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ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 2 October 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

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 11 September 2017

Minutes attached

3. INTERVIEWS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW

The Committee will interview witnesses for the review including NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities) representative, Peter Turvey and Market Traders from Stevenage Indoor Market.

4. EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW

The Committee are invited to consider the emerging recommendations for the Indoor Market Review.

Report attached

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.

Agenda Published 21 September 2017

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 11 September 2017

Time: 6.00 pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

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

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

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Broom, Downing and Harrington.

There were no declarations of interest

2 **MINUTES - 3 JULY 2017**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee held on Monday 3 July are approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice-Chair (in the Chair).

3 **INTERVIEWS FOR INDOOR MARKET REVIEW**

Mark Nugent and Arthur Howard from the Market Traders Association along with 2 representatives from Market businesses attended the meeting to advise the Committee of the issues that were affecting the Market from their perspective. A paper was tabled by Arthur Howard for Members which included a spreadsheet showing the turnover required by a market stall to earn the minimum wage.

The Market representatives informed the Committee that a meeting had been held with the Council's Strategic Director Tom Pike and the Executive Member with responsibility for the Indoor Market Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd. The main issues raised at the meeting were:

- Concern regarding the car parking charges and whether a validation system could be used for market customers to allow free or reduced parking charges;
- Location of the market resulting in low footfall through the Market;
- Competition with the shopping offer at the Roaring Meg which also provides free car parking for customers;
- The suggestion of trading on extra days would not be financially viable for a lot of the Businesses within the market;

- The current redevelopment of Park Place and the hoardings required could be discouraging customers;
- Competition with pound shops as well as Internet shopping.
- The lack of access to the Market through the rear of the shops on Queensway.

The Committee was advised that there were a number of traders who were suffering as a result of the low numbers visiting the Market and could not afford to pay the weekly voluntary Market Traders Subscription of £5.

A number of events for example around Christmas or the MacMillan Coffee Morning had been organised by the Market to encourage additional custom which did help but there was a limit to how many of these events could be supported.

The Market representatives thanked the Council and its officers for the hard work and commitment that had been evident in recent times in support of the Market.

In response, Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd advised that in response to the issue of car parking charges, a validation scheme for customers would be difficult for audit purposes but she would be speaking to the relevant Council officers to see if there were any possibilities in introducing such a scheme.

She reported that the Council had endeavoured to keep the rent increases down as low as possible as they were aware of the difficulties faced by the traders.

In relation to access to the Market, although it would help the market to have access through one of the shops on Queensway, there was an issue with ground levels requiring steps which would have access implications. The Strategic Director advised that this was however on the horizon for discussions to be held with Boots or Wilkinson to see if it was a possibility

It was reported that unfortunately as many of the shops in the Town Centre were not owned by the Council they could not be considered as alternative venues for the market.

It was **RESOLVED** (i) that the comments from the Market Traders Association and the representatives of the businesses be noted.

(ii) that the comments from the Executive Member for Resources in response to the Market Representatives be noted;

(iii) that the representatives from the Market Traders Association and the businesses be thanked for their attendance.

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

The Committee received a report on the recent site visits to Stevenage Indoor Market and Luton Indoor Market.

It was noted that in comparison to Luton Market, location linked to footfall was the biggest issue for Stevenage. The entrance to Luton Market was from the multi-storey car park in the shopping mall which created a natural footfall for the market with shoppers walking through from the car park on their way to the shops. Another disadvantage for the Stevenage Indoor Market was the inaccessibility from the Bus Station.

Members agreed that consideration should also be given to the fabric of the building and the quality of the pitches, shutters and floor surfaces. It was noted that there could be scope for more businesses to benefit from glazed shop fronts similar to those at the Butchers and Stevenage Blinds which would be visible from the service road.

Members asked that the issue of disabled access be addressed in the Review's recommendations.

It was noted that a further option being considered to increase footfall was the possibility of using the market as a parcel collection point for on-line shopping. It was also hoped that once the Park Place development had been completed and open with new residents this would encourage people into the area and into the Market.

It was **RESOLVED** that Members should make any detailed comments on the options in the report directly to the Scrutiny Officer to include in a future report to this committee.

5 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

None.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

7 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None

CHAIR

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Environment & Economy Select Committee, 2 October 2017
Emerging Recommendations for Indoor Market Review

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.

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, citing 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 5 - That officers look at incentives for Market Traders to keep to the opening trading times and days. Members would recommend 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 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 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.

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.

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