

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		18 March 2026	
PORTFOLIO:		Councillor Clare Pritchard - Transformation and Town Centres	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Kirsten Burnett, Head of Policy and OD	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Accrington Market Hall – Rents and other Terms of Trading	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress with reopening Accrington Market Hall.
- 1.2 To seek delegated authorities in relation to the setting of market rents, service charges, fees, market regulations and other terms and conditions for trading at Accrington Market

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet grant delegated authority for the Head of Policy and OD to determine rent levels, fees and service charges and the opening arrangements for Accrington Market, in consultation with the Executive Director (Finance) and the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres.
- 2.2 That, if proposed rent levels are at a level below market value, the Head of Policy and OD ensures compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, in consultation with the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic).
- 2.3 That Cabinet grant delegated authority for the Head of Policy and OD to agree, set and implement the market regulations and other trading terms and conditions for Accrington Market and to grant the respective traders' leases or other agreements, all in consultation with the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic).

3. **Reasons for Recommendations and Background**

- 3.1 Accrington Market Hall is one of the key town centre projects largely funded by the Council's Levelling Up allocation, with match funding from a number of sources.
- 3.2 The market traders were decanted to cabins in the Town Square to enable substantial repair, construction and refit works to the Market Hall building. These have been detailed in reports from the Executive Director (Environment) and are now nearing completion. The site is expected to be handed back to the Council from our construction contractors in July 2026.
- 3.3 Following consultation with consultants Barker Proudlove (appointed in line with Cabinet report in December 2025) and the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres, a proposed reopening date has been set for mid-November. This was to allow time for recruiting and agreeing leases with traders / food and drink operators and to recant traders from the Town Square back into their new Market Hall units / stalls.
- 3.4 The Council (with Barker Proudlove) is looking to move forward on detailed discussions (with clear information on rent levels) with existing traders. This will establish which traders will be moving onto new leases, on the Market's reopening. Following these discussions, there will be a clear picture of any gaps, both in terms of number and type of traders. Recruitment of new traders will then take place, led by Barker Proudlove.
- 3.5 At the same time as discussions begin with existing traders, Barker Proudlove will seek potential new food and beverage operators, including a bar operator. There are no existing food and beverage operators in the temporary Town Square market.
- 3.6 The Council will shortly receive specialist external advice on the estimated costs of running the Market. This has been a new piece of work since the Council decided to run the Market in house, rather than through an outsourced model as was previously planned. This advice will outline the estimated actual costs per square metre, alongside a picture of the commercial "going rates" for similar provision in towns bearing similar economic characteristics. This advice will inform decisions as to rent levels (including service charges).
- 3.7 In the past, rent levels have been subsidised and if this continues to be the case, the Council will need to ensure it is compliant with subsidy control rules.
- 3.8 Recruitment to a new post of Town Centre Venues Manager is underway. The objectives of this role will be to:
 - *Create a vibrant destination venue:* Transform Accrington Market Hall into a thriving visitor destination and community hub that drives footfall throughout opening times during the week, including evenings and weekends, creating economic activity and social value in the town centre
 - *Deliver exceptional programming and activation:* Develop and implement an innovative year-round programme that includes food and drink events, live entertainment, family

activities, cultural celebrations and special markets, creating compelling reasons for people to visit, stay longer and return regularly

- *Maximise commercial performance:* Drive income growth through strategic trader management, diverse food and beverage operations, new revenue streams, partnership development and commercial innovation whilst maintaining community focus and accessibility
- *Champion place-making:* Position the Market Hall as a catalyst to support Accrington's regeneration, working collaboratively with town centre partners to create a distinctive and cohesive visitor experience that supports the evening and weekend economy
- *Build community connections:* Ensure the Market Hall serves diverse community needs through inclusive programming that balances social value with commercial viability, demonstrating that community benefit and financial sustainability strengthen rather than compete with each other

3.9 There is an internal cross-service project team working on the reopening plans, as well as advice and services commissioned via Barker Proudlove.

4. **Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection**

4.1 N/a

5. **Consultations**

5.1 As set out in recommendations.

6. **Implications**

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	The recent annual Council budget set aside provision of £300k per annum for the in-house operation of Accrington Market.
Legal and human rights implications	It is likely that the intention will be for most traders within the Market Hall to trade on fixed term leases for terms of up to 3 years. The statutory powers pursuant to s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 would be applicable to those lettings. Lettings for term of up to 7 year would be considered a 'short tenancy' for the purposes of s123 Local Government Act 1972 and as such the consent of the Secretary of State is not required even if the rent is discounted and

	<p>considered to be at an undervalue. Terms in excess of 7 years would either need to be at best consideration or with the consent of the Secretary of State. However, Secretary of State approval is unlikely to be required for tenancies at an undervalue as the General Disposal Consent permits the same if the Council considers that the purpose of the disposal is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of one or more of either economic well-being: social well-being or environmental well-being of the area or persons resident in it.</p> <p>Should a lease rent be discounted this maybe considered to be a subsidy for the purposes of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the procedures for awarding subsidies pursuant to that Act would need to be considered and followed.</p>
Assessment of risk	<p>In setting rent levels and other charges and terms, it will be important to strike an appropriate balance between the actual service cost, market rates, and what will ensure the Market is as close to full as possible, with the right trader and operator mix to support those businesses and serve our community. Rents which are too high make void units at reopening more likely, while setting them too low creates subsidy control issues and long-term financial pressure on Council budgets.</p>
<p>Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i></p>	<p>Work on rents and trader selection will include ensuring the Market is accessible to a diverse range of traders and serves the needs of the whole community, as far as possible.</p>

**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:
List of Background Papers**

Cabinet Report March 2025 - Appointment of the operator and granting of a lease for Accrington Market Hall

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2900&Ver =4>

Cabinet Report March 2025 - Market Trader Rent/Licence Fee Concessions

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2900&Ver=4>

Cabinet Report December 2025 - Accrington Market Hall Operator Update

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/documents/s22227/Accrington%20Market%20Hall%20Operator%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>

Cabinet Report February 2026 - Market Trader Rent/Licence Fee Concessions

<https://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/documents/s23362/Market%20Trader%20Rent%20Licence%20Fee%20Concessions%20-%20Main%20Report.pdf>

8. Freedom of Information

- 8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.