

(CCC) Cambridge Markets

I would like all evidence presented to the Council to justify the closure of Cambridge market. Councillor Herbert has confirmed via email that there “was plenty of evidence that people were failing to social distance and unsafe transmission was occurring when the market was closed”, so I know that evidence has been shown to him and I would like to see that evidence.

Response:

As part of the measures to prepare for the reopening of the city centre, following the end of lockdown on 2 December 2020, the Council has been working with staff across its services in a City Centre Re-opening ‘Bronze’ Team. This team is made up of staff across the Streets and Open Spaces, Environmental Health, Markets and Community Services. The team log issues, complaints and actions that arise daily. This information, along with information on Covid-19 infection rates and outbreaks shared from the County Council’s public health team, and the City Centre footfall data from Cambridge BID (Business Improvement District), as well as our own car park occupancy data, is used to monitor the situation on the ground and this is reported weekly by the Council’s Bronze Team.

Some of this data is publicly available on the following links

- Cambridge BID footfall data (weekly counts)
<https://www.cambridgebid.co.uk/footfall>
- Covid infection rates by local authority area – this is a copy of the data that the County Public Health team share locally as part of their wider outbreak management briefings
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/948389/East_of_England_epidemiological_charts_data_set_2020-12-28.ods

The decision to close the market was taken following Council officer observations of the usage of the market and associated market square space on the 27 December and looking ahead to the expected number of operational stalls in the following week; data from Cambridgeshire Surveillance and Outbreak Management Team on the number of cases in the City Council area at this time; and in consultation with public health officers at the County Council.

The daily logs relating to this are as follows.

Action Date	Action ref	Incident	Action
27/12/20	CCC-SUN27-04	Head of Environmental Health (EH) with Markets Manager on Market. Introduced marshalling supervisor	Reviewed issues and discussed layout and marshals and queues

FOI Ref

Response sent

Action Date	Action ref	Incident	Action
28/12/20	CCC-MON28-04	Head of EH spoke with Market Manager: 8 stalls today, relatively quiet today and for the rest of the week. 19 stalls open last Sunday (27/12) closed Friday (25/12). Up to 30 stalls booked for next Sat/Sun real concern	Discussed requirements for support from marshals. possibly additional 5
28/12/20	CCC-MON28-05	Meeting with marshalling supervisors.	Support for Market Sat and Sun - marshalling supervisor thinks 5+1 would be sufficient
29/12/20	CCC-TUE29-04	Meeting with Suzanne Hemingway (Strategic Director) Interim City Centre Management COVID Support Officer. and Streets & Open Spaces Development Manager.	Discussed how the week has gone, also concerns about how busy market has been especially Sunday. Concerned about weekend ahead. Suzanne to raise at SLT in morning
30/12/20	CCC-WED30-07	SLT meeting and COVID epidemiology report of huge spike in numbers for Cambridge	Discussion about market. Public Health (County Council) advised that crowded open spaces does cause transmission of virus. If going to close needs to be before this weekend CEX asked SH to follow up best solution
30/12/20	CCC-WED30-03	Notification that market to be closed from the 1st January. Discussion with Interim City Centre Management COVID Support	VMS (variable messaging sign) off hire 4 th January. Pedestrian barrier to be stored at exhibition site

Action Date	Action ref	Incident	Action
		Officer. and Streets & Open Spaces Development Manager.	
31/12/20	CCC-THU31-02	Meeting with Head of EH, Market Manager, City Centre Management COVID Support Officer and Streets & Open Spaces Development Manager.	Discussion about barriers following yesterday decision. Talked through other options but best one is to close off external perimeter of market . Team ready to go as of 6.30 pm. Discussed if likelihood of protesters

The attached e mail from Suzanne Hemingway, Strategic Director, to Councillor Moore, Executive Councillor for Climate Change, Environment and City Centre, summarises the considerations taken in making the decision to close the market. This e mail was circulated to Councillor Herbert.

You will note in the attachments that information has been redacted where it relates to either junior members of staff or third parties. This information constitutes personal information, disclosure of which would be in breach of Data Protection. Therefore, this information is withheld under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Where possible staff positions are identified. Senior staff such as Heads of Service and Directors names have been disclosed, in line with their increased expectation of scrutiny due to their position within the council.

Further queries on this matter should be directed to foi@cambridge.gov.uk

[REDACTED]

From: Suzanne Hemingway <Suzanne.Hemingway@cambridge.gov.uk>

Sent: 30 December 2020 12:26

To: Cllr Rosy Moore (Cambridge City - Coleridge) <Rosy.Moore@cambridge.gov.uk>; Cllr Anna Smith (Cambridge City - Romsey) <Anna.Smith@cambridge.gov.uk>

Cc: Joel Carre <Joel.Carre@cambridge.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Cllr Lewis Herbert (Cambridge City - Coleridge) <Lewis.Herbert@councillor.online>; [REDACTED]

Subject: Market Closure wef January 1st 2021

Dear Rosy,

This is to follow up on our telephone call, where you agreed to an urgent closure of the market. I believe this is a power available to us under market regulations

12. CLOSURE OF THE MARKET

12.1. The Market Management Team shall have the right to close the Market at their absolute discretion if they consider this to be necessary on the grounds of public safety. If a Trader is unsure whether the market is open it is their responsibility to contact the Market Management Team before starting his or her journey.

I do not believe that we need an Exec Councillor decision to take this action (email copied to [REDACTED] in case he thinks we do need a formal record).

The reason for the closure is that we are seeing large crowds gathering in the market to queue, and also in the market square and surrounding streets (especially Kings Parade) to eat takeaways purchased from market stalls, and probably also from other takeaway stores nearby. We have reviewed this with Public Health colleagues, and their advice is that the crowds to pose a real risk of viral spread and that, in the light of the rapidly rising rate of covid infection in the city, we should take action to reduce the crowds.

We have considered whether other actions are available to us and have concluded that we cannot limit access to the market square due to the number of entrances into it, and we do not believe that we have the legal powers to limit trading on the market to only certain stalls or types of goods. The market square area was extremely busy last weekend, and we need to take action ahead of this weekend, which as New Year could be even busier.

I therefore advised you that we believe it is necessary to close the market, for the foreseeable future, and you agreed to this. The following actions are being put in place:

1. We will issue comms later today (after any government changes that may be announced at 14:30, but before close of business). [REDACTED] is drafting a press release, we will also consider what other means are appropriate to ensure people are aware, and understand the reasons behind our decision
2. [REDACTED] our Market manager will liaise with market traders affected by this
3. We will work to identify what funding and support is available to market traders, ensure they are made aware of this, and consider if anything further should be done

4. We will review the closure every two weeks to consider epidemiology (infection rates), national guidance, PH advice, any other locally relevant factors
5. Whilst the market is closed we will investigate whether there are any other legal powers available to us, that would enable us to reopen parts of the market (eg outer stalls) and/or limit trading to certain goods (eg fresh food / no hot food)
6. Throughout, we will continue to robustly engage with bricks-and-mortar takeaway businesses to ensure they are managing queues and not permitting too many people inside at any one time. Our EH team are willing to use enforcement powers where needed.

The market will be open tomorrow (Thursday) as midweek trading is not so busy, and we are aware traders need some notice of closure.

We are also seeing very large queues outside some shops for use of click n collect and goods return services. For example, there is currently an very long queue outside Zara. If we are to keep our city safe, we need the public to heed the "Stay at Home" message much more clearly, and we probably need government to put tighter curbs in place on trading.

Joel is on leave this week, but on his return I will expect him to pick up the ongoing monitoring and review.

Regards

Suzanne Hemingway
Strategic Director, Cambridge City Council

