

Comprehensive consultation

Between April and December 2012, a full and comprehensive consultation in two stages was carried out to gather information from traders, Elected Members, special interest groups, shoppers, non-shoppers and visitors to Kirkgate Market to inform a detailed feasibility study into improvements to the physical structure of the Market and also what the future management arrangements for the Market should be. Opportunities for feedback included workshops, paper and online surveys, information in Libraries and One-Stop shops, one-to-one discussions and opportunities to provide open responses online, by post or email. All of these opportunities were made available to traders and traders were especially encouraged on many occasions to attend the workshops set up exclusively for them. Unfortunately, only a small number wished to engage, with the main response being that they had been consulted on previous proposals and needed to see more detail before engaging. We are confident that as we now begin to work up designs and engage with traders regarding their individual needs, as well as the overall development, traders will be much more keen to be involved and, for example, we aim to set up working groups with traders in different areas of the Market to help us evolve practical and workable designs.

The consultation undertaken was successful, however, in that over 5,000 people responded to give us their views and this feedback helped us select the most appropriate and popular options to take forward into the Executive Board recommendations which were approved by Executive Board on 13 March 2013 and further ratified by Scrutiny on 3 April 2013.

More positive, open relationship between traders and market management

We accept that traders are fiercely independent business people and do not always see eye-to-eye with management. This is inevitable and is replicated at markets across the country. However, we did strive to have an 'open book' arrangement with the now disbanded National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) committee, meeting monthly with them to discuss operational matters, inviting them to the Markets Forum to discuss strategic matters and sharing with them the service charge accounts each year, transaction by transaction, so they are satisfied that traders are only paying for service chargeable items. One of the frustrations has been the inability to engage with the wider body of traders through the NMTF, as conversations with other groups of traders were not considered by the NMTF committee to be representative of other than these traders' own interests. However, with the disbanding of the Kirkgate Branch, the way is now open to develop more channels of communication to cover more of the Market. We are all committed to more frequent and more productive engagement with as many traders as possible going forward.

As a matter of course, all traders in the indoor and open market can and do phone, email or meet with Markets Service representatives at any time to discuss any concerns, whether in confidence regarding their business or more generally about the Market, or make suggestions for improvements and officers work with traders on events and promotions to try to ensure that traders get maximum benefit from these. In terms of financial assistance, although the £250k business support fund has all now been allocated to traders, management will offer help and assistance wherever possible to businesses in trouble or wanting to expand or change their business model.

Call for revised strategy

1. In the Executive Board approval (13 March 2013), it was clear that a further report would come back to Executive Board later this year with the detailed proposals for how the Management Board will work. As with any Executive Board report, stakeholders will need to be consulted in developing the recommendations. We are committed to ensuring that traders are working with us to establish, for example, the mechanism by which all traders

will be able to take part in nominating and selecting their representatives on the Management Board. By definition, the new Board will ensure that stakeholders are much more involved in how the Market is managed and run in the future and in turn the operation of that Board will be open and transparent.

2. It is worth clarifying that all leases currently offered, and offered in the past, allow the right of assignment. Some have this right 'in perpetuity' whereas other fixed term leases, only allow assignment of the remaining term. We do not have to offer this according to commercial property law but choose to do so through clauses contained in the lease. The form of leases to be offered going forward will be established as we move forward with the development. However, there is no reason to suppose that it would be in the Council's interest any more than the tenants' to have short term leases, as we want our tenants to have the security to invest in and develop their businesses.
3. We agree that it would be very helpful for all parties to commit to genuinely heal the rifts that have developed in the past. The current Market management genuinely strives to do this and to instil a different perspective within the Markets Service also. Indeed, new traders establishing themselves in the Market, along with a good number of established businesses, do have a positive relationship with management. We look forward to the opportunities ahead for broader and more regular engagement with a wider number of traders which would help to dispel rumour and suspicion and replace it with mutual trust and respect.