

Victorian Market Stakeholders Group Meeting
Virtual Meeting by Microsoft Teams

Tuesday 29th September 2020 at 5.30pm

Present: Cllr Isabelle MacKenzie (**IM**); Cllr Bet McAllister (**BM**), Cllr Janet Campbell (**JC**), Cllr Emma Roddick (**ER**), Cllr Graham Ross (**GR**); Jo Murray (**JM**), Victorian Market Manager; David Haas (**DH**) Inverness City Area Manager – Highland Council; John Ewart (**JE**) The Milk Bar, Victorian Market; Willie Morrison (**WM**) - William Morrison Jewellers, Market Arcade, Victorian Market; David Richardson (**DR**), Federation of Small Businesses; Hilary Tolmie (**HT**), Business Support – Highland Council

Apologies: Mike Smith (**MS**), Inverness BID; Jackie Cuddy (**JCE**), Eastgate Centre;

Cllr Isabelle MacKenzie in the Chair

No.	Item	ACTIONS	Action
	Welcome	<p>DH Welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for not circulating an agenda for this evening. However, the agenda would be as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update on the report presented to the CIAC on 27 August; 2. Victorian Market Managers Update 3. Update on the Covid situation 4. Project update 5. AOCB 	
1.	City of Inverness Area Committee - 27 August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIAC considered a report at their meeting of 27th August which detailed progress on the contract and updated Members on the activity of the Action Plan over the last three years. • Stakeholders gave a valuable contribution to the production of the Plan at the time. • Through the Action Plan the Victorian Market Manger post was created JM has delivered consistently in this post for the last three years. Members recognised this so have agreed to the continuation of this post for a further 3 years. This will tie in with the development and going forward constructively and consistently. • Members also supported the progress being made with the contract. • They also confirmed support for all the different activities detailed in the Action Plan for example Marketing and noted there is a cohesive marketing plan for the Market going forward. 	<i>Update; Head of Infrastructure (Colin Howell) to be advised of comments on Active Travel scheme</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They also supported the continuing development of a brand for the Market which must be tied into the brand for the Old Town. DH and JM will be working on this and they will engage with the Stakeholders in the development of the branding. This is considered to be crucial part of the Market going forward. • DR commented that it is very important that any changes to the City Centre traffic plans that the shops are supported with the change. JC agreed that everything must be done to help promote the shops and increase footfall. • DR commented that many shoppers from Inverness come from several miles away and these people want to be able to park their cars and then walk about the City Centre. We have to be aware of the bigger picture before implementing changes. • DH confirmed that the changes had been made due to Covid but there has been attempts to engage with businesses and there will be a continuing engagement with the businesses, but he will feed these points back. • WM advised that shoppers are not enjoying coming to Inverness at the moment and this is affecting business. • ER commented that it is easier to get to Rose Street now. • JE commented that the Spaces for People changes have had a very negative response all round from the businesses, cyclists and the Blue Light Services. • Postcards to be circulated to the Businesses and the Market Businesses views will be put in them and returned. <p>NOTED the comments on the Old Town and access the conflicting issues that need to be resolved and finding a way of sharing pace. These are very important issues for the City and the points raised will be feedback.</p>	
2.	Victorian Market Managers Update	<p>JM gave a brief update since the beginning of the year as per the attached sheet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The year started with an interview on BBC Radio Scotland on the social history of the Market. • Scotland went into lockdown due to Covid on the 23rd March and the Market was closed to the public on the 24th. Business prepared for a long shutdown and operational processes were put in place • JM emailed all tenants on the 25th giving advice and guidance to refer to as the pandemic progressed. • During lockdown JM was seconded to the Inverness, Nairn Badenoch and Strathspey Resilience Delivery Team working with DH setting up the Inverness Hub and was involved with the welfare elements but also continued working for the Market. 	

- Returned full time to Market Manager Role on the 15th June in preparation for reopening on the 13th July.
- A lot of work had to be done before the Market could reopen (including the preparation of a full Risk Assessment) – new signage, one-way system, hand sanitising stations etc all had to be put in place.
- The assessible toilets remain closed for the moment and no dogs are allowed in the Market at present with the exception of support dogs.
- During lockdown the Queensgate Arcade remained open and the essential food businesses remained trading.
- The building was manned Monday to Friday and operational tasks continued.
- Communications were received from most tenants regarding rent rebates and the Estates Team did their best to accommodate these requests.
- Events and Marketing were all cancelled or postponed. However, Facebook activity continued.
- There was a partial reopening of cafes and shops with external entrances on the 29th June.
- The Market fully reopened on the 13th July in line with all other non-essential retail outlets.
- During the first two weeks of opening footfall was down 63% on last year, it had recovered slightly by the end of August and was down by 58%. Shopping trends seem to have changed since the reopening and the peak now appears to be earlier in the day. General feedback is that customers don't feel comfortable wearing a mask so are focussing on essential shopping only although they do feel safe.
- Trade is varying throughout the Market with some businesses doing better others are doing considerably worse.
- JE arranged an Arcade Traders Meeting on the 8th September. JM and JE have met to progress the points raised at this meeting.
- Recovery is slow but it is encouraging to see the footfall picking up as there has been no marketing or events. However, JM has noticed shopping for most customers has become functionable rather than pleasurable and customers are coming in buying what they need and have come in for then going home without browsing.
- Most offices are closed so missing out on this crucial daytime footfall
- GR advised that the City and Area Recovery Group are working with Inverness BID on the Inverness Courier's Bounceback Campaign and asked if there was anything else the campaign could help with? JM confirmed that she is working closely with

		<p>Inverness BID on the campaign and are already involved in influencing the articles. A balanced approach is being taken with many Victorian Market Businesses featured. GR very happy to hear any suggestions on how the CARG could help in any way. DH confirmed there will be another campaign on the run up to Christmas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH thanked JE for taking the initiative to instigate links between the businesses to take things forward. 	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Market Covid Incident Update</p>	<p>DH confirmed there is an ongoing Covid incident in the Market and once an incident is declared an investigation is undertaken which led by Public Health. JM has been working with the incident management team and gave an update of events so far.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM was made aware that an individual who works in the Market was tested on Sunday morning and she immediately informed DH who put the process in place. • She found out on Monday morning the test was positive. A meeting was held with Environmental Health and Corporate Comms and the difficult decision was taken to close the Victorian Market for public health reasons. • This was communicated to all the tenants as soon as possible. Most of the businesses were very accommodating and managed to reorganise their businesses at very short notice • A full deep clean of the Market Hall and Arcade has been undertaken. • The individual is currently self-isolating for 14 days along with his family. • Every step has been taken to manage the concerns of the businesses. JM has been liaising with all the businesses and keeping them up to date with events. • Currently closed and a tactical meeting will be held tomorrow to decide next steps. • Advice will be taken from Environmental Health on how the Market is reopened. Although strict procedures have been in place it just shows how vulnerable businesses can be. • Anyone who has been in contact with this person will have now been contacted. Anyone contacted will be self-isolating. • The Market will remain closed tomorrow and the protocol and procedures will be reviewed to make sure the Market is as safe as possible. • Businesses were allowed into the market today under controlled circumstances for a short period to conduct any necessary business. • The shutter is currently down between the Market Arcade and the Queensgate Arcade as Queensgate remains open. • JM will advise Members and Shareholders when the Market is reopening. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IM advised it was good to get a very clear message out that all Scottish Government guidelines are being followed and the Market is closed to keep people safe. • Any enquiries or concerns about the Market contact DH or JM. • WM asked if there is an outbreak in the Queensgate Arcade will the whole Market be shut down? DH confirmed that instructions are taken from the Director of Public Health and his instructions will be followed. JM confirmed that a very thorough investigation has taken place and all recommendations have been followed. • JM shared the Highland Council media statement on Social Media last night to inform followers. This has been shared positively several times. • JE thanked JM and the incident team for their help and guidance. • Main thing is to get the message out that the Market is a safe place to come. 	
4.	Market Hall/Fish Hall Development Project Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are now no obstacles to letting the contract for the Market Hall refurbishment. All approvals and consents are now in place along with the budget which includes a very generous grant from the Town Centre Fund. • The contract will be let imminently and at the same time a very positive Press statement will be released. • The Press Release will be circulated to Stakeholders • JE agreed the Press Release should be positive and this will hopefully highlight the fact that the empty shops in the Market Hall are not empty because of Covid but because of the redevelopment. Only five business remain there now. Could the marketing advise customers where many of these businesses have relocated. It would also be good if plans etc of the redevelopment could be displayed as this would encourage people to come into the market to see them. • The announcing of the letting of the contract will trigger many discussions including the branding of the Market which will be tied in with the branding of the Old Town. A lot of work has been done on this already. • It will also trigger the compensation payments to the Market Hall tenants, those still there and the tenants who have already terminated their lease due to the redevelopment. • Those who qualify will also be able to apply for a new tenancy in the redeveloped Market they will be given the first opportunity to do so. • The new tenancy package is currently being pulled together. • All this is happening in line with what was agreed at the CIAC last year. • Hopeful that the announcement will be made this week if not early next week. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The commencement of the contract will be January next year so Christmas trade will not be interrupted• Discussions will take place with adjoining business on access to the Market.• Discussions will take place with the contractor on the methods to be used in managing the contract.• Covid guidelines need to be considered and this will affect the length of time the contractor will take to deliver the contract.• Engagement will take place with Market Businesses and the Stakeholders on how the contract will be run as we want as little disruption as possible for the businesses including the Queensgate arcade.• JM advised that everything is now happening at pace including the creation of marketing for the new units.• Pre site meetings will be held with the contractor so everyone is aware how the site will be operated. Most important that there is as little disruption as possible and any there is will be ad hoc and warned of in advance.• The contract will now take approximately 18 months but need to be aware we are in the midst of a pandemic so there could be many factors that will change this.• Once the contract is let it goes into preplanning stage where talks take place between the project manager and the contractor. Now expecting to be on site until the new year.• GR commented that it was very important that the festive trade is not interrupted, and the City and Area Recovery Group are looking for ways to increase footfall during this period.• JE asked who was involved in the Recovery Group? GR explained it was a politically balanced group of 11 Councillors who are working with various partner organisations to help and assist the local economy to recover from this extremely hard time. Looking at a variety of projects e.g. car parking over the Christmas period. There are no individual business owners on the group, but the group is working with Inverness BID, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business etc. JE suggested it would be good to have a City business owner on the group as they are directly involved.• DR confirmed that FSB have members all over Scotland and could bring in expertise from other Cities/Towns to give advice.• DH explained that the CARG has only been in operation for a short time and working through a huge agenda and as it works through this it will be important for the group to liaise with the Business Community.	
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5.	AOCB	<p><u>Tenancy Framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WM raised a query about conflicting businesses within the Market. • DH explained that it wasn't necessarily a bad thing to have similar businesses beside each other. The Tenancy Framework is about making sure that the right businesses come in to give the Market the balance it requires. • The Business Case is very clear about the class of business that can apply for a unit in the Market Hall apart from the caveat that the existing businesses have the right to apply. In most shopping centres it is common practice to see similar retailers grouped together. This is healthy for business as the customer has the choice of more than one retailer. • There is now a very robust application process in place for the Victorian Market, and everything was followed as per the protocol and there is a rigorous process going on behind the scenes to get the balance right. • JE agreed that The Tenancy Framework and the class usage need to be in place. There is obviously a lot of nuance around what would make the best mix for the Market and Kevin Murray used a good term for it by calling it "curating the best mix" and this implies a high level of consideration and not just ticking boxes. He went on to say that he hopes that this high level of consideration will be applied with some degree of independent expertise behind the decisions, ideally Kevin. The market Business owners could not be involved in the decisions as this would be a conflict of interest but it would be good to see a really robust process that goes beyond the Framework to make sure we are getting the right mix of businesses in the Market Hall. Hopefully we are in a position that we don't always need to take the highest bid for a unit as the market will need to work an eco-system and not just individual businesses. • DH confirmed that the Council will not shy away from taking the right decision for the Market and the character and diversity of each business must complement each other and will certainly consider the proposal to involve Kevin Murray. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graham and Sibbald who prepared the Business Case have offered some very good advice and have offered support going forward. • The whole group agreed that they want to create something special and unique with the development and don't want a bad mix of retail within it. • Confident with the design and layout. <p>IM thanked everyone for coming and asked everyone to keep the communication going between the group.</p> <p><u>Date of next meeting</u> DH would like to be able to give a full briefing of the contractor plans etc at the next meeting to which the Project Manager will be invited.</p> <p>Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 10th November 2020</p>	
		<p>The meeting ended at around 7pm</p>	