

Public Document Pack
Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments
Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 6th November, 2023 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - R Crouch, D Enright, O Collins, J Aitman, D Edwards-Hughes, D Newcombe, J Treloar and R Smith (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting and speak on a particular item should contact the Committee Clerk (derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) in advance.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

Standing Order 30(a)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 7)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 4 September 2023;

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. **Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2023/24 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2024/25** (To Follow)

To receive the report from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

6. **Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects** (To Follow)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with an update on the current year's work programme relating to Capital and Special Revenue Projects; as well as projects identified during the course of the year for inclusion as Revenue Growth Items or Special Revenue Projects in the Council's Revenue Budget or Capital Projects for 2024/25 and beyond.

7. **Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges 2024/25** (To Follow)

During Budget Setting Cycle the Council reviews its Fees and Charges for the various facilities and services it operates.

Attached is the schedule of charges in respect of the assets and services which fall under the responsibility of this Committee. The Committee is recommended to approve (or amend as necessary).

8. **Resident Satisfaction Survey Comments** (Pages 8 - 9)

To receive the report from the Deputy Town Clerk.

Public Halls

9. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 10 - 12)

To receive the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

10. **Public Halls Events Report** (Pages 13 - 15)

To receive the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

11. **Corn Exchange Business Plan** (To Follow)

To receive the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

12. **Public Halls Safety & Security** (Pages 16 - 17)

To receive the report of the Head of Estates & Operations.

Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards

13. **Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards 2024-25** (Pages 18 - 19)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager.

14. **Town Council Burials Service** (Pages 20 - 22)

To receive the report of the Senior Administrative Officer.

15. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution:

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

16. **Property & Legal Matters (To Follow)**

To receive and consider the confidential report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O.



Town Clerk

Agenda Item 3

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 11 September 2023

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright J Aitman D Edwards-Hughes	D Newcombe R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Mark Lewis Derek Mackenzie	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	No members of the public.	

H466 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins.

H467 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

H468 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 10 July 2023 were received.

Members received an update on the progress on the following:

H283 – A list of tasks had been provided to the Probation Service relating to support they can provide the Council to maintain the lake and Snipe meadow.

H383 – Councillor R Crouch advised the Witney Allotment Association no longer required the gate replacement at Lakeside Allotments.

H275 – The Operations Manager would investigate installing surplus cycle racks at St Mary's Churchyard.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 10 July 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H469 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H470 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

A Member raised a question regarding the low level of income from burials and was advised it was affected by the number of ashes interments rather than a coffin burials and the relatively low number of burials since April.

A Member also was concerned that the Food & Drink Gross Margin was close to zero and with the neighbouring shop to open as a café what further effect that would have. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Venue & Events Officer was preparing a business plan for the next meeting of the committee on 13 November 2023.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

H471 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer with an update on the activity of the Public Halls.

Members were pleased to see that the decorating had commenced in the Café and looked forward to the Gallery Room and stairway being completed. An update was also provided on new blinds and other improvements at Burwell Hall which Officers would communicate via social media.

Members were also appreciative for the efforts around promoting Childrens film events and the Women's World Cup, these events were gratefully received by many children and their families and were a great example of how the Corn Exchange was a community Venue. Members considered other events, including sporting ones, that could be shown and delegated to officers to consider each on its merits against the need for security and availability around other existing bookings.

The Committee was surprised that only one cafe voucher had been issued to vulnerable families over the summer as part of a Witney Community Church initiative. Members discussed the potential for a "pay it forward" scheme to be run from the 1863 café, Councillor Aitman would look into how these schemes run for other establishments and report back.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, Officers review potential sporting events that could be shown in the Corn Exchange.
3. That, the comparable booking activity figures for the public halls be noted.

Councillor D Enright joined the meeting at 18:12pm

H472 PUBLIC HALL EVENTS REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer as well as a verbal update from the Head of Estates and Operations (HEO) regarding the review of events held in the Corn Exchange.

Members had several questions and therefore more it was requested that information be included in the breakdown. The HEO assured members that future reports would contain more details such as the costs incurred by the council, net profits and grouping by activity.

The Committee considered the proposal of amending a range of Group 4 charges for performances and technical rehearsals. The Deputy Town Clerk reminded members of the Council's vision statement to 'run and maintain a small community arts facility', and although the charges may seem higher, the Venue and Events Officer had included a bar charge in the proposed fees and that in some cases they would work out more cost effective than the current charges for local performing groups.

Members were pleased to hear that Witney Dramatic Society would soon be returning to the Corn Exchange to preform having held their performances elsewhere in recent years.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, future reports contain more information on the financial breakdown of events held at the Corn Exchange and,
3. That, the simplified Group 4 charges, as presented, be implemented by the Council.

H473 CEMETERY FEEDBACK

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with a verbal update on Cemetery matters.

Members received the minutes of the Friends of the Cemeteries meeting held on 29 August 2023.

They also received the results of the council's entry of Windrush Cemetery into the Cemetery of the Year award. Members noted the comments on judging and benchmarking and that officers would implement changes where they could. There were, however, some suggestions which weren't in line with the Council's policies so the Committee asked that improvements and suggestions be passed to the Friends of the Cemeteries group to discuss.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal report be noted and,
2. That, Officers liaise with Friends of the Cemeteries to improve the Cemetery proposition where possible.

H474 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H475 **PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS**

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk.

Members received and considered correspondence from Witney Allotment Association (WAA) regarding the services and administration they provide.

Members welcomed the close working relationship with the Association, assisted via the regular contact with both the Operations Manager and the Town Council's nominated representative, Councillor Crouch on their Committee.

There was agreement that the current arrangement for administration of allotments should continue.

The Chair advised there was a need for a storage shed and lawn mower at Lakeside Allotments, members discussed the request and recommended these be funded from the Council's earmarked Allotments reserve. All members agreed.

Members went on to discuss matters arising from two of the buildings in the Council's portfolio. This included the need for replacement glazing in Langdale Hall to ensure the property was maintained correctly and to help improve the council's carbon footprint.

They also heard the lease at Madley Park Hall was due for renegotiation.

Recommended:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the Witney Allotment Association are contacted to advise the current arrangement for administration of allotments should continue and,
3. That, a storage shed and lawnmower to the cost of £2,900 and £300 respectively be funded from the allotments earmarked reserve and,
4. That, the Town Clerk explore options for replacement glazing for Langdale Hall, and into funding in consultation with the tenants.
5. That, the Town Clerk explores options regarding the lease at Madley Park Hall

The meeting closed at: 7.18 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 8

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023
Title: Resident's Satisfaction Survey Comments
Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a detailed breakdown of comments received during the Town Council's Resident Satisfaction Survey earlier this year to help inform future budget-setting for items under the remit of this Committee.

Current Situation

Members are asked to consider whether any of these items should be included in the Council's emerging Strategic Plan, and therefore whether budgets need to be incorporated in the short, medium, or long-term. The comments were:

Burwell Hall

Condition of Burwell Hall is poor - old & tatty

Corn Exchange

Harsh lighting in corn exchange - spoils the atmosphere
Events at the Corn Exchange are not properly advertised - leading to poor attendance.
Disappointing Council cars have to park in Langdale Court
Corn Exchange website to book doesn't work properly

Tower Hill Cemetery

Tower Hill cemetery not well maintained - graves damaged by practices

Windrush Cemetery

Windrush Cemetery needs weeding
Better access needed by foot to Windrush cemetery

The following table shows how the services scored overall in the survey.

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	N/A	Total
Cemeteries	37	63	25	6	83	214
Public Halls Corn Exchange	63	78	23	4	43	211
Public Halls Burwell Hall	16	43	22	8	122	211

During the summer Burwell Hall has been redecorated and has received a new boiler and blinds. There are further improvements planned for the toilets and changing rooms. Communications on this are pending.

Events at the Corn Exchange are being considered in the Business Plan being presented to the Committee as a separate item.

There was an issue with vegetation and growth in April due to the wet spring; the Operations Manager is exploring ways of dealing with weeds via the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee.

There have been complaints regarding damage to graves. Due to the layout of the cemeteries, it is regrettable but unavoidable that machinery has to traverse over graves and that topsoil from prepared graves has to temporarily be laid on another. The Council will repair damage by seeding etc as soon as possible after use.

Better access at Windrush Cemetery is expected from the delivery of the Witney East Strategic Development. The Council has a growing earmarked reserve to set out internal roads and paths once this is completed.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

There is a reputational risk if the Council does not address comments received in its satisfaction survey.

The Council's committees will have competing demands on the overall Council budget so other projects may take priority over these.

Financial implications

➤ There are no new implications from the contents of this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.

Agenda Item 9

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023

Title: Public Halls Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have come to the end of the summer months and look forward towards the Autumn and Winter season. Term time groups are back to regular sessions and the café will look to facilitate additional indoor tables as the weather gets cooler.

Current Situation

Corn Exchange

The Corn Exchange has undergone fresh decoration from local decorators to enhance the look of the Gallery Room, staircase and bar area, the colours are from the Heritage range with sage green in the bar and stairs and light grey in the Gallery Room. The new colour palette helps keep the hall looking smart and compliments the new carpet that was installed last year. It is hoped that the neutral grey colour of the Gallery Room will reflect feedback received by Officers regarding use as a wedding venue, allowing for individuals to decorate as they see fit from a blank starting point. The staff have received very positive feedback from many of our customers and hiring groups.

Officers are moving closer to a solution for the storage of the tables and free-standing chairs in the main hall. Two areas have been identified, one at the rear of the hall that can be adapted to act as a suitable storage area and another where one of the two stairwells to the green rooms could be converted.

Both of these solutions will improve the appearance of the Corn Exchange, access for performances and reduce the time taken for setting up and clearing for hall and room hiring groups.

Design and associated costs are being prepared for review.

Projector Screen

The old 4m projector screen that used to be in the Main Hall that was replaced with the new 6m screen is now being considered for use in the Gallery room. A projector screen installed on to a wall with a permeant projector fitted will improve the IT facilities and attract more customers and businesses to hire the venue.

The Venue and Events Officer will research the most suitable design and products with associated costs for review.

Burwell Hall

The new heating and hot water boilers have been installed enabling Officers to now control the heating in the hall via a remote portal that allows the temperature to be set daily according to the groups who are using the hall. This will enhance the customer experience and the reduction in energy usage, costs and impact on the environment will be monitored and reported at future committee meetings.

1863

1863 continues to be busy with no drop in customers that has been experienced in September/October before the traditionally busier festive season. The new café and Bar Manager is in post and working hard to update the offer the café provides, as well as providing a friendly focal point for customers and staff to work with.

New high street neighbours, Gails bakery, have recently opened in the old M&Co building, which is likely to bring more footfall to this part of town which in turn will hopefully encourage people to visit the Corn Exchange. Officers continue to put out signage daily to showcase the offer from the hall which helps provide a highly visible high street presence.

The pavement licence has been applied for again, and again this year the fee of £100 has not been applied (covid related support action). Officers are exploring how they can make full use of the area the licence covers that stretches all the way to the road in front of the Corn Exchange.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- The storage in the Main Hall is being reviewed with recommendations to follow at a future meeting.

Week commencing	11th Sept	18th Sept	25th Sept	2nd Oct	9th Oct	16th Oct	23rd Oct	30th Oct		
CORN EX 2023										
Hours booked	45.50	53.45	36.00	41.00	49.50	58.00	34.00	47.50	364.95	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	54.17	63.63	42.86	48.81	58.93	69.05	40.48	56.55	31.03	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2022										
CORN EXCHANGE										
Hours booked	33.25	12.75	20.25	37.00	60.00	24.00	15.98	25.50	228.73	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	39.58	15.18	24.11	44.05	71.43	28.57	19.03	30.36	24.07	Average %
GALLERY 2023										
Hours booked	46.00	25.25	28.50	21.50	20.00	18.50	13.50	24.00	197.25	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	54.76	30.06	33.93	25.60	23.81	22.02	16.07	28.57	16.77	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2022										
GALLERY										
Hours booked	11.50	25.75	31.00	27.50	23.00	20.00	6.00	19.50	164.25	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	13.69	30.65	36.90	32.74	27.38	23.81	7.14	23.21	13.97	Average %
Burwell Hall										
MAIN HALL 2023										
Hours booked	37.50	41.00	33.50	47.50	35.50	42.00	29.50	34.50	301.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	44.64	48.81	39.88	56.55	42.26	50.00	35.21	41.07	25.60	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2022										
MAIN HALL										
Hours booked	33.50	46.00	45.00	41.50	46.00	48.50	39.48	38.00	337.98	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	39.88	54.76	53.57	49.40	54.76	57.74	47.00	45.24	28.74	Average %

*based on x3 4-hour sessions per day; 12 hours total per day - 84 hours per week.

w/c 18th September CE - OCC Workshop, 60s Night, Nearly Nicks

w/c large private party, WODC workshop, Henley Theatre, Soundbite UK

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023

Title: Public Halls Events Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The Venue and Events Officer and the Venue and Events Assistant work to put on events which are run by Witney Town Council. Third party events are also put on and supported and facilitated by Witney Town Council Staff, these will contribute to approximately 60% of events with the Council run events making up the other 40%.

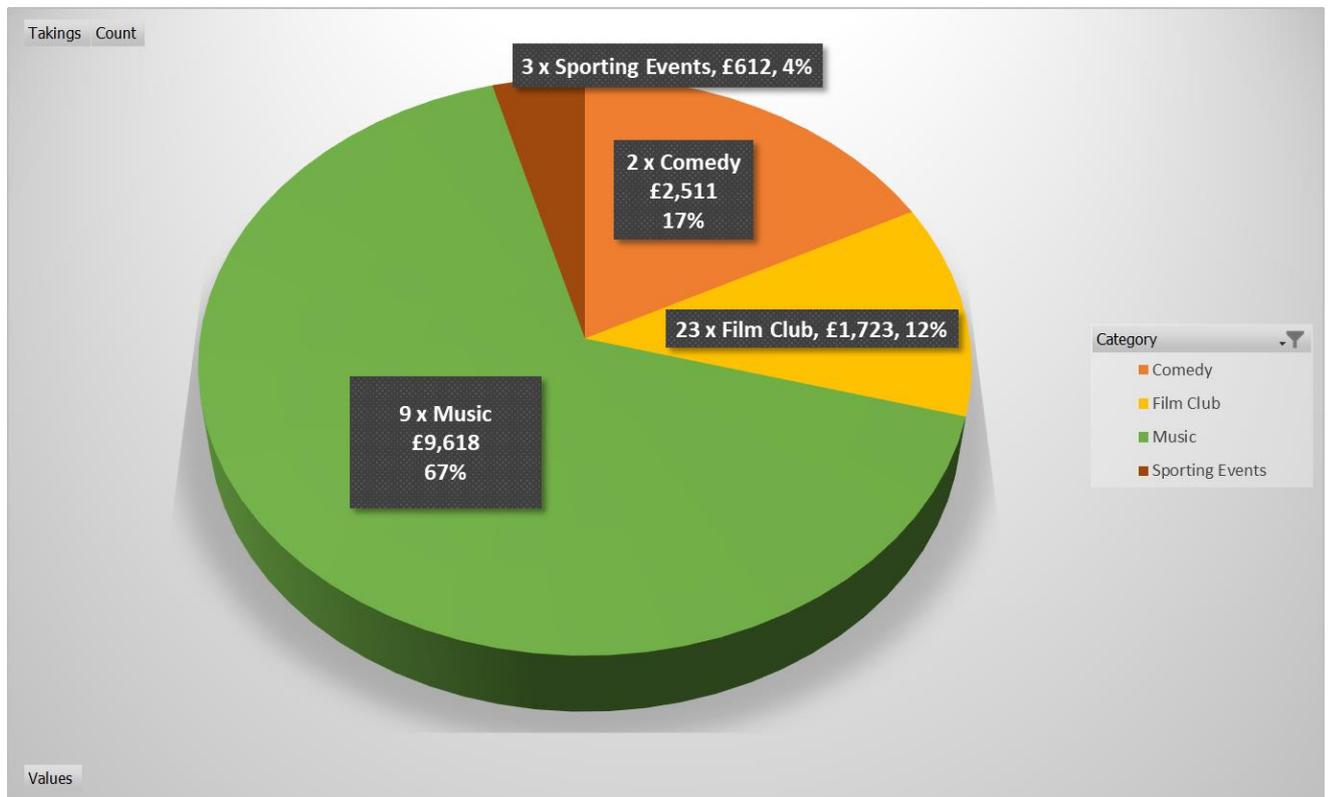
Current Situation

The past three months have seen a wide variety of events in the Corn Exchange, and with the Autumn/Winter season in full swing the Corn Exchange is about to welcome more.

So far, we have had:

- Music Tributes (Elvis, George Michael, Franki Valli etc.)
 - All very well attended (80-100%) with many visiting the Corn Exchange for the first time commenting on what a wonderful venue.
- Stand Up Comedy
 - As always very popular and well attended (over 80%) with a loyal following
- Monthly Jazz Club
 - Always a sell out every month, again with loyal following
- Monthly Open Mic
 - Held on a Thursday evening in the café with new young local talent performing with excellent customer feedback
- Cinema Screenings
 - Introduced in July and building a programme to suit targeted customer profiling. Pricing has been carefully considered to make affordable to the community with excellent feedback from families who attended during the summer holidays.

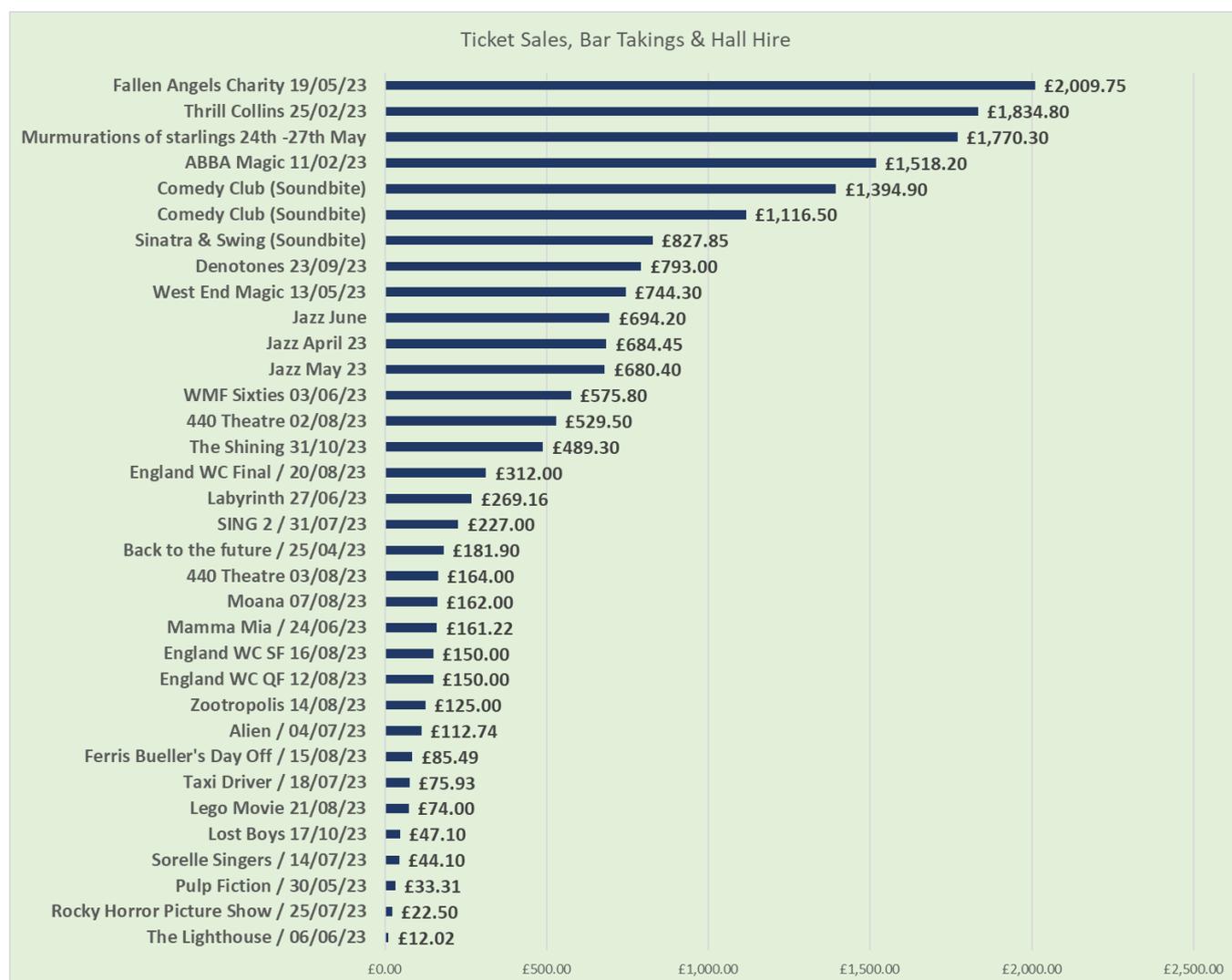
To demonstrate the usage of the main hall the chart below details the most common categories of events held this year including the total income received. As mentioned before, the operational costs will be included to report when in an available format to do so.



The Corn Exchange is hosting its first immersive event in the form of a murder mystery on Saturday 18th November. “A Murder at Goodbottom Manor” presented by Little Chico Productions accompanied by a 4-course meal from a new local restaurant, Grand Bangla. The venue & events team will be busy advertising this event over the next few weeks and feedback on this new type of event will be provided in the next report.

The events calendar for the larger shows that include popular local band Lucile & The Lightning Soul Train, Buttercross Theatre Pantomime, Hank Marvin tribute, and many more is fully booked up for the remainder of 2023. Full details of our upcoming events can be found on the Corn Exchange website.

The following table provides further detail of the events held noting the top line was a charity event and not income received by the Council.



Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implication

The Corn Exchange is operating to budget with no forecasted risk of annual overspend.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following;

1. Members are invited to note the report.

Agenda Item 12

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023
Title: Public Halls Safety & Security
Contact Officer: Town Clerk – Sharon Groth

Background

The Council has a duty of care to advise and assess risk for employees who work by themselves under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Whilst most employees work in twos or teams, Caretaking staff within the public halls working outside of office hours are often lone working.

Current Situation

There have been several incidents in the Corn Exchange recently which involved three young people accessing both the ladies and gents toilets and squirting hand soap on the floors, mirrors and wash basin. This resulted in the toilets having to be closed because it was a risk to hall users from slipping over as the floor had been made very slippery.

During this incident, the young people were rude and abuse to the staff and hall hirers.

Further incidents have occurred subsequently, and in fact resulting in a serious incident termed as a transphobic hate crime.

The incidents have been captured on CCTV which has been shared with the Police, to try and identify these young people. It is hoped that once identified the Council may be able to ban them from the Corn Exchange, but in the meantime, Officers are reviewing the Lone Working Policy to risk assess and safeguard employees at these most vulnerable times.

In respect of Burwell Hall, whilst no incidents have been reported, this is still an area of concern. Particularly the way the bookings operate for hirers to access the building. Officers are reviewing how an electronic access facility could work and the associated costings to see if a viable option is available.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As mentioned above, the Council does have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 for its employees. With these incidents occurring on a regular basis, measures need to be taken to try and mitigate any impact on staff wellbeing and interrupting meetings/hirings.

Financial implications

There are no known direct financial implications arising from this report at the preset time. Officers will be looking into costing out solutions – whether that is better access arrangement, CCTV or other safeguarding measures, and a report will be brought back to the next meeting.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and the situation around safety and security in the Council's public halls.

Agenda Item 13

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023

Title: Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards 2024-25

Contact Officer: Operations Manager

Background

Under the Local Government Act 1972, the council (Witney Town Council) maintains the walls and fences of both Holy Trinity and St Mary's Church as closed churchyards. The definition of maintenance is to be kept in decent order.

Church representatives for Holy Trinity have contacted the council and requested the council carry out repairs to the arch and supporting pillars as you enter Holy Trinity's churchyard. The metal archway and retaining stone pillars need repair; the pillar capping stones need replacing and the metal arch requires work to secure it back in place.

Current Situation

From a health and safety perspective, the arch is currently safe, and the issues are just aesthetic for the church. However, it will continue to deteriorate in its current state and become unsafe. If the arch were to be left it would simply be removed by Witney Town Council staff and stored to remove the risk of injury.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The council could receive negative press if it is found responsible for not maintaining the historic churchyard. This would become evident if the arch did have to be removed for health and safety reasons.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The Closed Churchyard maintenance budget 4036/303 annually is £11,000.00, £10,000.00 is rolled into a budget for the repairs to St Mary's boundary wall leaving £1,000.00 for closed churchyard maintenance.
- The cost to have the stone pillars recapped, arch removed and reinstalled is quoted at £3,150.40 ex VAT.
- The cost to have the arch repaired is estimated to be around £2,000.00.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. An increase to The Closed Churchyard maintenance budget 4036/303 of £5,000.00 to £16,000.00 for the 2024-25 financial year only.

Agenda Item 14

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 6 November 2023
Title: Town Council Burials Service
Contact Officer: Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk

Background

The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the burial services provided by Witney Town Council. The Council operates two Cemeteries in Witney; Windrush Cemetery and Tower Hill Cemetery. Windrush Cemetery opened in 2004 and offers lawn, Meadow and Woodland burials along with an Ashes Path. Tower Hill has operated since 1857 and has approximately 9,500 plots which are mainly Lawn Burials with some Family Ashes plots.

Current Situation

The Council usually takes initial instruction from a Funeral Director; the administration team will liaise with them to book a suitable time in the cemetery diary and obtain the relevant paperwork to ensure that that burial takes place lawfully. The importance of this work cannot be underestimated, as it is imperative that our records are held accurately.

The team may at times deal directly with a bereaved family to take them through the process without the use of a Funeral Director, usually to avoid the additional cost. This however does lead to great time commitment from the administration team.

Once a burial booking is in place, the Councils Work's team will prepare the grave and attend the ceremony to again ensure that the burial is lawful.

Windrush

There are a number of Coffin burials options. It is important to note that the majority of burials are in the lawned area, and the initial burial is at Double Depth to maximise the use of the land. Windrush Cemetery also offers the interment of cremated remains on an Ashes Path.

Tower Hill

All Burial plots are reserved. However, a small number of new reservations can be made for the interment of Ashes.

Recent Activity – Please see the attached table.

Over the past 12 months the council has carried out a total of 94 interments, 40 were Coffin burials and 54 the burial of Cremated Remains. These were roughly evenly split across the two cemeteries.

It is difficult to predict the number of burials however it is important to note that the Council does see additional pressures on the Councils works teams during summer months due to grounds maintenance duties. Burials are the primary duty for the team and therefore it is important to be mindful when conversing with residents regarding such complaints as the length of grass on recreational areas. Likewise, February and March usually see the highest number of interments in the winter months.

During the same period the council sold 73 Exclusive Rights of Burial (EROB) – this is a lawful document which dictates who owns the right to be buried in a grave. 48 of the 73 were used for immediate Burial. The remaining being sold as reservations for a future burial usually so that family members can be laid to rest together or because individuals are making arrangements for their future demise. Again, the process is handled by the Administration Team who are more than happy to discuss the options available with residents.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

The maximising of the use of land, such as the decision to bury at Double Depth in Windrush Cemetery supports the councils aims.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

➤ None resulting from this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

	2022		2023										
Column1	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total
Windrush													
Single Depth Burial	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	5
Double Depth Burial	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	4	1	2	18
Ashes	1	1	1	3	5	3	2	2	3	2	3	0	26
Tower Hill													
Burials	2	1	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	17
Ashes	1	2	2	3	3	6	2	0	3	3	2	1	28
EROB's	10	1	7	6	9	9	5	3	5	6	2	8	71