

MARKET MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2015 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Members: Councillors Glover (Leader of the Council – representing Councillors Mrs Bradley and Tickner) and Mrs Martlew

Officers:

Mr S Brown – Principal Lawyer

Ms B Vernon – Senior Estates Surveyor

Mr M Walshe – Strategic Property Manager

Mrs M Durham – Democratic Services Officer

ALSO

PRESENT: Mr A Trumper – Ryden Property Consultants
Mr A McLetchie – Ryden Property Consultants
Ms C Watkins – LaSalle Investment

MMG.01/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of:

Councillor Mrs Bradley (Chairman)

Councillor Dr Tickner

Mrs J Meek (Director of Economic Development)

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Martlew took the Chair.

MMG.02/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest affecting the business to be transacted.

MMG.03/15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Market Management Group held on 28 October 2014 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

MMG.04/15 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A Member made reference to the statement that “However the Market Hall was not geared to many food stalls.” He sought clarification as to whether there was a policy limiting the number of each type of stall, and whether the position should be reviewed. He added that there was a growing demand for artisan type foods and the City Centre would benefit from that type of growth.

Mr Trumper indicated that he could not recall that particular statement, the issue more properly being that drainage within the Market Hall was not geared towards certain types of food usage. He emphasised that additional market stalls selling local produce would be welcomed and questioned whether the Farmers’ Market could be relocated within the Market Hall.

A Member felt that relocation of the Farmers' Market (which was weather dependent) may be beneficial. She further commented upon the current operation of the Market Hall as opposed to other successful Markets throughout the country. The Member believed that the manner by which the Market Hall should evolve in future required to be considered moving forward.

Mr Walshe added that Coventry had a very good market where the quality of the produce was superb.

Ms Watkins questioned whether restrictions were in place in terms of usage of the Market Hall.

In response, Mr Trumper explained that the maintenance and legal aspects (referred to in his report) must be addressed as the first priority, following which consideration could be given to "the offer" at the Market Hall. On the latter point he stated that, although a letting policy was in place, there was no restriction upon competition.

The Member considered that competition was healthy. She added that the new Arts Centre was scheduled to open the following month and hoped that would have a positive impact upon the Market.

In discussion it was recognised that the situation was impacted upon by a variety of issues, including the early closure of certain market stalls and limited marketing budget available.

MMG.05/15 MANAGING AGENT'S REPORT

A copy of the Managing Agent's report had been circulated prior to the meeting. In presenting the report, Mr Trumper reiterated that the emphasis was currently upon maintenance / legal issues.

The following aspects of the report were highlighted and discussed:

Building Issues

Ms Watkins outlined the positive progress achieved to date in terms of progressing the essential works required to the roof. It was anticipated that the tendering process could commence shortly, and hoped that work would start in the summer.

Ms Watkins further reported on the associated costs in response to a Member's question.

Mr Walshe highlighted the requirement for applications for planning permission/listed building consent to be submitted to the City Council in early course. He also undertook to alert the Conservation Officer.

A Member asked whether the health and safety aspects could be flagged up to English Heritage with a view to the matter being expedited quickly.

In response, Mr Brown explained that the Market Hall was a Grade II listed building. English Heritage was a statutory consultee, but it would be possible to ask them to comment upon the application as a matter of urgency.

Mr Trumper then reported upon the current position as regards works to the smoke vents, which also constituted good news. He added that Ryden were looking at the potential to create more income by forming secure parking on the Market Street elevation; updating/replacing signage; and rebranding of the Market Hall.

Members outlined in some detail the public realm projects currently under consideration by the City Council (including Gateway Signage; City Centre Orientation; and Car Park Renaming). It may be that the formation of secure parking on the Market Street elevation alluded to above could dovetail into that work. Use of the Carlisle Toolkit may provide an opportunity to reduce costs.

Mr Walshe explained that it was proposed to install a new system of finger posts, 30 initially, within the City Centre area. Those would offer greater flexibility for naming and colour coding areas, such as the Historic Quarter, Rickergate, etc to aid navigation.

The meeting then discussed rebranding of the Market Hall. A Member made reference to the Carlisle Story vision, commenting that the branding and images were being used by a variety of organisations to promote Carlisle.

Mr Walshe added that examples could be viewed at the Old Town Hall and invited Mr Trumper to contact him if further assistance was required.

In response Mr Trumper stated that, due to cost, the focus was on repairing the external signs and installation of simplified tenants' sign boards at the entrance to the Market Hall.

Tenancy Matters

Mr Trumper explained the current position as set out within the report. He flagged up to Members the issues around competition, including changes to Competition Law (which sought to promote or maintain market competition by regulating anti-competitive conduct by companies), commenting that they may well receive calls from concerned market traders. It was important for Ryden to have the backing of the meeting so that they could move forward.

Mr Brown stated that the adoption/implementation of a policy restricting competition would be contrary to Competition Law. The issue was to dissuade people of the perception that competition would adversely affect their ability to trade.

A Member reiterated that, in her view, competition was essential for a healthy market.

Quoting the example of Coventry, Mr Walshe advised that initially traders had been opposed to the introduction of new opportunities and discounted produce. That strategy had, however, attracted more customers and the traders were now in favour.

Financial

Mr Trumper informed Members that the targets set out at Section 3.1 of the report had in the main been achieved. The only area which was still proving challenging was the reduction in arrears, although those were substantially better than 12 months ago.

Rent Arrears

Mr Trumper reported upon the current position with regard to rent arrears, including actions being taken to address the issue.

A Member asked whether background checks were undertaken, and how quickly action was taken following the discovery of arrears.

Mr Trumper replied that, although attempts were made to obtain background information, the majority of tenants were new starters. He outlined the methodology used by Ryden, adding that local control was important in terms of pursuing arrears.

Ms Vernon added that managing rent arrears could prove quite resource intensive. The adoption of a consistent approach and clear procedures would be of assistance.

Funding

Mr Trumper indicated that the issue as reported in April 2014 had improved due, to a large extent, to the assistance provided by Ms Watkins.

Service Charge Budget

Details were as set out within the report. Mr Trumper informed Members that Mr McLetchiewould be working with him on the day to day management of the Market Hall.

Legal Update

Mr Trumper outlined the current position, adding that he was relatively happy with the progress made.

Ms Vernon added that a number of leases were on the verge of completion. In response to a Member's question, she clarified the new "Easy in Easy out" leasing arrangements.

Mr McLetchie added that the new arrangements saved a great deal of time in terms of renewing the Leases.

Mr Brown cautioned that tenants should still be advised that they were signing a legal document and to obtain legal advice.

Mr Trumperreplied that meetings had taken place between Ryden and individual stallholders in January and February to talk through the new arrangements, and also to provide a forum for them to raise their individual issues. No negative feedback had been received in response to that process.

Mr Trumperadded that the Head Lease ground rent calculation was being worked on and needed to be closed as soon as possible. He alsooutlined the position concerning business trends and responded to questions.

Marketing and Stallholders Committee

Mr Trumper explained the position, details of which were set out at Section 4 of the report.

Mr Walshe commented upon the opportunities available under social medial, and questioned whether consideration had been given to developing that aspect. It may be possible to attract a different / younger clientele to the market.

Mr Brown was in agreement, quoting an example of a business in Caldewgate which only advertised via social media.

Mr Trumper acknowledged that marketing via social media required to be addressed moving forward.

Discussion arose around the issue of the Stallholders' Committee. A Member felt that, even if Committee membership was initially limited, that may provide impetus for other stallholders to become involved in the future.

A Member gave an overview of the Carlisle Ambassador Programme 2015 which was now well underway, with meetings held on a bi-monthly cycle at interesting venues that showcased Carlisle. The first meeting took place in January at the Halston Aparthotel and was attended by over 150 people representing businesses across the City. The second meeting, in March, was held at Carlisle Racecourse and was attended by 220 business

people. People were passionate about the programme and both meetings had been oversubscribed with waiting lists for places. He added that currently funding had been provided for two people to drive the project for a twelve month period.

Another Member added that the next meeting of Carlisle Ambassadors was scheduled for Thursday 21 May 2015 at the Arts Centre in the Old Fire Station.

Mr Walshe indicated that the new website was up and running - visit www.carlisleambassadors.co.uk – where further information could be found.

Mr Trumper undertook to draw the matter to the attention of the Market Hall Centre Manager.

RESOLVED - That the Managing Agents' report be noted.

MMG.06/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no further business to be considered.

MMG.07/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That arrangements be made for the next meeting of the Market Management Group to take place on Wednesday 21 October 2015 at 2.00 pm.

[The meeting ended at 3.05pm]