

CROWTHORNE MARKET – UPDATE

OCTOBER 2023

Crowthorne Parish Council (CPC) launched its market at the start of the Covid pandemic.

The market is well loved by locals. CPC is keen to ensure the success and growth of the market; recognising that it attracts people to the village to shop and spend leisure time – with people visiting not only the market but nearby shops, cafes and leisure facilities too.

Since the launch in 2020, in order to be fair to our regular traders and independent High Street shops, it has been standard practice to not take bookings from stalls with a product range the same or similar to others on the market or High Street.

This approach has led to CPC refusing bookings from traders whose product range in some way competes with those at the market or on High Street. At the same time there has been an increase in shop voids throughout the village, and businesses choosing not to open on Sundays. The Parish Council is keen to do what it can to address this decline in retail offer in Crowthorne.

Traders and members of the public have raised concerns about how few stalls there are at the market, and their desire not only for a larger and more diverse market, but for Crowthorne to be a destination of choice for shoppers, café and pub visitors and those wanting to relax during their leisure and recreation time.

Crowthorne Parish Council has taken the time to look at exemplars of places where the growth and diversity of the market has led to nearby shops and businesses flourishing, in tandem, with increased visitor numbers. Fleet is a good example of this.

Fleet Market state on their website:-

Fleet Saturday Market is a weekly marketwhich was setup with the aim of reinvigorating and regenerating the declining market; and

- *Improving the retail offer for residents of and visitors to Fleet*
- *Improving the visitor experience*
- ***Creating a more vibrant atmosphere in Fleet and reversing the decline in the town centre***
- ***Stimulating more footfall in Fleet for current and future retail and leisure businesses***
- *Creating employment and business opportunities for local people to trade on the market*
- ***Create a sustainable source of local produce for residents of Hart***
- *Using any financial surplus which might be generated for the benefit of the community*

Crowthorne Parish Council reviewed the recent complaints from traders and the public received by email, and the online social media thread about the lack of market stalls on We Love Crowthorne Village, at its meeting on 3 October 2023.

Consequently, CPC resolved to allow open competition and to remove restrictions on trade at its market in the future.

It is very much hoped that this change in operating practices will encourage more people to trade at the market; visit the shops, cafes and pubs in the village, and to use our parks, open spaces and leisure facilities – ultimately making Crowthorne the destination of choice for people in the surrounding areas.

Within Bracknell Forest, Crowthorne is unique in having a market, traditional High Street and other retail areas and free car parking – we are proud of these things and want very much to welcome locals from the village, and beyond, to shop and trade here, bringing footfall and visitors to all the retail outlets in the village.

Crowthorne's market, like Fleet's, is not run to make a profit – the licence under which the market operates is used to enable us to hold more vibrant and successful community events such as Late Night Shopping, the Coronation and the Summer of Fun and a D Day community commemorative event in June 2024. Without the licence we could not run these hugely popular free events.

Whilst we know that the changes to the market's operating practices may initially upset some members of the trader community, Council has been mindful of the anticipated long-term benefits. CPC is striving for Crowthorne to become a destination for both borough residents, and visitors from neighbouring villages and towns, in the hope that they choose to spend their time and money here. We all want Crowthorne to be a vibrant place to live and work, and developing the market to attract visitors to Crowthorne will help to raise the prosperity of the wider community.

The change in policy has been made by the Council - our Officers who advertise the market, process stall applications and bookings, allocate pitches and deal with the invoices must operate under the operating practices determined by Council.

Any queries, concerns or feedback about the change in operating practices should be sent to clerk@crowthorne-pc.gov.uk clearly marked – 'Crowthorne Market'

All such correspondence will be collated and reviewed by Council.