

MINUTES OF THE HERTFORD MARKETS WORKING PARTY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 24 JULY 2017 IN THE ROBING ROOM, THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillor P Boyle, S Cousins, B Deering, S Dunkley, J Sartin

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Whelan, Town Clerk; Dr Maria Iancu, Project Officer; Cllr Peter Ruffles

178. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Jane Sartin was proposed and voted as Chairman of the Working Party.

179. ELECTION OF THE VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Sue Dunkley was proposed and voted as Vice Chairman of the Working Party.

180. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

181. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

182. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

183. DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME FOR THE HERTFORD MARKETS

The Chairman noted that the Council had agreed within its objectives for 2016 to 2019 to consider whether it wished to seek to take over the running of the market from East Herts District Council. Earlier this year, the District Council had itself decided to ask the Town Councils across the District if they wished to do this. The members of the Working Party considered that the possible transfer of rights to license markets from the East Herts District Council to Hertford Town is an interesting proposition, but it should be considered carefully. They noted that the figures provided by the District Council suggest that there is not currently enough footfall for the markets, except for the Farmers' Market.

Members mentioned that despite the challenges to the retail sector, there are still examples of successful markets, such as the one in Saffron Walden.

Councillors noted that the Hertford Market is not as popular as it used to be, and some stalls are no longer present.

It was considered that competition from charity shops and pound stores can be one of the causes for the loss of footfall. Members discussed whether choosing a unique niche may lead to increased interest from a larger catchment area.

It was suggested that a smaller retail market on Bull Plain could be more effective and that stalls could also be used for informing people of health and wellbeing matters.

However, the financial loss that the markets make annually is a matter of concern and the Working Party should be cautious in their decisions.

Members agreed that East Herts should provide more details on the rights to license markets within set distances, as there is a risk that the territories granted to Hertford and Ware may overlap. They suggested that the food market that is organised on Thursday evenings could possibly get more interest if it were organised on Fridays or Saturdays.

The Working Party felt that the Farmers' Markets closes too early and that the possibility to organise it more often should be considered. It was noted that this would need more detailed exploration, as stallholders also take part in other markets.

The Working Party decided that they would like more information before their next meeting in mid to end of September 2017. The Members and Officers at Hertford Town Council will work together for this aim. Members of the Working Party will seek to gather examples of good practice from other markets in the region. A standardised set of questions will be produced to ensure the uniformity of the data gathered from stallholders in Hertford. Members may seek to gather some data on the markets' footfall. East Herts will be notified about the small research to be conducted.

It was RESOLVED that:

East Herts will be notified of the interest of Hertford Town Council to gather more data on the Hertford markets.

The Members will not proceed with appointing a consultant to establish the viability of the market, until further information is gathered.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20:20.