

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Wednesday 11th June 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

The indoor market continues to be extremely busy in terms of general footfall, particularly on a Friday, Saturday, and noticeably during school holiday periods. Of course, footfall in itself doesn't guarantee sales and a small number of traders have reported a relatively challenging period despite the high visitor numbers. In contrast others have reported record sales figures, with the cafes and restaurants often having to manage queues of potential customers.

There have been a number of operational and logistical issues in recent weeks which are undoubtedly exacerbated by the age of the building itself and the demands placed upon it by such a busy market. Some of those issues, such as lift breakdowns and external door failures, have become increasingly regular much to the understandable frustration of management, traders, suppliers and customers alike. The collaborative working relationship between the Town and Shropshire Council management teams has again helped in trying to mitigate these issues. However, there is no doubt that without significant, long overdue, investment in the infrastructure of the building, these sorts of issues will have an increasingly negative impact on the operation of the market itself 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 due to provide positive changes in the coming weeks. These include;

- New external signage in both entrances
- An update to the large promotional banner in Mardol Head
- New 'award winning' internal signage
- Improvements to the general appearance of the Bellstone entrance
- Development of a partnership with Shrewsbury Food Festival and Oktoberfest
- Develop relationship with 'Highly Flamable Studios' in conjunction with the traders development group
- Making the 'viewing deck' area fully operational

The Town Council's canopied section continues to operate with 100% occupancy of regular traders and no rental arrears. It is pleasing to report that following a number of recent trader changes the Shropshire Council units are also fully let. The new businesses which opened during these changes have settled in well, further enhancing the trader mix on offer and their feedback has been extremely positive.

We are continuing to receive a high level of enquiries for trading space within every area of the market and consequently we are continuing to explore any opportunities to create further capacity.

The 'late night's in the market' events for 2025 are now on their summer break before resuming in the autumn with the final 3 dates planned for September, November and December. 3 nights have already taken place successfully in March, April and May with the participating traders reporting positive customer feedback and no security or logistical issues. The numbers for May were lower than the previous months and this will be taken into consideration when planning the dates for 2026.

Preparations are continuing for the celebratory events in September to acknowledge the market building turning 60 years of age.

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.

The site is undoubtedly challenging given its out of town location and relatively exposed position. With that in mind, Officers have continued to maintain an open dialogue with the operational management team to discuss improvement ideas, including market research, site preparation, alternative financial models, specialist market days, marketing and promotion opportunities, whilst the town council remains fully committed to providing assistance wherever possible.

'Places for Community Spaces Ltd' have continued to push for an immediate reversal of their original plans to allow for the introduction of a car boot sale element, which they believe would improve footfall and therefore the financial viability of the Sunday Market. To date this has been based solely on anecdotal feedback they have received from traders and prospective customers.

Given the Town Council's previous concerns of potential reputational damage from car boot sales and indeed recent issues raised by the operators themselves, Officers remain unable to recommend such a change. In the meantime 'Places for Community Spaces Ltd' have been invited to provide more reliable and quantifiable supporting evidence, as well as the details of a robust plan of how any car boot sales would be managed.

Officers have once again re-iterated the position that under the current agreement car boot sales are not permitted on the Sunday Market site and any prospective traders must be turned away.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.