



## ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 7 November 2017

Time: 6.00 pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Lisa Jerome Tel:01438 242203

Members: Councillors: M Downing (Chair), M Hurst (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, R Broom, J Brown, L Chester, J Fraser, L Harrington, J Lloyd and A McGuinness

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### AGENDA

#### PART 1

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2. **MINUTES - 2 OCTOBER 2017**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 2 October 2017.

3. **FINAL INTERVIEWS FOR THE INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

The Committee will carry out its final witness interviews for the review including Tina Benson, Stevenage Town Centre Manager and Market Traders from Stevenage Indoor Market.

4. **OFFICER RESPONSE TO ISSUES MEMBERS RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING**

Members are invited to note the response from officers to issues raised at the last meeting.

5. **AMENDED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

Following Members comments at the last meeting where Members considered the first draft of emerging recommendations, some initial recommendations were dropped, amended and added to at that meeting and they are represented here for further Member comment.

6. **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

## **7. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

## **8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 2 October 2017

Time: 6.00 pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair), Matthew Hurst (Vice-Chair), Doug Bainbridge, Jim Brown, Laurie Chester, James Fraser, John Lloyd and Andy McGuinness

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00 pm  
End Time: 7.45 pm

#### 8 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Broom and Harrington.

There were no declarations of interest

#### 9 **MINUTES - 11 SEPTEMBER 2017**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 11 September 2017, are approved as a correct record to be signed by the Chair subject to Councillor McGuinness being removed from the Members present and added to the list of apologies.

#### 10 **INTERVIEWS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Peter Turvey – NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) Consultant, Mandy and Barry Crouch from Mandy's Café, Demi Tasker – Demi's Cake Magic and Onyebuchi John Nwachukwu Marketing & Health Food Store - Oyoyo and Zap Intelligent Solutions.

The following observations regarding the Indoor Market were made by the representative of NABMA and the market traders:

- The Market was well managed, well operated and had good support from the Council officers;
- The market was clean and well lit;
- The Market was in the wrong location and lacked footfall as a result of it.
- Signage for the market was poor, particularly from the Bus Station
- Stronger links should be made with the Town Centre Manager in particular

when events were being held in the Town such as Armed Forces Day.

The NABMA representative suggested that the market could be improved by extending the opening days and hours or moving the market outdoors so that it could become a focal point for the Town. An evening outdoor market with an extensive street food offer had proved successful in other areas.

The market trader representatives agreed that the issue of location was significant and the prime factor for the future of the market but they were of the view that the outdoor market suggestion would not work for many of the current businesses. It was agreed that restoring the access to the market through one of the larger shops on Queensway such as Wilkinsons or Boots would go some way to help with footfall.

In relation to the opening times of the market, it was reported that there were mixed views with some traders happy to work additional days and longer hours but some not. Members suggested that the market model should be reviewed as it was clear not all traders wanted the same opening days and times.

Members advised that many potential customers for the market might be travelling by bus and asked whether advertising on buses could be considered.

Concern was expressed regarding the service road to the market, particularly in relation to crossing points and the speed which vehicles including delivery vehicles travelled at along the road.

In response to the comments by the traders and representatives, Members were advised that

- new way finding signs would be installed in the Town Centre highlighting the Market as part of a Regeneration Project;
- Officers and the Town Centre Manager were currently in communication with Wilkinsons and Boots regarding the possibility of opening up the rear entrances of their buildings although it was known that security was an issue for those shops;
- There would in the future be more joined up working with the Town Centre Manager particularly in connection with events that were going on in the Town;
- A major concern for traders was the opening times of the other stalls within the market. Opening and closing times were not consistent amongst all traders which could give a negative impression to those visiting the market;
- Although the issue of crossing points along the service road had previously been investigated, Officers agreed to look into whether safety measures including crossing points could be installed.
- The town centre shops previously used by BHS and Marks and Spencer were

both owned privately and currently not options for relocation of the market.

It was **RESOLVED** (i) that the comments from the Market trader representatives and the representative from NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) be noted;

(ii) that the comments from officers in response to the traders set out above be noted;

(ii) that the representatives from the Market trader representatives and the representative from NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) be thanked for their attendance;

## 11 **EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

The Scrutiny Officer presented draft recommendations for the Indoor Market Review. Following consideration and in the light of the discussion during the previous item the following draft recommendations were agreed:

**RECOMMENDATION 1 - That options for a future alternative location for the indoor market be included in the town centre regeneration plans – this would include considering a review of the model of the market offer to the town.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – That the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources discuss with officers the possibility of a future open market acquisition of the freehold for a suitable town square retail establishment creating an arcade linking the town centre square with the Indoor Market entrance – officers to identify costings for the recommendation.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3 – That officers revisit this issue with the shops to see what incentives would be required to restore access to the multi-storey car park as this would significantly improve the potential footfall of the market and would also restore a much needed pedestrian route to and from the car park to the town centre.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4 – Removed – it was considered that improvements to the fabric of the building would not increase the footfall to the market**

**RECOMMENDATION 5 - That officers look at incentives for Market Traders to keep to the opening trading times and days. Members recommended that the Garages and Market Manager discuss with the MTA altering the current rules of 'rewards and punishment' to Market Traders to see if this issue can be improved.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6 - That the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources discuss with officers in Finance and the Car Parks Manager the options open to varying the parking charge for Market shoppers, looking at free validation or free/discounted parking - Recommendation to be removed but officers to identify costings and data for the usage of the car park**

**RECOMMENDATION 7** - removed as food offer within the market could not be increased unless another location could be found to accommodate other street food traders

**RECOMMENDATION 8** - That officers discuss with the Town Centre Manager further ways to incorporate the Indoor Market with Town Centre events that are organised by the Town Centre Manger.

**RECOMMENDATION 9** - That officers discuss with the Market Traders Association ways to encourage a wider diversity of traders available in the Market.

**RECOMMENDATION 10** – That officers be requested to look into carrying out market research in order to find out what kind of market offer is required by the Town

**RECOMMENDATION 11** – That officers be requested to consider the safety concerns referred to regarding the physical access to the market including crossing points and speed limits.

12 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None

13 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following items being in Part II it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

14 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None

**CHAIR**

## Environment & Economy Select Committee – 7 November 2017

### Response to issues and questions Members have raised at the last meeting

#### Safety concerns and access arrangements

Regarding the issue of safety concerns and physical access to the market, including crossing points and speed limits, the Engineering Services Manager has provided the following response:

This issue has been looked at in the past but the fundamental issues remain the same, which would lead officers not to recommend formalised crossing points:

- The layout is very challenging. Since the closure of Woolworth (Wilko's) rear door all pedestrian traffic goes across the two corners. Crossing from the inside of a right angle bend to the outside of the bend gives poor visibility because pedestrians would have to crane their necks (especially at the north west corner to Park Place) to see what's coming. If the council put markings on the ground to indicate that pedestrians have a right of way across the road then it becomes more liable in the event of an accident.
- A raised platform ("speed table") across the street creates the same concerns but is impossible to detail as the ground is flush at the market entrances and kerb height elsewhere. Any such platform would thus be tilted towards the market throwing surface water into the entrances.
- Also we have no evidence of speeding on which to base an investment into traffic calming measures. It is virtually impossible for traffic to speed at a right angle bend and I would be surprised if vehicles gathered substantial speed along the short straights of Market Square.

If Members are still minded to go ahead with this recommendation and the Executive Portfolio Holder agrees to go ahead with an investigation, then officers could design crossing points (£200 technical assistance), and get HCC's Team to carry out a Safety Audit (£800) and we could arrange a speed survey for a similar amount. But in the officers opinion the Council will be spending money to no avail.

#### Discussion with Wilko regarding opening their rear door

Regarding the issue of approaching Wilko to discuss the possibility of reviewing access arrangements via their rear door, Officers met with the Wilko Store Manager over the summer to move this forward and after a follow up email have been informed that the company are in a restructuring consultation period, so until this ends, no opportunities like these will be entertained. They are due to end consultation the internal consultation period in November, at this point the store Manager will raise this issue again with their head office.

Discussion regarding the step/plinth size in the market

The Garages and Markets Manager, Carlo Perricone asked the Markets and Estates Officer to measure the average step size going into stalls in the Indoor Market are between 5 inches to 6 inches. The biggest step is 7 ½ inches and the smallest is 2 ½ inches.



Environment & Economy Select Committee, 7 November 2017  
Revised Emerging Recommendations for Indoor Market Review

PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATION - That officers be requested to engage an external company to carry out market research in order to find out what kind of market offer is required by the Town.

Reason – This tackles the fundamental question regarding the indoor market, what type of market is desired by shoppers and what type of market does the Council wish to support. This would provide some data on which to inform future decisions, and without which the other recommendations of the review could have some impact on improving the fortunes of the market but do little in the long run if the market is not supported by shoppers. It is recommended by the Committee that following the outcome of the independent market research that the remainder of the scrutiny review recommendations be revisited to see if they are still relevant at that time.

The following recommendations would be considered by the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources and by the Strategic Director and other officers when the outcome of the independent market research has been completed.

RECOMMENDATION 1 - That options for a future alternative location for the indoor market be included in the town centre regeneration plans.

Reason - Location linked to footfall was seen as the biggest barrier to Stevenage Indoor Market being a success.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – That the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources discuss with officers the possibility of a future ~~open market~~ acquisition of the freehold for a suitable town square retail establishment creating an arcade linking the town centre square with the Indoor Market entrance.

Reason – Creating a walk way link between the Town Centre Square and the rear of the shops and the entrance to the Indoor Market would break the physical barrier to the Market and car park from the Town Centre Square. The building would be used as an arcade creating income for the Council. Members are aware that there could be a number of issues that would be obstacles to this happening, including the commercial considerations and the physical floor levels for disabled access. However, if these obstacles could be overcome, creating a physical access to and from the Town Centre Square would be a potential transformative development for the Indoor Market as it would then have a link to the regenerated town centre which it currently lacks. **2 October Update** - Officers to identify costings for the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 3 - That officers revisit this issue with the shops to see what incentives would be required to restore access to the multi-storey car park as this would significantly improve the potential footfall of the market and would also restore a much needed pedestrian route to and from the car park to the town centre.

Reason - Since Boots and (the former Woolworths shop) Wilkinson's have closed the pedestrian access from the back of their shops leading to the multi-storey car park this has had a major impact on the footfall for the market. Until now the shops have shown little interest in re-establishing this link, siting storage and security as their main issues. If security could be improved then the shops would also benefit from increased footfall.

~~RECOMMENDATION 4 - If the Market is not moving venue as part of the Town Centre Regeneration Plans, then the Council should look at improving the fabric of the building including upgrading the quality of the pitches removing the raised floors, replacing the shutters and upgrading the floor surface which could be linked to a future upgrade to the car park.~~

~~Reason—The current infrastructure of the car park and the indoor market is an uninviting environment. If the market is to continue in the current location then the building should be improved. There could be scope for more of the building being openly visible from the service road such as the butchers and blind shop, which makes it more obvious to potential shoppers that there is a Market operating in the building.~~

Recommendation Removed – it was considered that improvements to the fabric of the building would not increase the footfall to the market and would therefore be of little benefit and at further cost to the Council.

RECOMMENDATION 5 - That officers look at incentives for Market Traders to keep to the opening trading times and days. Members would recommended that the Garages and Market Manager discuss with the MTA altering the current rules of 'rewards and punishment' to Market Traders to see if this issue can be improved.

Reason – Continuity of pitches opening times is an ongoing issue. It is confusing for customers who may have visited to use one particular stall if that stall is not open when the rest of the market is open. It doesn't help the reputation of the market and can generate negative publicity.

~~RECOMMENDATION 6 - That the Executive Portfolio Holder for Resources discuss with officers in Finance and the Car Parks Manager the options open to varying the parking charge for Market shoppers, looking at free validation or free/discounted parking.~~

~~Reason—The Market Traders Association (MTA) have requested that Council consider concessions on the parking charges for market shoppers, from free parking to chip coins, to discounts to aid footfall. The Council has introduced a low cost short stay option in the MSCP and Westgate and is reviewing effects in the two car parks. Members would like officers to explore options suggested in the recommendation to see if there is anything that can be done regarding parking to help the Market Traders.~~

Recommendation removed - as these measures would need to be introduced to all car parks but officers to identify costings and data for the usage of the car park.

RECOMMENDATION 7 - That officers look at ways that a more varied food offer could be provided at the market.

Reason – Compared to the food offer at Luton Market which has a variety of different foods available, Stevenage Market food offer appears far less appealing. The review does not wish to be prescriptive about how a more varied food options should be provided but perhaps an invitation to catering students from North Herts College or other establishments to have an occasional food stall at the market to provide an alternative food offer could be investigated. This would give students a place to trial their own catering and provide a real business opportunity and could be linked to themed events at the Market.

Recommendation removed - as food offer within the market could not be increased unless another location could be found to accommodate other street food traders. The cost to support the existing food offer is expensive in the building as it is currently configured.

RECOMMENDATION 8 - That officers discuss with the Town Centre Manager further ways to further incorporate the Indoor Market with Town Centre events that are organised by the Town Centre Manger.

Reason – It appears that close liaison between Town Centre activities and the Indoor Market is not happening as often and as routinely as Members would expect. Members would like to see more active links between town centre activities and the Indoor Market. Members are aware that officers attend monthly meetings with the Town Centre Working Group so are asking that this issue is looked at this meeting.

RECOMMENDATION 9 - That officers discuss with the MTA ways to encourage a wider diversity of traders available in the Market.

Reason – It was apparent to Members that there was a wider variety of traders at the Luton Indoor Market than at the Stevenage Market. A wider selection of traders helps with the appeal of the Market as a shopping experience.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – That officers be requested to consider the safety concerns referred to regarding the physical access to the market including crossing points and speed limits.

Reason – The current pedestrian access to the Market is not ideal so any measures that can be implemented to improve this would be welcomed. However, Members recognise that there are physical and technical constraints to what can be delivered at this location.

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