

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