

MARKETS REVIEW GROUP

21 November, 2013

PRESENT – Councillors Carson, Cossins, Harman, Lawton, Long (in the Chair) and EA Richmond.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Lewis.

OFFICERS – Ian Thompson, Assistant Director, Community Services, Steve Petch, Head of Strategy and Commissioning and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To advise the Review Group of the current position in relation to the Markets and Indoor Market Building.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- The Assistant Director advised the Group that whilst Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was keen on the Civic Theatre proposal there was less enthusiasm for the Markets. It was however stated that there was some interest in the Town Clock and the Old Town Hall and there could possibly be an opportunity for regional funding from HLF.
- It was stated that the HLF bid for the Civic Theatre had now been submitted and that the priority for Officers was now the Arts Council bid for the Ambulance Station.
- With regard to the Indoor Market the Group were advised that work on a phased approach would be investigated in January.
- The consultation had been stopped for the time being as Officers wanted to focus on what was on offer in the market with regard to the types of stalls and requirements of the public.
- Leeds Market, a large Victorian Market building, was quoted as an example of a good market layout for Darlington to consider for the future. Group were also advised that Leeds had £12m to spend to regenerate the Market.
- It was suggested that the regional HLF could be approached to gain funding for the Clock Tower and then again for the Old Town Hall. With regard to the Old Town Hall it was proposed that a good tenant be sought who would work with the Council to develop and enhance the building.
- Following a question the Group were advised that a trust model had been investigated two years ago but that would incur a financial cost due to VAT obligations. With regard to private sector management/purchase, the view of the Council's Estates Department was that this would be difficult in the current economic climate.
- The priority was to preserve the Market and Members were keen to take a proactive role in finding a solution. Although there is not a Friends of the Market

Group a member suggested that the Historical Society may be interested.

- Comment was passed that in these economic times the market should flourish and with the relocation of Mowden Hall staff to the town centre it was hoped that with the mix of right stalls the market would flourish.
- It was suggested that Darlington College could be approached to involve students in the market revival. Another suggestion was the launch of 'pop up' markets to generate trade. Officers also suggested that there was a need to understand what a modern market was and referred to Covent Garden as an excellent example.
- A Member volunteered to do some research on markets and report back to the Group.
- It was reported that Officers were currently undertaking a retail study and could possibly look at the role of markets.
- The Chair referred to the Markets Charter which stated that Darlington has the legal right to control other markets (which include table top sales, car boot sales and fairs) to a distance of 6 and 2/3 miles from its markets.
- Members requested that to fully understand the situation a tour of the Town Clock, Old Town Hall and basement area could be undertaken.

IT WAS AGREED – (a) That the next meeting of this Review Group be held in February on a date to be agreed in consultation with the Chair and Officers.

(b) That ideas be formalised and reported back to a future meeting of this Review Group.

(c) That a tour of the Old Town Hall, Town Clock and basement area of the Markets be arranged in the New Year.