

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Monday 6th February 2023

Officer: Mike Cox – Outdoor Recreation and Asset Manager

MARKETS UPDATE

Purpose of Report

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

NABMA REPORT

The National Association of British Markets Authorities have produced a survey which headlines some issues arising in 2021 / 2022.

Comparing previous data, it appears the number of full time traders has reduced from 32,000, with an increase in traders attending market events instead of full time markets.

Of the markets surveyed, only 8% of the traders were under the age of 40. Both NABMA and the National market traders Federation are attempting to address this by promoting youth markets, and awards for outstanding young traders.

Nationally Occupancy levels are down to an average of 72%, however they do add that some stalls will have been removed as trends change and food outlets require substantial seating areas.

Market charges, it does identify, Shrewsbury Indoor Market is below the average single stall charge.

Footfall. Shrewsbury Market is one of only 35% of indoor markets that record footfall, although we are not in a position to provide comparisons due to how long the device has been in the market, indications are that markets attract around 88 million annual visits

Financial performance. The survey indicated that of those taking part, 27% of the markets were running at a deficit with 23% breaking even.

How does Shrewsbury Market compare?

To date we do have fewer traders than we did when the town council took over the canopied market, (from 35 businesses to 29) the main reasons being that we removed stalls that have several traders during the week, ie one trader operated Tuesday and Wednesday whilst another operated Friday and Saturday, we have also had a lot of success where traders have asked to increase the size of the units, and we have done this providing the stall complies with the trader mix policy.

Of the traders leaving, we are pleased to see that over the past few years at least six have opened shops in town and are still operating and in some cases expanding the businesses.

We do have a broad range of ages of traders within the market with around 40% being up to and into their 40's. Which adds to the vibrancy of the market and we find they can use technology to amazing effect to promote their businesses and the market as well.

The market has been operating at 100% occupancy, and we do have a small waiting list. Market staff do have contingencies in place should a vacancy arise, which should ensure a varied trader mix.

Although our rents may be lower compared to other markets, we need to recognize that markets are also ideal venues for entrepreneurs wishing to start up a business, and if a new business cannot be successful within the market, they would not be successful on the high street.

We have demonstrated that new businesses can go from the market onto the high street and thrive.

Some Councils do increase rents to generate much needed income, but this can have a detrimental effect on the occupancy levels, resulting in reduced income, the need for more promotions and incentives to encourage traders (and customers) back into their markets.

The financial performance is strong and will be covered in future finance reports.

UPDATE

It is pleasing to report that Shrewsbury Indoor market was voted Britain's Favorite market 2023. Over 35,000 votes were received and involved 430 markets and the judges commented that one in particular had huge support.

TRENDS

The late nights will be returning again to the market on the following dates

Saturday 25th March

Saturday 1st July

Saturday 23rd September

Saturday 28th October

Saturday 2nd December

SUNDAY MARKET

The market Manager reports that the winter period has been tough for the Sunday Market. During December, freezing conditions, along with the cost of living and fuel crisis, caused the performance to plummet to an unprecedented low.

The start back after Christmas has been very concerning as the trend had continued up until mid-January. The last weekend of the month found milder weather and with the first pay packet since Christmas, the turnout was much better. The manager says you could almost feel spring was in the air! So he is hoping for more of the favorable weather conditions. The manager forecasts that the situation should improve by March.

He has found that some traders have decided to take a longer winter break, as they are getting older and because of the current financial crisis.

Many others have taken early retirement or alternative careers. At the moment recruitment is difficult due to evolving retail habits, these are issues which the manager has discussed with other operators and traders and finds that this is a common factor with many markets and is also mirrors the findings of the NABMA survey.

CONCERNS

The canopied market is beginning to look tired with the stall canopies over the years becoming stained. Although companies have been in to try and remove the stains, they have not been successful.

Some people have asked why we do not remove the tops, however the amount of detritus we have to remove from the roof of the stalls indicates they do serve a purpose by keeping stock clean and dry.

I also have concerns that stalls can be viewed from above on the balcony and this would have security implications.

To remove existing canopies would be a massive undertaking and would cause significant inconvenience within the market, however I would like to consider several options.

Purchasing new lightweight flame retardant canopies that we can lie over the existing canopies and clamp them to the frame.

When these need cleaning they can be unclipped pulled off, cleaned and replaced far quicker than we currently can.

Another option is to replace the existing canopies with new, however this will involve the cooperation of the traders as some of the decorations may need to be taken down whilst old canopies are replaced, however by replacing them we will still have issues when attempting to do a deep clean.

There will be companies out there who provide canopies for markets, and we would ascertain the best option for our particular requirements

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted