

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 3rd December 2025

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

As Christmas approaches it is pleasing to report that the indoor market has remained extremely busy over the autumn period, with stall holders declaring positive trading figures. It is clear that there is a lot of love and affection for the market at a local level, but it is now gaining a much wider appeal both from its 'award winning reputation' and continued national publicity, such as the recent Daily Telegraph article which identified the indoor market as the top reason for Shrewsbury being named a perfect market town.

The Town Council's canopied section continues to operate with 100% occupancy of regular traders and no rental arrears, whilst we continue to receive regular enquiries from prospective new traders. We continue to work closely with the Shropshire Council management team on all aspects of the market operation. This includes any tenancy changes to ensure a continued focus is maintained on the crucial trader mix throughout. Indeed 3 Shropshire Council units have recently been let to new tenants and STC have been fully engaged in the decision-making process. The new traders should make exciting new additions to the market and are due to open at the start of December ready for the busy Christmas period.

The positive impact of the tenancy changes across the whole market during the year is a vindication of the collaborative approach we are continuing to adopt in relation to all aspects of the market operation.

This partnership approach is also allowing a number of joint initiatives to continue to drive positive change within the building and help to mitigate the impact of the current financial constraints of Shropshire Council in the short term. The most recent examples of this joint initiative include;

- Installation of replacement LED lighting in the main hall
- Installation of 4ft Christmas trees on exterior of building
- Inclusion in new 2026 Town guide & map
- Artwork changes for new guide and map
- Additional storyboard prints for 60th anniversary
- Delivery of new portable retro style stall
- Development of new Christmas pop up in undercroft

Following a successful launch of the exhibition to celebrate the current market building turning 60 years of age we have continued to receive a lot of positive feedback, and it has also unearthed a number of personal stories which have brought a new dimension to the event. One such story was that of Reg Winfield who played a key role in the construction of the Market Hall back in 1965 along with the Shirehall and Shrewsbury Hospital. Reg dropped into the market to tell us about the mammoth project and the lives of many of those who built it.

SUNDAY MARKET UPDATE

During the initial 3-month trial period when the operator of the Sunday Market, 'Places for Community Spaces Ltd', was to bring back the car boot sale element they reported a general upward trend in both footfall and trader numbers. As a result, it was decided to persevere with this new arrangement over the more challenging autumn and winter period before taking stock of the situation in early spring.

As with any outdoor event the weather has the greatest impact of any outside influence and therefore it is advisable to look to derive any statistical analysis or 'trend' assumptions from the days which benefit from decent conditions (i.e. no rain and minimal wind).

That is not to say there are no other external influences which can affect attendance numbers. The operators are acutely aware of the impact of other events and it is clear that the car boot operating from the West Mid Showground is the main competition within the local area. There was a clear reduction in footfall at the Harlescott site when it returned following their summer break.

It will be interesting to monitor attendances over the coming weeks and months when both sites are operating on a consistent basis, as the Harlescott site does have the perceived advantage of being completely hardstanding in comparison to the West Mid Showground's position adjacent to the river.

In terms of the factors that the operator can control they have been trying to maintain a very competitive pricing strategy in the hope that it will allow them to attract and retain traders on a consistent basis. The early signs are encouraging and the claim that they are offering the most competitive rates in the West Midlands is certainly eye catching.

They are continuing to keep a close watch on the trader mix offered on a Sunday as it is extremely important in helping to attract and grow the customer base week on week. This strategy is definitely starting to bear fruit with an increased variety in the different categories of trader operating over recent weeks. However again it will be more difficult to sustain this upward trajectory over the autumn and winter.

It has also been established that the core trading period in terms of footfall is between 10am and 1pm rather than the early morning period as was traditionally the case. The main contributing

factor in this regard is likely to be the corresponding opening time for the nearby Tesco supermarket (10am).

The operators are now in a position determine the breakdown of traders groups including around type and regularity of attendance. With an increase in traders who are seemingly committed to the future of the market, i.e. attending at least 3 times in a month, it has allowed the operator to become more creative with promotion and marketing, as well as being able to start to group traders by category, e.g. food or clothing, in specific locations.

They have also started to gather some interesting feedback from traders including the first and last Sunday's in a month tend to be the most profitable. The idea is to continue to capture more of this data to potentially use it to target promotions and discounts.

There have been no issues reported with regard to the car boot sales but the operator has vowed to remain vigilant in this respect. One interesting development which should help further in this regard is that West Mercia Police will hold trial surgeries on several Sunday morning's in the lead up to Christmas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.