

# Public Document Pack

## Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

### Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



**Monday, 19th January, 2026 at 6.00 pm**

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - R Crouch, J Robertshaw, R Smith, O Collins, A Bailey, G Doughty, D Temple and J Treloar (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 8(e)(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 3 - 7)**

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee held on 10 November 2025;

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 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

**Public Halls**

5. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 8 - 14)

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

6. **Corn Exchange Business Report** (Pages 15 - 19)

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

**Allotments**

7. **WAA - Request to install raised beds at Lakeside Allotments** (Pages 20 - 22)

To receive and consider a request from Witney Allotment Association to approve and fund the installation of raised beds at Lakeside allotments.



Town Clerk

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

**Held on Monday, 10 November 2025**

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

**Present:**

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	J Robertshaw	D Temple
	R Smith	J Treloar
	O Collins	J Doughty (In place of A Bailey)
	G Doughty	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	None	

**H624 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Bailey, Councillor J Doughty attended as a substitute and Councillor O Collins had advised that he would be arriving late to the meeting.

**H625 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

**H626 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 8 September 2025 were received.

H496 – In response to Members questions the Head of Estates & Operations confirmed that two ditches between the Witney Hotel and Lakeside Allotments had been cleared by the Town Council. Members also heard that the cost of the Hydrologist report was due to the extent of the report and that this was more investigative than a flood risk assessment.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,

2. That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 8 September 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H627 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

*Cllr O Collins joined the meeting at 6:06pm*

H628 **FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2026/27**

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

The RFO provided additional verbal commentary to the points outlined in his report and responded to Members' questions regarding his thoughts ahead of the Chancellor's budget announcement on the changes to Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme.

He also advised Members that following discussions held since writing his report that the cost of insurance was likely to increase more significantly, as much as 40%, citing a number of reasons given by insurers. The Committee were reminded that the councils insurance policy was agreed on a Long-Term Agreement, details of the new premium would not be known until January 2026 at the earliest as insurers were reluctant to agree this more than three months ahead of the renewal date.

The agreement of the draft revised base revenue budget for 2025/26 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2026/27 was proposed by Councillor D Temple and agreed by members unanimously.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted.
2. That, the draft revised base revenue budget for 2025/26 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2026/27, as detailed be approved.

H629 **REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS, AND CAPITAL PROJECTS**

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

Members were requested to provide their views on items detailed in the report for further consideration in the 2026/27 budget setting.

The Committee heard clarification that the amount required to install hearing loop technology into the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall would be in the region of £6,000, this being £2,000 per area of the building and that the costs of the installation of a New Ashes section at Windrush as detailed in Agenda Item 11 could be covered from an existing Cemeteries earmarked reserve.

In relation to improvements to Burwell Hall a request was made by a Member for a separate budget line to be created to monitor the spending of its green initiatives; Members heard that proposals for the decarbonisation improvements would be presented by the Compliance &

Environmental Officer to the Climate Action Working Party at their next meeting with details being provided to this Committee in due course.

Following a Member's question, the Town Clerk confirmed that improvements to the Langdale Hall would be the responsibility of the tenant and that both the Project Officer and the Head of Estates and Operations were working with them to bring about the creation of a new lease to facilitate improvements.

Following a proposal from Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr J Doughty the Committee were unanimous in agreement with the reports proposals and the additional request for a separate budget line for Burwell Hall.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a budget line related to Green Initiatives for Burwell Hall be created and,
3. That, that the Revenue Growth and new Capital items be agreed by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

**H630 SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED FEES & CHARGES 2026/27**

The Committee received and considered the details of the proposed increase to Halls & Cemeteries costs from April 2026.

Members heard of the general increase of 4% to burial fess and 5% for Halls related charges which reflected the additional cost to the Council and also aligned with the Council's medium term financial strategy and that the Council would continue to charge double fees to those accessing burial services who live outside of the parish.

In response to a Member's question, the RFO responded to confirm that the costs of running the two cemeteries were not fully recovered by the burial fees charged due to the significant ground and general maintenance costs, such as the tree works required at Tower Hill. A full review of costs had been provided to the Committee as requested in January 2025.

**Recommended:**

That, the proposed 4% increase for burial fees and 5% for Halls charges for 2026-27, be agreed.

*The RFO left the meeting at 6:24pm*

**H631 PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer (VEO).

Members discussed the proposal to relaunch the Corn Exchange seat sponsorship and following additional consideration of the level of rewards to be offered to donors, the Committee agreed unanimously to proceed with the launch of the scheme on 1 December 2025 as proposed. However, they asked for further clarification on the minimum ordering of plaques to ensure these were placed within a reasonable timeframe following their purchase.

The Committee welcomed the additional information provided on the introduction of hearing loops into the Main Hall, Gallery Room and Café/Bar area of the Corn Exchange. Members were unanimous in agreement with increasing the budgeted amount to £6,000 to account for these additional units.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the relaunch of the seat sponsorship proceeds and,
3. That, the sum of £6,000 be added to the budget requirements for 2026/27 to finance the installation of hearing loops.

*The RFO returned to the meeting at 6:37pm*

**H632 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

Members were pleased to hear that the Café income had risen 20% year on year and that it had received the award of best café in Oxfordshire which they believed recognised the hard work of all the staff involved.

They welcomed the feedback of events activity and the proposed planned events that they felt continued to expand and promote the use of the Corn Exchange.

**Resolved:**

That, the report be noted.

**H633 PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the updated Corn Exchange Business Plan prepared by the Venue & Events Officer.

Members heard of the ideas being explored which included revisiting the potential of introducing National Theatre cinema events which had seen changes to its offering since the last review. Also, potential improvements to the existing kitchen were discussed, it was noted that although options were limited due to the limited space, a small budget should be set to improve storage and for the purchase of new or replacement professional catering equipment.

The Committee agreed with the proposal to include the Café 1863 in the business plan as this would bring together both events and bar revenues and would evidence and further support the transition from a traditional public hall to an arts centre venue.

Members also heard that changes would be proposed to create a minimum bar spend agreement for private event hirers. This would be presented at the next meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 24 November.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a budget be set for improvements to the Corn Exchange kitchen and,

3. That, the Café 1863 be included in the Corn Exchange Business Plan and,
4. That, the idea of national Theatre live be explored and,
5. That, that future reviews of the business plan be presented to the committee in May and November of each year

*The Venue & Events Officer left the meeting at 6:54pm*

**H634 WINDRUSH CEMETERY - NEW ASHES SECTION**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager which provided further details of the proposal for the introduction of the new ashes section at Windrush Cemetery.

Members were pleased to hear that the proposal had the support of the Friends of the Cemeteries group and that all the feedback received from existing users by Officers during their investigations of what was a niche market, was positive.

A Member raised the illustration of the breakdown of figures for the new vault solutions; it was believed that it gave an indication that the Council would be profiting from the sale of these plots when the reality was that only initial outlay costs would be being recovered.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the proposal as detailed in the report for the new ashes section at Windrush Cemetery along with the proposed charging schedule be progressed and,
3. That, a budget of £25,000 to install 40 burial vaults & 20 Trident Vaults in the new ashes section be approved and,
4. That, a budget of £1,500 be approved for the initial purchase of 20 ashes urns and,
5. That, it be delegated to officers to set additional guidelines in line with current cemetery guidelines for the new ashes vault section.

**H635 WITNEY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION - REQUEST FOR PLOT CLEARANCES AT NEWLAND ALLOTMENTS**

The Committee received a request for help clearing two plots at the Newland Allotment site, linked to the new fencing and replacement sheds the Council had already approved.

It was noted that the request had not been formally made via the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) and would incur additional labour/disposal costs due to the volume of waste involved. The Town Council had not previously undertaken such work, which had historically been arranged and funded WAA and Members expressed concern that agreeing to the request could establish a precedent for future cases.

**Resolved:**

That, the request for Town Council assistance in clearing two plots at Newland allotments be declined and referred to the Witney Allotment Association.

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The meeting closed at: 7.04 pm

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Chair

## HALLS CEMETRIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Public Halls Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January

**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer

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The purpose of this report is to provide updates and seek direction on the management of the Town Council's two public halls. These important community venues must be well maintained and effectively operated to meet local needs and support the Council's strategic objectives.

This report outlines a proposed Minimum Spend Policy for private hire of council managed bars, reviews the public halls booking cancellation policy and provides any other updates relating to the management of the public halls.

### Minimum Spend Policy

#### Background

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall are regularly hired for private and exclusive events where bar provision is not included in the standard hire fee. Opening the bar for such events generates additional costs, including staffing, utilities, additional setup, and close-down time. The current policy means that **private event hirers** of the Corn Exchange or Burwell Hall who wish to have bar service in addition to venue hire, are charged a flat hire rate of £50.00 per event. This rate applies regardless of the event's duration, size, number of staff or bar takings. This figure, initially intended to cover costs, has remained the same since the bar has been in place at the Corn Exchange and has not risen in line with operational costs. A minimum spend policy proposal was presented at the Policy, Governance and Finance committee meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Members requested that the officer defer the report to the Halls Cemeteries and Allotments Committee on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January, with additional detail on how the policy can be effectively enforced whilst mitigating deterring potential hirers.

#### Current Situation

A revised "Private Bar Hire" loss-prevention policy has therefore been developed to ensure cost recovery without imposing arbitrary or excessive conditions on private hirers. The below policy is designed to minimise deterrent of potential hirers and focusses on prioritising loss-prevention, transparency in communication and providing the hirer with a choice.



## How The Policy Works

Where a private hirer requests the bar to be opened, the hirer must select one of the following two loss-protection mechanisms.

### Option 1: Cost-Based Minimum Bar Spend

A minimum spend calculator has been built (*figure 1*), estimated using direct staffing costs and overheads per event, to suggest a minimum spend on an event-by-event basis. The minimum spend figure is designed to aim for a 15% net margin, providing a small buffer which further protects the bar from operating at a loss. The cost values inputted into the calculator will move in line with increases in operational and staffing costs and will be guided by the RFO.

A loss-preventing minimum spend figure will be calculated and quoted to the hirer at the point of booking enquiry, based on their event requirements.

Event Details	Value	Notes
Number of bar staff	2	Based on Event requirements and number of guests
Event Duration	6	Includes set up / pack down of bar
Hourly rate per staff (£)	£16	Includes ER NI
Additional Staffing hours	0	Supporting staff during event for bar purposes only (e.g. Glass collecting, welcome drinks extra staff for busier period)
Additional fixed costs (£10 per hour)	£60	Estimated additional overheads for operating bar (water, electricity etc.)
Estimated number of guests	70	To calculate number of staff required and spend per head
Average Bar Stock Margin	59%	
<b>COST CALCULATOR</b>		
Total Staffing Cost	192	
Additional fixed costs (£)	60	
<b>Total Fixed Cost</b>	<b>252</b>	
Estimated Breakeven Sales	£512.54	(Fixed cost / average margin) X 1.2
<b>Minimum Spend (15% net margin)</b>	<b>£589.42</b>	((Fixed cost X 1.15) / average margin) X 1.2
Spend per head	£8.42	Information for hirer

*Figure 1*

Where a hirer elects a minimum bar spend, a **refundable deposit equivalent to the total fixed cost figure** will be taken. This ensures the venue is protected against loss while allowing the hirer to recover the cost through bar sales. If the event falls short of the minimum spend, the difference is deducted from the deposit. The hirer is only liable up to the deposit amount, as this is a loss-prevention policy, charging above that would be profit-maximising.

### **Option 2: Cost-Based Flat Fee**

The hirer can choose to pay the fixed cost figure as a flat, non-refundable fee, meaning there are no minimum spend requirements for their event. Whilst at face value this looks like an obvious 2<sup>nd</sup> best choice financially, there are some reasons why hirers might choose this option. Some people will value certainty of cash-flow, less post-event admin and avoiding tracking and encouraging bar consumption during the event.

Having the fixed-cost and deposit for minimum spend as equal figures, ensures the policy remains focused on protecting the venue from loss. The cost of running the bar for the event is calculated transparently and outlined to the hirer, so neither the fixed fee nor deposit for minimum spend should exceed this figure. If the fixed fee were lower than the deposit, it would imply that either the fixed fee does not actually cover costs, or the deposit overstates the financial risk on the venue. Likewise, if the fixed fee is higher than the deposit, it implies that the fixed fee is being charged above the actual cost of operating the bar.

By offering a choice between a fixed, known cost and a capped, variable cost, the policy removes uncertainty, avoids a mandatory minimum spend, and allows hirers to select the option best suited to their event, thereby reducing the likelihood of deterring bookings.

### **Introduction and Administration:**

The proposed policy is straightforward to implement:

- Existing booking systems and point-of-sale software can easily track, and record spend levels against each event. This can be easily accessed via the till during the event to inform the hirer of the spend progress.
- The terms and conditions of hire would be updated to outline the new bar hire policy and the two options of covering the cost.

### **Delivering the Policy:**

- The venue & events team will handle all private bar hire enquiries, ensuring the policy is explained clearly to the potential hirers.
- Communication and reasoning for the policy will centre around covering operating costs and staff will provide re-assurance to the hirers explaining how the minimum spends are set to be realistic.
- Avoiding defensive and negative language such as “you will be charged” or “penalties” etc. will solidify that the policy isn’t trying to maximise profit and minimise deterrence of hirers.

### **Local Community / Charity Events (Group 1)**

Currently, the council offers a discounted Venue Hire rate for Charities and Local Organisations, with the same £50.00 charge applied if they wish to hire the bar for their event. The proposed policy and its charges are only cost-covering and therefore any reduction would be putting the cost risk onto the council. Members should consider the following options for Local Community / Charity Events:

#### **1. The proposed bar hire policy applies equally to Community and Charity Events (Group 1), as it does to Private Hire Non-Charitable Events (Group 2).**

Pros:

- Keeps the policy simple and consistent for all types of hirers
- Remains neutral, avoiding allegations of preferential treatment.

Cons:

- May price out small or volunteer-led community events.
- Could appear insensitive to socially beneficial events

#### **2. Group 1 bookings are charged a flat 50% (or other suggested discounted rate) of total staffing costs for the bar, using the same calculator.** This means the council takes on 50% of the risk of staffing costs whilst keeping the venue accessible.

Pros:

- Keeps bar affordable and reduces deterrence.
- Still recovers some staffing costs, so no unmitigated financial risk.
- Simple to calculate and explain, appears fair to hirer.

Cons:

- Council takes on a portion of staffing cost risk (though still less than current policy in most cases)

#### **3. The group is given the choice of a flat fee (50% staffing costs) or the same amount as a deposit towards a smaller minimum spend (estimated breakeven sales).** This creates a similar condition as for private hirers, with the council taking on a small amount of risk to maintain accessibility.

Pros:

- Allowing choice aligns with private hire model
- Limits financial risk to council

Cons:

- Complex policy: difficult to explain to the hirer and outline the benefit and discount they're receiving, may deter them
- Overkill for small community events

#### **4. Keep the current flat fee policy, currently set at £50.00 – Officers recommend that if this option is preferred, a rise to at least £75.00 is considered.**

Pros:

- Keeps the bar accessible for charities and community groups
- No administration changes to the policy
- No extra deterrent to hirers

Cons:

- Charge not related to operating costs

- Significantly below the operating costs for most events
- Unscalable – punishes lower cost events.

## 12-Month Review of Cancellation Policy

The cancellation policy was updated to reflect the type of booking and is summarised by the table below. The policy considers income lost, likelihood of replacing booking, work completed for the booking and reputational damage.

Booking Type	Booking Deposit	50% Cancellation Fee	75% Cancellation Fee	100% Cancellation Fee
Standard Hall/Room Hire (Group1/2)	Zero	N/A	N/A	Less than 72 hours' notice
Commercial and Sales (Group 3)	25% at point of booking	Less than 14 days' notice	N/A	Less than 7 days' notice
Party / Function	25% at point of booking	Less than 14 days' notice	N/A	Less than 7 days' notice
Show (group 4)	25% at point of booking	Less than 28 days' notice	Less than 21 days' notice	Less than 14 days' notice
Weddings	25% at point of booking	Less than 2 months' notice	Less than 1 month notice	Less than 14 days' notice

The cancellation policy has been in use for numerous bookings over the last 12 months with no backlash or complaints received. The policy remains appropriate for the activities of the public halls, protecting them from loss of income and reputational damage relating to public facing booking cancellations.

## 1863 Local Art Display

Officers are exploring the possibility of using one of the walls in the café to display local artwork. This will involve reaching out to local artists looking to advertise their work for sale, offering slots for a period of time. The wall on the right-hand side as you enter the Corn Exchange previously displayed photographs of Witney, on loan from a local photographer, who has recently collected those pictures leaving an opportunity to freshen up our display. The location is ideal for a public art display as it is open to the public consistently, in comparison to the Gallery Room which is regularly used for private hire.

## Quality Control

WTC can open applications to display artwork with no guarantee they will be accepted. This ensures that the artwork displayed is in keeping with the Corn Exchange and 1863 Café and is inoffensive in nature.

## Financial Implications

Members should consider whether this is an activity the council would like to offer and whether to do it free of charge to local artists or charge a commission for any sales generated via the display. Once a decision is made, officers can begin to implement this project. Officers advise the following for consideration:

- Rolling out the proposal and displaying the artwork will take up a small amount of officer/staff time
- The Corn Exchange already possess the equipment needed to display the artwork

## 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 – No impact
- b) Biodiversity – No impact
- c) Crime & Disorder – No impact
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – No impact

## Risk

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

- The current bar hire policy opens the council to financial risk of operating the bar at a loss for private hire events. The new policy is designed to mitigate this risk by avoiding operating at a loss for non-community purpose events, demonstrating responsible use of public asset.
- Enforced high-level minimum spends could deter hirers. Mitigation:
  - **Transparent, loss-prevention approach.** Keeps the spend requirement low and fair to the hirer.
  - **Providing a choice:** we are outlining the cost of operating the bar to the hirer and allowing them to choose how to cover it.
  - **Providing evidence-based figures:** Using the calculator above to provide a minimum spend figure and EPOS sales reports to determine deposit deductions/refund.

## Social Value

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

- This policy will maintain accessibility to the council's venues, whilst protecting the council from operating certain events at a loss.
- The 1863 Local Art Display proposal will support the council's mission to use The Corn Exchange as a hub for local arts.

## **Financial implications**

- Zero asset / software cost to introduce and uphold the new proposed bar hire policy. EPOS system already in place to provide figures needed.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the approval of the Bar Hire Policy for Private Event Hires
2. Consider the options for Charity / Community events bar hire and decide which is the most appropriate
3. Consider the approval of the 1863 Local Art Display and any charges to be associated with it

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



**Agenda Item:** Public Halls Business Report

**Meeting Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer

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. The report also provides an update on the recent business of 1863 Café & Bar.

### 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.

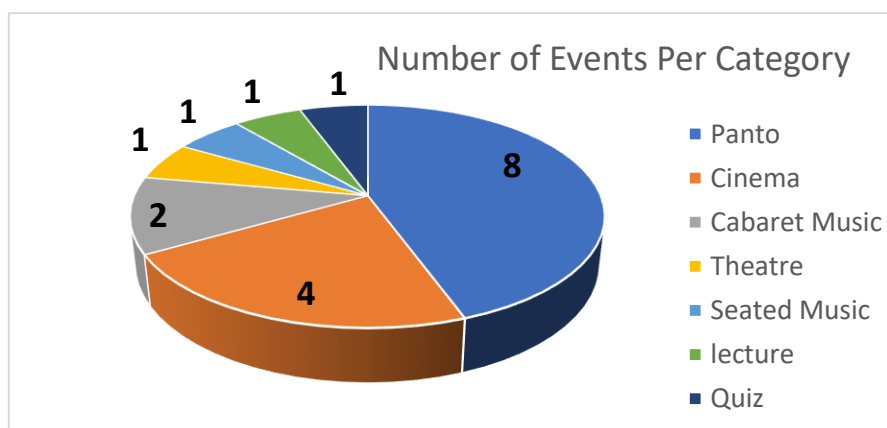
This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

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

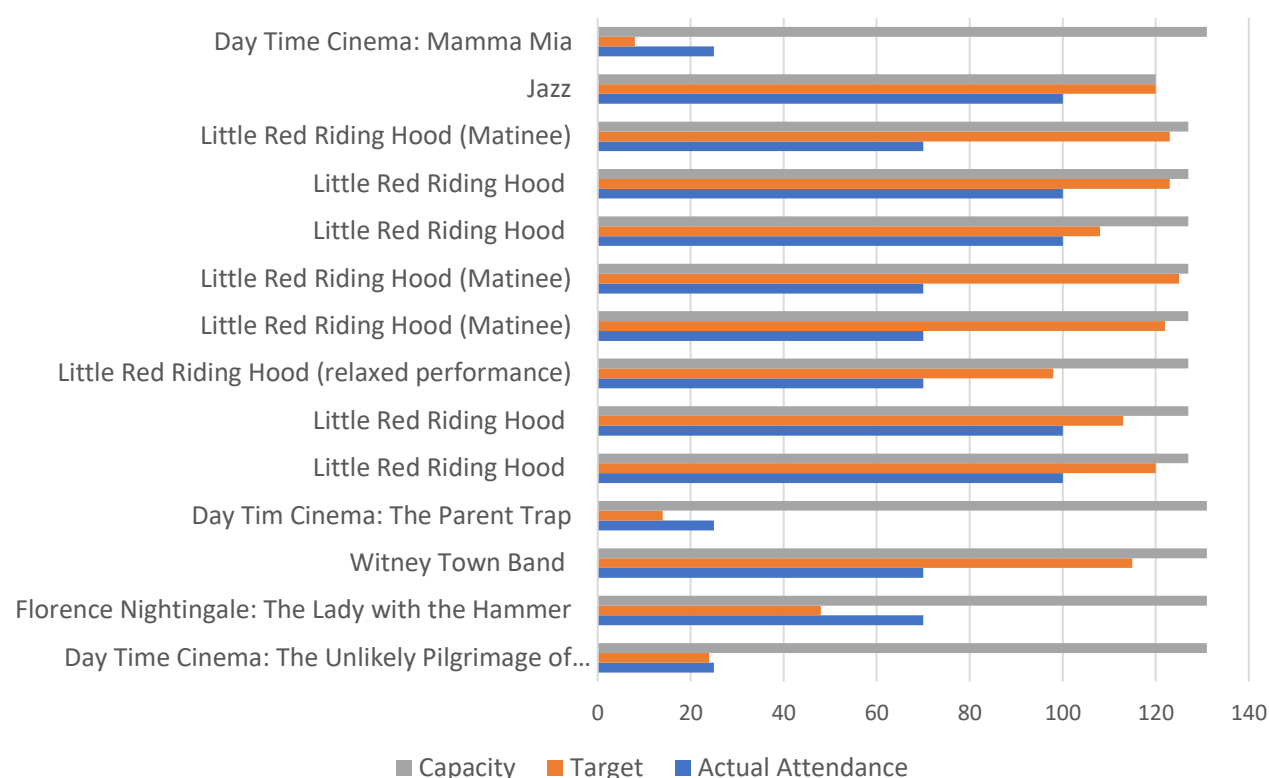
### Current Situation

The Venue & Events team have been working hard to deliver a range of in-house and third-party events.

The graphs below show the number of ticketed events hosted by category, since the last report in November 2025, and attendance figures (where available) 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. Each event capacity has also been included, upon request from members.



## Capacity, Target and Actual Attendance per Event



## Recent events

### Witney Town Band Autumn Concert

Witney Town Band hosted their annual performance in the main hall at The Corn Exchange. This event furthers our positive relationship with the Town Band as we continue to work with them on other events hosted throughout the year. The event was well attended and the organisers felt it was a great success.

### Day Time Cinema

The Day Time Cinema hosted 3 films since the November 10<sup>th</sup> with two further films in late January early February. Attendance has remained consistently low though those in attendance do express their positive feeling for the cinema. In January we have trialled a 3 for £10 ticket offer to encourage return customers while most attendees bought into the deal it did not have an effect on the overall attendance figures; however it may see an increase in ticket sales for the following 2 screenings given the advance purchases already received.

### Witney Jazz

The Witney Jazz events continue to be a popular addition to our events program, with very good levels of consistent attendance. These events utilise the flexibility of the venue by combining a partial amount of tiered seating, with cabaret tables for an intimate jazz club atmosphere. Impressively, the Witney Jazz show on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January sold out.

### Witney Blues



Officers are delighted that the Little Live Music company, who promote the regular Witney Blues shows, have continued to host additional shows under a new brand "Music Box Events". This continues to add diversity to our events program and further builds on an already positive relationship with these event organisers. These shows have continued to prove popular with high attendances recorded.

### **Advent Fayre**

Advent Fayre was once again a great success for the local community. The event was fully booked within a week of tickets becoming available. This event offers local families with young children a free festive activity that is inclusive to a variety of ages and ability levels. Suggestions and feedback have been gathered for next year to continue to develop and grow this community focused event. Officers appreciated the support and attendance by councillors.

### **Quiz Night**

In December The Corn Exchange reconnected with the quiz master from the Mayor's Charity Quiz events that had previously been held. Despite a short advertising period this event was a success with a 75% attendance and minimal expenditure. We will be hosting another quiz at the end of January with the intention of starting a regular quiz night.

### **Panto**

Buttercross Theatre Productions produced Little Red Riding Hood, their annual pantomime across the last few weeks of December. The pantomime continued to be a success in 2025 with high attendance figures. This event is popular with local families and school groups.

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have also hosted several private events including regular group meetings, private parties, presentations etc.

## **Upcoming Events**

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

- Witney Jazz – First Friday Every Month
- Tea Dance – Every Wednesday
- Multiple Classes hosted by Buttercross Theatre – Every Week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- Specsavers Coffee Morning – 1st Thursday of the month
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday
- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

### Upcoming Public Ticketed Events:

- 20<sup>th</sup> January - Day Time Cinema Presents: The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
- 23<sup>rd</sup> January - Lets Twist Again! Rock & Roll Dance Party
- 30<sup>th</sup> January - Quiz Night
- 3<sup>rd</sup> February - Day Time Cinema Presents: Sunshine on Leith
- 6<sup>th</sup> February - Witney Jazz Presents: Gripper & Jeffery Quartet
- 21<sup>st</sup> February - Angry Boater
- 27<sup>th</sup> February – Young Elton

- 28<sup>th</sup> February - The Dung Beatles – The Beatles Years & Beyond
- 7<sup>th</sup> March - Witney Jazz Presents: Marvin Muoneke Classic Swing Quartet
- 14<sup>th</sup> March - Decades Disco
- 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March - Return to the Forbidden Planet

## **1863 Café & Bar**

The 1863 Café & Bar has increased in popularity year-on-year. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April, overall takings from the Café and Bar are up 19.5% on the same period in 2024. This positive figure can be attributed to several factors. Good summer weather allowed us to maximise use of the pavement license on the square coupled with the Tunes on the Square event series providing consistent weekly trade. Improved reputation has led to more regular repeat café customers. An increase in event frequency and focus on promoting drinks for private events by the bar manager has encouraged an increase of bar sales.

The Cafe & Bar Manager hosted two successful fully booked Christmas Afternoon Tea events in December. The events carried a warm and welcoming festive atmosphere, incorporating local carol singers and were delivered with top quality service by the councils dedicated staff. The customer feedback was very positive and the events will be repeated next year.

## **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 events 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, providing people with an opportunity to connect through shared experiences, reducing loneliness.
- 1863 Café provides affordable hot drinks and has enabled social connection for lots of elderly people. Sharing tables is encouraged which allows us to serve more customers and creates a warm and friendly atmosphere.

## **Financial implications**

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

## **Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report.

Dear Councillors

*Having cleared an area around the Lakeside toilet, we're hoping to install a number of raised beds as an alternative to the full and half plots we presently offer at Lakeside. We would hope to offer these to current plot holders who are finding their plots difficult to manage, but who are understandably reluctant to lose the benefits that having an allotment brings, as a way of freeing up plots for reletting. Having done some initial research, our preference is for metal raised beds - easier to construct; easier to move; and potentially longer lasting - but have yet to decide which would be best value for money. We would hope to have your agreement in principle to fund the project from the allotment improvement fund, with a maximum budget set in the same way as the cost of the replacement sheds at Newland was agreed. As a ballpark figure, we expect the whole cost to be in the region of £2500 to £3500 depending on the quality and shape of the beds bought, the flexibility of shape possible from the kit, the cost of soil to fill them, and any work around the beds to meet health and safety concerns about access. Construction will be by volunteers from the Lakeside community. and we would hope to have them installed in time for the start of the new season once we have made our final decision on make and design. We believe that this proposal should also be seen in the context of the Council's Strategic Development Plan, achieving far more than simply providing a couple of more plots for people on the waiting list. In particular, it would not only enhance an existing community space at Lakeside but promote inclusivity by extending the opportunity for older members to continue to stay connected to what is an important contributor to mental and physical wellbeing.*

*Please see below for a summary of the request:*

1. Aim -
  1. To install a number of raised beds as an alternative to full and half plots.
  2. Offer to Lakesiders finding plots difficult to manage as a way of freeing up plots for reletting
2. Advantages
  1. Better management of the waiting list.
  2. Better use of the site - previously neglected areas brought into cultivation.
  3. Will extend the range of plot sizes in line with the national picture
  4. Will keep longstanding Lakeside tenants connected to the Association with all the advantages it brings to them personally through exercise and community involvement.
  5. Will potentially reduce issues of under cultivation.
  6. Consistent with the aims of the Strategic Development Plan.
3. The bid
  1. Type of raised bed
    - Metal rather than wood
      - Easier to construct
      - Long lasting
      - Easier to relocate
  2. Shape, size
    - Rectangular or u shaped depending on best fit in the area. If rectangular, size is approximately 4 metre x .8 x .45 to .8 metre. See

*pictures below for u shaped dimensions, and appearance of both shapes.*

3. *Number*

- *Depends on shape of beds selected, but if rectangular, 6 in the first instance, to accommodate approximately 3 extra tenants; if u-shaped, 3 for the same number of tenants.*

4. *Estimated rental income*

- *£10 per "plot"*

5. *Estimated cost*

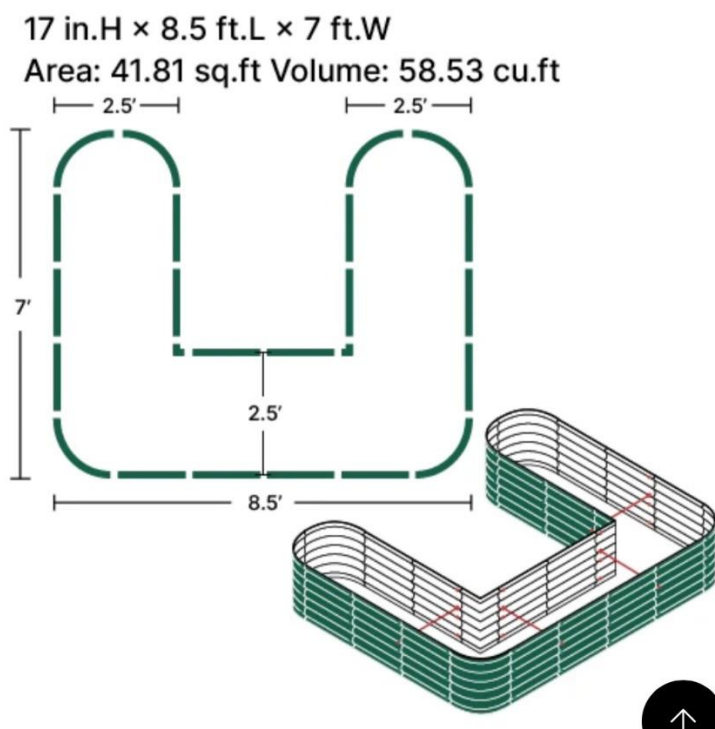
- *£2500-£3500 as detailed above to include:*
  - *Cost of beds*
  - *Cost of soil*
  - *Groundwork around the beds*

***Rectangular beds already installed at Lakeside***

***Dimensions of possible U-shaped beds***

These U shaped raised garden beds offer improved pest resistance and season extension. They also allow for better soil life, drainage, and root growth.

## Configuration



## Actual view of u shaped beds

