

The Executive Board on 29th January 2007 agreed that the Bonn Square scheme should be implemented in phases in tandem with receiving external funding. Officers have therefore had further discussions about the impact of the phased implementation of the Bonn Square scheme on street trading; and have also given initial consideration to the impacts of the Westgate redevelopment on street trading.

It is recognised that street trading has a vital role in animating and adding spontaneity to people's experience of the city centre. Street trading can add colour and vitality to the street scene. Indeed Government advice, through English Heritage, is that street life must be fostered by striking the right balance between all users of the city centre and that this should include street trading. They advise that kiosks should be well-designed and that overcrowding and clutter should be avoided.

The major financial investment proposed to improve Bonn Square aims to create an attractive, flexible, multi-use space for everyone in the city to enjoy. The present pattern of street trading is not ideal for that to happen. Street trading will be welcome in the square when redevelopment is complete but the type, location and accommodation for traders has to be reviewed so that street trading contributes positively to the appearance and function of the redeveloped square. Existing street trading pitches therefore need to be extinguished and new pitches re-introduced when the redevelopment is complete. There will also be new opportunities for local traders to operate from facilities to be provided in association with the Westgate redevelopment, particularly to enliven the redeveloped Castle Street. The Council will be able to achieve increased rental income from a revised pattern and style of street trading possibly with superior accommodation for traders than at present.

Relocation of existing street traders is at best difficult and probably impossible given the lack of opportunity described in the report. This is a situation that can only get worse when the Westgate redevelopment commences (possible February 2008) and displaces further street traders.

Officers therefore recommend that:

1. in relation to the Bonn Square scheme, where it is not possible to retain street trading sites individual street trading consents be extinguished one month prior to commencement of the phase of redevelopment that directly affects the pitch. In this way existing traders may continue to trade for as long as possible;
2. that when the Bonn Square scheme is completed a report be brought back to General Purposes Licensing Committee and Central South & West Area Committee with proposals for the pattern, type and accommodation for street trading in the square;
3. that the source of any financial contribution required to offset the temporary loss of rental income to the street trading budget be identified;
4. to recognise the costs of a possible legal challenge should be met centrally by the Council; and,

5. that a review be brought to Committee as soon as is practical taking a strategic look at street trading in the Bonn Square / Westgate area of the city and making comprehensive proposals for the pattern of street trading.