

MARKET WORKING GROUP

16 JULY 2013

Present: Mayor D Thornhill (Chair)

Councillors N Bell, K Collett, P Jeffree, A Lovejoy, H Lynch
and I Sharpe

Market Representatives:

Grant Adams	Chair of Market Traders' Association
Michael Davis	Treasurer of Market Traders' Association
Toni Davis	Secretary of Market Traders' Association
Darrell Fyne	Market Trader
Michael Rockman	Vice Chair of Market Traders' Association

Officers: Managing Director
Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Committee Members were present.

Apologies had been received prior to the meeting from Lynne Lawrence of the Market Traders, the Market Superintendent and the Property Development Project Manager.

2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2013 were submitted and signed.

4 PRESENTATION BY THE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER

The Property Development Project Manager had sent apologies for non-attendance. The Managing Director gave the presentation on her behalf. He introduced the presentation by informing the meeting that a range of options were being considered.

The Managing Director advised that the Council was working with a number of market advisors, the Market Working Group sub-group and with Central ward councillors. He offered the meeting an overview on options for the new market.

The Managing Director explained that 'Intu' were now landlords of, and had responsibility for, the Charter Place area. Through informed discussion they would determine compensation; it was anticipated that there would be clarity on this issue in October 2013.

The Managing Director added that Watford Borough Council (WBC) would work with the market management company (MMC), once appointed. Assessments and management issues relative to the market would also have been determined by the end of October 2013. He advised that WBC would continue to be responsible for the day-to-day running of the market.

Councillor Bell referred to the Cabinet report which had advised that there was a £20,000 reserve available for marketing use.

The Managing Director said that there was, in fact, £23,000 available to which trader contributions would be added for marketing the current and the new market. He advised that it was hoped that the new market would be ready for use by the end of July 2014 and that there would be a 'one step' transition from the old to the new location. He added that it was possible that there would be a degree of flexibility within the timetable.

The Managing Director then informed the Working Group that Intu would be consulting in the present week on the delivery plan for Charter Place. A submission would be made in September 2013 for an anticipated start in 2015; it was anticipated that opening of the refurbished area would be in 2017.

The Managing Director informed those present that Kier would project manage delivery of the new market and would tender for the building contractor. He stressed that traders would be able to transfer seamlessly from the current location to the new market. He then outlined the options for the new location.

Option 1a

- Containers for trading purposes would be installed; the whole area to be covered by a glass roof. This would essentially be an outdoor market with a roof for protection.
- This would be a two-storey construction. On the ground floor there would be eight feet wide containers providing trading and storage space.
- There would be secure gates at the Beechen Grove entrance and a route through to the High Street.
- On the first floor there would be café facilities and the facility for sales of food. Larger container sizes would be used on this level.
- Lifts would be installed for access to the upper level making this the most costly option.

Councillor Bell noted that the entrance from Beechen Grove would be a key aspect for the market and said that work was required to alter the current configuration.

The Chair commented that the subway was used by many people for access to and from Clarendon Road and that it would not be wise to remove this facility.

The Managing Director assured the meeting that there was genuine commitment to making an improved route from the updated Charter Place area to the new market. He added that the area next to the Palace Theatre could also become a public open space; this would constitute a great improvement for the town.

The meeting then discussed the issue of use of containers for storage and retailing purposes and whether traders could set up tables outside the containers to display their stock.

The Managing Director pointed out that the traders would be able to configure how best to use the space the containers would provide. He explained that it was possible traders would be able to take more than one container and that some of the space would have to be used for stock. He added that on the upper floor there would be a mix of sizes: 20 feet long, 30 feet and 40 feet; this mix could be decided through discussion with the traders.

It was noted that, when investigating options, markets at Camden, Greenwich and Box Park as well as Borough Market had been considered.

Councillor Lynch said that whilst containers were used at Box Park, these were considerably wider. She asked whether a width of eight feet was sufficient.

The Managing Director replied that containers at Box Park were, in fact, the same width.

Grant Adams agreed with Councillor Lynch that eight feet was a very small retail space and pointed out that the market at Box Park was 'high end' and that this may not be as good for general market trading. He reiterated that the size of the smaller containers was an issue.

Councillor Jeffree advised that the containers at Box Park were eight feet wide; tables were not used outside but that goods were displayed throughout the interior space.

Michael Rockman noted, however, that this would not be possible for many types of goods currently sold at the market: there would be insufficient room to pass between racks of clothing for instance.

Replying to comments from traders regarding the configuration of the market, the Chair advised that the Council would be in discussion with the appointed MMC. She assured the meeting that the management company would have considerable experience of market trading and that the Council would be wise to be guided by their advice.

Option 2a

- This would be a one-storey option
- There would be no option for open café space
- The area of open space available with Option 1a would be lost

In reply to a question from Councillor Lynch the Managing Director said that all measurements for trader space to work within had not as yet been determined.

Option 3a

- This would be on the ground floor with 40 units
- The cafe facility would be included
- This option would have the same benefits as Option 1a but at a reduced cost.

Option 4a

- One-storey option
- PTFE coverings for customers and trading
- Within the budget estimate

Other Options

The Managing Director then gave an overview of options which combined different elements of the previous four configurations.

Grant Adams asked whether the Council would proffer assistance with insurance costs. He agreed that the stock would be secure in the containers but there were other factors which should be considered.

The Managing Director assured the meeting that the market would be locked and gated at the entrance and that the containers would be of a metal construction and would also be lockable.

The meeting then discussed the appearance of the new market.

The Managing Director advised that signage would be installed on the flyover which would give prominence to the market. The various roof options would also ensure that the market would not only be extremely visible but would gain a high profile within the town.

The meeting considered other issues:

- The proposed plan might create a 'wind tunnel'; this issue should be addressed.
- The entrance from the High Street could accommodate more stalls if required.
- The entrance at Clarendon Road needed to be widened.
- Further discussion with traders regarding the roof provision and how drainage would be managed.

The Managing Director said that discussions had been held with the Market Working Group sub-group; he would be willing to hold a further meeting to talk about these issues.

The Chair advised that the companies with whom WBC was consulting had considerable expertise in the design and management of markets. The design for Watford Market would be based on existing operations and would be realised by professionals who were experts in their field.

Councillor Collett considered that it would be wise for the traders to speak with engineers and architects who had designed other markets.

Councillor Sharpe said that it was sensible to discuss these matters in the arena of the Market Working Group; it was better to anticipate possible problems. He noted that the new market would be in a different location with a different structure and urged that participants be flexible in their approach.

The Chair advised that a change must be effected as the market was not currently working to full capacity. She added that in consultation, market users had stressed that of greatest importance to them was:

- a) proximity to buses and
- b) the provision to sit down and socialise

Timetable of Works

The meeting was advised of the anticipated timetable:

Appointment of MMC	August 2013
Design input	Between August 2013 and December 2013
Pre-lettings	Between August 2013 and December 2013
Management and documentation	Between August 2013 and October 2013
Rent structure decision	January 2014
Opening	Summer 2014

Other issues that would be under consideration were:

- Wifi provision
- Cash machines
- Signage and prominence
- Safety and security
- Design of stalls
- Colour schemes
- Lighting

The Chair said that it would be wise to speak with other traders who currently had stalls in Watford market about what they were hoping for in the new space.

In reply to a query from Councillor Lynch regarding guest markets, the Managing Director advised that this would be a part of the brief for discussion.

The Chair concluded the meeting by assuring Members and Traders that the MMC would be able to provide information and suggestions based on their considerable experience in market management.

5 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 8 October 2013

Chair
Market Working Group

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm
and finished at 7.10 pm