

Markets Forum

A meeting of Markets Forum was held on Wednesday, 14th November, 2007.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chair), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher

Officers: S. Burgess, D. Craig (DNS) M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance: Market Traders

Apologies: Cllr Bill Noble

MF 17/07

Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

MF 18/07

Minutes of the Meeting Held 19th September 2007

The Town Centre Manager noted that she had written to Market Traders querying whether they wished to hold a Christmas Fair but had had no feedback. The Town Centre Manager stated that she would write again to Market Traders. The Market Traders Newsletter was discussed and it was requested that copies of the newsletter be distributed to the Market Forum Members in advance for information and proofing prior to circulation to all traders to enable them to be forewarned of any issues likely to arise.

The Town Centre Manager updated on the progress of Stall Covers. An agreement had been reached that the supplier would provide topsheets in blue and white striped waterproof material. Side covers were sent back to the suppliers to be modified, and measures were being taken to ensure that these would be back on the market by the end of November 2007. Once all the covers had been returned and successfully inspected, the contract with the supplier would be terminated, and the remaining 40% of payment would be released. The Town Centre Manager noted that the project had come in on budget despite all the difficulties.

Dennis Craig reported on the results of a survey which was conducted as a secret ballot to establish whether Market Traders wanted to continue to hire this equipment. The majority of respondents did not want the equipment and therefore security radios would no longer be hired using funds from the Promotions Budget as had been previously agreed. It was stated that if individual Market Traders wished to have security radios on their stall they should contact Dennis Craig who would put them in touch with the supplier direct to arrange their own individual contract.

Notification of the meeting was raised. The Town Centre Manager stated an extra 20 copies of the agenda and minutes were to be sent to Market Trader Representatives to distribute, and in addition if Market Traders wished to provide an email address to the Town Centre Manager these would be sent to them electronically.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2007 be agreed as a true record.
2. Members to receive copies of Market Trader Newsletter prior to main circulation.
3. Information be noted.

MF **Increase in Market Stall Rents**
19/07

The Town Centre Manager presented a report to advise Members of the proposal to increase market stall rents.

The Town Centre Manager informed that last stall rent increase was agreed in October 2005, an increase of £1.50 per stall space. Since that time, significant improvements to cleansing and appearance of the market had taken place, at Stockton Borough Council's cost. These costs had not been passed on to stallholders and each year the cost of providing cleansing and security services had increased. At the meeting in October 2005, it was agreed that stall rents would be reviewed again in April 2007, but this had not taken place, as it was not deemed appropriate to do so during the redevelopment phase, resulting in an additional seven months at the old rent. At this time, Stockton markets service was predicted to make an under-recovery of c. £35,000 in the financial year 2007/8. To reflect the increased cost of managing and maintaining the markets and in line with inflation the Town Centre Manager recommended that Members endorse an increase in rent of £5 per stall space, to be implemented from 1 April 2008.

A Market Rent Comparison document was circulated (attached) and the proposal was discussed. The members agreed that an increase was appropriate but felt that they did not have the relevant financial information to make a decision on the amount of this increase. It was therefore decided that another meeting would be held in December 2007 to agree the amount of increase and members requested detailed financial information to be brought to the meeting.

Concluded that:

1. An increase of Markets Rents be agreed.
2. A meeting to be held in December 2007 to agree the amount of the increase.

MF **NABMA Markets Conference Report**
20/07

Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher presented her report on the National Association of British Market Authorities Conference (NABMA).

Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher noted her impression that every market in the country was having problems and that change was inevitable if they were to survive and prosper. The Conference discussed the devolving of responsibilities of markets to Town and Parish Councils, with Sedgfield and Ferryhill cited of good

examples of how this worked. Licensing arrangements could be done with District Councils, and greater involvement of these Councils and the community could lead to a long term success. Smaller Councils could be more flexible and responsive to changing situations.

Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher noted that NABMA has a remit to lobby Parliament on behalf of its members, and felt that this would be a good opportunity to feed issues through to government.

The Conference also discussed 'Night Vision – town Centres for All'. This is a report on the night time economy produced in 2006 by the Civic Trust. There were ideas about markets using the twilight time of early evening. These had been popular with people who had been at work all day. “Family nights” were suggested that could be weekly or monthly and “creative and imaginative play” were discussed, things that didn’t necessarily cost much money to put on and that imagination was used to vary the programme. Along with stalls that were thought to fit in with customers there were opportunities for other public sector and retail outlets to remain open, if that fitted with their agendas. It was felt that it was important the atmosphere of a traditional market was kept for these sort of markets.

Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher noted that she believed Stockton Market was a comparatively good market. The Chair thanked the members who attended the Conference, and Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher for her report.

The Town Centre Manager noted that in recognition of Stockton market as an example of best practice, she had been invited to present “Stockton Market- The Queen of the North” film at the NABMA Conference in January 2008.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

MF Promotions Budget and Future Meetings

21/07

It was noted that there was no change to the Promotions Budget.

It was suggested that re-useable canvas bags which advertised Stockton Market could be purchased from the Promotions budget, which could be given to customers instead of plastic bags. It was also suggested that instead of canvas bags, bio-degradable plastic bags could be purchased.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

MF Any Other Business

22/07

Market Traders noted they had received anecdotal information that the outdoor cafe was not being charged as much as Market Traders for rent. The Town Centre Manager stated that the outdoor cafe was not part of the market and therefore would be paying a leasehold rate negotiated by the Council’s Land and Property Section who manage all the Council’s assets. The cafe would also have to pay a business rate. The Town Centre Manager stated that she would enquire the amount of the leasehold rate for the outdoor cafe, but may not

receive the information due to data protection regulations.

Market Traders queried why smoking was allowed on the outdoor cafe and the Town Centre Manager explained that the cafe was considered to have 50% open space when the side sheets were tied up and the doors were padlocked open, therefore being compliant with regulations. When the sides where down, smoking was not allowed at the cafe.

Market Traders further queried the expansion of the cafe's menu. The Town Centre Manager stated that the cafe had been given a licence to sell 'hot food', and Stockton Borough Council could not dictate its menu.

Christmas arrangements were discussed. The Town Centre Manager stated that the Fair would not be held on the High Street on a market day. If the fair wished to operate on a market day, the Town Centre Manager was considering offering the site outside Splash. The Christmas Train would operate on non-market days, with the exception of Fridays when there was a smaller market. The route of the train was noted.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.