Agenda No

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SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 14th October 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 Town Council's canopied section remains fully let with permanent traders, with no rental arrears to report. Looking at the market as a whole it is pleasing to note that the issue with the none trading unit within the Shropshire Council section has now been resolved and the process is underway to select a new trader to take on the lease.

Once this process is completed the market will return to being completely full with permanent traders, which includes the new florist which has opened since the last report was submitted. Having at least one florist within the market is undoubtedly an important element of maintaining a balanced trader mix. Rebecca's business is a welcome addition to the market and all the feedback received to date has been overwhelmingly positive.

Demand for trading space remains extremely high with a steady stream of enquiries being received on a regular basis and existing stallholders also considering ways in which they can look to expand and grow their business. With that situation in mind the management team are always looking at innovative and cost-effective ways to increase available trading opportunities. This includes constantly reviewing all non-trading areas and exploring any 'pop-up' options.

The options are currently limited to an indoor barrow and outside stall which are both receiving an increasing amount of interest. We are currently awaiting delivery of a second outside stall from the brilliant charity Shrewsbury Men's Shed which will help to provide additional high quality, flexible trading space and improve the visibility and awareness of the market itself.

Back In July we welcomed a large delegation from the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) who were keen to understand why Shrewsbury Indoor Market had been so successful in recent years. The delegation included representatives from a host of other successful markets across the country and proved to be an extremely useful exercise for everyone who was involved. As a result, we had a follow-up visit from a smaller delegation who are in the process of developing a masterplan for a new 'market neighbourhood' to be called Smithfield Birmingham. Hosting these sorts of visits are another indication of the excellent reputation of the indoor market and demonstrate just how far it has now spread.

We are continuing to examine appropriate ways to capitalize on that reputation and try to further improve footfall. One such idea is to explore the UK coach tour industry and see what scope there is to include the market hall on any existing itineraries and look into any partnership opportunities with other visitor attractions or hotels in the area.

Close attention is also paid to the diverse events calendar in Shrewsbury, particularly over the summer months, to monitor the impact it has on footfall and trade in the market. Generally speaking, the impact is a very positive one as the demographic of the people attending events such as Loopfest and the Folk festival are attracted to what the market offers. A lot more effort is also made to promote the town centre as remaining open for business during events to try and minimize any negative impact on the local, regular custom.

The general poor condition of the market building continues to cause concern and is raised by the management team on a regular basis. All available options to try and address the various issues are being explored and, although the well documented economic challenges facing local authorities are making any progress more difficult, the campaign will continue.

SUNDAY MARKET UPDATE

As ever the weather has a huge impact on the success of any outdoor market, but particularly where the site is as open and exposed as the one at Harlescott. However, the long hot summer in 2026 has provided the perfect opportunity for the operators to make the most of the conditions.

As they reported previously for the period over June & July, they were able to build on the consistent good weather and start to grow the numbers in terms of footfall (peak 500), traders (peak 26 and car booters (peak 94). However, it looks like that may have been the ceiling for that growth as despite continued good weather into early August although the footfall remained steady the trader and booter numbers slowly declined week on week.

The weather then gradually worsened with several market days cut short due to high winds and inevitably the footfall and trader numbers fell away as is to be expected. It is clear that with the current model it needs a good weather forecast and combination of traders and car booters to make it financially viable.

This is partly because of how difficult it is proving to attract and then retain good quality market traders to that environment on a regular basis. The car boot element also seems to peak below 100 despite much improved weather and probably struggles to break through that number given the well-established competition at the West Mid Showground.

The organisers have continued to explore some alternative attractions to help bolster the footfall numbers, although restricted finances reduce the feasible options. The police surgery continues to be popular and has the added benefit of increasing the feeling of security.

One pleasing aspect is that the operators are already reporting an improvement in the general condition and cleanliness of the site now that the Town Council has taken on more of the site maintenance. However, the litter continues to be a challenge particularly after busy Friday & Saturday nights at the nearby fast food outlets.

All of this background data demonstrates the challenges facing any operator on this site and how difficult it is to make it financially viable over the winter months. As a result, officers will be meeting with the operator in the next few weeks to discuss the way forward and the impact of the upcoming Sunday operation of the park & ride.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.