

NABMA

the voice of markets

National Association of British Market Authorities

MEMBER SUPPORT

DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR NABMA MEMBERS TO SELF-CHECK THEIR PUBLIC OFFER, THEIR OPERATIONS, MARKETING, SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

This document is a self-assessment tool for market managers and line managers to help to analyse the performance of their markets by posing a series of questions covering strategic, operational, financial, legal and customer issues.

These notes have been drafted on the basis that the diagnosis will be carried out by the market manager. NABMA member authorities range from major metropolitan markets with multi-million pound budgets through to town councils with small markets serving very local populations. If you are not familiar with some of the terminology it is suggested that you involve your line manager. You can also take advantage of the NABMA Diploma in Markets Administration programme to learn how to professionalise your markets service.

If you are able to provide detailed and accurate data, and answer 'yes' to all the questions, this indicates good general levels of management are in place. Equally, if there are gaps in terms of the information you are able to provide, or if the answer to any of the questions is 'no', this will identify areas that the authority/market management should focus on.

Clearly, this process relies on you being honest and robust in your evaluation. Where evidence is asked for (in support of 'yes' answers), make sure it can be provided.

Remember – your membership of NABMA provides you with major benefits and support, ranging from draft policy documents, training, health checks and professional advice from colleagues. Managing a market can be a complex matter – but being part of the NABMA family you are not alone and can benefit greatly in familiarising yourself with the NABMA website.

Action Checklist

1. As a starting point, consider the local issues/priorities/problems in relation to the market. These could be major or relatively minor, but set the scene for the review.
2. Does the market enjoy political support within the authority and /or from the local MP? If so, how is this support shown, and if there is a lack of support what are the consequences for the market?
3. Consider how the market supports the key strategic priorities for the local authority. You may find these local priorities in your Council's strategic plan. If you aren't familiar with such plans then ask your Chief Executive/Director for a copy. Are you ever asked to provide statistics to other sections of the local authority in relation to the performance of the market and how your markets service contributes to the political priorities?
4. Such priorities may be tourism, promoting local produce, local employment, town centre footfall, business support, regeneration, environment issues such as waste handling and green issues....? Where you can demonstrate that your service does support such priorities then you are most likely to receive support from those in charge of the Council.
5. Is there an annual business plan produced that sets out the strategic and operational priorities for the market in the year ahead? Does it set out the planned financial profile of income and expenditure, and

set performance targets? If you can demonstrate the public benefits that your service creates then you are more likely to obtain the resources need for the future of the service.

6. Also consider what happens to any profit produced. Is it reinvested in the market or used to support other Council services?
7. In looking at this question, it is important to consider a wide range of issues. This does not relate solely to the physical state of the market, but also the retail offer – does it meet the needs of the customer, are your systems and procedures effective and up-to-date? Might modernisation of the market involve relocating it?
8. Are there plans in invest money in the market? This could be through a major capital investment or through revenue repair and maintenance budgets? Where is the money coming from and is it sufficient?
9. Does any marketing/PR take place? How do you know whether or not it is effective?
10. In addition to the question, consider how effective your written systems and procedure are. Are they used in practice? Have they been challenged, and if not, would they stand up to challenge? Are there any gaps? When were they last reviewed and updated?
11. Is this done proactively or reactively? How often are visits/inspections made?
12. How robust is your legal compliance monitoring? If, for example, you find evidence of traders selling counterfeit goods, what happens? What is your working relationship like with Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers? Are you consistent in your application of market rights?
13. What is the customer base of the market? Do you measure customer satisfaction levels? Do you measure footfall on the market? Might the customer base change in the future? If so, how will this change affect the market?

14. These can be formal or informal – questionnaires, feedback forms, meetings, conversations when walking the market, newsletters etc.
15. What actions are taken as a result of feedback received? Do you let the stakeholder know that you have responded to the feedback? How?
16. Are you able to attract new traders/commodities onto the market? How is this done?
17. How long have each of your traders been on the market? Is there a turnover of traders or particular commodities, and if you attract new businesses do they survive?
18. Does your Council have a Market Rights Policy that sets out its stance to potential rival market operators and justifies possible legal action where appropriate?
19. Are there for any private markets in your area? These could be permanent, regular indoor or outdoor markets, Sunday car-boot sales or specialist events such as farmers' markets.
20. Does your local authority licence private markets under its Market Rights? If so, is this done in a consistent manner? Have you ever been challenged, and if so, what was the outcome?
21. In addition to simply measuring occupancy rates, what analysis of the data is carried out? For example your data may show consistent occupancy levels of e.g. 80% over each of the past 3 years, suggesting a stable market operation. However, this could mask a significant 'churn' in relation to traders or specific commodities.
22. Is the market offer changing? What trends can you identify? Is this something that you are managing proactively? For instance, should you be moving away from clothing lines that the high street chains compete effectively with to specialist individual food traders who offer something different to the customer? Is the future of your market in specialisation and differentiation rather than in general goods?

23. Your traders will be either micro businesses (less than 5 people employed) or small to medium enterprises (SMEs). How many individual businesses does the market support? Where one trader occupies more than one stall you will have to consider whether this is one or more businesses – are all the stalls grouped together? Are the same commodities sold from the stalls? How does the trader view the business?
24. If there is no actual marketing budget, have you been able to generate free publicity? How? Do you use social media - at no cost to your budget but at some staff time to support? Was it successful? How do you know?
25. Do you produce detailed profit/loss accounts for the market? If the market is breaking even, how do you ensure it doesn't fall into loss? If the market operates at a loss, how is this managed/covered?
26. Do you subscribe to the "free of charge" REAL DEAL initiative which seeks to show that the market does not deal in fake goods?
27. In considering where you would like the market to be in five year's time, also ask yourself 'why?'
28. What are the three things you would do to make the biggest difference to the performance/future of the market?

Conclusions – What conclusions do you draw from this review? If the market is well managed overall, are there still changes/improvements that could be made? If there are a lot of 'no' answers or missing data, what does this tell you?

Recommendations/Actions – What happens next? Do you need to write/submit a report? Are there any actions or changes that you can instigate? Do you need further analysis/research to be carried out? Is there a major problem that needs to be resolved?