

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 1st June 2026

Officer: Ian Thorpe – Commercial, Markets and Events Manager

GENERAL MARKETS UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To update the Council on the current situation within the Indoor and Outdoor Markets

INDOOR MARKET UPDATE

Once again the entire market has continued to operate at 100% occupancy, including The Town Council's canopied section of regular traders, and there are no rental arrears to report. There is one unit within the Shropshire Council section which has remained closed on a regular basis, despite the associated rent being covered. This is obviously extremely disappointing as it has a negative impact on the market overall and the neighbouring units in particular. There has been consistent dialogue with the trader to get the situation resolved and it is hoped this will be successful in the next fortnight.

The situation is also frustrating as demand for trading space remains extremely high with speculative enquiries received on a regular basis and strong interest shown whenever any units or stalls become available. The new owner of a double unit in the canopied section has settled in well and has already started to build on the existing customer base of the original business, expanding the product range and introducing new services.

There have also been some exciting changes on the gallery level following the recent retirement of two much loved, long standing Shropshire Council traders. As a result, another existing trader has taken the opportunity to expand into a double unit and has already completely transformed the look of the space. Her old unit has since been let to an entrepreneurial local couple who have brought their renowned skateboarding brand into the market, which will undoubtedly diversify the customer demographic even further. They are also very keen to bring their expertise to help with the development of any community based recreational projects should they arise in the future. The final change has seen a lady take on the old cabin at the top of the stairs which she is currently in the process of repurposing for her hand made soap business. She has booked the 'pop-up barrow' on a regular basis and has now decided to make a permanent move.

Once again any tenancy changes are progressed collaboratively between both council management teams, with the best interests of the market being at the forefront of any decisions.

The market has fully embraced the 'Love your local' market campaign this year with the 2 week period being used to highlight the huge variety of products, services and expertise which is available. There is a programme of workshops, demonstrations, talks and promotional offers available with a late night held on the middle Saturday.

The promotion of the fortnight has been very well received and the activities which has been held to date have proven to be very successful and helped to drive additional footfall into the building.

Although the current economic challenges are well documented for all retail establishments, footfall in the market has picked up very well after the quieter winter months with several Fridays and Saturdays being exceptionally busy. The peak footfall was undoubtedly reached on the Saturday of the first bank holiday weekend in May which mirrors the picture across the town centre as a whole.

SUNDAY MARKET UPDATE

After a very difficult start to 2026, with the combination of extremely poor weather and well documented financial challenges, having a serious impact on the performance and long term viability of the Sunday market, the operators were looking forward to a steady improvement during the Spring period.

The weather did provide some welcome respite at the start of the latest trading period and the dry conditions helped to slowly increase footfall across the site. It is still proving difficult to attract and retain traders on a regular basis with the average number remaining in single figures each weekend, whilst the number of car booters has shown some signs of growth with the average number now around 30.

The operators have been successful in recruiting a few new traders over recent weeks, however they are tending to favour visiting once a month, rather than fully committing to every market that is held. It is proving very difficult to overcome that reluctance, particularly when there are still occasional market cancellations at this time of year during the worst of the weather.

It is pleasing to note that the operators are open to making modifications to the set up and refining their approach in an attempt to improve the overall performance of the market. This has included a new layout to improve the visibility of traders and making them feel they are seen as a priority. They have significantly increased their activity on Facebook in recent weeks to try and improve engagement and general interest, whilst coordinating correspondence with the traders through a dedicated 'WhatsApp' group. They have also designed new promotional signage which should be available to use very soon.

The regular Police surgery held on site each month appears to be popular with local residents, offering them the rare opportunity to discuss specific issues, which are often particularly important to the Harlescott area but not necessarily related to the market. One recent topic affecting both the market and the area as a whole has been the proliferation of teenagers on electric scooters on the site, riding at speed and creating antisocial behaviour issues.

The other regular issue being raised is the general condition and cleanliness of the site with its poor appearance and accumulation of litter contributing to the general feeling that area has been neglected. Officers have committed to liaising with colleagues within Shropshire council to look into how this situation could be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.