



ITEM 9

Wells City Council

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Wells Weekly Market – Options Paper

1. Introduction

Wells City Council operates the weekly market with a combination of Council staff and council-owned gazebos. Challenges have emerged relating to the age/condition of existing gazebos and the high level of ongoing maintenance required.

This paper sets out clear options for the future delivery gazebo provision, outlining benefits, drawbacks, and indicative costs for decision-making.

2. Gazebo Options

The Council currently owns 60 gazebos with mixed canvas tops (Green/White). The frames are aging several requiring major repair, and cleaning/maintenance demands are increasing.



PVC Gazebo



Canvas Gazebo

Option 1: Replace All 60 Gazebos (Frames + Tops) (RECOMMENDED**)**

Description

Full replacement of all 60 units with new frames and either canvas or PVC tops.

Material Choices

- **Canvas tops:** White and green, matching current scheme
Cost: £35,940
- **PVC tops:** White, more durable and easier to clean
Cost: £41,845

Benefits

- Fully modernised, uniform fleet.
- Reduced maintenance for several years.
- Improved presentation for traders and the public.
- PVC option offers long lifespan and low cleaning burden.

Challenges

- Highest capital cost.
- Require procurement lead-in.
- Need for disposal/recycling of old frames.

Option 2: Replace All Tops Only (Retain Existing Frames)

Description

Replace all tops while retaining the current frames, which are aging and require ongoing repair.

Top Options

- **Canvas tops (60 units):**
Cost: £6,565
- **PVC tops (60 units):**
Cost: £7,140

Benefits

- Lower short-term capital cost compared to full gazebo replacement.
- Visually refreshes market appearance.
- Allows continuation of existing equipment lifecycle.

Challenges

- Frames are nearing end of life; repairs will continue to be required.
- Mid-term likelihood of full replacement still high.
- Will create mismatched condition between new tops and old frames.

Option 3: Phased Replacement (20 Units Per Year for 3 Years)

Description

Replace 20 full gazebos per year over three years (total 60 frames replaced). Re-top the remaining 40 gazebos in Year 1, with an expectation of full replacement after the third year.

Costs — New Gazebos (per year for three years)

- **Canvas-topped gazebos (20 units):**
Annual Cost Placeholder: £10,005
- **PVC-topped gazebos (20 units):**
Annual Cost Placeholder: £13,965

Costs — Re-topping the Remaining 40 Units (Year 1)

- **Canvas tops (40 units):**
Cost Placeholder: £4,360
- **PVC tops (40 units):**
Cost Placeholder: £4,760

Canvas Total Cost (Year 1) £14,365

PVC Total Cost (Year 1) £18,725

Benefits

- Smooths capital expenditure over three financial years.

- Allows gradual improvement of stock while keeping the market operational.
- New gazebos phased in, improving reliability each year.

Challenges

- Aging frames (40 units) still need repairs until their replacement year.
- Total long-term expenditure may exceed a single bulk purchase.

4. Summary of Options

Option	Scope	Pros	Cons
1. Replace All (60)	New frames + tops	Most durable; uniform fleet	Highest cost
2. Replace Tops Only	New tops, old frames	Lower cost short term	Frames aging, ongoing repairs/individual replacement
3. Phased Replacement	20 per year, re-top 40	Spreads cost; improves resilience gradually	Mixed stock; total cost will be higher

5. Recommendation

Recommended Option: Hybrid Approach – Phased Replacement of 20 Gazebos per Year Combined with Retopping the Remaining Units

Based on operational resilience, the most appropriate option for Wells Weekly Market is the hybrid approach, which replaces 20 gazebos in Year 1 while re-topping the remaining 40 frames, with further phased replacement of the older units over the following two years.

Rationale

1. Ensures Immediate Improvement to Market Resilience

Replacing 20 gazebos immediately introduces a significant number of new, structurally reliable frames into the market stock. This reduces the risk of gazebo failures, structural issues, or safety concerns that can disrupt market operations—particularly in adverse weather conditions.

Re-topping the remaining 40 gazebos provides an immediate aesthetic and functional uplift. New canvas or PVC tops will improve waterproofing, visibility, and appearance, reducing complaints and minimising weather-related disruption.

This dual action strengthens operational resilience more effectively than topping alone, and more affordably in the short term than a full fleet replacement.

2. Spreads Capital Expenditure, Avoiding Budget Shock

A phased programme allows the Council to invest steadily over three financial years. This reduces the strain on annual budgets compared to full replacement while still maintaining a clear renewal pathway.

This financial smoothing helps to protect the market budget from volatility and reduces the need for sudden, unplanned large expenditure due to frame failures.

3. Allows for Better Management of End-of-Life Equipment

Many of the current frames are approaching the end of their service life. The hybrid approach recognises this but avoids forcing all frames to be replaced immediately.

Instead, it provides:

- Immediate upgrades where needed most
- A structured replacement programme that avoids a backlog of repairs
- Reduced maintenance pressure over time as old units are steadily phased out

This gradually strengthens operational assurance year on year.

4. Provides Flexibility While Maintaining Market Continuity

This option minimises operational disruption. The market can continue operating at full capacity throughout the phased replacement programme.

It also provides flexibility to adjust the schedule if:

- trading demand changes
- weather-related risks increase
- budgets fluctuate

5. Balances Risk, Cost, and Service Quality

The hybrid model achieves a strong balance between:

- Operational resilience
- Cost efficiency
- Service continuity
- Improved presentation of the market

While it does result in mixed-age equipment for a period, this is a manageable and temporary compromise, and significantly less risky than continuing with aging frames without a replacement plan.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The hybrid approach provides the best overall operational resilience for Wells Weekly Market. It delivers an immediate improvement in safety, presentation, and structural reliability, while controlling costs and securing a sustainable, multi-year replacement cycle that supports long-term market continuity and supports our commitment to the future provision of the market.

Following the Estates Committee on 4th December 2025, the committee endorsed option 1, to look to replace all frames and tops, with a preference to white PVC tops to allow for in year maintenance and longevity of the infrastructure.

Finance is asked to agree the endorsement of Estates Committee and the recommendation of officers, and approve the noted expenditure of up to £41,000.