

Public Document Pack



ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 11 September 2017

Time: 6.00 pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact:

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

AGENDA

PART 1

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

2. **MINUTES - 3 JULY 2017**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on 3 July 2017
3 - 6

3. **INTERVIEWS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

The Committee will interview witnesses for the review including the Executive Portfolio for Resources, Members of the Market Traders Association, and a Market Trader.

4. **FEEDBACK FROM SITE VISITS TO VARIOUS MARKETS & EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS**

To note the feedback from Members and the Scrutiny Officer from various site visits to Markets including the Stevenage Indoor Market, Luton Indoor Market and Watford Covered Market and to agree or amend the emerging recommendations from the review.
7 - 12

5. **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

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

6. **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.

7. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

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

NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Monday, 11 September 2017 –

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

Agenda Published **Insert date of Publication**

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES****Date: Monday 3 July 2017****Time: 6:00 pm****Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage****Present:** Members: M Downing (Chair), J Brown, L Chester,
E Harrington, J Lloyd and A McGuinness.**Start/End Time:** Start Time: 6:00 pm
End Time: 7:20 pm**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Hurst, D Bainbridge, R Broom and J Fraser.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference are noted.

3. MINUTES – 1 MARCH 2017

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on Wednesday 1 March 2017 are approved and signed by the Chair.

4. EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO RESPONSE TO ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

The Committee received the Executive Member response to the Allotments Scrutiny Review which was carried out in 2016/2017.

The Committee was advised that a draft strategy document for a review into the allotments policy had been written which addressed a number of the points raised in the review. Subject to Members' comments the document would be submitted to interested parties as part of the consultation process prior to implementation.

In reply to a question the Committee was advised that feedback from the consultation would be communicated to allotment holders via email, letter or via the Customer Service Centre.

With regards to the role played by the Stevenage Gardens and Allotment Association (SGAA) the Committee was advised that any changes to the

existing agreement between the Council and the SGAA would be formalised legally.

In reply to a further question concerning neglected plots the Committee was advised that Officer intervention was now more timely and that plot holders were contacted sooner than in the past. In respect of vacant plots weed proof netting was being provided to prevent the spread of unwanted growth to adjacent plots.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive Portfolio Holder's response to the allotments review is noted.

5. DRAFT SCOPING REVIEW DOCUMENT AND PRESENTATION – SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO THE INDOOR MARKET

The Committee received a presentation on the Indoor Market which covered its history, steps taken by the Council to support and promote the market, especially since the economic crash of 2008 and recent recommendations that had been implemented following a consultation between the Market Traders Association and senior officers of the Council.

Members then discussed the challenges facing the market which included its location, local building works, changing consumer spending patterns, the number of vacant stalls in the market, the Mutual Agreement Between Traders and more effective methods of advertising the market to townspeople.

It was noted that a number of businesses currently occupying retail premises in the town centre had begun in the market and Members acknowledged the role played by the market in fostering growth within those businesses.

In terms of the scoping document Members requested the following:

- That the background issues be extended to include a more detailed summary of the current issues facing the market, such as what is the market for and who are its customers;
- That issues with the multi-storey car park, such as cleanliness and state of repair, be raised during the witness interview with the CCTV and Car Parking Manager;
- That stall holders and customers be included as witnesses.

The Committee was advised that Peter Turvey of the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) would be interviewed as a 'critical friend' and it was requested that NABMA be asked to undertake further market research for the Council prior to the interview.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report is noted.

6. ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2017-2018

The Committee considered its proposed workplan for 2017/2018.

Members indicated that they would welcome a 'one-off' meeting with the Bus User Group to discuss local service provision.

In response to Members concerns about the facilities and cleaning of footpaths at Fairlands Valley Park the Strategic Director Environment undertook to raise the issues with the Leisure Services Manager and feedback directly to the Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report is noted.

7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

None.

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not Required.

9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

Item 4

Feedback from site visits to Stevenage Indoor Market 19 07 2017 & Luton Market 24 07 2017 & Emerging Recommendations

Speaking to the Market Traders the issues that affect them appear to be:

- Location linked to footfall was seen as the biggest issue – anecdotally when medical staff were provided with parking in the multi storey car park when Lister Hospital was being rebuilt there was an upturn in customers for fresh produce

Options – That the Committee make a recommendation that the future alternative location of the indoor market be included in the town centre regeneration plans

- Since Boots and (former Woolworths) 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

Options – Many attempts have been made with these shops to open discussions regarding re-opening the access from the back of the shops to the carpark & indoor market without any success. The shops are not interested in opening up these access points for customers as they are not convinced there is a business case for doing so and only a security risk to them.

- If the Market is not moving venue (Town Centre Regeneration?) then the Council should look at the fabric of the building/quality of the pitches/shutters.

Options – Depending on the long-term decision regarding the car park then the Committee should consider a recommendation to improve the fabric of the indoor market and the shutters for the pitches and the floor surface.

- Continuity of pitches opening times is an ongoing issue “make traders trade”

Options – Recommendation that Officers look at incentives for Market Traders to keep to the opening trading times and days.

- The general economic climate/squeezed incomes
- Competition from online and discount retailers (affects some traders more than others)
- Changes to shopping patterns / older shoppers not being replaced with younger demographic
- Car parking charges – The Market Traders Association (MTA) asked if the Council could make a concession on the parking charges for market

shoppers (e.g. if they were to shop over an agreed value in the market then their chip coin could be validated in the indoor market to provide free parking?) – However, this issue is linked to legal agreements with Westgate Shopping Centre Car Park (currently there is a price match between the Council and Westgate, so the Council can't offer a lower fee without Westgate's agreement/renegotiation).

History and Options - The MTA Committee requested in January 2017 for free parking in the MSCP, but the Council decided to give them 30 minutes for 50p, with a promise this would be reviewed after 3 months. The MTA Committee have asked again for free parking in the MSCP and a meeting has been arranged with Cllr Joan Lloyd and Tom Pike in August 2017. As above any agreement would need to be negotiated with Westgate.

- MTA reps spoken to Arthur Howard and Dave stated that the last year was a particularly hard year (down 40% on takings)
- Rateable Value – thresholds changed in 2012 when the rent and rates were split (12/20K threshold?)
- Members/officers met traders of fruit and veg/ethnic food, fishmonger, accountant/health food, records stall, cycles, gifts, bespoke cakes, blinds

Positives:

- Events in the market, armed forces day, school treasure hunt, Easter event (although some of the traders were not keen on these events and described them as not adding much value to their business)
- The MTA suggested that pushing the food offer and arranging more food related/diverse/ethnic food events could be an option if they are well promoted. Another option could be the promotion of themed events such as wedding events, which could be promoted between traders in the market
- The progressive traders do a lot of self-promotion/offers. Demi's Cakes and the Fishmonger were very attractive pitches and had very enthusiastic traders (as were many that we spoke to)
- Importance of online presence and use of social media

Current temporary issues

- Park Place construction – the market traders/officers have done what they can re temporary signage but it's having an impact on customers accessing this way.

Follow up & info requested:

- Provide stats to Members on the period of free Saturday parking (April – July 2014) (see separately circulated papers)
- Following the site visit it was suggested that perhaps we should speak to Tina Benson re relationship with the activities in the town centre - The Garages and Markets Manager has reported that the "Town Centre Manager said in February when she started that she would look into ways

of how to incorporate the Indoor Market with town centre events. SBC attend monthly meetings with the Town Centre working group and I did bring it to the attention of the TC Manager that the Indoor Market was supposed to be included in the TC events and it is not, and the events have been planned from April until the end of this year.”

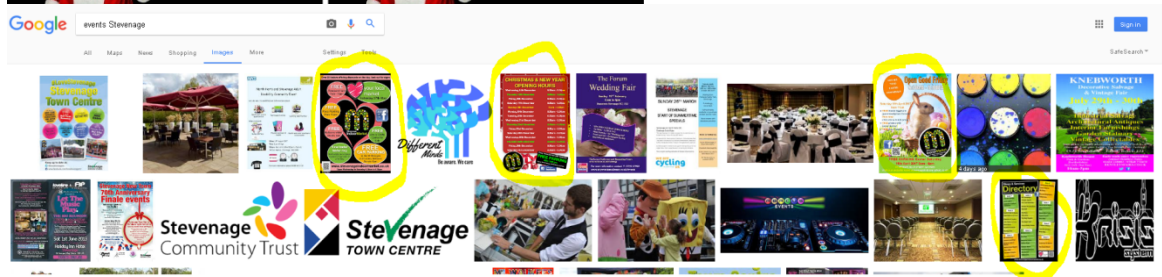
- Also Martha Levi-Smith be asked to comment on the work that is happening on the wayfinders in the town centre. The Garages and Markets Manager has reported that “We received an approval for chalk spray adverts on pavements. We have durable stencils and washable chalk spray to advertise market location. (Please see attached which was a trial advert we did a couple of months ago) – it had positive comments from both traders and customers. The spray stays on the pavement for approx. 7 day or longer (depending on weather) and we can re-do it when needed.”



Follow up & info requested:

- The Scrutiny Officer asked if QR codes have been used which are picked up by smart phones advertising the Indoor Market. The Market and Estates Officer has stated that “the Council have already been using QR codes – please see attached examples of leaflets/adverts. Also we do SEO on all our photos, i.e. can be seen below (when typing ‘events Stevenage’ 4 of our adverts will come up in the first two rows in Google Images section (highlighted in yellow). All of our Facebook posts are also focus around Stevenage and surrounding area to raise brand awareness amongst local people.”





- The Scrutiny Officer met a trader who was less confident and did not have an online presence. The Garages and Markets Manager stated that the particular trader has been offered help on their business like moving from a poor area of the market to a better area; going to WENTA for free training on Websites, Social Media and marketing. Each new trader has a 3 Month New Trader interview. This is approximately a 15 minute meeting to see whether they follow what they stated in their business plan/application form and check whether there is anything we can help with.” It is up to each trader to listen to and act upon the advice provided by SBC Market Officers and WENTA.

Visit to Luton Indoor Market

During August the Scrutiny Officer and Councillors Jim Brown and Laurie Chester visited Luton Indoor Market. Luton Market currently has 117 traderable stalls which cover just under 21000 sq ft of space (just the market stall areas). There are currently 20 empty market stalls. The lowest footfall week was 16000 customers through but they are averaging around 18900 a week. The Markets Manager can draw up licenses for varying lengths from 1, 3, 6 or 12 months lengths and can discuss discounts with traders as each stall is priced differently according to size and location, which is reviewed regularly.

Advantages compared to Stevenage Indoor Market:

Location - The entrance to the Market is from the multi-storey car park which also is the same location for the Shopping Mall. This creates a natural footfall for the market with shoppers walking through the market from the car park on their way to the shopping mall. It also benefits from the facilities for lifts and toilets being directly at the entrance/exit from the market into the mall.

Floor Levels - all the same and have a professional uniform colour. The requirement to have traders on raised plinths in Stevenage due to flooding issues at the location is negative as looks messy in comparison.

Uniform look and quality of the pitches – The signage above and around the pitches look professional, attractive and colourful. The shutters are of a high quality.

Options:

As noted earlier a possible recommendation that the plinths and pitch shutters be replaced with a uniform style and design. A further recommendation could be made to invite design/graphic design/photography students from North Herts College to work on a “live brief” to enhance the images on vacant pitches and around the market.

Greater number and diversity of traders – The quality and selection of traders is more diverse than Stevenage.

Food offer - The food offer is extensive in Luton Market with a wide range of food offers clustered in one area of the market and also a large, more traditional café/restaurant in another location in the market.

Options: Officers to look at ways that a more varied food offer could be provided at the market. 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.

Footfall – The number of shoppers at Luton Market is far greater than Stevenage Market, this is primarily due to a better location, the design of the car park moving shoppers through the market on their way to the shopping mall. Also the overall diverse and attractive offer of the market helps.

There is no parking concessions given to shoppers using the market and it is run by a specialist independent market company.

Observations of Watford Market

The Scrutiny Officer has arranged a site visit for interested Members in September but undertook an informal visit earlier in July. The new location of the Watford market is not popular with traders and was moved from its former site for commercial purposes but is now cited in a different area as an external covered market. Pitches are very small and open to the weather from the sides so in winter months this would not be attractive to shoppers or the traders. One of the entrances to the market is accessed from the pedestrianised Watford High Street which is positive, but this is under a road flyover which is less attractive to potential shoppers. As well as the street access covered market, which wraps around a commercial building, there is also a steel structure offering stalls on 2 storeys where the food offer is located.

This page is intentionally left blank