfall to interest traders in locating to St Mary's.



Rent at St Mary's

4.3 The traders believe that rent is too high and that they struggle to make a profit from the current levels of footfall the market is getting. Having noted this, the table in Appendix 1 was produced to try to give the task group an idea of what rates are being charged across the North West.

- In comparison with nearby markets rates at St Mary's are by far the most expensive. Charges also include a large deposit and solicitor's fees where most of the others don't. However this is in part due to stalls at St Mary's being larger



than those at other Markets. This makes rent more expensive per stall and also makes expanding within the market more risky for traders.

- Also, service charges for heating, lighting, cleaning, security etc are included in the cost at St Mary's. It is unclear whether other markets are charging services inclusive or separately from the figures we have collected. This makes it difficult to truly compare St Mary's with other markets. It is noted that since 2000 the rent level has been set and has never changed. This means that as utility rates have increased over the years rent contribution has actually lowered.
- Other markets have the ability to offer new tenants deals on the first few months of rent and offer a choice of lease or license where as St Mary's has only been offering leases. When the market was set up the existing traders were granted leases following a High Court challenge. Leases give traders protection under the Landlord and Tenants Acts but are complex and require legal consultation resulting in the addition of solicitor's fees. Recently licenses have been introduced for traders who require them. It is hoped that this will make it easier to attract new traders to the market.
- As of 18th January 2011 the way rents are calculated will be changed. In future each stall will have its own rateable value and the trader will be responsible for payment of these. This will make it much easier to identify how much markets are charging their traders in additional services. Being able to do this will allow the Council to get a true comparison between the rates charged at St Mary's Market and other markets.
- It is noted by the task group that although rents may appear to be high, traders will pay them as long as they are able to make a good profit on their business. It is also noted that whilst St Mary's rent may be perceived by some to be high the market is currently attracting new traders.

Consultation with the public and their views of the market

- 4.4 In September 2009 a survey of people who use the market was carried out. In December 2010 the task group commissioned a survey of people who do not use the market. Here are some of the key findings from the two surveys.

September 2009

- Of those respondents arriving by car, van or motorcycle, 58% parked in a private car park (Tesco) situated in close proximity to St Mary's Market.
- Almost half of all respondents (42%) visit St Mary's Market between 1 to 5 times per month.
- Friday (28%) and Saturday (24%) are the days of the week that St Mary's Market is mostly visited by respondents.
- A third of respondents spend on average 1-2 hours in St Mary's Market. It is suggested that the social aspect of the market could be the reasoning for this.
- Over 60% of respondents visit other markets in the North West.
- Over half of all respondents (61%) stated that they do not visit the market looking for anything in particular.



December 2010

- 86% of respondents interviewed had visited St Mary's Market in the past.
- Some stated that location is why they no longer visit.
- 46% of respondents stated that the market was dull and 36% stated it lacked variety.
- 71% of respondents stated that they visit other markets in the North West.
- 22% stated that more shops were needed.

4.5 It seems that St Mary's is an appealing place to socialise. However shoppers seem to be in agreement with the traders that more variety is needed to give it greater appeal. Research highlighted most of those people surveyed visit markets across the North West. This demonstrates that people are interested in markets as long as they have a good offer and a good reason to visit.

Site visits and examples of best practice

4.6 The Task and Finish Group visited Accrington, Widnes and Bury market as well as St Mary's and had discussions with their respective market managers to draw comparisons and find examples of best practice that could be applied to the operations at St Mary's.

4.7 Visit to Accrington Market – 2nd November 2010

- Accrington market is housed in a traditional Lancashire stone building in the town centre next to the town hall. The market hall has recently undergone a £2m refurbishment which included a new ground floor layout, extended mezzanine and balcony units.
- It has a very open, light and airy atmosphere. The paint work and stall design is very traditional and gives the market an historic feel.
- The market has several butchers and fresh fruit and veg sold both inside and outside the market. There is a good food offer for customers with two cafés with seating, a coffee shop with its own seating and an ice cream stall.



- The centre of the market has an "entertainment" space with seating benches that could easily be removed making the space flexible. To that date the space has hosted various musical performances including choirs and bands and at Christmas they used the space for a large Christmas tree.
- On the extended mezzanine the market was hosting an art gallery. It was hoped that the area would display art from the local schools, colleges and



local art groups. It was noted by the Task Group that the space was very flexible and could accommodate a range of activities.

- The market team had established links with the Local Enterprise Partnership within the area which had relocated a small office into the market in order to provide support to the current and prospective traders and businesses within the market.
- The market had previously unused space in the upstairs of the market. They used LEGI funding to refurbish the units which now accommodate new start-up businesses.

4.8 Visit to St Mary's Market – 5th November 2010

4.9 After the traders' forum the task group had a tour of the market and had a discussion with the Market Manager about issues and possible solutions for the market.

- The traders commented that the previously little was done to develop the markets or liaise with traders and keep them up to date. Since taking up the post the new market manager has moved the office to three of the vacant stalls on the market floor rather than above the market and out of sight. He continues to build good relationships with the market traders and brought energy and a can do attitude to the market.



- The task group are pleased to hear that efforts are being made to increase the variety of the market and several new traders are ready or have already begun trading. Incentives are being offered to anyone planning to bring something unique and desirable to the market. Other short term solutions to filling vacant stalls include donating the space to charities to make use of the space while improving the image of the market at no extra cost.

- The task group agree that the lay out of the stalls could be better to make the market more welcoming and visible from St Mary's Arcade. The Café area could be improved to make it more appealing as it seems to have a poor image. The task group feel that investment to give the café a more contemporary and modern image would increase the attractiveness of the café and bring more customers to the market.



- The task group note that the unoccupied space at the Chalon Way entrance gives the market a bad image. The group feel that taking down the unoccupied stalls would open up the area to become more flexible. Having events and markets



going on in this space will make the market a more appealing view from Chalon Way. This will make a big difference to the market's image, especially when the new Saints Stadium is opened. As of 1st April 2011 the Council will be charged rent based on the value of each stall within the market. This adds an extra incentive to removing empty stalls as the Council will want to avoid the payment of rent on empty units.

4.10 Visit to Widnes Market – 17th November 2010

- Widnes Market moved to its current location in 1995. Like most markets, it has been affected by competition from major retailers and changes to shopping habits. However, the market manager informed the task group that it has enjoyed relative success, due in part to; free parking, good public transport links and a good range and display of commodities.
- The market is well signed posted around Widnes and the surrounding area which makes it easy to find.
- A flea market operates next to the market which has been successful and helped draw people to the market on the quietest days of the week.
- All traders in the indoor part of the market have a license which includes a "tenancy at will". Ideally a months notice should be given when a stall is to close, yet this is courteous and traders are not tied to leases.
- An art group made up of retired traders uses an open space above the market to meet and take part in art activities in a similar fashion to Accrington Market.
- The market has a Committee of Market Traders which allows traders to voice their opinions about the market. This is useful to keep traders engaged in the market and creates a market community. It is also a useful vehicle for the market manager to deal with all traders through a small group.
- The promotions budget is £18,000 a year and is partly funded by contributions from traders' rent. This budget is used to fund various promotion campaigns as well as events such as fairgrounds and puppet shows that they hope will draw people to the market.

4.11 Visit to Bury Market – 24th November 2010

4.12 It should be noted that while St Mary's does not compare to Bury Market in its size, level of resources or visibility it is worth reviewing Bury Market to find examples of best practice and see how favourable conditions can influence the performance of a market.

- Bury Market hosts traders on either a six year lease or on a daily license dependant on the position of the stall being rented. Although they are on a daily license most of the stalls have permanent fixtures and fitting owned by the traders. If a stall is held for 10 years it can be sold on by the trader to someone else. Bury market has been fully occupied since 2005.



- The range of products available at Bury Market is extensive which attracts many shoppers from the North West and tourists from all over the UK. The market had a refurbishment in 1999 when the Fish and Meat Market was opened. Now there are several fish and meat stalls and with lots of fresh fruit and veg stalls it is easy for someone to come to the market and buy most of their weekly food.
- Bury Market has a prime location in the centre of Bury. The market is next to the bus station which also has an interchange for the Metrolink from Manchester. The market is visible from the busiest road in and out of Bury and is very well sign posted on the roads into Bury including on the M66. There is lots of parking close to the market on either side. There is free parking and food vouchers for coach drivers also. The market is next to the Mill Gate shopping centre and the new Rock Development which attract footfall to the market.
- There are two traders associations for the indoor and outdoor markets. They meet the Operations Manager on a weekly basis and meet with the Market Manager regularly. Traders would like to see an increase in local footfall, especially from younger generations.
- Several improvements to the market have been made thanks to research and consultations. They include; improvements to the toilets, polycarb roofs for the open market and security fences around the market.
- Bury Market has a large promotions budget of £72,500. A contribution comes from traders' earnings and a promotions plan is agreed at the beginning of the year. While the market spends heavily on promotions and advertising they also receive a lot of free publicity in the press from some of the events that the market hosts. A "Birds of Prey" event attracted interest from National Press which brought free publicity to the market.

4.13 Possibilities for improving transport links to the market

4.14 The Task Group met with the council's Head of Traffic and Engineering and the Principal Transport Officer to discuss possibilities for changes to transport links to the market to increase the access and visibility of the market.

- Once Chalon Way was closed to through traffic in 2002 there was a significant reduction in the number of stall holders within twelve months due to reduced footfall. Due to the changes that were made Chalon Way can not be re-opened as it would create "horrendous congestion". However the council are in the process of allowing private hire vehicles to drive through the Chalon Way bus gate.
- There is a lot of parking available close to the market at Chalon Way, on Tesco car park and in the St Mary's multi-storey car park. However they do not contribute to directing footfall through the market. There are quicker ways to get into the main shopping area from these car parks than going through the market. However if people are choosing to use the market then the car parks are quite convenient.



- There are some signs on roads leading into St Helens for the World of Glass and other tourist attractions but the task group feel that more could be done with signage for St Mary's and would like it looked into further.
- It is not possible for the Council to influence where buses stop in St Helens. The bus services operated by Arriva and Stagecoach are commercial services so drop-off/pick-up points were determined by demand. The Council can not subsidise certain routes, such a decision would rest with Merseytravel.
- When the Saints Stadium opens in 2012 parking will be available for fans in the town centre and they will have to walk past the market to get to the stadium. Despite the fact that the market will be closed during almost all match days there is an opportunity for the market to advertise itself and the town centre. Thousands of people will pass the market on match day and will be able to see inside and outside. This gives the market a large area to place advertising or promotional events.

4.15 Marketing and promotions at St Mary's

4.16 The task group met with members of Marketing to discuss what is being done to promote the market currently and what else can be done in future.

- There is currently no major advertising and promotions of the market going on. It is agreed that there shouldn't be any investment in marketing for St Mary's until necessary changes and improvements are made to make the market more attractive to shoppers. Any expenditure now would produce very little returns in terms of sustainable footfall into the market.
- Promotions will be an important part of increasing footfall and have several possible marketing activities including the promotions to Saints fans on match days and specialist markets are being considered.

4.17 The Market's relationship with the World of Glass

4.18 The task group met with the Executive Director at the World of Glass to discuss links between the market and the World of Glass.



Picture taken from Chalon Way Bus Gate with the Market on the left, World of Glass on the right and Chamber of Commerce in the background.

- The Executive Director of the World of Glass believes that the World of Glass struggles because it is "outside the town walls and what people would consider to be the town centre". The World of Glass would benefit from a quality market as it would bring people to the area. Chalon Way has lots of space to host events that would support both the market and the World of Glass. Between



them they could host various markets and events throughout the month that may attract people regularly and make the Chalon Way area a place of culture and artisan activities.

- The World of Glass represents a large part of St Helens' heritage and heritage is something that many towns and cities are losing these days due to the increase of national and global brands within town centre across the country. This could be viewed as a unique selling point for the area.
- At the moment it is hard for the market to attract any of the visitors to the World of Glass into the market because from the World of Glass the market looks closed. If the market was more appealing then that would also increase the interest in the World of Glass as there would be more reason to visit for a day.

4.19 The Market's relationship with the St Helens Chamber

4.20 The task group also met the Council's Business Location Manager and two members of St Helens Chamber; the Director of Enterprise Development and the Town Centre Co-ordinator. The task group discussed the market's links with the Chamber and what the Council and the Chamber can do to get more traders into the market.

- The Chamber members agree that there needs to be more variety on the market including a food offer. They believe they will be able to help bring unique traders to the market through their connections to local businesses. As well as donating unused space to charity as a short term fix the market could also donate to local school enterprise clubs that could fill the space and attract more young people to the market.
- The market needs to be flexible in order to react to changes and operate effectively. They suggest that the Market Manager should be given more flexibility and autonomy in decision making so that decisions that benefit the market can be made quickly. However the task group note that as ING are the head landlord they need to be consulted on certain decisions about the market and that investment decisions need to be considered by Chief Officers and the Cabinet
- The Market Manager receives 1% of turnover for a promotions budget which is currently £6,000. This is lower than that of Accrington and Widnes and the Task Group believe a larger budget would allow the Market Manager to be more effective with changes to the market.
- Recently the market manager has set up a traders association like those seen at other markets. The Market Manager and the Chamber's Town Centre Co-ordinator have been meeting once a fortnight to discuss the market and work on bringing in new traders and offering existing traders support. Anyone who enquires about a stall is offered a pack on what the Chamber can do to assist them with their business. Also through the trader's association the Chamber can offer support to existing traders on how to improve the attractiveness of their offer to the customers in the market. The Enterprise Allowance Scheme is due to be re-introduced by Government soon with Merseyside as one of the pilot areas. This scheme may provide opportunities for potential new traders on the market



but also other businesses across St Helens

- The members of the Chamber also raised the issue of young people in the market. St Helens College has a lot of potential customers and future traders. If the market can create a suitable offer to attract young people regularly they could be a great source of income. The group believe that a space such as a food court would be able to draw young people looking to socialise with their friends as currently this isn't being offered to them elsewhere in the town centre. To promote the market to young people we should take advantage of the Youth Action Zone (YAZ) website.

5.1 Conclusions

- 5.2 Various local authorities across the country are facing problems with their markets. Some markets have been struggling due to increased competition from supermarkets, global retailers and the internet but there are many examples of markets that have adapted to the current climate and have embraced change.
- 5.3 St Mary's market seems to have a poor image as a dull place with little to offer shoppers in the town centre. There is a perception among some traders that St Mary's is an expensive place to set up a business. The Council should address this once the new rating system comes into place in April by conducting an audit of rents across the North West. With better information we can work on changing this perception making the market a more attractive place to trade goods.
- 5.4 There is also a perception among shoppers that the range of goods on sale at St Mary's is poor and that there isn't much to attract shoppers to St Mary's from the town centre. The task group has found that despite the perception of high rent the Market Manager has been able to attract several new stall holders. These will be bringing unique products to increase the range and variety at St Mary's Market.
- 5.5 This has been aided by St Helens Chamber which has a strong interest in the market and has resources that will be able to enhance the offer of the market to both traders and shoppers. The Market Manager has instigated a relationship between the Chamber and the Market that allows both to benefit. With the prospect of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme there are many possibilities to encourage new traders to the market in the future.
- 5.6 The World of Glass also has a strong interest in the market and a relationship between the two is developing. The task group has identified various opportunities to the two to work together to bring mutual improvements to footfall and image.
- 5.7 If it is possible to implement some of the changes suggested, this should be accompanied by a marketing strategy to promote the changes. The task group has noted several opportunities to promote the market once it has a strong offer to shoppers including taking advantage of Saints fans passing by on match days.
- 5.8 There is potential to increase footfall from the town centre. The task group explored possibilities for changing transport links in St Helens to improve the visibility of the market but discovered that there isn't much that can be done. The task group do feel that there are opportunities to improve the signage for St Mary's and that this should be explored further.



- 5.9 The task group have identified that the area of the market at the Chalon Way entrance is a concern but there are many possibilities for improving this space. The Chalon Way entrance is impressive and contemporary but while there are only empty stalls on display this isn't being taken advantage of. Removing these stalls would create a flexible space for events and specialist markets that will improve the image and attractiveness of the market.
- 5.10 Any marketing events held within the town centre should complement St Mary's. To ensure that this happens the task group feel the Market Team should be consulted or involved in planning to ensure such events help support the market. Creating a new flexible space within the market will bring opportunities to promote both the Market and St Helens. Due to imminent changes to the rates paid by the Council for the market building the vacant stalls should be removed as soon as possible to avoid the payment of rates on empty units.
- 5.11 The task group feel the market would benefit from a greater food offer. An idea to occupy the empty space and address the lack of a food offer is to create a food court with communal seating that would host the café and other vendors, similar to that of Accrington market and commonly seen in shopping malls. Creating a modern and vibrant place for people to eat lunch and socialise with friends could be a big draw and could increase the image of the market and the town centre.
- 5.12 The layout of the market has been a concern and should be looked at in more detail to see where improvements can be made. Some stalls are blocking the view into the market from St Mary's Arcade which affects the visibility of other stalls. There are issues with this idea however because the decision would have to consider the holder of the stalls and the best trading locations would be taken out.
- 5.13 Young people have a lot of money to spend but the market doesn't have an offer for them. Creating an offer for young people would open up a new source of income to the market traders.
- 5.14 The task group believe this review has shown that St Mary's has had various issues in the past but is not the only market in the country to be suffering. The task group has seen that improvements under the current management are already being made and that the market has a lot of potential to improve further. We have considered the five key considerations that the House of Commons report suggest and believe that St Mary's market can fill all of them to become a successful and thriving market. The task group believe that the recommendations that have been made will help to improve the vitality and vibrancy of St Mary's Market.

6.1 Recommendations

- 6.2 That empty stalls at the Chalon Way entrance should be removed as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary costs. This will also create an open a flexible space which can be used to host various community events and part time markets.
- 6.3 That once the new system for rates payment is introduced in April a review should be carried out to address the perception that rents and rates at St Mary's are more expensive than elsewhere in the North West.



- 6.4 That closer consultation between Marketing and Markets Management takes place when planning future events.
- 6.5 That links between the Market and St Helens Chamber continue to be strengthened in order to provide existing and future traders opportunities to develop their skills and their business expertise as well as exploit the Chamber's links to business starts up and other businesses that can enhance the market.
- 6.6 That consideration is given to the opportunities that could become available with the possible introduction of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.
- 6.7 That the Market's relationship with the World of Glass, continue to be developed in order to take advantage of opportunities to share marketing and promotions as well as share customers and increase the attractiveness of the Chalon Way area.
- 6.8 That improvements to signage around the town centre and on the roads leading to the town centre be considered to increase the visibility to St Mary's Market to shoppers and visitor in St Helens.
- 6.9 That a variety of flexible market types be trailed in order to establish which will be most effective in increasing footfall to St Mary's Market.
- 6.10 That promotion of the market is limited until the market's offer is improved. Future promotions should consider highlighting the benefits of the experience traders have around their products.
- 6.11 That consideration is given to investing in the image of the Café in St Mary's market to bring it inline with a more contemporary and vibrant image that will be able to draw more people into the market.
- 6.12 That the possibilities for creating a café mall or food court within the Market containing a variety of food offers and a collective seating area that would attract visitors and shoppers to the Market for lunch and other social gathering be investigated further.
- 6.13 That links with the market, schools and colleges to attract more young people into using the market be encouraged.



St. Helens Council

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1	That empty stalls at the Chalon Way entrance should be removed as soon as possible to avoid unnecessary costs. This will also create an open a flexible space which can be used to host various community events and part time markets.		
2	That once the new system for rates payment is introduced in April a review should be carried out to address the perception that rents and rates at St Mary's are more expensive than elsewhere in the North West.		
3	That closer consultation between Marketing and Markets Management takes place when planning future events.		
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5	That consideration is given to the opportunities that could become available with the possible introduction of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme.		
6	That the Market's relationship with the World of Glass, continue to be developed in order to take advantage of opportunities to share marketing and promotions as well as share customers and increase the attractiveness of the Chalon Way area.		
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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table comparing rents and rates

Market Charges

Market	No of Days	Price Per Sq ft £	Average Weekly Charge		Notes
			15' x 15' stall price £		
Blackpool	6	0.66p	148.50		£100.00 deposit, All Shuttered 3x Security Guards, Latest CCTV system Lease or licence
Bolton	4	1x unit price £24.00 - £27.00	1x unit price £24.00 - £27.00 per day		1x Unit price regardless of size new starters 1/2 price 3 months can offer lease or licence
St John's	6	0.55p	123.75 per week		Week to week licence No deposit Electricity built in
Burnley	6	0.66p	148.50 per week		No solicitor fees 75% off for new traders 3 months Security on site
Fleetwood	5	0.55p	123.75 per week		No deposit No setup fees Week to week licence
Wigan	6	0.66	148.50 per week		No deposit No solicitors fees Security on site Lease or licence
Widnes	6	0.44	100.00 per week		No deposit Lease or licence No solicitors fees All shuttered
St Helens	6	1.10	247.75 per week		Solicitors fees £150.00 Deposit £500.00 Lease only Electricity separate