

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 4th February 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

Before we look ahead to what 2026 will bring for the indoor market, it is important to review the period since the last report, especially as it incorporates the all-important festive season. It is safe to say that the market was extremely busy, both in the weeks running up to Christmas, as well as over the holiday period itself. Crucially, the feedback from traders was that the high footfall did translate into very healthy sales, with a number reporting record figures. Obviously, this does not necessarily result in record profits, especially when considering the ever-increasing costs with which everyone is all too familiar. However, it is clear that the indoor market is continuing to buck national trends and operate very successfully.

Demand for trading space remains high, with the entire market operating at 100% occupancy, including The Town Council's canopied section of regular traders with no rental arrears to report. Three Shropshire Council Units became available in November and encouragingly new tenants were able to open in the weeks before Christmas and become exciting new additions to the market.

The positive impact made by all the tenancy changes within the whole market over 2025, was a clear vindication of the collaborative approach we are continuing to adopt in relation to all aspects of the market operation. This has also been reflected in the healthy numbers being reported through our associated social media channels, the vast majority of which is consistently enthusiastic and supportive.

To provide some detail with regard to our social media output, we are now approaching 50,000 followers across all platforms. We have focused more attention on growing our promotional video reels in recent months, the most successful of which reached over 112,000 views. A total reach of more than 370,000 was also achieved for a post welcoming our youngest trader, Alfie Jones, into the market earlier in the year. On facebook alone it attracted 355,000 views, 2400 likes, 183 comments, 139 shares and an engagement of 46,259. Instagram also added nearly 15,000 further views.

This partnership approach remains key to ensuring the market continues to evolve, reinvent itself with fresh ideas and innovations, remain an integral part of the community and retain its distinctive identity as a 'proper market'. To some extent it has now become a visitor attraction in its own right, drawing people from across the UK, in addition to maintaining its loyal local customer base.

Every inch of space within the building is being utilized in creative ways to support the trading opportunities and that approach is now being extended into the immediate external areas with the launch of a brand new, innovative stall design which has recently gone on trial. The portable wooden stall has been designed and constructed in collaboration with Shrewsbury Men's shed with the aim of expanding trading into the pavement areas outside the market entrances.

The stall was used by the existing Market florist to sell festive wreaths over the Christmas period and was so successful he has booked it again for other key dates in the calendar like Mother's day.

Looking ahead to 2026 there are a number of key elements which are already in focus;

- Expansion of external trading spaces
- Development of new viewing deck area
- Continue to work constructively with trader groups and Shrewsbury BID
- Fully capitalize on opportunities created by collaboration with Shrewsbury Food Festival
- Develop new marketing and social media campaigns
- Review, develop and deliver 2026 'late night' and/or 'special event' calendar
- Consider any opportunities created by the submission of entry to Britains favourite large market.

SUNDAY MARKET UPDATE

After an encouraging late summer and early autumn period the operator of the Sunday Market, 'Places for Community Spaces Ltd', were hopeful that they had a solid base on which to build as they entered the traditionally very challenging late autumn and early winter for any outdoor events.

This challenge has proven to be even more difficult than anticipated with the weather taking a distinct turn for the worse and being consistently wet and windy for the majority of Sunday's over this timeframe. The plan was to try and continue to build on the previously successful community elements, such as the West Mercia Police surgeries, together with some Christmas themed events to drive interest and engagement.

On the one Sunday where the weather was favourable, December 14th, this approach proved successful, with the highest number of traders and footfall figures recorded. However, all other Sunday's were decimated by the persistent rain which gradually eroded customer numbers and consequently trader confidence. This culminated in the last Sunday in December being particularly poor, with a clear apathy for the market being demonstrated in all aspects.

With the operators then facing the prospect of the most difficult month of the year in January and no improvement in the weather forecast, they requested a face-to-face meeting with Town Council officers to discuss the best way forward.

This meeting took place on 22nd January in Livesey House, where the operators detailed the difficult position they currently face with continuing to operate the market and the decisions needing to be made with regard to their financial liabilities particularly during the winter months.

The operator's have resolved to consider their circumstances over the next few weeks, consult with as many of their traders as possible to obtain their feedback and then put forward a number of potential solutions for the Town Council to consider.

Officers have resolved to continue to provide as much advice and support as possible during this difficult period and have already made a number of recommendations and suggestions that, unlike the weather, are in the control of the operator to instigate in the meantime. These include elements like communication, promotion and pro active trader engagement which can certainly be improved.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.