

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

Held on Monday, 22 January 2024

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

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright O Collins J Aitman D Edwards-Hughes	D Newcombe J Treloar R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Zoe Henstridge Mark Lewis Derek Mackenzie	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Administrative Support - Halls & Green Spaces Head of Estates & Operations Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	No members of the public. Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Jane Doughty Councillor Thomas Ashby	

H26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

H27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

H28 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee meeting held on 6 November 2023 were received.

H583 – The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the request for dog fouling signs at Tower Hill Cemetery was dealt with at the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee on 13 November 2023.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee meeting held on 6 November 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H29 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H30 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which are the responsibility of the committee.

There were no questions from members.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

Cllr R Smith arrived at 6:04pm

H31 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O).

Members welcomed the update regarding the energy and cost savings following the installation of a new efficient gas boiler at Burwell Hall.

The HE&O explained the proposed new approach to deal with maintenance in the halls and Members were in agreement that timely repairs were the best to ensure that the halls remain available to use and were maintained to a high standard.

Prior to the meeting some Members had taken part in a guided tour of the Corn Exchange which allowed them to see “behind the scenes”, this included the potential locations where new storage could be placed. Members were all in agreement that this was necessary, and that Option 1 be selected as the preferred contractor to carry out the work.

Members were pleased that the Corn Exchange Blue Plaque had been restored and thanked Officers for actioning this; Officers reported that the other plaques on the Town Hall and Buttercross would also be renovated.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, George Murray Carpentry be commissioned to carry out works to increase storage capacity at the Corn Exchange for the sum of £4,690 and,
3. That, the Town Hall and Buttercross Blue Plaques be renovated.

H32 **PUBLIC HALLS EVENTS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operations (HE&O).

Members were pleased to hear details of the variety of events that had taken place over the previous months and for the financial information included in the report so that Members could see the overall viability.

Members asked that consideration be given to providing Cinema events during each of the school holidays. A Member advised of the [Into Film](#) scheme whose aim was to facilitate free access to cinematic performances for school aged children.

The Committee also asked that Officers investigate the potential for Folk evenings and events for under 18's, in particular music events.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, officers investigate the Into Film scheme along with Folk and events for under 18's.

H33 **CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee received and considered the updated draft Corn Exchange Business Plan.

A Member raised their thoughts for consideration and potential inclusion in the plan; these included having a clear and concise Vision Statement, more definition in the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) so Members could see how the performance of the plan would be measured as well as seeking some clarity on some financial projections.

The Head of Estates and Operations (HE&O) responded to the points raised and explained the differences occurred due to the timing of the plan being updated and the closure of a further month of the Council's accounting figures, which the Responsible Financial Officer confirmed.

In response to the question regarding KPI's the HE&O advised that there were a number of specific measures in place however, these were managed operationally with the results being presented to the Committee via the Public Hall reports.

The HE&O advised the next review of the plan was due in May 2024. The review would see the inclusion of Burwell Hall and a Financial Appraisal of Cost Centre 103.

The Chair explained it was the Committee's responsibility to set the Strategic aims and for Officers to create from that an Operational process to best implement them. A Member also reminded the Committee that a lot had been achieved in the previous five years and for Witney to now have a diverse and well used venue was a credit to the work of so many, Members were encouraged to support the Public Halls in any way they could.

Resolved:

1. That, the Business Plan and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the review of the plan take place in May 2024 to include additional financial information for both Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.

H34 **CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL GARDEN**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer with an update on the progress of the Children's Memorial Garden at Windrush Cemetery.

Members heard that following the agreement of the project in January 2022 Officers had been faced with several issues which they wanted to overcome in order to provide this space for families to reflect.

Members discussed the proposal to vire funds from the In Bloom budget, which had an underspend for 2023/24 to purchase planting and signage. Members were understanding of the difficulties suffered and were in agreement that Officers work to bring the project to completion.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, an amount of up to £1,500 be requested from the Stronger Communities Committee In Bloom budget to complete the Children's Memorial Garden and,
3. That, Officers work to complete the project as soon as possible.

H35 **CEMETERY MAPPING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager regarding the marking out of existing and future areas of the cemetery.

Members were pleased to hear of the scheme however asked that the caps on the top of the posts be "soft" so as not to create a visual impact, however they were understanding that the post would need to be obvious to both cemetery visitors and for the purposes of grounds maintenance such as grass cutting.

Members asked that Communications be issued to inform cemetery visitors once these final stages of the installation commence.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the installation of ground markers take place at a cost of £2,500 and,
3. That, Officers investigate the options to cap the posts to suit the environment such as colour etc.

The meeting closed at: 6.50 pm

Chair