

# **Managing Director's Report to Market Working Group 21 February 2012**

## **1. Consultation with Market traders on their requirements for a redeveloped Charter Place (CP)**

GL Hearn, on behalf of Henry Boot will be undertaking an audit of market trader needs this spring. This will be done through face to face interviews to build relationships and consider trader's issues. The audit is intended to establish the nature of the various businesses so as to inform the design proposals. GL Hearn will attend the MWG to present their approach.

After the results of the audit have been reviewed, MWG will then be presented with the design options for the future of the market, after which there would be a meeting with all the traders on the proposals.

The development work for CP has progressed well. Officers have agreed a detailed vacant possession strategy with HB and are in positive dialogue on the detailed heads of terms for the development agreement. Joint financial appraisals of the scheme have been undertaken and retailer mix discussions have progressed well as has initial dialogue with the Planning department on preliminary design work.

MWG will receive a presentation on the design proposals in May, once the audit work has been taken account of.

### Recommendations:

The MWG is asked to approve the audit proposal.

## **2. Review of Guest market and indoor market improvements**

The first Guest Market took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and was themed around Food & Crafts and additional markets took place in the weeks to Christmas on the following basis: .

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November  
Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November  
Saturday 03<sup>rd</sup> December  
Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December

The footfall was increased by the event and the atmosphere in the market made much more attractive, so the objectives were achieved. Income for a number of traders was also improved.

Since September, Watford Market has been opening a 4<sup>th</sup> Day on Thursday with a review to take place at the end of 2011. Whilst this has not in itself produced a substantial increase in footfall or takings, the increase in trading days is important for the viability of a new market in a redeveloped Charter Place. It would now be counter-productive to revert to a 3 day week.

Physical improvements (signposting, floor painted, stalls redecorated) have also been made to demonstrate to the public that the market is important and to improve the trading environment.

The costs of the above initiatives ( balanced against the income from additional traders and the guest market income plus a £5k contribution from traders) are being finalised and will be reported separately at the meeting. It was also envisaged that this investment would improve the attractiveness of the market to new traders and hence reduce void levels. The economic climate makes this difficult to achieve but new traders continue to be successfully sourced.

The full year costs of the 4 day week will also be reported to the meeting. The MWG should note however that no new expenditure will now be made on the indoor market given these costs and as we approach redevelopment commencing from 2013.

Grant Adams review of the various initiatives is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Recommendations:

The MWG is asked to consider the success of the various initiatives and agree to the continuing 4<sup>th</sup> day of opening providing there continues to be a substantial (60%+) number of traders participating.

The MWG is asked to note that no new expenditure will now be made on the indoor market given the recent investment and as we approach redevelopment commencing from 2013.

### **3. VOA changes to Market rates**

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has advised that Watford Market fulfilled the criteria for separate assessment for individual stalls rather than assessment of the market as a whole.

The small business rate relief scheme can be applied to the benefit of a number of traders and the Council has briefed and supported traders in this regard.

A recent Q&A sheet for traders has been produced (**appendix 2**).

Recommendations:

MWG is asked to note the position

### **4. Market standards and contractual requirements.**

The Head of Property is issuing clear advice to traders to ensure that contractual obligations and requirements are being complied with. The draft letter and new stallage rates are attached as **Appendices 3a & 3b**.

Recommendations

The MWG is asked to support the full implementation of these requirements.

-----