



Celebrate the Street – Speech

Six months ago, my team and I sat down to discuss how best to commemorate the historic occasion that was the 775th anniversary of Romford Market – this was to be “Celebrate the Street”, our 3 day event.

At that time, no one could have predicted that our nation would have been plunged into a time of national mourning in response to the death of our beloved Queen, who served her country, the commonwealth and indeed the world with unswerving devotion - sustained by faith and driven by duty.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the King and his family at this very sad time.

What a 48 hours it has been!

It is on occasions of national significance such as this, that we remember the importance of coming together as a community. To be with one another as we experience such a momentous transition in our nation’s history.

Thank you to everyone who has come out to support this event today. I am Julie Frost, the Director of the Romford Business Improvement District and it has been a great honour to put this event together to mark this historic milestone in our town’s history.

It is my role to use our levy payers money wisely – to drive footfall, to re-invest their money back into the town and to ensure that Romford is so much more than just a place to shop.

Today we celebrate an amazing achievement for our town – the 775th Anniversary of Romford Market being granted its market charter by the Crown.

It is amazing to think that Romford’s market dates all the way back to 1247 and the reign of Henry III. It is in this year, that the High Sheriff of Essex was ordered to proclaim publicly throughout the county the holding of a market at Romford on Wednesdays, with all the liberties and customs belonging to the said market.

Strategically positioned as it was on the ancient Roman route between London and Colchester, this new market quickly established itself as a key point of commercial exchange for agricultural goods, livestock and materials between London and the surrounding rural areas.

Romford’s reputation as ‘a great market town for corn and cattle’ (as described by one 17th century visitor) would last all the way up to 1958, when the last livestock sale took place.

There were massive changes in Romford during the 1960s, as the largely Victorian town, embraced the modern era with plans for a ring road and a new shopping centre on the western side of the Market Place.

On Sunday September 14th, 1969, Romford Market was closed to through traffic. A crowd of nearly 5,000 people came to share in the formal closing ceremony which followed the Mayor and Mayoress of Havering making the final journey on a horse drawn landau. Creating the market space, we are here in today.

It is particularly poignant to remember that HM Queen trod these cobbles back in 2003, becoming the first reigning monarch to pay an official visit to Havering since Charles I. Strolling through the Market, she admired the stalls, spoke to the stallholders, and engaged with passes by.

Throughout its history, Romford Market has faced difficulties and challenges but remains very much part of Romford's identity and has continued to develop and adapt. I would like to pay tribute to all our Traders – past and present, for their passion and dedication to Romford Market.

In light of the sad news on Thursday, we felt it appropriate to scale down our plans for this weekend, but we nevertheless felt it important on this occasion of such national significance that there should be a focal point for the expression of our individual and collective response.

We feel strongly that people still want to come together to commemorate this historic occasion in our town's history, but at the same time to take the opportunity to reflect on the loss of our beloved monarch. Where better to do this than in the Market Place; a place which owes its very identity to the late Queen's ancestor.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped put this weekend together with particular thanks to our sponsors, BID Events and their team, the Market Traders for accommodating us and to all of you for coming to support this historic occasion.

Tomorrow we will be marking another solemn occasion with the 21st anniversary of 9/11. Leading up to 11am, I will pay tribute to the Queen and to those who lost their lives on that terrible day, followed by a 2 minutes silence. We will then conclude that time with music from the Romford Drum and Trumpet Corp.

Music and street food with then continue until we close at 4pm tomorrow afternoon.

Thank you once again to everyone for coming out to show your support for our town, our market and our beloved monarch.