

DOWNHAM MARKET TOWN COUNCIL MARKETS STRATEGY GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING HELD MONDAY 22nd JUNE 2020 AT 9:00AM

Due to the Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic this meeting was held remotely by way of zoom videotelephony system.

‘To research, develop and promote the Markets being mindful of their historic evolution’

	<p>Present: The Mayor Cllr Hayes, The Deputy Mayor Cllr Groom, Chair Cllr Woodmin, Cllrs Bulley, Horne, Lightfoot, McKee, Pickering and Westrop. Non-Strategy Group councillors Hendry & Willow Woodmin, Town Clerk E Oliver & Deputy Clerk R Davidson.</p> <p>Mr A Harding, director of Phoenix Events (East) Ltd, was in attendance for the start of the meeting.</p>	
1	<p><u>To receive Members’ apologies</u> Apologies – Cllr Daymond & Sharman. Cllr Soehnle did not attend the meeting.</p> <p>The Deputy Clerk advised that Cllr Sharman had informed him he had not resigned from the strategy group at the start of the last meeting but was unable to attend meetings in the immediate future due to other commitments.</p>	<u>Action</u>
2	<p><u>To receive any declarations of Interest</u> There were no such declarations</p>	
3	<p><u>Report from Mr A Harding, Director of Phoenix Events (East) Ltd</u> With the permission of those present, the Chair Cllr Woodmin changed the order of business to allow a verbal report from the private company currently engaged on stewarding duties on the market.</p> <p>Mr Harding advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous Friday operation had been a lot better • Some stallholders not trading had attended promoting a petition and threatening a protest at the next week’s markets • The petition organisation had not observed safe social distancing protocols and for example, the same pen was used for signing the petition • 5 stalls had been in attendance. Apart from the benefits of greater choice this assists with visualising and planning the market more accurately in these challenging times • Positive feedback had matched the levels of negative feedback • Footfall levels of 300 were recorded – double those of the previous week • A violent altercation had been reported at the time to the Police, but officers had not attended 	
4	<p><u>Co-option of Cllr Willow Woodmin</u> Cllr Willow Woodmin had put herself forward for co-option onto the Markets Strategy Group.</p> <p>Discussion ensued amidst concerns of the Strategy Group size as it already stands without an additional member. Some felt the group was already too large whilst an alternative view was that new councillors</p>	

should be able to join whichever committees/groups they wished to gain experience.

Following the discussion, Cllr Willow Woodmin withdrew her nomination.

5 **Review of Market Operation 19/6/2020**

Members were made aware of inappropriate behaviour (shouting and swearing) that had been directed towards Cllr Lightfoot by one of the licenced market traders who has been unable to trade, when Cllr Lightfoot visited the market.

Councillors were aghast to learn of the abuse.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Those responsible should never be allowed to trade on the market again
- Abusive, aggressive behaviour is in clear breach of the Trader's Licence
- To not act sends out entirely the wrong message
- Disappointed to learn that at least one councillor had signed the petition
- Town Council taking legal advice re options
- 'Worst case of behaviour seen for a very long time. Really bad, bringing Council and Market into disrepute'
- Behaviour is possibly of a criminal offence level
- Concerns that the petition organisers were blatantly ignoring/breaking social distancing requirements
- Concern that a Borough Councillor was apparently encouraging people to demonstrate/protest regarding the market operation at next Friday's market on Facebook
- Trader Licence breaches were suggested
- Video recording of the altercation was deemed irrefutable
- Believed more than 1 disgruntled trader involved in smear campaign
- Discussion surrounding reporting Borough Councillor to Standards Board
- Need to advise Police of protest/demonstration at next week's market
- Concern for the reputational consequences for Town Council regarding protest/demonstration. If Market takes place and protest does materialise, has Town Council knowingly tolerated lockdown breaches such as more than 6 in a public gathering and non-observance of social distancing restrictions?
- Problem has been seemingly passed onto Town Council, especially considering the protest will take place on its own land
- A councillor reported the petition was in circulation at the Mini Market held at Denver Windmill and this was again was not complying with the current restrictions in force
- The views of the Town Council solicitor should be sought

There was then a comprehensive discussion as to whether the market should proceed this weekend. This resulted in two distinct views, those that believed the market should be reluctantly shut, fully publicising the reasons; and those who felt the market should not be dictated to just as it was emerging from the Covid-19 situation.

	<p>The Deputy Mayor Cllr Groom reminded members this weekend was to be the first weekend the market opened on both days.</p> <p>The Mayor Cllr Hayes reminded members that as the Council was aware of the protest/demonstration and it was to take place on our land the Council could not just lose its responsibilities; the reputational risk of being linked with a protest apparently taking place without adherence to social distancing guidelines and that the Council would still have a duty of care for those taking part and therefore actually by cancelling the market it should be argued the Town Council had acted responsibly.</p> <p>Members were reluctant to decide until the views of the Town Council solicitor and the Police had been obtained.</p> <p>Consequently, the meeting closed to be reconvened at 4:00pm</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed: 10:30am</p> <p>Date of next meeting: 22nd June 2020 at 4:00pm</p>	
	<p>SIGNED</p>	<p>DATE</p>