

Response to Petition sent to petitioner 13th March 2015

Condition of the 1st Floor Food Court at the New Watford Market

Dear Mr Lee,

I am writing in response to your petition you presented to Council on the 28th January 2015 with regard to provision of additional heating and side panels for the public seating area at the New Watford Market.

Whilst the new market was never envisioned to be fully enclosed, we accept that the new public seating area has been more impacted by wind and weather than anticipated. Town and Country Markets (TCM) have therefore identified a heating option and I am informed that all food court traders have been consulted and have endorsed the location, number and type of heaters.

The contractors are meeting with TCM and WBC on site next week to establish the best installation, assessing Health and Safety issues and timeline. I understand that it is frustrating for the traders the length of time it is taking to get heaters installed but please be reassured that we are progressing this as fast as we can. We have now ordered the heaters and they will be installed in approximately two weeks time.

We will introduce some short term proposals including banners at the Beechen Grove entrance, signage above the lift entrance advertising the food traders on the food court, a banner including a map on the fire escape on the entrance area and additional banners around the pillars of the flyover.

We have also agreed to undertake a further review of the market and capture some of the proposals in a design brief before procuring architects/engineers to come up with specific proposals.

Proposals raised with us include side panels to the first floor seating area, to address wind tunnel effect on the ground floor, improvement to entrance areas, enhancement to gates, introducing more colour and enhancement to flyover.

Once the architects have produced proposals these will be consulted on and tested for viability. It may not be possible to deliver all of the proposals mentioned above due to costs or technical issues.

Please understand that the steps outlined above will take some time but it is important that we get this right. A project plan is being developed and TCM will keep you informed of any consultation planned when the information is available.

The primary aim of the proposals is to increase the footfall into and the dwell time in the market. We have now installed footfall counters that will enable us to monitor trends in the coming months.

New Watford Market is a new venture and it will take some time to get the market to where we all want it to be. Key to the long term success of New Watford Market will be establishing the right trader mix. TCM is working hard to attract the right businesses into the market that will be firstly sustainable and secondly that will attract shoppers to the market. This may take some time but we are confident that together with the physical enhancements we can increase dwell time in the market and ensure that it is vibrant and successful.

I hope that the above reassures you that progress is being made and want to thank you for your patience. TCM will continue to hold the Quarterly Open Forums alongside the working groups they have set up. I trust that TCM will continue to keep you informed of any forthcoming consultations and progress on proposals. Together with TCM we will continue to work hard to iron out any identified problems and ensure the market enjoys a healthy successful future.

Sincerely
Dorothy

Dorothy Thornhill MBE
Elected Mayor of Watford