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**Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments**  
**Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council**



**Monday, 20th January, 2025 at 6.00 pm**

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - R Crouch, D Enright, J Aitman, D Edwards-Hughes, D Newcombe, J Robertshaw, R Smith and O Collins (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.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk [derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

**Standing Order 30(d)(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 - 9)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 11 November 2024;

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**

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee in 2024/25 and the upcoming 2025/26 period.

**To Follow**

**Public Halls**

6. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 10 - 14)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

7. **Corn Exchange Business Report** (Pages 15 - 20)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer.

8. **Public Halls Business Plan Review**

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

**To Follow**

**Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards**

9. **Cemetery Regulations**

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager.

**To Follow**

10. **Burial Fees** (Pages 21 - 23)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager.

11. **Exclusion of Press and 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.

12. **Property & Legal Matters**

To receive and consider a confidential report from the Town Clerk/CEO.

**To Follow**



Town Clerk



# Agenda Item 3

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

Held on Monday, 11 November 2024

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

### Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright D Edwards-Hughes	J Robertshaw R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Sharon Groth Mark Lewis Nigel Warner	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Six members of the public.	

### H620 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Collins & J Aitman.

### H621 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Edwards-Hughes declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 13 by virtue of the CEO of the ICE centre being known to him as a fellow member of the West Oxfordshire Conservatives Association.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

### H622 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 September 2024 were received.

H495 – Members were notified that the cost of the Oak Monolith had risen from £850 to £975 in order to increase the thickness from 25mm to 75mm, this would mean greater longevity and potentially allow for plaques to be placed on both sides. All Members were in agreement with the increase in cost.

### Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 September 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair and,

2. That, the purchase of the Oak Monolith proceeds at a cost of £975.

H623 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*The Committee adjourned for this item.*

The Committee received representation from a member of the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) concerning Agenda Item 11.

Members asked the Association member questions to gain further clarification regarding the positions of the Committee that were not filled, what the WAA constitution allowed for by way of calling an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting, and how they would see the Association's running going forward.

*The Committee reconvened.*

H624 **WITNEY ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION**

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

The Committee considered the points raised by the members of the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) who were present along with a verbal update from Officers and the Chair, who was also the Town Council Representative for the WAA.

It was proposed by Councillor D Enright, and seconded by Councillor R Smith that a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange be agreed to allow for an AGM or EGM to be held by WAA. Members were unanimous in agreement.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, a subsidised use of the Corn Exchange to the value of £157 be allowed for a meeting of the WAA subject to receipt of the necessary paperwork.

*(All Members of the public left at 6:26pm)*

H625 **FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2025/26**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO concerning the base revenue budget, draft estimates on budget parameters for 2024/25 and a revenue budget summary.

For the benefit of Members, the RFO outlined the contents of the report and explained that although monitoring takes place throughout the year, this was the initial report of the Committee budget setting cycle and this would be refined ahead of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting later in month.

During this process, the Committee were advised the RFO scrutinises budget lines and looks at the inflationary rises. He also considered changes resulting from public sector pay increases and Employer National Insurance contributions. Due to uncertain energy prices, he suggested this budget line should be held at the same level as 2024/25.

Members received confirmation from the Head of Estates & Operations that the Corn Exchange Business Plan was working and that with the improved energy rating of the Burwell Hall following the boiler replacement, costs would continue to show saving in respect to energy unit use.

In response to a Members question, the RFO confirmed the decision to introduce Maglocks to the Corn Exchange was developing and therefore the potential £5,000 savings was not included in the budget.

The RFO tabled the Annual summary of the cost centres under the committees remit and further explained that costs relating to the activity of the works team were being directed to the individual cost centres to provide a greater understanding of their true cost.

Agreement of the draft revised base revenue budget for 2024/25 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2025/26 was proposed by Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Smith and agreed by members unanimously.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the draft revised base revenue budget for 2024/25 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2025/26, as detailed be agreed.

*(Councillor D Enright left the meeting at 6:45pm)*

H626 **REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS**

The Committee received and considered the tabled report of the Responsible Financial Officer.

Members heard the majority of new Capital Items could be met from existing budgets however, there was a need to increase revenue to ensure that the maintenance of property remained at an agreeable level. Replacement lighting at the Corn Exchange was required to ensure that the Council worked towards it's Environmental & Climate Emergency aims.

The Committee were all in agreement with the reports proposals.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, that the Revenue Growth and new Capital items be agreed by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

H627 **SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26**

The Committee received and considered the details of the proposed increase to Halls & Cemeteries costs from April 2025.

Members heard of the general 2% increase to most of the charges along with the greater proposed increase to limited Cemetery fees, the Committee felt it was necessary to ensure that the costs incurred by the Council were reflected in the fees charged to those using the services

however, it was also potentially necessary to provide some form of subsidy as the Council did with other fees it charged, such as sports pitches.

Members asked that Officers benchmark interment costs against like for like Councils as well as providing a detailed breakdown of the Council's costs for providing the various types of interment that it offers.

**Recommended:**

That, the matter be deferred to a meeting of Policy, Governance & Finance to allow Officers to provide further information.

*(The Responsible Financial Officer left at 7:05pm)*

H628 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received the report and verbal update of the Venue & Events Officer providing an update and further details of proposed capital expenditure.

The Committee received specifics of the proposals having earlier in the meeting been presented with the costs when they reviewed the capital cost items for 2025/26.

Members welcomed the details provided however, asked that additional information be provided by Officers along with detailed costings in respect of the changes to the website and replacement kitchen.

Members also asked that Officers contact West Oxfordshire District Council to confirm if any form of permission was required for the hanging of the flags at the side of the Corn Exchange.

The Committee was pleased to hear of the request from Witney & Abingdon College to host a charity stall outside the Corn Exchange to support adults with learning difficulties and wholly supported the idea.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, Officers explore further the cost of the change to website provider and,
3. That, Flags and flagpoles for the alleyway be procured at a cost of £504 subject to due diligence being carried out in respect to the need for planning permission and,
4. That, a replacement internal wooden framed noticeboard be purchased up to a cost of £200 and,
5. That, two new noticeboards for the front of the Corn Exchange be agreed up to a cost of £1,000 and,
6. That, Officers explore further the options for a replacement kitchen and for the costs to be added to the Business Plan along with details of potential offerings and profits and,
7. That, these recommendations, some for 2025-26 be subject to approval of the Policy Governance and Finance Committee and,
8. That, the Public Halls cancellation policy be readopted and reviewed in 12 months and,
9. That, the request received from Witney & Abingdon College to host a charity stall outside the Corn Exchange be agreed.

*(Councillor D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting at 7:23pm – The meeting adjourned due to being inquorate till 7:25pm when he returned)*

H629 **CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report along with a verbal update from the Deputy Venue & Events Officer (DVEO) concerning the recent and upcoming events in the public halls.

Members were reminded of the Advent Fayre which required their assistance so as to be able to run effectively. All Members acknowledged the importance of the free event to the children of Witney.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

H630 **CLOSED CHURCHYARDS & ST MARY'S CHURCH UPDATES**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair and Officers following their meeting with church representatives.

**Holy Trinity - Woodgreen**

Members heard that tree works were due to be carried out as planned. It was also noted that the church grounds were an excellent wildflower area and that there had been compliments to this effect.

**St Marys – Church Green**

The Committee heard the churchyard would soon be cleared and tidied by members working under the Probation Service. Also, that the Town Council had recently completed the repairs to the church walls.

Members expressed their disappointment with the repairs of the footpath/right of way which had been carried out by Oxfordshire County Council. Officers advised that they had requested an update on the works from OCC however, it had not been forthcoming, they would continue to follow this through. It was suggested that details be forwarded to Councillor Enright so that he may also follow up as a County Councillor.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, Officers forward details to Councillor Enright so that he could follow up progress of the pathway with OCC Highways.

H631 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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.

H632 **WITNEY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**

Members considered further the earlier discussions regarding the issue being experienced by the Witney Allotment Association.

Following a proposal Members agreed that an AGM was necessary in order for the Association to move forward. The Council was supportive of the WAA separating into two separate associations.

**Resolved:**

That, the Town Clerk and Chair meet with the remaining representative of the WAA Committee to ask that the AGM to called.

H633 **PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO which concerned one of the Councils building assets.

Members also received a verbal summary of the history of the lease arrangements along with a verbal update from the Head of Estates & Operation regarding the current condition of the fabric of the building.

The Committee welcomed the report and praised the Town Clerk on the comprehensive detail provided.

Members were unanimous in agreement with the options proposed being further explored by the Town Clerk, however the need for repairs to the roof should not wait and as funds allowed, these repairs should be made.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, on receipt of updated quotes, the Council funds the repair of the roof at Langdale Hall from earmarked reserves (366) as a priority and,
3. That, future lease and building options are further explored and fully costed before being brought back to the next meeting of the Committee on 20 January 2025.

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The meeting closed at: 7.58 pm

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Chair

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Public Halls Report  
**Meeting Date:** Monday 20 January 2025  
**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer

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### Background

The Corn Exchange is a unique public building in the centre of Witney providing vital facilities for the community that includes arts and theatre, the 1863 Café, and halls for weddings, music events, and more offering charitable concessions. The building also acts as a point for refuge in the event of local disasters.

### Current Situation

#### Local Film & Media Student – Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake

The Venue & Events Officer has been approached by a local student who has produced a film set in Witney, it's a full-length feature and the request is to support with a premiere on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> June. The request is for free use of the Main Hall to screen the film, with Witney & Abingdon College being invited to come and watch, as well as reaching out to the school's media students to see if they would like students to attend.

This could be a great opportunity for the Council to support local artists and promote local creativity with the recommendation being to host the event as a free entry event to encourage as many people as possible to attend with WTC taking money from any bar revenue on the night. The cost of a full subsidised let would be £160 Hall Hire and £120 for bar staff, the duty manager would accrue TOIL.

Link to Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxCdkRrGIY>

#### Corn Exchange Gallery Room Conferencing Equipment

Officers have worked with Cloudy IT to finalise the setup of the recently installed conferencing equipment in the Gallery Room. With their support the Officers will produce a user guide which will be available to all groups looking to hire the space for video conference meetings, or to simply use the projector and screen.

The project will be finished to a high standard and will be completed by the end of January, this will then allow all future WTC meetings to have the option to utilise the new equipment.

## **Corn Exchange Website**

Officers held discussions with the current website provider, Rumbi Ltd, to understand the full potential of the website. The feedback from Rumbi is that the website can be refreshed and tailored to suit our needs. The current platform works well on the 'What's On' page but otherwise the site needs overhauling to get the most benefit for the Council.

Officers have made suggestions to improve the current set up, with The Old Fire Station in Oxford being discussed as a good base model to look to replicate on our platform. It uses the same website engine (WordPress) but looks a lot slicker than ours. The designer has taken this on board and will look to implement some visual changes to the site for approval before going live.

There are two additional key areas that were identified which would maximise the use the website and which have been identified to make a difference for staff. Firstly, the implementation of a digital Box Office where the key difference would be to do away with the need for Event Brite, enabling Officers to set up payment details, input performer account details and set the ticket split if that's what's agreed. There would be no real difference for a customer looking to book tickets, just a visual difference. The benefit for the Council is a saving on each event ticket purchased of 6.95% of the ticket value plus £0.59 per ticket.

Secondly, Officers have asked Rumbi to explore the options available with an integrated calendar on the website, the thinking is that this would allow people browsing at home the option to book a room at either hall without having to call and confirm.

This could potentially provide more hiring opportunity as these could be booked at any time if people had access to the website. It might be that full autonomy might not be an option, instead there could be an option to hold a date online, that information would come through to bookings staff and we can then contact the person who has made the enquiry to support with their request. This would need to align with the new overall booking system currently being researched.

By utilising and maximising the existing website it is the opinion of Officers that the current provider will be suitable and provide a good level of continuity for the Corn Exchange brand. Officers have a good working relationship so this could be a factor in continuing to use Rumbi. Any additional costs will be evaluated and presented to the Council before any decision is made and implemented.

## **Flags**

The four flags and flagpoles which would be located down the side on the Corn Exchange have been researched and specifications have been sent to local printing companies to see if they can be competitive against online prices. Once purchased and installed they will be photographed and added to all visual marketing.

It is the hope of the Officers that by having this visual brand identity permanently on show, that this will increase both visibility of the hall as well as allowing hirers to promote their own events if they purchased their own flags which could be interchanged when required. All third-party flags would only be permitted under permission from Officers. Strict criteria will be provided as to the content and colours of the flags, as well as the restrictions surrounding timings, content etc.

### **Digital Notice Boards**

The Venue & Events Officer has contacted the planning and conservation officer at WODC and has had initial feedback that this might not be permitted. Additional research and discussions are currently underway. At this point it has been indicated the most likely outcome would be to continue with the current set up, an idea was discussed for additional signage in the form of a digital noticeboard installed in one of the front windows of the hall, having spoken to users of the café and café staff, the Officers feels that this is not viable option as any display in the windows would restrict visibility both into and out of the hall.

### **Internal Notice Board**

A new internal noticeboard has been purchased to be located at the bottom of the stairs in the Corn Exchange. This will be to replace the existing glass fronted notice board which looks dated and out of place in situ with the recent redecoration.

The old notice board may be able to be repurposed at a future date, potentially in the works team depot. Alternatively, it could either be sold or gifted to a local school or organisation which might require it.

The backboard colour has been chosen as lead grey to compliment the carpet on the stairs and in the Gallery Room.

### **Corn Exchange 1863 kitchen Facilities**

It has been decided that the current facilities in the Main Kitchen of the Corn Exchange are continued to be used, the cost vs reward of a complete refurbishment doesn't adhere to current budgetary restrictions. All current kitchen equipment will be maintained to the highest standard, and when any item becomes unsuitable this will be replaced with upgraded and commercial specification items.

The first items that will need to be considered in due time are the glasswasher in the small kitchen and the oven in the larger kitchen.

There is an underlying issue with the current kitchen set up as the it was originally developed without the café in mind. When the kitchen was refurbished, the plan was to leave it as a blank slate for any hiring group to use as they see fit. The ideal scenario was to utilise induction hobs which could be brought in for an event then removed once it had finished. With the introduction of the café the kitchen use changed significantly with most of the usage coming from 1863 with only a couple of groups looking to use it. These groups usually use it

for drinks but there is still a cross over with the café and hirers. If the FSA were to inspect, it is difficult for the café staff to guarantee that the cleanliness is at the level where it needs to be if there are factors out of their control.

If the café is to continue as it is, and more importantly, to grow turnover, the preferred option would be to restrict third parties from using the kitchen, and develop the facilities. WTC staff would then be responsible for any kitchen requests made by any hiring group. Any increase in costs to provide this arrangement will be monitored.

It is recommended that any future kitchen development keeps this in mind as the initial reason for having the café and bar was for it to work as an ancillary function of the Corn Exchange, not to be the dominant business in the hall.

If WTC want to change the direction of the café, it is important to get the right decision made for both the customer and the future growth of the business.

### **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Providing a supportive environment for people to express themselves through creativity.
- b) Environment & Climate Emergency – The continued running of the hall with additional winter running costs

### **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.

No risks identified for this report.

### **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The social value of supporting a local enterprise (film) when considering subsidised hall hire for local film premiere

### **Financial implications**

- The cost to WTC of hosting and staffing for screening of Los Banditos. 2 x bar staff plus duty manager. The cost of a subsidised let would be £160 for Hall Hire and additionally £120 for bar staff (4 hours).
- Purchase of new kitchen equipment as and when necessary, to be fully costed before purchasing.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and

1. That subsidised use of the Main Hall is granted for a local media student to premiere his film, to be advertised free entry to generate support. At a cost of £160 (Hall Hire) and £120 (Staffing).
2. Approve recommendation for third parties to be excluded from using the kitchen to enable hygiene standards and safe working practice to be maintained.

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Corn Exchange Business Report

Meeting Date: 20th January 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Venue & Events Officer

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The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the events that have taken place since the last committee meeting and report on forthcoming events in the diary.

### Background

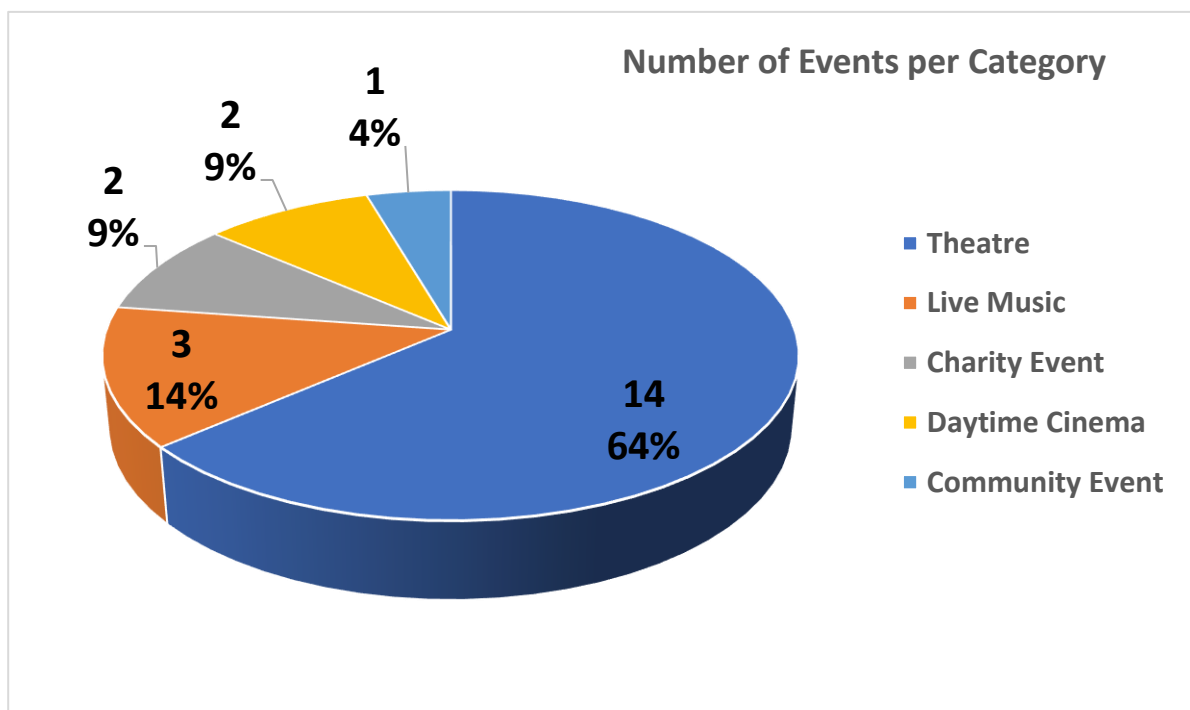
Witney Town Council has an obligation and objectives to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and community arts facility that is valued and supported by the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire.

This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

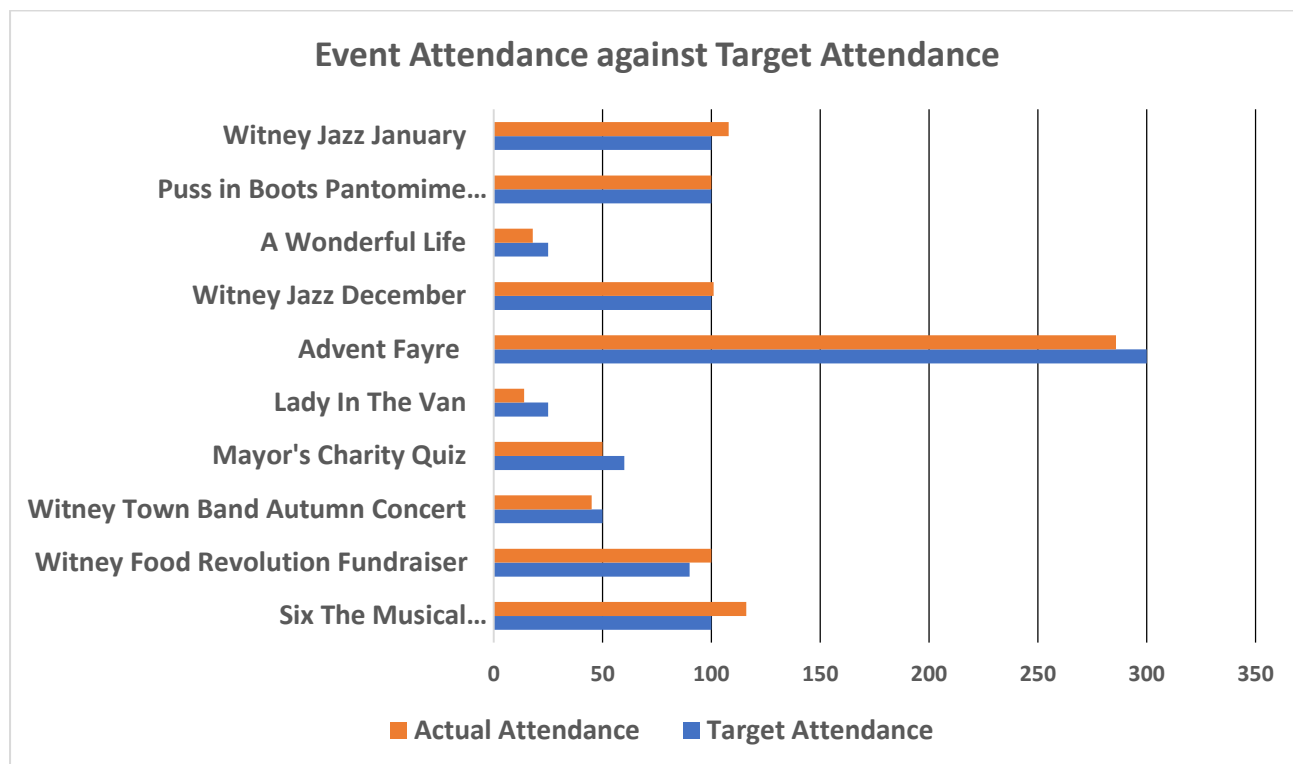
The Council will provide a professional, well-maintained, and run hireable space for private events including parties, weddings and conferences.

### Current Situation

The graph below shows the number of events hosted by category, since the last report in November 2024.



The table below shows attendance figures for each event at The Corn Exchange since the last report, alongside a target attendance to show how each event is performing in line with officers' goals and expectations.



The figure shows that the events in November and December 2024 have been well attended, in relation to their target attendances. It shows that, some work needs to be done to increase the daytime cinema attendances slightly, to reach the target of 30 attendees per screening by the end of January.

## Recent events

### Wedding

At the end of November 2024, The Corn Exchange hosted a Wedding Ceremony and Reception, totalling over 100 guests. The Wedding was hugely successful, with much appreciation from the couple. Lots of work went into the planning and delivery of this event, specifically to ensure the bar requirements were met. Due to the nature of the event and number of guests in attendance, this was one of our most lucrative bar takings of the year.

### Puss In Boots Pantomime – Buttercross Theatre Productions

The Corn Exchange ended 2024 with a run of “Puss in Boots” Pantomime shows by Buttercross Theatre Productions. We’ve seen heaps of praise on social media regarding this show and greatly appreciate the efforts put in by Buttercross Theatre to put on multiple successful show at The Corn Exchange throughout the year.



### Six Teen Addition – Buttercross Theatre Productions

Buttercross Theatre also hosted a Teen Addition of “Six” in early November. These shows had a great turnout, and officers are glad that the venue can provide a space for young people to get into performing arts.

### Advent Fayre

Officers would like to firstly thank the councillors who volunteered their time to help with Advent Fayre this year. Due to a wedding taking place in the hall the night before, the set up was a much bigger job this year, so we appreciate the support received.

This year’s event ran in a very similar way to last year, with booking slots used to help control the flow of attendees. When planning this year, we reviewed last year’s event analysis and decided we should increase the number of total attendees, and decrease the number of entrance slots, thus bringing the finish time of the event forward an hour.

The tables below breakdown the structure of the booking slots, number of bookings and number of attendees from 2023 vs 2024. The total bookings increased by 81 from 317 to 398, however, total attendance only increased by 44 due to a lower percentage turnout this year. Whilst increasing the percentage turnout is a goal for next year, the data shows that this event remains popular amongst the families of Witney and can be deemed a success.

## 2023

Booking Slots	Booked	Attended	% Turnout
10:00 - 12:00	40/40	31	78%
10:30 - 12:30	40/40	29	73%
11:00 – 13:00	40/40	30	75%
11:30 - 13:30	40/40	30	75%
<b>Session total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Break</b>			
14:30 -16:00	40/40	33	83%
15:00- 17:00	40/40	30	75%
15:30 - 17:30	40/40	29	73%
16:00 – 18:00	37/40	30	81%
<b>Session total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>78%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>76%</b>

## 2024

Booking Slots	Booked	Attended	% Turnout
10:00 - 12:00	66/66	49	74%
10:30 - 12:30	66/66	48	73%
11:00 - 13:00	66/66	51	77%
<b>Session total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>Break</b>			
14:00 -16:00	66	51	77%
14:30 - 16:30	66	46	70%
15:00 - 17:00	66	41	62%
<b>Session total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>72%</b>

### Witney Town Band Autumn Concert

The Corn Exchange hosted Witney Town Band for an autumn concert in November, which welcomed around 50 attendees. The band were grateful for the support of Witney Town Council and were very happy with the venue, stating that they would love to stage another concert here in 2025.

### Witney Food Revolution Fundraiser

Witney Food Revolution held a very successful fundraising event at The Corn Exchange in November. The event was very well attended with 100 attendees making the event a sell-out. The organisers were extremely thankful to the venue & events team for their support with this event.

## **Daytime Cinema**

The attendance for the daytime cinema have plateaued over the last month, slightly below target. However, as this event is low cost to run, and provides community value to an audience of mainly elderly people, officers are keen to continue this event.

## **Upcoming Events**

The Corn Exchange will continue to host the regular repeated in-house and third-party events below:

- Open Mic – First Thursday Every Month
- Witney Jazz – First Friday Every Month
- Tea Dance – Every Wednesday
- Daytime Cinema – Every other Tuesday
- Multiple Classes hosted by Buttercross Theatre – Every Week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday
- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

Officers have been working hard programming the first half of 2025 and look forward to the following events that are now confirmed in the diary, with many more to be finalised in the coming weeks.

- Young Elton – 21<sup>st</sup> February
- Decades Disco (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event) – 22<sup>nd</sup> February
- Wedding Singer BTP – March
- Shadowing Hank – 5<sup>th</sup> April
- What you will – 19<sup>th</sup> April
- West End Magic – 26<sup>th</sup> April
- Take @ That – 31<sup>st</sup> May

Following suggested interest for Folk music in Witney, plans are developing for an indoor Folk festival featuring local and national Folk Artists. However, this is still in the early planning stages and a date is yet to be decided.

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality - The concept of equality when reporting on events is very important to the council, as it ensures fair and impartial coverage of all events and social groups within the community to reflect fairness, representation, and inclusivity.
- b) Biodiversity – Officers focus on the broader context of their actions when organising event to maintain the Council's environmental and conservation efforts.

- c) Crime & Disorder – Council policies and operational processes adhered to by Officers include a multi-faceted approach that integrates crowd control, prevention of criminal activity, security planning, and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Officers assess the risks relating to events ensuring the necessary due diligence, reviews, sign off and monitoring is completed. Post event analysis data is used to review opportunities for continuous improvement.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Careful consideration is given to the environmental and climate impacts to reduce negative effects and promote sustainability. Many aspects of event planning by the Council include venue location, transportation, recycling, local produce, and energy usage. By incorporating sustainable practices into every stage of event planning, the Council aims to reduce the environmental impact, create a positive attendee experience, and help lead the way for more responsible event management in the future.

## **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.

Managing risks for Council events is a crucial aspect of event planning and requires careful thought to ensure the safety and success of all events. The Council's risk management control measures for events covers legal considerations, safety protocols, insurance, and other key factors ensure these are delivered successfully.

## **Social Value**

The Corn Exchange is registered as a warm space this winter, providing a cosy refuge from the cold, as well as a welcoming environment for socialising and engaging in conversation.

The Corn Exchange also hosts some events with a community focus.

- Open Mic – Provides a supportive environment for beginner local musicians perform and allows more established local artists a chance to share original music.
- Daytime Cinema – An affordable daytime activity, specifically an opportunity for pensioners to have a warm activity during the winter.

## **Financial implications**

The Corn Exchange is operating and aligned with the 2024/2025 budget with no forecasted risk of annual overspend.

All events are evaluated from the planning stage to post event analysis to manage financial risk and maximise income.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report.

Week commencing	25th Nov	2nd Dec	9th Dec	16th Dec	23rd Dec	30th Dec	6th Jan	13th Jan	20th Jan	27th Jan		
<b>CORN EX 2024 - 2025</b>												
Hours booked	59.98	45.00	29.50	48.00	22.00	21.00	24.50	30.50	25.50	39.00	<b>344.98</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	71.40	53.57	35.12	57.14	26.19	25.00	29.17	36.31	30.36	46.43	<b>29.34</b>	<b>Average %</b>
<b>SAME PERIOD 2023 - 2024</b>												
<b>CORN EXCHANGE</b>												
Hours booked	44.50	59.98	43.00	24.00	19.00	26.00	14.00	45.00	26.25	36.00	<b>337.73</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	52.98	71.40	51.19	28.57	22.62	30.95	16.67	53.57	31.25	42.86	<b>29.34</b>	<b>Average %</b>
<b>GALLERY 2024 - 2025</b>												
Hours booked	46.48	30.00	13.50	14.00	0.00	0.00	17.50	32.00	43.00	32.50	<b>228.98</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	55.33	35.71	16.07	16.67	0.00	0.00	20.83	38.10	51.19	38.69	<b>19.47</b>	<b>Average %</b>
<b>SAME PERIOD 2023 - 2024</b>												
<b>GALLERY</b>												
Hours booked	29.00	44.23	10.00	3.00	4.00	6.00	21.75	55.00	15.75	20.25	<b>208.98</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	34.52	52.65	11.90	3.57	4.76	7.14	25.89	65.48	18.75	24.11	<b>17.77</b>	<b>Average %</b>
<b>Burwell Hall</b>												
<b>MAIN HALL 2024 - 2025</b>												
Hours booked	41.50	45.00	37.50	39.50	0.00	4.50	40.50	35.50	39.50	40.00	<b>323.50</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	49.40	53.57	44.64	47.02	0.00	5.36	48.21	42.26	47.02	47.62	<b>27.51</b>	<b>Average %</b>
<b>SAME PERIOD 2023 - 2024</b>												
<b>MAIN HALL</b>												
Hours booked	42.50	41.50	38.75	43.98	10.98	15.00	41.00	36.00	34.00	38.00	<b>341.71</b>	<b>Total Hrs</b>
Usage Percentage	50.60	49.40	46.13	52.36	13.07	17.86	48.81	42.86	40.48	45.24	<b>29.06</b>	<b>Average %</b>

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

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Burial Fees  
**Meeting Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
**Contact Officer:** Operations Manager

### Background

It was proposed to the council at the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2024 that a more considerable rise in burial charges should be considered above the proposed 2% increase to ensure the Council was covering its burial costs. Councillors wanted to ensure these rises in burial charges were comparable to similar-sized town councils.

### Current Situation

There are two areas to understand why it is important to ensure the council is covering its cost incurred from burials. There is the initial financial impact of the burial, but sometimes overlooked is the ongoing maintenance of that grave and the cemetery. There is a justifiable financial impact from this ongoing maintenance of the cemeteries as it falls under the general upkeep of Witney Town Council grounds and the cemeteries do act as recreation grounds. However, interment cost is directly linked to an individual who has made a decision to procure a parcel of land and has an expectation of service standards.

The Councils' current costs to excavate a double-depth grave at Windrush are estimated at around £1500 These costs are calculated from labour hours, fuel, materials and administration. The figure is a lower estimate of the true cost as most graves require additional labour, officer time and administration. The figures also do not equate to the deterioration, replacement and general maintenance of machinery and tools or the ongoing maintenance of a grave for a year after interment.

Witney Town Council's current charge for a double-depth grave with exclusive rights of burial is £1436, £791.50 for the interment costs and £644.50 for the EROB. Although not common there is no requirement to purchase the EROB, so an applicant can inter someone for £791.50 representing £708.50 loss for the council.

From a review of surrounding council burial charges, it appears there is no set fee, but the average works out to be around £1500 to inter someone at double depth with the ERBO purchase. This is still above Witney Town Council's agreed 2% increase for the 2025-26 year bringing interment and EROB charge to a total of £1465.

	Double Depth	Purchase of Exclusive rights of burial
South Oxford district council	£684	£412
Oxford City Council	£640	£1050

Abingdon on Thames Town Council	£900	included
Cotswold District council	£920	£1200
Aylesbury Town Council	£600	£1096

## Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – an increase in charges could disproportionately effect more disadvantaged parts of the community.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct impact from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from this report.

## 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 outlined in the report, if Witney Town Council chooses to go ahead with its agreed 2% increase, each burial will represent a financial loss for the council. Although the proposed increased charge is minimal in relation to the total cost of a burial any larger increase above what is traditional could be viewed negatively.

## Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- Increased charges are a means of maintaining financial sustainability for cemetery and burial services.
- To sustain the long-term viability of the Council's burial services, ensuring they remain available and of high quality.
- Higher burial charges will help towards the funding of the ongoing maintenance and improvement of Witney's cemeteries, ensuring that they are well-maintained, accessible, and respectful places for families to visit.

## Financial implications

- Increasing all interment charges by 6.3% would help to cover interment costs and help bring charges in line with the surrounding area.
- Committing to the agreed 2% increase for EROB purchases.

## Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. With the information provided in the report decide if a rise in burial charges for 2025-26 is required.

# WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

## SCHEDULE OF BURIAL CHARGES For Tower Hill and Windrush Cemetery Effective from 1st April 2025

All charges shown are for residents of Witney. Interments and Purchase of EROB are doubled in the case

	2024-25	2025-26 Proposed based on 2% but see footnote	2025-26 Proposed based on 6.3%
of non-residents			
<b>1. Interments - Charges apply to late cancellations.</b>			
a) Foetal remains pre 24 weeks gestation	no charge		
b) Baby in baby plot	£269.50	£275.00	£286.50
c) Under 18 yrs if using Child Size grave double depth	£399.00	£407.00	£424.00
d) Under 18 yrs Second burial in existing double depth Child Size grave	£251.50	£257.00	£267.50
e) Double depth grave Adult Size grave	£791.50	£807.00	£841.50
f) Second burial in existing double depth grave Adult Size grave	£503.00	£553.00	£535.00
g) Interment of ashes for person	£175.50	£179.00	£186.50
h) Burial in single depth grave at Tower Hill Cemetery	£582.50	£640.00	£619.00
<b>2. Purchase of Exclusive Right of Burial (EROB)</b>			
<b>LEASE PERIOD: ADULT 30 YEARS: CHILD 90 YEARS</b>			
a) Exclusive right of burial for a baby	£ 218.50	£ 251.00	
b) Exclusive right of burial for child under 18 years of age	£ 321.50	£ 370.00	
c) Exclusive right of burial for person over age of 18 years	£ 644.50	£ 741.00	
d) Exclusive right of burial for family ashes plot (Tower Hill)	£ 423.00	£ 486.00	
e) Exclusive right of burial for ashes plots	£ 233.50	£ 269.00	
<b>3. Use of Tower Hill Chapel (Includes VAT)</b>	£ 129.00	£ 132.00	
<b>4. Memorials and Memorial Inscriptions</b>			
a) For the right to erect an approved memorial - baby	£ 68.00	£ 69.00	
b) For the right to erect an approved memorial	£ 196.00	£ 200.00	
c) For the right to place a desk tablet 18" x 18" (Windrush Cemetery)	£ 169.00	£ 172.00	
d) For each additional inscription (to include moving of headstone if required)	£ 81.00	£ 83.00	
e) For the replacement of an existing memorial	no charge		
<b>5. Memorial Plaques on Wall of Remembrance at Tower Hill Cemetery</b>			
a) Reservation of plaque space on memorial wall	£30.50	£31.00	
b) Small/large plaque including fixing	£60.50/£82.50	£62/£84	
<b>6. Transfer of Exclusive Right of Burial Deed</b>	£42.50	£43.00	
<b>7. Charge for Late Arrival at Cemetery</b>	£166.50	£170.00	
Per hour, charged in 15 minute increments			
<b>8. Administration Charge for Burial Searches</b>	£30.50	£31.00	

Some of the charges listed above are subject to The Children's Funeral Fund for England and can be reclaimed

Some additional charges may apply for example graves over 28" wide, removal of spoil or cancellations.

We will advise if these apply