

Markets Forum

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

Present: Cllr B Cook (Chairman), Cllr Mrs J Beaumont, Cllr Mrs S Fletcher, Cllr W Noble; Market Trader Representatives - E. Hutchison, P. Johnson, J. Mason and P. Mason.

Officers: S. Burgess, C Watson (DNS), Mrs T Harrison (LD)

Also in attendance: Market Traders

Apologies: Cllr R Patterson and G McDonald (DNS)

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th November 2006

Members considered the minutes held on 15th November 2006.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2006 be agreed as a true record and forwarded on to Council.

2 Purchase of Stall Covers - Verbal Update

Members were advised that invitations to quote went out but only one responded resulting in the required quota of three not being met. Letters have gone out to other companies requesting quote submissions, the closing date of which will be 26 March 2007 at 12 noon.

CONCLUDED that upon receiving the required full quota of three to be able to carry out a quotation for the stall covers, the item will be brought back to the Forum for a further update.

3 Proposed New Layout - Verbal Discussion

Members were advised that Officers had received a diagram to enable them in the planning of the new market layout, however it had required several amendments as a result, the plans for the new market layout was not ready. The item therefore needed to be deferred to a special meeting planned for 11th April.

CONCLUDED that the item be deferred to a special meeting of Markets Forum on 11th April.

4 Planning application for outdoor Cafe and seating area

Prior to discussion on the planning application, the Chairman observed that the Forum was not a decision making body but the purpose of the application being on the agenda was to discuss the application and feed back the collective comments of the Forum to the Planning department to be included with all other comments sent to the planning department as part of the consultation period which expired on 16th March. It was observed that the site notice did not go up until 2nd March, therefore it was queried whether the deadline for consultation was 21 days from that date.

Councillor Mrs Beaumont advised that she was a member of the Planning Committee who would be responsible for making a decision on the planning

application, therefore she would listen to the comments made by the Market Traders during the meeting but would not speak about the application to ensure that she did not fetter her discretion.

The Town Centre Manager advised that she had requested extended time to consult with Market Traders thoroughly, which had been agreed by the Planning Department.

Market Traders located in the area affected by the proposal had been shown the application and plans at an earlier market traders meeting, therefore the purpose of this meeting was to obtain a response from the Markets Forum collectively.

As part of the new market layout, the area in question had been allocated as a flexible event area. The application had since been submitted. The Town Centre Manager emphasised that the application was from a private individual and was not a Council application; however the application fell within the vision of the Town Centre regeneration. The applicant had not received any funding from the Council for the application.

The Chair advised that anybody could submit a planning application for anywhere, even land that was not owned by them but it did not mean that the application would be approved. If five or more people objected then the application would need to go to planning committee. If the application was approved the applicant would still need to obtain permission from the land owner to carry out the works proposed. If permission was not given, the application could not go ahead.

In response to Market Traders' objections to being moved from the area, Market Traders were reminded that the area was not their own land, it was owned by the Council and had previously been the site for the underground toilets which, once levelled, had always been earmarked for a use other than to site market stalls, e.g. events, performances or street café. The Town Centre Manager assured Traders that although Traders in all areas could be moved as part of the market realignment, every effort would be made to keep traders as close to their existing pitches as was feasible and still achieve the overall objective. This however was a separate issue to the purpose of this item which was to discuss the planning application. Detailed discussions regarding relocation would be held with traders once the corrected detailed layout had been received.

Contrary to Market Traders' beliefs, the Chair advised that the application had not been approved and no decision could be made until it went before the Planning Committee. It was also confirmed that it was not the plan of the Council to get rid of the Market altogether, the purpose of the redevelopment was to improve the market and the High Street.

A Member queried what would happen if the application was approved and was erected and then Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) needed the area, and was advised that the applicant stated in the application that the kiosk and seating area could be moved within 75 minutes. If the Planning Committee decided to approve the application it may be that a condition could be attached to the approval stating that the kiosk and seating area be moved in certain circumstances. However it would be for the organisers of SIRF to raise this if appropriate.

Market Traders questioned the accuracy of many of the statements made in the application form. They were advised that, Planning Committee would consider such matters when looking at the application, if deemed appropriate, and that traders should feed their comments into the consultation

Market Traders queried who would be responsible for the security of the kiosk and seating area and were advised that it would be the operator's responsibility.

A Member commented that issues such as the environmental sustainability of using patio heaters would be worthy of consideration by the Planning Committee when making their decision.

Market Traders queried whether they would have to change their street furniture to match the furniture of the seating area and were advised that it was hoped that due to the investment the Council would be making into the Market, that Traders would improve their street furniture. The Council's Trading Standards department had approved styles and materials for outdoor café furniture.

Market Traders queried if all the Traders would be informed when the Planning Committee would be taking place and were advised that everyone who submitted comments to the Planning Department would receive a letter informing them, therefore Market Traders were encouraged to submit any comment they had to the Planning Department in order to be part of that process.

Market Traders were encouraged to submit comments regarding the Town Centre redevelopment to the relevant Officers.

Market Traders had queried their rights; as a result a Member requested that prior to the meeting to discuss the re-alignment of the market, that members of the Markets Forum and all Traders be provided with documentation relating to the rights of Market Traders so that everyone was clear on the matter. It was suggested that this information would be reiterated at the meeting on 11 April but that Forum members would get a copy of the information in advance of that meeting.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The Town Centre Manager will request that the Planning Department defer the consultation of the application until the Market Traders have been able to see the new Market layout so that they can respond having all the information in front of them.
2. Market Traders wishing to submit comments to the Planning Department regarding the application will do so.
3. A briefing note on the rights of traders under the terms of the Markets Charter, Open Market Regulations and the daily Licence be produced by the Town Centre Manager and distributed to members of the Markets Forum and all Market Traders.
4. A collective response from the Markets Forum will be submitted by 26th March to ensure that the comments are included in the Planning report.

5. It was agreed that this information would be reiterated at the meeting on 11 April but that Forum members would get a copy of the information in advance of that meeting.

**5 Item for Information
Feedback from Adults leisure and Culture Select Committee's Markets Survey**

Members were provided with the results of the survey of Market Traders undertaken by some of the Members from The Adults Leisure & Culture Select Committee as part of their scrutiny review of the Stockton International Riverside Festival.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

6 Any other business

The Town Centre Manager observed that Market Traders had advised that they were not consulted on matters relating to the Market, however members were advised that Market Traders had received individual invites to a meeting to discuss the Stockton International Festival, however none of the Market Traders attended as a result the meeting had been reconvened to the 18th April and it was hoped that all would attend.

Market Traders stated that they were not told about meetings until the day of the meeting, however the Markets Manager advised that this was incorrect and a Market Trader Representative advised that he received the Markets Forum agenda a week prior to the meeting at which point he told Market Traders.

It was observed that at a previous meeting it had been minuted that a copy of the agenda would be put up in the Markets Office and that more hard copies would be issued for the Market Traders' representatives.

It was expected that a copy of the agenda would be placed on the notice board in the Markets Office but not to publish additional copies for the Market Traders.

The Chair observed that the Markets Forum was not an open meeting although Traders would not be turned away and that the agendas were issued 5 clear working days before the meetings and that it was the role and responsibility of the Market Trader Representatives to advised Market Traders of the meetings and what was on the agenda, bring any issues and concerns from the Market Traders to the meetings and then feed back details of the discussion at the meetings.

It was suggested that an annual diary of all meetings linked to Market Traders be published and posted up in the Markets Office, with any alterations being made and Traders being notified in plenty of time. Where possible any plans and information would be provided prior to the meetings.

A newsletter was distributed at the meeting and further copies were to be made available for distribution the following day. The meeting was advised that it would be a regular issue dependant on the amount of news/information.

Due to a break-in to one of the trader's vans during the meeting, the Chair

requested that better security be provided to protect the vans during meetings. The markets manager to action this with SBC Enforcement team.

Members queried whether smoking would be allowed in the kiosk and seating area if the application was approved due to the new law that was coming into place and what Market Traders should do with regards to customers that enter their stall if they were smoking?. Members were advised that smoking would not be allowed in the seating area of the Kiosk. It was suggested that no smoking signs could be printed on the new canopies for the market stalls.

The Town Centre Manager suggested that the no smoking issue be put on a future agenda and that Trading Standards be invited to provide information at the meeting regarding the new laws.

Market Traders had read that the fairground ride which was at the South end of the High Street during the Christmas festival would be even bigger in 2007 but the Town Centre Manager advised that she had not had any discussion with the operator to approve this.

Market Traders advised that they were not happy that the continental market was not dispersed and placed amongst the existing Traders. The Town Centre Manager advised that the continental market wanted to stay together and the Council could not dictate that they be separated.

The Town Centre Manager updated the meeting with regard to the Safer Shopping in Stockton Initiative. The radios, 8 of which would be issued to designated market traders, would be on the Apex network and that the hire of these would be funded from a markets budget. The promotional materials for the scheme were being designed and as soon as these were available the scheme would launch.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. A copy of the Markets Forum agenda be put up on the notice board in the Markets Office.
2. Market Trader Representatives to notify Market traders of dates of meetings, items on the agendas, take concerns and issues to the meetings on behalf of the Market Traders and then feedback details of the meeting to the Traders.
3. An annual diary of meeting linked to Market Traders is to be published and put up on the notice board in the Markets Office.
4. The Markets Manager will contact the Enforcement Team to request increased surveillance in the area where Market Trader's vans are parked during meetings.