

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 6th August 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 Market

INDOOR MARKET UPDATE

With the summer season in full swing and the school holidays now here, there has been a noticeable increase in visitor numbers within the town centre, and it is very pleasing to see how many of these people are including a trip to the indoor market on their itinerary. As a result, the market has been particularly busy in recent weeks with the cafes and restaurants often full to capacity and traders reporting brisk sales volumes.

The collaborative working relationship between the Town and Shropshire Council management teams has undoubtedly helped to address and mitigate the on-going operational and logistical issues caused by the age of the building itself and the demands being placed upon it by such a busy market. There are also small encouraging signs of progress with improving the building infrastructure, however, significant long-term investment is still urgently needed to avoid an increasingly negative impact on the operation of the market and ultimately the experience being provided to customers.

In the meantime, we are continuing to build on this partnership approach with a number of joint initiatives driving positive change. These include;

- New vinyl graphics in the Bellstone entrance windows
- New external signage for both entrances
- New 'award winning' internal signage
- Improvements to the general appearance of both entrances
- Development of a partnership with Shrewsbury Food Festival and Oktoberfest
- Develop proactive relationships with the trader development and trader rep groups
- Making the 'viewing deck' area fully operational

The aforementioned partnership with Shropshire Festivals enabled 6 of our stall holders to trade at the recent Food Festival in the Quarry which proved to be very successful. It also provided a new platform to showcase the market to a new audience and hopefully drive further footfall in the future.

The Town Council's canopied section continues to operate with 100% occupancy of regular traders and no rental arrears. There is a change on the horizon with one of our long running traders deciding to take a well-earned retirement. Her double stall will be let to one of our other stall holders who have been looking to expand for some time. Their stall will then become vacant, and we have already had significant interest being shown in it without the need for it to even be advertised. As ever the key driver in any decision will be protecting or enhancing the overall market mix. It is also pleasing to report that following a number of recent trader changes the Shropshire Council units are also fully let, with a new takeaway sandwich operator due to open in the coming weeks.

Preparations are beginning to ramp up for the celebratory events in September to acknowledge the market building turning 60 years of age. A 60th birthday template has been designed to provide a consistent thread throughout, and the plan is to create various storyboards for all our of longest running traders which will be sited on the market floor. There will also be smaller storyboards for all the other traders to be located on the viewing deck alongside other exhibition elements, including screens showing archive films and drone footage.

The final 3 'late nights in the market' events for 2025 are scheduled for September, November and December.

SUNDAY MARKET UPDATE

The operator of the Sunday Market, 'Places for Community Spaces Ltd', have continued to report difficulties in attracting and retaining significant numbers of stallholders and as a result footfall has remained relatively low.

As officers have consistently reported the operator have continually argued for the reintroduction of a car boot sale element, because they believe this would help to improve footfall and therefore the financial viability of the Sunday Market. Although they have been unable to provide any substantive evidence to support their case.

However, to some extent this discussion has been going round and round without much progress being made and therefore officers have agreed to allow the operator to bring back car boot sales to essentially try and bring the matter to a conclusion.

This change was agreed on an initial 3-month trial basis, and is subject to the following additional conditions being met;

1. The Terms & Conditions laid out on the operators' new website will be strictly enforced and any issues reported to Shrewsbury Town Council
2. The registration and contact details of all traders and car booters will be captured on a weekly basis
3. Trader and car boot attendance figures will be captured for weekly analysis along with customer footfall figures
4. A full marketing/promotional plan is developed during this period

These conditions are designed to support the case for car boots continuing beyond the trial period, as well as improving the financial viability of the market in general.

Unfortunately, since the change has been made the weather conditions have not been particularly favourable and both trader uptake and customer footfall has remained low. Officers will continue to closely monitor the situation over the next few months.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.