

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

**Held on Monday, 8 July 2024**

**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 O Collins T Ashby (In place of J Robertshaw)
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie  Thomas Davies Sharon Groth Mark Lewis Tomas Smith	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Venue & Events Assistant Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations Venue & Events Officer
Others:	Four members of the public.	

**H368 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Robertshaw, Councillor T Ashby attended as a substitute.

**H369 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

**H370 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 20 May 2024 were received.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 20 May 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

H371 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*The Committee adjourned for this item.*

The committee received representation from residents of Fernleigh concerning Agenda Item 16.

*The Committee reconvened.*

With the permission of the Chair, Agenda item 16 was moved up the agenda so the members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

H372 **ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD - PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY**

The Committee considered the correspondence along with the verbal participation from the residents of Fernleigh in respect of the Right of Way through St Mary's Churchyard.

The Fernleigh residents had outlined the issues that they faced on a daily basis when using the path through the churchyard and how the rough surface impacted them by creating trip hazards, an uncomfortable journey on their mobility scooters as well as causing damage to their scooters due to the jolting. They also advised that there was no acceptable alternative route due to the lack of suitable dropped kerbs and obstacles they faced.

Members understood the residents' concerns and assured them the matter would be taken seriously, investigated by Officers and an update provided to them.

The Town Clerk/CEO advised that she had already made initial enquiries with Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Team and the Church, these discussions would continue in order to establish ownership and responsibility. Once known, a schedule and cost of works could be considered.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the Town Clerk/CEO continue investigation to establish ownership and report back her findings.
3. That, the residents of Fernleigh be kept updated on progress.

*(The members of the public left the meeting at 7:21pm)*

H373 **RESIDENT'S SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) which provided feedback results following the annual residents survey.

The DTC advised that this was the raw data and that a further report would be presented to the Committee in September 2024 after Officers had fully reviewed the results and were able to provide an action plan along with budget costings.

A Member noted that the percentage of responses rating a service as "Excellent" had decreased though the number of responses had increased. It was also noted that the number of responses selecting "not applicable" was significant; it was felt that this may have been a result of the large

proportion of responses being from the schools who did not make use of the services under the remit of this Committee.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

H374 **CAFÉ/BAR 1863**

**Newspapers**

The Chair opened discussions as to whether the Corn Exchange Café should continue to supply a daily newspaper for its users, opinions were expressed as to both the cost incurred and the political standing of particular papers.

The Venue & Events Officer advised the newspapers were well read, and that additional copies were left by some Café users for others to read. Members agreed that it would be best to support local and neutral papers only.

All Members agreed to purchase the Witney Gazette & Big Issue along with the Metro newspaper which could be obtained from the Stagecoach bus each day. Officers would monitor the responses left by users via the feedback cards that were available in the Café for completion.

**Fairtrade Products**

Members moved on to discuss the Café's Fairtrade product offerings as it was felt that the Council should be more focused on promoting the Fairtrade scheme wherever possible. Members agreed that Officers should investigate the inclusion of Fairtrade drink options.

The Venue & Events Officer advised the current coffee supplier, though not Fairtrade, did follow similar values and that a compromise would be needed to ensure that the Council supports Fairtrade, locally sourced as well as financially responsible purchasing.

Lastly, Members asked that signage be displayed to advise café users of the Council's aims to supply ethically sourced products whenever possible and that a commitment to this should be included in the business plans for the Halls and Café.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the Witney Gazette, Big Issue and the Metro newspaper be available to users in the Café and,
2. That, the response to the change in supply of newspapers be monitored and,
3. That, the Corn Exchange café manager explore options for Fairtrade tea and biscuits/cakes and,
4. That, a notice of the council commitment to supply local and ethically sourced products wherever possible be displayed and included in the council's business plans.

H375 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer (VEO) which provided an update on the Council's public halls.

Members discussed the proposal to replace the existing coffee machine at the Corn Exchange with a new model and contract term. It was also proposed that the current coffee machine be purchased and relocated at Burwell Hall in order to provide refreshments to football teams that play their matches there.

Members asked that further information be provided by Officers prior to a decision being taken to purchase the existing machine as it was felt that with the location of the convenience store opposite Burwell Hall, this could already be meeting the needs of the football teams.

The Chair asked for an agreement in principle to the recommendations in the report. It was therefore proposed by Councillor J Aitman, seconded by Councillor D Newcombe and agreed by all members to purchase the existing machine at a cost of £1,000 should demand be expressed by the football clubs for refreshments at Burwell Hall.

In respect of a replacement machine for the Corn Exchange, Members again in principle agreed to proceeding with Option 3, this being a new machine supplied by UE coffee roasters with a 36-month contract at a cost of £160.27 per month when the current contract ended in September 2024 or if required at an earlier date should the existing machine be moved to Burwell Hall.

The VEO advised that details of all the quotes obtained would be made available to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at the meeting on 22 July 2024.

The Head of Estates & Operations raised to the committee verbally a request for the purchase of an ice cream freezer, this was to be used to sell items in the café as well as during intervals of performances at the Corn Exchange. Officers had identified a suitable item with an expected cost of £450.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers discuss the demand for Witney Vikings for refreshments and,
3. That, should sufficient demand exist then the current coffee machine be purchased at a cost of £1,000 and,
4. That, Officers proceed with the replacement of the coffee machine on a 36-month contract costing £160.27 per month subject to receiving further comparable quotes to meet the Council's financial regulations.
5. That, an ice cream freezer be purchased for use in the Corn Exchange.

**H376 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer (DVEO) concerning event activity in the Corn Exchange.

Members were pleased to receive the update and in particular to see the venue used to host screenings of England's advancement through the Euro 2024 football championship. The DVEO advised the reasoning for making these screenings free was in order to avoid the need to purchase an expensive commercial licence which would be required if a charge was made to attendees.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

H377 **PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the business reports prepared by the Venue & Events Officer (VEO).

Members were pleased to see the draft copies of Business Plans for Burwell Hall and Café 1863 and they looked forward to receiving the final versions.

In response to a Member's question, the VEO advised that progress toward the Year 1 outstanding goals for the Corn Exchange was progressing as planned with improvements expected soon with LED lighting for the tiered seating, new modular staging and the introduction of the box office counter for use when performances took place.

It was suggested that Officer present the future objective progress in a colour coded fashion, red, yellow and green to show yet to start, in progress and completed.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the future objectives section of the business plan be colour coded to show the level of progression and,
3. That, the business plans for Burwell Hall and Café 1863 be finalised ahead of the next meeting.

H378 **MADLEY PARK HALL - PARTITION DOORS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Estates & Operations concerning the replacement of the Madley Park Hall doors.

Members were pleased to receive the update and all members agreed to proceed with the appointment of Contractor C to carry out the work at a cost of £9,140.41.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the replacement of the door be instructed to [Contractor C] at a cost of £9,140.41 to be paid from the Madley Park Hall Ear Marked Reserve.

*(The Venue Events Officer and Deputy Venue & Events Officer left the meeting at 7:08pm)*

H379 **COUNTY COUNCIL EV MICROHUBS PILOT SCHEME - BURWELL HALL**

Members received the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) regarding the EV pilot scheme.

Members were pleased to hear that Burwell Hall had been selected as one of nine pilot sites across the county to receive one of the installations however, it was thought that the siting of the EV charger at the Madley Park Hall Car Park, which had previously been submitted as a potential location due to its position within an area where a higher proportion of houses and flats don't have driveways or parking adjacent to their properties, might be more beneficial.

Members raised questions regarding the potential demand of the charger should they not be rapid chargers as well as any financial incentives to the Council as landowner. It was also agreed that the Council should do all it can to support the EV Pilot programme as it aligned with the Council's aim to reduce the effect of climate change, and this would also provide an additional charge point for the council expanding fleet of vehicles.

All members were in agreement with Officers progressing with the scheme and discussing contractual terms with OCC and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and
2. That, Officer progress with scheme with OCC raising the members queries and concerns.

H380 **WINDRUSH CEMETERY - MAPPING**

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager regarding the need to carry out Datum marking within Windrush Cemetery.

Members understood the importance to carrying out his work so as to ensure the Council always had sufficient burial plots available. The quote had increased since this had last been at Committee due to the time lapse and increased number of plots to be marked.

Councillor O Collins proposed, seconded by Councillor J Aitman that the recommendation to commission the marking be approved at a cost of £6,215.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Datum marking be commissioned by Cemetery Design Services.

H381 **WINDRUSH CEMETERY - CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL GARDEN**

The Committee received the report of the Projects Officer regarding Children's Memorial Garden at Windrush Cemetery.

The report provided an update on the scheme which it was hoped would be completed later in the year. There was still an issue with what was achievable within the agreed budget.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

*(Councillor D Edward- Hughes left the meeting at 7:22pm, he returned at 7:25pm)*

H382 **WINDRUSH CEMETERY - RELOCATION OF MEMORIAL TREE**

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager regarding the relocation of the memorial tree at Windrush Cemetery.

Members understood the need for the location of any memorial to be accessible to all and that the memorial should be of a respectable standard to reflect its significance. A Member spoke of how impressed they were of the memorial installed at the Tiny Forest by Earthwatch and asked that Officers consider a similar installation.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a new location be sought in the Cemetery for the installation of a memorial tree and,
3. That, Officers explore options for a replacement memorial and,
4. That, the costs for replacement plaques where necessary be borne by the council.

**H383 TOWER HILL CEMETERY - NUISANCE BEHAVIOUR**

The Committee received the correspondence from a member of the public regarding issues of vandalism and anti-social behaviour at Tower Hill Cemetery.

The Head of Estates & Operations advised that the logs in the cemetery would be removed by the Operations Team. The Town Clerk/CEO reported that she had spoken with Inspector Ball of Thames Valley Police with a request that patrols be increased and that the detached youth scheme had been advised of the issues raised.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the logs be removed by the Operations Team.

**H384 WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL GUIDE TO BURIALS - DRAFT PUBLICATION**

The Committee was pleased to see the final draft version of the Cemetery guide and welcomed its introduction.

**Resolved:**

That, the Cemetery guide be approved and published

**H385 NEWLAND AND HAILEY ROAD ALLOTMENTS FENCING**

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager in respect of the request to install fencing at Hailey Road and Newland Allotments.

Members were all in agreement with the recommendations in order to secure the sites for allotment users.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officer progress the installation of fencing at Newland and Hailey Road Allotments from earmarked reserves.

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The meeting closed at: 7.30 pm

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Chair