

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
Monday 2nd December 2024

Officer: Ian Thorpe – Commercial, Markets and Events Manager

MARKETS UPDATE

Purpose of Report

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

UPDATE

As we enter the festive period it is very pleasing to report that the Indoor market continues to operate with 100% occupancy of regular traders and no rental arrears.

We continue to receive enquiries from potential new stall holders on a regular basis and from existing traders looking to expand or diversify what they currently offer. There was also significant interest from casual traders wanting to sell Christmas goods on a temporary basis which unfortunately we cannot currently accommodate within the Market Hall.

This level of demand for trading space would suggest the Market Hall is currently in a very healthy position, but also demonstrates there is further potential if additional space could be made available on a permanent or temporary basis.

The market hosted another 'late night event' on Saturday 2nd November which provided the cafes, restaurants, and bars with a timely boost in takings and no issues were reported. The final late night date is scheduled for Saturday 7th December which could well be the busiest night of them all.

The vast majority of traders then stayed open until 20:30 on the night of the Christmas Lights Switch on where the 'Winter Warmer' event included a collaboration with Shrewsbury Food Hub and the slow food chef 'The Hungry Guy'. Shoppers received a voucher from any of the retailers they had purchased an item from, which could be exchanged for a complimentary mince pie or glass of mulled wine, while Chef Steve (aka Hungry Guy) created some culinary delights for everyone to enjoy for a donation to the charity. This proved to be an extremely popular attraction and contributed to a very busy evening for the Market with a fantastic atmosphere. The sheer volume of people did create a few logistical issues which will have to be addressed for any similar events.

The second 'Winter warmer' event will take place on the night of 'Carol's in the Square' which will hopefully create a really festive atmosphere and attract plenty of shoppers into the Market that evening.

Another new addition to the market is the recent launch of a free bike delivery scheme which is run by volunteers using one of the ebikes provided by the Town Council. It is based on a similar scheme which has been operating successfully at Wellington Market to deliver items bought from the market to addresses within a 3 mile radius.

Following a 'soft launch' to prove the concept works, the intention is for the service to grow in availability terms as more volunteers are recruited. The idea has already received plenty of positive publicity for both the Market itself and the Town Council as a whole.

SUNDAY MARKET

A preferred operator has been selected for a relaunched Sunday Market with an opening date of 15th December being proposed.

Following the completion of the tender process 'Community Spaces Ltd' were successful with their proposal.

Officers were re-assured by the detail provided in their application, the team behind the submission and the direction in which they wanted to take the market.

They are fully aware of the challenges of the Harlescott site, particularly for an outdoor market, but they are confident they can increase the numbers of traders and therefore the volume of customers.

A number of meetings have been held between officers and 'Community Spaces Ltd' representatives, to review the plans and ideas in more detail. This included a successful on-site meeting to walk through crucial elements such as market layout, pedestrian access and vehicle movement prior to the process of drawing up the final formal agreement, which is now underway.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report is noted.