

Public Document Pack

Witney Town Council

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4 March 2020

To: Members of the Corn Exchange Working Party - *O Collins, L Ashbourne, J Aitman, L Duncan, A D Harvey and J King (and all other Town Councillors for information)*

You are hereby summonsed to a Meeting of the **Corn Exchange Working Party** to be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall on **Tuesday, 10th March, 2020 at 4.00 pm** for the transaction of the business stated below.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To consider apologies and reasons for absence

Working Party Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Town Hall prior to the meeting, stating the reason for absence.

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 3 - 4)

To receive and consider the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party meeting held on 6th January 2020.

4. **Oxford Arts Consultants Draft Business Plan** (Pages 5 - 10)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue Manager and accompanying draft action plan for the Corn Exchange provided by Oxford Art Consultants.

5. **Website & Branding** (Pages 11 - 14)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue Manager on the potential website and branding of the Corn Exchange.

6. **Provision of Seating, Light & Sound** (Pages 15 - 18)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue Manager concerning the installation of retractable seating, lighting and sound equipment in the Corn Exchange.

7. **Proposed Cafe/Bar Area** (Pages 19 - 22)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue Manager concerning the creation of a café/bar area in the lobby of the Corn Exchange.

8. **Corn Exchange - Possible Phase Three Refurbishment**

To receive and consider a verbal report from officers concerning the further refurbishment of the Corn Exchange.



Town Clerk

**CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 6 January 2020

At 5.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne J Aitman	H Eaglestone
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Tomas Smith	Town Clerk Office Manager Venue Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Duncan, Harvey and King.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

3 MINUTES

The Working Party received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2019.

RECOMMENDED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chair.

4 CORN EXCHANGE PHASE TWO REFURBISHMENT

The Working Party considered proposals by Oxford Art Consultants on what they could offer the Town Council in order to achieve the delivery of the Corn Exchange phase two refurbishment.

Members reaffirmed the Working Party's earlier recommendation to prioritise the lighting and sound equipment and seek clarification on sound proofing and acoustics. Members were also keen to explore options for a café/bar in the lobby of the building which would be a valuable and attractive asset for potential groups looking to hire; In particular, the management and running of this should be considered. In addition, assistance would be required in sourcing proposed retractable seating.

Future utilisation of the backstage area along with storage was also discussed and the Working Party was keen on asking this to be explored with options for the current air-handling unit, the latter by Officers. Members heard that there was also an issue with the capacity of the Main Hall

and building as a whole and were interested to discuss with the Consultants any possible increase by extending seating upwards.

As well as the fabric of the building, members also welcomed proposals from Oxford Art Consultants to assist the Venue Manager with production of programming schedules, hire templates and branding but also wanted to ask for help with digital signage as this was budgeted for.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That Officers explore the possibility of relocating/replacing the current air-handling unit at the Corn Exchange;
2. That Witney Town Council considers re-branding the Corn Exchange or Public Halls, in so doing creating a new brand with logo and separate website;
3. That Witney Town Council agrees to the proposals provided by Oxford Art Consultants with immediate focus being placed on:
 - a) Options for café management and how this could be managed;
 - b) Sourcing and installation of stage lighting, sound and acoustics;
 - c) Sourcing and installation of retractable seating.
4. That in addition to the above, Witney Town Council also seeks assistance from Oxford Art Consultants to produce the proposed resources with the Venue Manager;
5. That Oxford Art Consultants are asked to further assist with the potential utilisation of the Backstage area;
6. Advice on increasing the capacity of the Hall in terms of adding a potential balcony or higher- level seating.

The meeting closed at: 6.07 pm

Chair

Corn Exchange Working Party

Date:	9 th March 2020
Title:	Oxford Arts Consultants Draft Business Plan
Contact Officer:	Venue Manager (Tomas Smith)

Background

The Council has looked to get direction and guidance for the upcoming regeneration of the Corn Exchange and decided to employ the Oxford Arts Consultants to help facilitate the project.

Current situation

Three meetings have been held with Jacqui Ibbotson and one with Euton Daley regarding unlocking the potential of the Corn Exchange. We have had help and advice from Jacqui relating to the ongoing business plan for the Corn Exchange, as well as further meetings about the options available when the hall is regenerated. The actual use from these meetings will become more obvious as the ideas and plans discussed at this stage will only become viable once the Corn Exchange has had the work undertaken.

There are hopes that Euton will be able to attend site with an architect to explore further options for the main Hall in the future. This will be covered further under Agenda Item 8.

A draft business plan provided by Oxford Arts Consultants is attached as Appendix A.

Environmental Impact

Nil as verbal conversation only

Risk

Cost to the council due to relying on the Arts Consultants recommendations bearing fruition.

Financial Implications

- The cost is the consultant's fees (previously already agreed).

Recommendation

- Members are asked to note the report; and understand the greatest value from this association will come once the Corn Exchange has had works completed.

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Witney Corn Exchange – Action Plan

Year 1 - 2020

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>ACHIEVE BY</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational Infrastructure / Building / Administration 	
Design & install café counter, tables & chairs, (toddler activity area?)	June
Research and install retractable seating	August
Research and install lighting & sound system/equipment, drapes & dance floor	August
Address the storage issue – make a new door in store room	August
Establish procedures - contracts for hire, record-keeping & ticket-selling	April
Draw up tech pack as equipment is installed	August
Train staff in café and front of house skills	June
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing & P.R. 	
Create visual identity: mission & branding, design logo	April
Website – design and develop	May
Design, print & distribute flyers, e-promotions, posters – info on hire of venue & What's On	June
Establish and develop e-mailing list and social media following	Ongoing
Public-facing information events	October
Make use of oxonarts.info and Oxford Daily Info for sourcing talent and promotion	Ongoing
Build relationships with local press, Radio & TV	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Relationships 	
Local, county and national arts/cultural officers & Experience Oxfordshire	March - July
Witney community drama, dance, art/craft, book clubs, Music/Beer/Food Festivals, Oxfordshire Festivals (Artweeks, Heritage Open Days etc.)	March - July
Local businesses, schools & colleges (& Cultural Education Partnership)	March - July
Funding bodies e.g. WODC, ACE, NLHF, Big Lottery, Esme Fairbairn, Wren etc.	March - Nov

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>ACHIEVE BY</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progammimg / Activity 	
Research the competition (especially Langdale Hall) and agree artistic aims	March
Research potential touring companies/bands/comedy/pop-up cinema/film options	May
Research potential clubs/family activities/half-term & holiday events/festivals	May
Start 'Shop window' events – (in café area: e.g. local comedy nights, open mic)	July
Wedding Fairs & Corporate sponsored events (established local businesses e.g. Margaret Johnson, Wychwood Brewery, Hacketts)	October
Host Music/Comedy Festivals – link with Wychwood Festival, Witney Music Festival	May?
Host Artweeks & Film Festivals e.g. Witney Film Festival?	May
Take part in Heritage Open Days with Cogges, Blanket Hall, Witney Museum	September
Research co-producing Xmas show with small professional drama company e.g. Human Story Theatre/Flintlock/Mandala/Oxford Playmaker?	April
Research co-producing summer show with an Oxford Castle Shakespeare company e.g. Tomahawk?	March
Consider starting a small genre-targeted Literary Festival with a bookshop?	November?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish revenue streams 	
Agree Witney Town Council funding and pursue WODC funding contribution	March
Project income and expenditure budget for café operation & launch cafe	March/June
Develop hire of spaces – promote to local groups, schools, businesses and increase activity	May
Develop wedding hire business – photograph May wedding & host Wedding Fair	May + Oct
Research and apply for additional core funding e.g. Community Facilities grant (with WTC match as partner funding?)	June
ACE funded project with minority or disadvantaged youth group – link with OYAP?	July
Pursue additional sources of funding (e.g. 'Friends' & sponsorship)	Ongoing
Write business plan and set incremental revenue goals across 3 years	May

Year 2

- **Organisational Infrastructure / Building**
 - Commission architect drawing for re-development back stage area
 - Fundraise for re-development back stage area
 - Develop and improve technical facilities/sound-proofing
 - Develop and improve flexible staging & storage
 - Appoint additional skeleton staff (freelance marketing, technical staff?)
- **Revenue**
 - Continued review and development in all areas in line with established goals
 - Fundraise for re-development of backstage area
- **Marketing**
 - Continue to develop website content & ticketing system
 - Social Media campaigns
 - Distribution (flyers, posters etc)
 - Continue to develop e-mailing list
- **Programming / Activity**
 - Keep main hall & upper room busy in winter, freer for weddings in summer
 - Develop and strengthen 'Shop window' events
 - Introduce occasional programming of professional touring work
 - Offer Flintlock/Creation opportunity to make and launch a new show at Corn Exchange, to develop awareness wider through touring network – ACE funded?
- **Develop Relationships**
 - Continue to develop relationships in all areas above
 - Strengthen sponsorship
 - Strengthen and build 'friends' & volunteer team
 - Funded arts/heritage/health activity in community

Year 3

- **Organisational Infrastructure / Building**
 - Commission backstage re-development work, improve facilities to enable the receiving of well-established touring work and large cast community/school shows.
- **Revenue**
 - Continued review and development in all areas in line with established goals
 - Develop box office income as a revenue stream to balance hire of spaces
- **Marketing**
 - Continued development in all areas
 - Increase presence and familiarity, broadening reach
- **Programming / Activity**
 - Continue established events
 - Regular programming of professional touring work
 - First in-house Christmas show?
- **Develop Relationships**
 - Continue to develop relationships in all areas above
 - Funded arts/heritage/health activity in community

Corn Exchange Working Party

Date: 9th March 2020

Title: Websites and Branding

Contact Officer: Venue Manager (Tomas Smith)

Background

The Corn Exchange (and Public Halls in general) has lacked from an identity for some time and has been found only on a page embedded in the Council's main website. We need to develop a modern and relevant website for the development and future of the Corn Exchange, we also need to create an identity for the Corn Exchange so that we stand out and become recognisable and synonymous with the arts in Witney.

Current situation

There is currently one page under Venues on the Town Council's Website which although serves a basic function is outdated and maintained by the Town Hall. Our individual branding is currently non-existent.

I have contacted four local web designers and asked them to provide quotes for a website which can grow as the business grows. It needs to look professional and include a lot of content which can be updated regularly by Council officers and the designers as and when required. The website needs to be mobile friendly and designed in a way which makes it easy for people of all ages and impairments to interact with it (Quotes attached as Appendix A).

I have also contacted four graphic design companies in order to get an idea of the costs involved in establishing us as a recognisable brand in Witney and surrounding areas (Quotes attached as Appendix B).

Environmental Impact

There is no perceived environmental impact from the establishment of a branding and a new website.

Risk

In choosing the website provider and the branding, the Council needs to ensure it represents the best value and provides the best return for the council in regard to the functionality and appearance of the website, as well as becoming the easily identifiable brand we want to market and develop. If the Council chooses the wrong developers for this, we run the risk of having an outdated site in a short time.

Financial Implications

All quotes are sourced from local companies where possible and range in cost between £3-5000). Details are attached – and commercially sensitive so documents are restricted as confidential.

Officers have identified an underspend in the 2019-20 budget for Public Halls publicity of £3000 which could be used towards the cost of website and/or branding.

Further budgets of £3000 for Corn Exchange publicity and £6000 for digital signage have been set in the 2020-21 budget should the Council wish to request some of this funding towards website and branding.

Members should note the ongoing revenue costs of hosting the website etc and the impact on future budgets going forward.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and consider the quotes provided for Website and Branding and decide on how the Working Party would like to proceed.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Website Quotes

APPENDIX B – Branding Quotes

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Corn Exchange Working Party

Date: 9th March 2020

Title: Lighting, Sound and Seating

Contact Officer: Venue Manager (Tomas Smith)

Background

This Working Party has previously identified the need to install retractable seating, new stage lighting and to soundproof the main hall following advice from consultants and agreement from performance groups. This will allow us to approach more hirers, companies and groups to use our facilities while offering a greater flexibility as a venue when considering new functions, productions and performances.

Current situation

Currently we are operating the Main Hall as a blank space as we have nothing else to offer. I'm asked daily about the prospect of retractable seating and lighting. As it stands, groups are bringing their own equipment with them, however not all groups have this and indeed, some do look to book elsewhere. I have approached Henley Theatre Services, JS Stage and Event Services and Centre Stage Technology to help with the lighting and sound (Appendix A) and CPS, Hussey Ltd and Audience systems to quote for the seating (Appendix B). All the seating will have a slightly different look and feel, but all will allow for a greater degree of flexibility when using the hall. The speed which we can turn around the main hall will become of vital importance as the hall gets busier so this should be a factor when deciding which route to go down.

With the stage lighting, I am happy to rely on the expertise of independent companies, I have varying quotes coming in, at different ends of the market. Some will be quoting to fit all lights for all eventualities, while others will be looking to give us a good starting point from which we can build.

Regarding soundproofing, this depends on the seating we will be getting. Once it is in situ, I recommend that we look to soundproof later when we know the needs of the endeavour.

Environmental Impact

There will be an impact having lighting and seating installed, but if we can minimise by using LED lights and sustainable/low impact seating covers we can be seen to be limiting this.

Risk

We need to ensure that the lighting and standards is up to the standard we require in order to maximise the versatility of the hall and complies with all necessary legislation.

Financial Implications

The quotes are attached, and summarised on the next page – which are confidential.

The Council has an earmarked reserve of £6461 towards the cost of lighting and sound.

The Council has Section 106 contributions for the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange which include:

- a. £45,000 from the Springfield Nurseries development.
- b. £12,500 from the Thorney Leys Development (Abbey Developments) *this to be split between Play Areas and the Corn Exchange – at the Council's discretion.*
- c. £100,000 from the West Witney Development (payable in stages – and not yet received).

The Council may be eligible to apply for a Community Facilities Grant from West Oxfordshire District Council towards the refurbishment of the Corn Exchange. A maximum of 25% of the total project cost can be applied for.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and consider the quotes provided for Lighting, Sound, Seating and decide on how the Working Party would like to proceed – making a recommendation to Council.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Lighting & Sound Quotes

APPENDIX B – Retractable Seating Quotes

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Corn Exchange Working Party

Date: 9th March 2020

Title: Proposed Café and Bar

Contact Officer: Venue Manager (Tomas Smith)

Background

Members will recall that the Council has previously agreed to introduce a café and bar into the lobby of the Corn Exchange so that we can maximise profit from the venue. This will include coffee and tea facilities as well as light snacks to be available throughout the day.

Current situation

The Council currently outsources bar companies to help on events which although useful and low risk, provide no financial income to the council. The intention is to operate as a café by day and a bar at night for events and not every night. For this to function to a high professional level we will need to purchase or hire relevant equipment and a till system. We also are looking to furnish the lobby with updated seating and tables as the current seating is more functional rather than keeping with the aesthetic of the building.

The Working Party also needs to factor in kitchen equipment, till systems and finally a name for the café and bar. I have researched these options and have recommendations below. Once a café and bar area are agreed we can move forward with the installation of the café equipment. Regarding coffee machines, and coffee supplier I have asked local coffee roasters, but none were interested so I have contacted Cool beans coffee (nationwide) and Rave Coffee of Cirencester.

Environmental Impact

Minimum, wood for the bar design will be sourced from reclaimed material and from sustainable forests. All coffee will be Fairtrade and products sold in the cafe will be local.

Risk

Making a viable and successful venue which can sit comfortably in the heart of Witney while providing a service to both Hall users and general public alike. We need to create a brand identity in order to stand out from the crowd and prove successful.

Financial Implications

Details of the quotes received are summarised on the attached confidential appendix along with the quotations received for information.

At the end of the financial year it is normal practice to transfer underspends in respect of property maintenance and equipment into the Public Halls Earmarked Reserve – for this reason Officers, at this stage, have identified an underspend in the 2019-20 budget for Public Halls cost centres totalling approximately £11,000 which could be used towards the cost of the café/bar.

A grant application has been submitted to Witney Town Hall Charity for £1,500 towards the cost of the furniture in the café/bar (due to imminent meeting).

The cost of the bar/café counter could be covered from Section 106 contributions (see agenda item 6 for details) but this would diminish the amount available for other parts of the project.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report; and,

1. Consider a name for the proposed café/bar at the Corn Exchange. The original name of the area proposed for the café/bar was the Athenaeum Room as historically, in 1863 the Witney Athenaeum group met in that space. i.e. 'The Athenaeum',
2. Consider and decide on a quote for the bar,
3. Consider and decide on a quote for the furniture,
4. Consider the quotes for Coffee Machine hire,
5. Note the cost of equipment and associated works for this to be created.

Appendices

APPENDIX A – Bar Quotes

APPENDIX B – Furniture Quotes

APPENDIX C – Kitchen Equipment/Coffee Machine Hire Quotes

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