

<b>SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD</b>	<b>Agenda Item:</b>
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<b>Meeting Date</b>	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> September 2013
<b>Report Title</b>	Proposed Closure of Sittingbourne High Street to Vehicles on Fridays
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr David Simmons
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Brian Planner
<b>Head of Service</b>	Brian Planner
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Mike Knowles
<b>Classification</b>	Open

<b>Recommendations</b>	Members are asked to note the contents of this report <b>for information</b> on proposals to close Sittingbourne High Street to vehicles on Fridays.
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## **Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to inform Members of the proposed closure of Sittingbourne High Street to vehicles on Fridays, to accommodate the re-location of the existing Market, currently located in The Forum Car Park.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Swale Borough Council's Regeneration Team has been tasked with progressing the re-location of the existing Sittingbourne Market from The Forum Car Park into Sittingbourne High Street. The team has also been tasked with exploring potential for the market to run as a two day event, to operate on Saturdays as well as Fridays.
- 2.2 The Borough Council is seeking to create an opportunity to provide an environment within the upper High Street (between the junctions of Station Street and Central Avenue) and beyond where both retailers and the market can co-exist, support their existing clientele whilst working to develop a new customer base through an enhanced shopping offer in the town centre.
- 2.3 The current market site is relatively small and is outside of the traditional high footfall area of the High Street; a re-location will allow the market to grow, increase the number of pitches to create a critical mass of greater interest and diversity as well as offer new products by engaging new traders.
- 2.4 The idea behind having a two-day market event on a Friday and Saturday is to create a new energy and focus within the High Street that also supports community groups who may also wish to host special events working towards creating an exciting and vibrant street scene in a safe, traffic free zone throughout the year

celebrating seasonality. It will be possible to look to develop specialist and themed markets which continually support our community's ambitions to live, work and enjoy Sittingbourne.

### **3 Issue for Decision**

- 3.1 The proposals consist of amending the existing Traffic Regulation Order currently in force for the Saturday road closure between 10:00 and 18:00 hours, to include the prohibition of vehicles in the High Street on Fridays between 06:00 and 18:00 hours, and also to extend the Saturday closure times between the hours of 06:00 and 18:00. The extent of the closure will match the existing area, between the junctions of Station Street and Bell Road, and the exception to allow wedding and funeral vehicles access to the Churches located within the closure area will remain.
- 3.2 Seven potential options for the location of the market have been identified for consideration, but following discussions with the Market Manager one preferred option has been determined which is to locate the market in the top section of the High Street between the junctions of Station Street and Central Avenue. This area has wider footways which could accommodate market stalls whilst keeping the carriageway clear of obstruction for emergency vehicles and funeral or wedding vehicles requiring access to the Churches. The other considered locations included the car park adjacent to St Michael's Road (serving Tesco's), the area of land on the corner of Bell Road and East Street opposite Swale House, Swale House Car Park, East Street, Roman Square and the car park behind the former Bell Shopping Centre.
- 3.3 Several issues relating to these proposals have already come to light. As the High Street forms part of various bus routes covered by Chalkwell and Arriva Bus Companies, including the recently introduced Chalkwell "Eden 9" route from Sonora Fields Estate to Eden Village Estate, the bus operators have expressed concern that the Friday closure will cause disruption to these routes and there will be a need to establish an alternative route which will mean re-scheduling timetables. Concerns have also been expressed that this could impact on passenger numbers and reliability of the bus service due to potential traffic congestion on alternative routes. It is clear that we will need to work closely with bus companies regarding these points, although ultimately some of these issues will be unavoidable and objections at the formal consultation stage should be anticipated. One option for consideration is the introduction of a bus stop operating on market days in Station Street to accommodate passengers travelling to the High Street. This could form part of the consultation with businesses in the area and the bus operators.
- 3.4 The Police have provided views on the proposals and have stated some signing improvement measures to ensure that the road closure is legally enforceable. There will obviously be a cost associated with the signing works, as well as the advertising costs of the Traffic Order itself, and funding will therefore need to be sourced to cover this expenditure.

3.5 The next stage will be to carry out an informal consultation with shop owners in the High Street, in the form of door to door personal visits and discussions, and informally consulting with statutory consultees such as Kent County Council and the Emergency Services, as well as bus companies and other interested parties. It is anticipated that the results of this informal consultation will be reported to the Swale Joint Transportation Board in December.

## 4 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Supporting Economy and Re-Generation
Financial, Resource and Property	Costs associated with Traffic Regulation Order and on site signing
Legal and Statutory	Traffic Regulation Order to be prepared
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Sustainability	None identified at this stage.

## 5 Appendices

5.1 None.

## 6 Background Papers

6.1 None.