

Markets Liaison Group

Tuesday, 21 February 2006

Present: Councillor A Gee (Chair) and Councillor M Lowe (Vice-Chair)

Chorley Borough Council officers

Roger Handscombe (Head of Property Services), Wayne Andrews (Markets Manager), Irene Riding (Economic Development Assistant) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

Market Trader Representatives

Mr C Ball, Ms J Dickinson, Ms M Kay, Mr P Lucas and Ms J McAteer

Also in attendance

Councillors Mrs S Walsh (Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Chair)) and Mrs D Dickinson (Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel)

06.ML.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Michael Lawson.

06.ML.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

06.ML.03 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Markets Liaison Group held on 14 September 2004 be confirmed as a correct record.

06.ML.04 DECRIMINALISATION OF PARKING INQUIRY - DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF THE CUSTOMER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair welcomed Members of the Council's Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Panel were undertaking a Scrutiny Inquiry into the Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement (DPE) and wished to consider the views of the Market Traders as part of the Panel's collation of evidence. The report would go forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to the Executive Cabinet who would consider the recommendations made.

The number of people using the Pay and Display car parks had not reduced since the implementation of DPE. However, a Trader noted that there were not as many cars driving round looking for a space as previously. It was emphasized that only 1% of the total number of users of the town centre car parks incurred a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN).

The Traders expressed their concerns in relation to the manner of certain Parking Attendants and described circumstances when customers had highlighted this.

An incident with the parking passes used by the traders was discussed. It had been agreed with Parkwise that Traders could use a certain parking pass on the Friday Street car park, but this had not been fed back to the Parking Attendants as two Traders received a PCN.

A Trader highlighted that the lighting on car parks needed to be improved. When the stalls were being set up early in the morning it was difficult for the Traders to see their own Pay and Display ticket (on Friday Street Car Park) and their stock to display it (on the Flat Iron Car Park).

A leaflet had been designed entitled "Parking Tips". This had been distributed to shops in the Town Centre and highlighted that a top up pay and display ticket could be purchased. The leaflets would also be distributed to the Markets Traders.

It was requested that the Panel double-check that the Pay and Display machines were checked each day with regard to the time displayed on them.

Councillor Mrs. Walsh thanked the Group for their comments and emphasized her hope that the Panel's inquiry report would result in further enhancement of the scheme.

RESOLVED – That:

- 1. The Market Traders be given copies of the "Parking Tips" leaflet to distribute to their customers,**
- 2. The Panel double-check that the Pay and Display machines were calibrated each day with regard to the time displayed on them,**
- 3. The lighting on the Flat Iron and Friday Street be improved early in the morning,**
- 4. That the issue relating to internal communication be raised with the contractor NCP.**

06.ML.05 PARTNERING AND OUTSOURCING ISSUES

Roger Handscombe reported that the Service Specification for Chorley Markets, distributed prior to the meeting, had been created as a basis for moving forward with the partnering and outsourcing of the Markets. This had been one of the recommendations of the Chorley Markets Scrutiny Inquiry conducted in 2004. There were 3 prospective partners who would be taken forward in a selection process that the Market Trader representatives would be involved with.

The Group discussed the stall rents and several suggestions were made, including asking each company how they would give the traders comfort in this area. It was noted that the stall rents had not been increased for a number of years.

Roger raised the issue of tenure on behalf of a Trader who was unable to attend the meeting. The traders noted that there were pros and cons to tenure rather than licenses, but highlighted the number of empty cabins on the Covered Market and questioned whether tenure would be economical.

In response to a query Roger noted to build the part of the stall rent levied for publicity and promotions into the Service Specification. It was noted that stalls should ideally be 15 feet in size and able to display a variety of stock. Stalls with aluminum umbrellas were light but they did not protect the stock from the element.

The issue of VAT was discussed as VAT was currently charged on the stall rents. Roger undertook to check whether VAT would be charged on stall rents by each of the prospective partners.

RESOLVED – That

- 1. To involve Market Trader representatives in the selection process for the partnering and outsourcing options,**
- 2. To build the publicity and promotions part of the stall rent into the Service Specification,**
- 3. That an update on the publicity and promotions budget be presented at a future meeting of the Group,**
- 4. That prospective partners be asked whether VAT would be charged on stall rents.**

06.ML.06 CONSULTATION REGARDING A POTENTIAL FARMERS MARKET

The Chair welcomed Irene Riding to the meeting to consult the Market Traders regarding a potential Farmers market. Irene reported that she had investigated holding a Farmers market on a Sunday, but due to other Farmers markets being held on a Sunday this was not feasible for Chorley.

The Traders discussed that a Farmers market could be seen as more of a leisure pursuit than a regular market. The customer experience of a busy and bustling market was the key point that supermarkets could not give.

RESOLVED – That

- 1. The markets be publicised running up to Easter,**
- 2. A farmers market be held on a Thursday to benefit both the markets and the town,**
- 3. To survey the farmers about the market and rents to see if they would come back,**
- 4. To publicise the Farmers market.**

06.ML.07 ANY OTHER ITEM(S) FROM THE MARKET TRADERS

In response to a query Roger outlined the Council had requested him to consult in relation to a trial move of the Flat Iron market to Cleveland Street, Fazakerly Street and Market Street.

The Traders commented that Chorley was famous for the Flat Iron market on a Tuesday and that there was a lot of history behind the market. Customers had said to the Traders that they did not want the market to move. None of the traders at the meeting would be part of the trial and stated that the majority of other permanent traders felt the same.

In response to a query Roger highlighted that there had not been an application for planning permission for the far end of the Flat Iron car park, although some preliminary drilling had been undertaken to ascertain its suitability for development. It was noted that a recent report from a consultant stated that Chorley was holding its own in comparison with similar areas, although there was a need for more suitable buildings for other shops to move into. With the opening of the new Booths store more money was coming into the town centre.

The Traders highlighted an issue with temporary traders. These traders turned up on the day and only paid for the time they were using a stall. In the past temporary traders could not count on getting a stall there were currently vacant stalls for them to use each time. The incentive to be a permanent trader in the past was to be guaranteed your stall and now this was no longer the case it was felt there were more negatives than positives in being a permanent trader.

Roger undertook to investigate a letter that had been received by a trader from a debt collection agency the day after payment was due for the stall rent. Roger apologised for this and would report back to the trader involved.

The Group discussed the policy in relation to traders who had suffered a bereavement.

RESOLVED – That

- 1. The Traders be thanked for their feedback,**
- 2. The casual traders be part of the trial,**
- 3. If the trial was successful the permanent traders would have first choice of the stalls whether they had participated in the trial or not,**
- 4. That the Flat Iron market be condensed to remove the spaces available for the casual traders,**
- 5. The traders be subject to the same bereavement policy as Borough staff, meaning that traders would be given a day to attend a funeral of a parent or grandparent,**
- 6. The minutes of the meeting be copied to the Traders on the Group for distribution to other market traders,**
- 7. That the Traders would be notified of the date of the next meeting.**

Chair