

REPORT TO COUNCIL – 20 NOVEMBER 2013

REPORT OF CABINET – 11 NOVEMBER 2013

Cabinet met on 11 November 2013. The minutes are published on the Council's website.

The following Members were present at the meeting:

Mayor Dorothy Thornhill	(Strategic partnerships/external relationships and community safety)
Cllr D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor and Portfolio Holder for Strategy & Client Services.
Cllr Crout	(Community & Customer Services Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Sharpe	(Regeneration & Development Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Watkin	(Democracy & Governance Portfolio Holder)

Also present: Cllrs: Bell, Meerabux and Mills.

The following included a recommendation to Council:

34 NEW WATFORD MARKET

Cabinet received a report on the progress of the delivery of the new Watford market and its future operation.

The design entailed a new, vibrant WBC led covered market located in the current car park at the side of the TJ Hughes building (23-33 The Parade) and also included expansion into the Parade with some temporary stalls. It was designed to be complementary to the smaller market that Intu was proposing to build as part of the Charter Place redevelopment.

The estimated cost for the project was £2.65m which reflected substantial design changes including full roof coverage throughout the market and a first floor storey to accommodate more units. A planning application for the new market had been submitted and a decision was expected before Christmas 2013. The scheme included 45 units.

Following an open tender exercise, Town & Country Markets had been selected to provide

advice prior to the opening of the market in relation to design, business support and operational matters. They had also been selected to operate the new Watford Market once completed and were expected to enter into a lease and a management agreement.

Councillor Sharpe introduced the report. He said that there had been extensive engagement with traders and the scheme was moving forward positively. The increased costs being incurred were as a result of discussions with traders and meeting their needs. The new market would be a market the town could be proud of and would not make losses in the way the old market had.

The Managing Director advised that the planning application had now been received and a decision was expected by the end of the calendar year. In January 2014 a contractor would be appointed to build and fit out the market. He said that the difference in costs had been driven by the traders and the market operator who specified the need for a roof and two storeys. It was anticipated that savings and income would result in costs being recouped within 10 years.

An open day had been held with traders on 29 October: There had been a near 100% turnout and excellent feedback. Members were asked to note that trading was now proposed for five days a week and not six as detailed in the report.

In response to a question from Councillor Bell about future rent increases, the Managing Director advised that Town & Country Markets needed freedom to develop a successful market. The terms of the leases would be either 1 or 3 years and rents and service charges would be up-rated annually by RPI. They were, however, proposing a 50% reduction in rent for the first year spring 2015 to help traders establish themselves at the new location over the winter period.

Councillor Bell asked for confirmation that INTU would ensure that the smaller market proposed for Charter Place would compliment this new market. The Managing Director responded that this was certainly the intention although it was not clear at this stage what type of market the Charter Place market would be. He added that INTU were considering appointing an operator to run the Charter Place market and it would obviously be beneficial if Town & Country Markets were selected.

The Mayor commented that the two markets would be very different and the intention was for them to be complementary. She added that this was the best opportunity there had been for the market in 20 years. She had recently been carrying out visits to sheltered schemes and had learnt what was important for users of the market including a place to sit down and have refreshments and accessibility to roads and bus services.

The Portfolio Holder said that, whilst there had never been any opposition to the idea of a covered market, officers had been financially cautious. Town & Country Markets was a professional company who knew what they were doing and what was important for success.

The Managing Director confirmed that there would be no gap in trading. Councillor Watkin concluded the discussion by speaking of the positive cash flow potential and the benefits to the future of the town.

RESOLVED

that Cabinet

1. notes that the Watford Health Campus Partnership LLP has been instructed to design the new Watford Market and to prepare Employer's requirements for the building contract
2. notes that a planning application has been submitted.
3. notes that Town & Country Markets have been appointed as the operator to manage the new Watford Market following completion and also been appointed to provide design advice, business support, secure pre-lets and develop appropriate management policies.
4. notes the Terms and Conditions for traders in the new Watford Market
5. approves a revised capital budget estimate of £2.65m and **recommends the change to the Capital Programme to Council.**

The report to Cabinet is attached