

Town set to have two festive season markets

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Tenterden is set to get two Christmas markets this year after a survey of traders decided there's a need to run separate events for residents and visitors.

Rows over the 2016 event have been put aside after a "very constructive and positive" meeting was held at the town hall on Wednesday of last week.

People at the town council organised meeting unpicked last year's event, run for the first time by a commercial operator The Market Square Group, after town councillor Sue Ferguson sent out a survey to canvass opinions.

The meeting was attended by 29 people and chaired by town clerk Phil Burgess.

Feedback included that Market Square Group rates were expensive over the three-day event and that Tenterden Chamber of Commerce, who bowed out last year due to lack of resources, should renew its involvement in the spectacular.

Some businesses reported a downturn in trade from previous years including furniture store Woodcocks of Tenterden and the White Lion pub.

The merits of late-night festive shopping on Friday versus a daytime Christmas market were weighed up with businesses such as Biddenden Vineyards, Gibbet Oak and the Old Dairy Brewery, wanting to see a full event.

There was a desire to put back the market's traditional



Christmas fair stalls

Picture: Gary Browne FM4595040



Cllr Sue Ferguson

appeal and to reinstate the shop window competition, as

well as visits by the mayor to all shops.

Other requests were that the Christmas lights should be switched on the first day of the market and that free parking should be made available at the late-night event.

There was praise for the better parking arrangements at the 2016 market, especially the popular 'park and train' involving Kent & East Sussex Railway.

Cllr Ferguson said: "The Christmas market meeting was very constructive and positive and a second survey has been prepared."

The second survey is being

issued to shops and businesses with the proposal that there should be late-night Christmas shopping for residents on the evening of Friday, November 24, to coincide with the Christmas lights switch-on, plus a Christmas market for visitors over the weekend of November 25-26. Feedback from the second survey is due on March 17.

➡ What do you think? Write to Kentish Express, 34-36 North Street, Ashford, TN24 8JR or email kentishexpress@thekmggroup.co.uk