

Petition Received: Save our Market

The undersigned called for the Stevenage Outdoor Market to be saved.

Date Received: 19 November 2012

No of Signatures: 385

Reply by: 4 December 2012

Response: 30 November 2012

Thank you for organising and submitting the petition calling for support in saving the outdoor market in Stevenage. We estimate that there were 385 signatories to the petition. In accordance with the council's petition scheme, and given the number of signatories, it falls to me as the Resources portfolio holder to reply.

You will recall that the future options for the outdoor market were discussed at a meeting of the council's Executive on the 16th October. It is true that the market has been in the Town Centre for over twenty years and was once very successful. However, in more recent times, the market has struggled to remain attractive and competitive with the rest of the Town Centre offer. You may also recall that it was in 2005 when the council seriously considered closing the market following the failure of the previous managing agent to take the market forward. The council demonstrated its commitment to the market then by taking the management back "in house" and to see what could be done to increase the number of traders.

Despite all of our efforts, over time, it has not been possible to attract any more than the current nine or so traders; quite often it is less than that. Also the appearance of the market, and its location on an important gateway into the town, has drawn criticism from the Town Centre Management Company and other retailers. Alongside this, the council did consider the option of a sustained advertising campaign and funding improvements to the stalls. However, even if the council had been able to afford it in these difficult times, it could not guarantee that this would turn the market around and attract more traders.

So it was with some regret that the Executive decided, on balance, the only option was to cease operating the market in its current location. In doing so it also undertook to do what it could to assist with the relocation of individual stalls where possible. It also gave the traders the opportunity to come forward with a business plan for a co-operatively run market on an alternative location. I understand that, with one exception, it has not been possible to relocate any of the traders. Neither have we received a plan from the traders for taking the market forward. Consequently the decision to close the market will stand.