

Markets Forum

A meeting of Markets Forum was held on Wednesday, 21st May, 2008.

Present: Cllr Robert Cook (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg (Vice cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher), Ms E Hutchinson, Mr P Johnson, Mr J Mason, Mrs P Mason

Officers: S. Burgess, C. Watson, R. Pounford, N. Laws, D. Bilton(DNS), M. Jones (LD)

Also in attendance: Market Traders

Apologies: Cllr Ian Dalgarno, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Bill Noble

MF 6/08 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

MF 7/08 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th April 2008**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2008.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th April 2008 be agreed as a true record.

MF 8/08 **Stockton International Riverside Festival**

Members were presented with the first draft proposals of sites to be used by productions during the Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF). The sites proposed included the area north of the Town Hall, which was the same area used in 2007, the area south of the Town Hall up to the Market Cross, and the area outside the shambles. It was explained that negotiations were ongoing with both the production company and Town Centre Staff, and therefore the proposals were subject to change.

It was queried whether the outdoor cafe would be removed from its site to accommodate SIRF. The Town Centre Manager noted that the cafe needed three months notice to remove premises. The SIRF Committee had decided to try not to move the cafe for 2008, and it was seen as an enhancement to the festival.

There was concern that this information had been presented to the Market Forum only ten weeks before SIRF and was still at the outline stage. It was noted that, as requested in previous years, both the Town Centre Management and Market Traders needed the information on the plans for SIRF sooner in the year from the relevant department. The Town Centre Manager suggested that the proposal to hold a holiday for the Saturday Market during SIRF, which had previously been supported by the Forum but subsequently abandoned, be revisited.

Traders wished it to be noted that the Market was heavily promoted by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC), and the Market brought in a high proportion of the town centre footfall, however the market traders were displaced for the festivals SBC wished to hold. Officers stated that they did not displace traders lightly, and tried to work with traders to give the best possible

solution when events were to be held in the town centre on market days.

Traders were informed that further plans for SIRF would be circulated as soon as they were available.

There was concern that this information had been presented to the Market Forum ten weeks before the SIRF. It was noted that both the Town Centre Management and Market Traders needed the information on the plans for SIRF sooner in the year from the relevant department. The Town Centre Manager suggested that the agreement to hold a holiday for the Saturday Market during SIRF be revisited.

Traders noted that the Market is heavily promoted by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC), and the Market brings in a high proportion of the town centre footfall, however the market traders were displaced for the festivals SBC wish to hold. Officers stated that they do not displace traders lightly, and try to work with traders to give the best possible solution when events were to be held in the town centre on market days.

Traders were informed that further plans for SIRF would be circulated as soon as they were available.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Further SIRF proposals to be circulated to traders
2. The information be noted

MF
9/08 **Christmas Market Festival Update**

The Town Centre Manager discussed the changes to the proposals for the Christmas Market event following the previous meeting of the Market Forum. The changes included:

*Thornaby and Billingham Markets would still be held during the week commencing 24th November 2008 for those that wished to stand at those markets.

*Stockton Wednesday Market would still be held, however could not take place on the High Street due to the construction work taking place. Possible sites for the Market included Church Road, Bishop Street/Bishop Street Car Park, and Riverside Car Park. All sites would be promoted and clearly marked and signposted to alert the public to the change of venue. Following further discussion with traders it was agreed that the market could take place on Wednesday 26 November on the High Street if traders were prepared to trade from the gazebo stalls in the layout agreed for the 4-day event, as these could be erected in time for Wednesday.

*Market Traders would occupy the site north of the Town Hall, which would be the biggest high profile site of the event. There was also the possibility of traders displaced from the southern end using the site outside of Castlegate Centre. This was to be agreed with the owners of Castlegate before it could be confirmed.

*The Continental Christmas Market would occupy the site south of the Town Hall.

*The times of trading on the Thursday needed to be negotiated. The Town Centre Manager stated that while she would like traders to trade on into the evening, she was aware that this might not be feasible for traders.

The Town Centre Manager explained that a layout of stalls still needed to be produced for Market traders, and it was hoped to offer traders a stand as close to their regular stand as possible on a first come first served basis. However, an indication of which traders wish to be involved in the event was needed before a site plan could be drawn. Traders would operate from gazebos and could take any equipment they wished to display their produce in their gazebo. Traders would be permitted up to 12 metres frontage each, and three metres depth. The Town Centre Manager noted that the traders could not display all their stock on the gazebo at once due to size, but she would work with the markets staff and traders to try to arrange for easily accessible storage for stock so traders could replenish the stock on their gazebo. The arrangements for this were still to be discussed.

Further proposals for the event included:

*A stage raised from the ground by approximately one metre to the west of the street café site, for performances. Although covered this would be open on all sides. This would free up the usual performance area north of the Town Hall to provide extra space which could be occupied by the market traders;

*Street entertainers performing walkabout entertainment through the crowd;

*Some small scale traditional fair rides. It was stressed that these would not be big mechanical rides;

*The return of the Salvation Army Band;

* The possibility of a traditional steam fair, although this was yet to be confirmed with the provider.

The purpose of these proposals was to attract people to the town centre area and ensure that they would stay for a longer period.

The Town Centre Manager stressed that the event was still in the planning stages and that she had brought information to traders as early as possible not only to ensure that they were fully aware of the plans, but also that they were involved in the planning.

Traders were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the event. The Town Centre Manager was asked to explain her quote regarding how the festival would attract a better type of spend, to explain how the event would complement and benefit the traders, and how much the continental market traders would be charged. The Town Centre Manager noted she was not criticising regular customers of the market, but explained that festivals and events attract those with a higher disposable income, therefore would spend

more. This would benefit traders as they would not only spend at the event but would hopefully return to the town at other times. The Christmas Market event was not just to attract custom for the Market, but for the centre as a whole, which was suffering from the competition of other town centres in the area, including Newcastle and Leeds. She stressed that SBC was not attempting to compete for the same customer experience of those centres but for the 'pounds', those people who live in the Tees Valley area but did not shop in Stockton Town Centre. The Town Centre Manager noted that the Continental Market company would pay SBC a fee, which had not been agreed at the time of the meeting, and that fee the continental market traders pay their company was subject to commercial confidentiality. The fee that the Continental Market would pay SBC would be reinvested into the event.

Members noted that the Christmas Market event was a real attempt to improve Stockton Town Centre, and urged traders to take up the challenge of making the event work so that it benefited both SBC and the traders. It was requested that traders contacted the Markets Officer to express their interest in attending the Christmas Market event so that a plan of sites and stall locations could be drawn up. The gazebos would be displayed on forthcoming market days so that trader could view these.

1. Traders would contact the Markets Officer to express interest
2. A site plan of pitches to be drawn
3. The Town Centre Manager explore the option to undertake the build for the event between Sunday 23rd November and Tuesday 25th November to enable the Wednesday market to stand in its temporary location on the High Street.
4. The Gazebos to be displayed
5. The information to be noted