

COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	<i>Stage Trial report: "Stage on the Square"</i>
Committee:	<i>Commercial Services Committee</i>
Item Number:	<i>11</i>
Date:	<i>6 July 2026</i>
Author:	<i>Matthew Hine, Head of Business and Lol Wilde, Event Manager</i>
Report status:	<i>Recommendation to Full Council</i>
Confidential / Exempt:	<i>No</i>

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the recent 6-week trial "stage on the square" March 14 through to April 25 2026
- 1.2 This report provides the background, options, financial implications, legal and governance considerations, risks, and recommended course of action to support informed decision-making.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee **does not** move toward the creation and introduction of a permanent stage upon the Market Square.

3. Background

- 3.1 Salisbury City Council Events team were tasked with the implementation of a trial to understand the viability, impact and opportunities of locating a stage upon its Market square, for a period of 6 weeks. This was in line with a longstanding view and ambition that a permanent stage could bring additional benefits and experiences to the wider Salisbury community, residents and offer local entertainers, bands, charities and other groups a platform to showcase and share messages.
- 3.2 The idea for a trail of the stage was discussed at the Full Council on 16 January 2023. However, at this time no funding was identified.
- 3.3 As part of the Council's 2025/26 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan approved by Full Council on 13 January 2025, a budget provision of £20,000 was approved to fund the hire and operation of a temporary stage within the Market Square. The approved budget allocation included provision for stage hire, performers, security and associated operational

costs to facilitate a six-week trial and assess the feasibility, demand and wider implications of a permanent stage installation.

4. Trial Outcomes and Findings

- 4.1 The temporary stage was installed on 13 March 2026 and remained in place until 27 April 2026. The purpose of the trial was to assess the viability, demand and operational implications of a permanent stage within the Market Square.
- 4.2 During the trial period, the stage hosted a range of programmed activities including live music events, busking performances, community music groups, Salisbury Live Rising, silent discos, a community drum circle, a mass karaoke event, St George's Day activities and partner-led events.
- 4.3 In total, approximately 15 programmed activities took place during the trial period. One scheduled event on 4 April 2026 was cancelled due to adverse weather conditions, although some associated costs were still incurred due to the late cancellation.
- 4.4 Officers undertook extensive engagement with performers, schools, community groups, local organisations, businesses and potential sponsors. More than 50 performers and groups expressed an interest in using the stage, including solo performers, bands, choirs, DJs, community groups and event organisers. Officers also engaged with local businesses and organisations regarding sponsorship opportunities and participation in events.
- 4.5 The trial generated total income of £8,425 through sponsorship agreements, trader fees, concession agreements and event-related activities.
- 4.6 Total expenditure for the trial was £20,082, marginally exceeding the approved budget of £20,000 by £82. The income generated reduced the net cost of the trial to £11,657.
- 4.7 The trial demonstrated that a temporary stage can be successfully accommodated within the Market Square and can attract performers, community groups, traders and sponsors. However, the level of activity achieved required significant officer involvement in programming events, securing sponsorship, engaging performers, coordinating contractors and managing operational arrangements.
- 4.8 The trial also highlighted the significant operational requirements associated with stage provision within the Market Square, including:
 - Stage hire and installation.
 - Security provision and safety
 - Public toilet provision.
 - Refuse collection and site management.
 - Sound engineering and technical support.
 - Performer recruitment and management.
 - Sponsorship acquisition and administration.
 - Event management and officer coordination.
 - Public liability insurance and risk assessment compliance.
- 4.9 Noise monitoring was undertaken during live performance activity. Recorded peak noise levels varied by location, ranging from approximately 59 dB to 89 dB. The trial demonstrated that noise management, event timings and potential impacts on nearby residents and businesses would require further consideration as part of any permanent stage proposal.

- 4.10 Whilst the trial demonstrated that a temporary stage can host events and generate some commercial income, officers do not consider that sufficient evidence has been identified to demonstrate that a permanent stage would generate the level of sustained activity, income and community benefit required to justify the significant capital investment, ongoing maintenance liabilities, staffing requirements and operational costs associated with a permanent installation.
- 4.11 Officers therefore conclude that a permanent stage within the Market Square or Guildhall Square would not represent a proportionate or justifiable investment based on the evidence gathered during the trial.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 Option 1 – Purchase and install a permanent stage in the Market Square or Guildhall Square. This option would progress the purchase and installation of a permanent stage within the Market Square or Guildhall Square.

This option would require further work to understand:

- The full capital cost of purchasing and installing a permanent stage.
- Associated maintenance, repair and lifecycle replacement costs.
- Potential return on investment and long-term financial sustainability.
- Additional insurance liabilities and associated risks.
- Impact on markets, civic events, the Charter Fair and other city-centre operations.
- Supporting infrastructure requirements.
- Licensing, noise management and mitigation requirements.
- Consultation with residents, businesses, partners and stakeholders.
- Potential anti-social behaviour impacts.
- Staffing requirements for bookings, administration, event management and security.
- Planning permission and health and safety requirements.
- Heritage, visual impact and conservation area considerations due to the sensitive historic setting of the Market Square.

Planning permission would likely be required for any permanent structure within the Market Square. This may be challenging due to the sensitive historic and conservation area setting, the prominence of the Market Square and the need to consider visual impact, heritage impact, public realm, noise, access and operational implications.

- 5.2 Option 2 – Explore an alternative Council-owned location. This option would not progress a permanent stage within the Market Square or Guildhall Square but would investigate whether another Council-owned park or open space could provide a more suitable location.

This option would require:

- Identification of suitable Council-owned locations.
- Assessment of demand and community benefit.
- Feasibility and cost appraisal.
- Planning, legal and insurance assessments.
- Accessibility and Equality Impact Assessment.
- Environmental and community impact assessments.
- Consultation with local stakeholders.
- A further report to Members before any decision is made.

Any future proposal would be subject to a separate business case and approval by the relevant Committee and Full Council.

5.3 Option 3 – Take no further action

This option would conclude the Stage on the Square trial and not progress a permanent stage or undertake any further feasibility work.

This option would:

- Avoid further capital expenditure.
- Avoid ongoing maintenance and operational liabilities.
- Avoid additional officer resource requirements.
- Avoid planning, licensing and heritage considerations associated with a permanent structure.
- Enable Council resources to be focused on other priorities.

This option would retain the Council's ability to hire temporary stages for individual events in the future should a specific business case and budget be approved.

- 5.4 Preferred Option - Officers recommend Option 3, as the evidence gathered during the trial does not demonstrate sufficient demand, community benefit or financial sustainability to justify the capital investment, ongoing maintenance liabilities and operational requirements associated with a permanent stage within the Market Square or Guildhall Square.

6. Financial Position of the Options

- 6.1 The one-off proposal was funded from allocated in January 25 (for expenditure in 25/26) MIS BUS 45026 (Bid) Construction of stage in Market Square and operation as multi use communal facility for a six-week trial to assess the feasibility of a permanent structure as per Item 15b Administration Budget Medium Term financial plan.

7. Implementation and Next Steps

- 7.1 Subject to the Committee's decision, the next steps will be as follows:

- a. Undertake any due diligence.
- b. Take agreed recommendation to Full Council.
- c. Report back to this Committee.

- 7.2 The anticipated timetable is:

Milestone	Date
Undertake any due diligence	1/09/26
Take agreed recommendation to Full Council	14/09/26
Report back to CSC	02/11/26

8. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	High	Unknown costs are associated with the project.
Legal/Insurance	High	Additional insurance requirements would have to be met. In addition, dependent upon location, there would be planning requirements

Risk	Medium	Risks include financial exposure, under-utilisation, reputational impact, anti-social behaviour concerns and operational challenges
Personnel	High	Would require additional resource – security staff, event personnel and administration staff to manage.
Environmental Impact	High	Potential prolonged noise pollution
Equalities Impact Statement	Medium	An EIA would likely need to be completed to ensure equality of access, for the public and performers alike.
Community / Public Impact	Medium / High	Potential for noise impact on residents local to the stage location. Has potential to contribute to Salisbury's economy and experience.
Procurement / Contractual	Low/Medium	Procurement of a stage and the associated infrastructure would require the SCC to follow agreed process.
Property / Asset	Medium	This would depend upon the model adopted – whether it is a purchase or rented solution.
Data Protection	Low	Any personal data collected through bookings, event management or stakeholder engagement would be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Council's Data Protection Policy.