

MARKET WORKING GROUP

21 FEBRUARY 2012

Present: Councillor A Wylie (Chair)

Councillors N Bell, P Jeffree, A Lovejoy, H Lynch, A Mortimer
and D Scudder

Market Representatives:

Grant Adams
Michael Davis
Toni Davis
Darrell Fyne
Lynne Lawrence
Michael Rockman

Also Present: A. Schofield, Henry Boot Developments
J Burton, Henry Boot Developments
N Jones, G L Hearn Developments

Officers: Managing Director
Interim Property Section Head
Hannah Heinemann
Melvin Carrigan
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There was a change of membership for this Committee: Councillor Wylie replaced Mayor Thornhill and Councillor D Scudder replaced Councillor Sharpe.

The Sub-Committee was asked to elect a Chair for the Hearing.

RESOLVED –

that Councillor Wylie be elected Chair for this meeting.

7 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

8 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2011 were submitted and signed.

REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

Consultation with Market Traders on their requirements for a Redeveloped Charter Place

Mr Jones introduced himself and outlined the scope of the Market Trader Audit. He explained that in order to redevelop the shopping centre successfully all elements should be drawn together into a cohesive whole. He advised that to achieve this it was important to understand the needs of Market Traders; their ideas would then be included in the proposals.

Mr Jones said that his team had met with Grant Adams (Chair of the Market Traders' Association) the previous week. He wished to establish when would be a good time to speak with traders and whether this should be in the form of face-to-face interviews. He said that letters would be sent to all traders and that the interviews would be held over a two-week period. Mr Jones added that G L Hearn were keen to engage with all current occupiers of Charter Place. A public consultation would also be undertaken which would begin in late Spring 2012.

One Member asked when the Market Working Group would have the chance to look at the outcome of the consultation.

Mr Jones said that the Market Working Group would have this opportunity as soon as the report was available.

Another Member enquired whether the traders' wishes would be included or whether they would need to fit with existing plans.

Mr Schofield assured the Member that the results of the survey would feed into redevelopment plans.

A further Member asked whether Market customers would be consulted.

Mr Jones advised that traders would be asked initially and that shoppers would be consulted later. He explained that the traders and other businesses in Charter Place would be surveyed first, followed by the whole of Watford. This second consultation would not, however, be in such depth. He noted that the intention was to make Charter Place appealing to shoppers.

Toni Davis expressed her view that it was important to consult with customers in order to achieve a greater footfall. She said that she hoped the new market premises would bring in additional customers.

Michael Rockman suggested that all discussions with traders should take place in conjunction with the Market Supervisor and that the supervisor should make the introductions and be present throughout the interviews. He stressed that interviews should be with the owner of the stall rather than with an employee. He also advised that interviews should have a set time length and that only the set questions be addressed. He stressed that it was imperative that traders

move straight into the new premises with no temporary measures being employed.

The meeting discussed optimum means of holding the interviews.

It was suggested that 20 minutes would be sufficient for each interview and that it would be better to hold the meetings when traders were not engaged in working on their stalls. One Trader, however, considered that it would be more beneficial to conduct the interviews on the market floor in order to demonstrate the current set-up and to consider traders' aspirations.

Mr Burton advised that one of the aims of the survey was to acquire useful background information. He agreed that 20 minutes appeared to be a good length of time for individual interviews.

A Member advised that it was intended to input a considerable degree of investment in the Parade area of the town and asked how much liaison would be ongoing with regard to the Charter Place development.

Mr Schofield replied that a meeting had been held with the consultants dealing with the Parade area. He confirmed that both groups were keen to engage further.

The Chair thanked Mr Schofield, Mr Burton and Mr Jones for their input and attendance.

RESOLVED:

that the Market Working Group approve the audit proposal.

Review of Guest Market and Indoor Market Improvements

The Managing Director advised that the Guest Markets had made an impact and had generated some extra footfall and income. Additional opening on Thursdays had not attracted as many customers as had been anticipated. The Managing Director said that in order to be viable, 60% of traders needed to open on the extra day and he suggested that the traders who attended the Market Working Group encourage stall-holders to operate on Thursdays in future.

The Managing Director advised that physical improvements had been made to the Market and that there had also been a £5,000 contribution from traders with the consequent reduction. He stated that the Council would be unable to justify any further expenditure so close to the start of redevelopment. He said that it should prove possible to meet routine costs from the marketing budget and that income from the Guest Markets should be used for new initiatives.

In reply to a question from Grant Adams, the Interim Property Section Head agreed that the Insurance for the Guest Markets could be financed from income generated by the guest market fees.

One Member advised that it was still necessary to pay for advertisements for the Market and maintenance cost.

The Chair advised that spending should equate to no more than was expected under the day-to-day maintenance budget.

The Managing Director agreed that the existing expenditure budget would provide for maintenance cost as this was already committed under this heading. He cautioned, however, that no new initiatives could be instigated.

The meeting discussed the necessary maintenance of lifts and heating systems. It was agreed that these were key pieces of equipment and must be maintained in good working order.

Michael Rockman suggested that new traders could be encouraged to take the units designated for the Guest Markets. He said that just three or four new traders would make a difference to the Market.

A Member advised that there would be a Guest Market every Saturday throughout the year and urged existing traders to support them.

RESOLVED:

that the Market Working Group approves the continuation of the 4 day trading on existing terms, notes the success of the new initiatives and notes that no new expenditure outside of existing budgets would be made on the indoor market

VOA changes to Market Rates

The Managing Director advised that the Revenues team had briefed and supported traders in the matter of the small business rate relief scheme.

Grant Adams considered that the Valuation, based on Market rents, was too high; rents were also at a high level compared to other markets. He noted that traders at Watford Market required four units whereas at other markets only one was needed. He added that traders would appeal these costs.

A Member expressed gratitude to the Revenues Manager and the Interim Property Section Head. He suggested that Grant Adams' comment on the high level of rents for stalls could be investigated.

RESOLVED:

that the Market Working Group note the position with regard to changes to Market Rates

Market Standards and Contractual Requirements

The Managing Director noted that the Head of Property had issued clear advice to traders to ensure that expected standards were maintained and that all

contractual requirements were met. These mostly concerned the timely payment of rents and the tidy upkeep of stalls and surrounding areas. He added that enforcement of good standards needed to be robust and that the support of the Market Working Group would be welcome.

RESOLVED:

that the Market Working Group supports full implementation of contractual requirements.

Any Other Business

1. Queen's Jubilee:

Grant Adams asked whether, since the Jubilee celebrations would extend over Tuesday 5th June and the market would be closed, this could be a rent-free day.

The Chair agreed that this option would be looked into.

2. Fire Drill:

Grant Adams noted that no fire drills were actioned in the Market and that Traders would not know what to do in the event of a fire.

The Market Supervisor agreed that no drills were held but stated that it would be difficult to evacuate the market hall. He said that Traders should take note of current instructions which would be re-issued.

10 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting to be confirmed.

Chair
Market Working Group

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm
and finished at 7.00 pm