

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting11th June 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

The Shambles Market Hall

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report on progress regarding the letting of the Shambles Market Hall following its refurbishment in November 2008 and the initiatives being looked at to assist in filling the units.

In April 2008, Cabinet approved proposals to refurbish the Shambles Market Hall with a view to returning its use to that based around the sale of food. The creation of specialist niche food enterprises could then establish themselves in a freshly renovated environment in a prominent location in Stockton's High Street.

Works to refurbish the hall were carried out in August and November 2008 and were completed below budget and within timescales to enable the units to be successfully used as a part of last years Christmas Market Festival. Photographs of the hall after its refurbishment were attached to the report. Two existing traders, a barber and a cobbler had been relocated as tenants, with refurbishment works programmed around them to minimise disruption to their day top day trade.

The use of the Shambles Market Hall since the refurbishment was detailed within the report.

Prior to the completion of the Shambles Market Hall, Officers had started to actively market the letting of the 9 remaining units. Over 60 businesses had been targeted because of the offer they provided or because of previous expressions of interests made. These businesses ranged from Farmers co-operatives, to confectioners and culinary herb traders. Follow up calls were made and further letters send that included specific marketing literature detailing the benefits of trading from the Shambles Market Hall.

There was a requirement for a highly proactive marketing campaign to raise awareness of the changes and to recruit new traders that fit with the profile described to fulfil the Council's aspirations for the new-look market

hall. This was underway to secure tenants for the completed building. Over 50 Food / fresh flower based businesses had been targeted. Individual one to one targeting of businesses continued to be made to secure tenants into the units. A breakdown of the interest that traders had declared was detailed within the report.

The current economic climate had created a very difficult market for the Shambles to be let in particularly given the extent of other vacant units within the Town Centre and beyond. Discussions were continuing with interested parties of the units including wood-turners and local history groups. It had been established that planning permission was not required to extend any scope of business use within the A1 class. However further approval would be required should any request for A3 Restaurants / Café be requested.

As identified in the recent Town Centre Cabinet report (14th May 2009) and following the recommendations made by the DCLG report 'Taking Care of the Town Centres', a number of units were being looked at as a base for artists with their work able to be displayed in both the empty units and other shop frontages. This strategy contributed to and formed part of a number of initiatives currently being developed to enhance the future vibrancy of the Town Centre.

In addition following the expected decantment of the Tourist Information Centre in September 2009 from the Central Library, officers were investigating the possibility of relocation onto the Shambles and or other unit in the town, together with the existing Town Centre Management Team.

Any actions taken to fill the Shambles would be sympathetic where possible to the existing tenants who were keen to see the units let. This included being flexible over the offer of leases which included rent free and stepped incremental periods.

With regards to the 2 existing tenants in the hall, it was proposed that signage in keeping with the buildings listed status be provided to promote business whilst footfall was low due to the proliferation of empty units.

A summary of initiatives being looked at included:-

- * Continue to canvass and contact businesses
- * Introduction of stepped rents and or free periods to help generate footfall
- * Use of the units as a Craft / Artist centre
- * Conversion of units to accommodate Town Centre Management and or Tourism Staff.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The completion of the refurbishment to the Shambles be noted.
2. The programme for tenancy be noted and further proposals for widening the business types for occupancy be considered should the required 70% occupancy rate not be maintained.
3. Reasons for the Decision

To keep members updated on the development, funding and subsequent lettings of the Shambles Market Hall in Stockton.
4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None
5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None
6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable
7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By Midnight, Friday, 19th June 2009

Proper Officer
16 June 2009