

Public Document Pack

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 19th May, 2025 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 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 **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. Election of Vice-Chair

To elect a Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

4. Minutes (Pages 4 - 8)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 17 March 2025;

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress any item).

5. **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.

6. **Committee Terms of Reference** (Pages 9 - 10)

To review the Committee Terms of Reference (TOR) if appropriate.

7. **Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year** (Pages 11 - 14)

To receive and consider the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O concerning the priorities of this Committee during 2025/26.

Public Halls

8. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 15 - 18)

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

9. **Corn Exchange Business Report** (Pages 19 - 25)

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

10. **The Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Consultation - Toilet Provision in Public Halls**

To note (formulate or delegate a response if appropriate) the upcoming EHRC public consultation following the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of "sex" under the Equality Act 2010, and to consider any implications for the provision of single-sex and staff toilet facilities at the Corn Exchange and other public halls. Further information available on this following link: <https://dwfgroup.com/en/news-and-insights/insights/2025/4/ehrc-interim-guidance-a-practical-update-following-the-supreme-court-decision>

Allotments

11. **Lakeside Flooding Options** (Pages 26 - 28)

To receive and consider the report of the Operations Manager.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 17 March 2025

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	R Smith
	D Edwards-Hughes	O Collins
	J Robertshaw	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Zoe Henstridge	Administrative Support - Halls & Green Spaces
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
Others:	Four members of the public.	

H143 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Aitman.

H144 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

H145 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 21 January 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 21 January 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

H146 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from four members of the Witney Allotment Association who thanked the Council for their assistance with their recent Annual General Meeting.

The Committee reconvened.

All Members of the public left the meeting at 6:05pm.

H147 FINANCE REPORT

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 clarification to questions submitted before the meeting by a Member which related to cemetery income, target setting, and the application of staff costs. The Member thanked the RFO for the comprehensive responses.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee for the period up to 31 January 2025 be approved.

H148 PUBLIC HALLS REPORT

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

Members were supportive of a Thames Valley Air Ambulance clothing bank being placed adjacent to Burwell Hall due to the mitigations in place by the charity. As the clothes were to be sold on, it was requested communications be conveyed that only clothing with future use should be deposited.

The Committee also welcomed updates on a local film screening, Gallery Room conferencing equipment, installation of an internal notice board, and flag poles. With the latter, a question was raised by a Member to see if they could fly twinned town flags during the anniversary weekend in May.

Finally, a Member asked if seat sponsorship in the Corn Exchange Main Hall could be re-tasked to officers per a previous resolution on the project.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, permission be granted to Thames Valley Air Ambulance Charity to locate a clothing bank adjacent to Burwell Hall.
3. That, seat sponsorship in the Main Hall of the Corn Exchange be re-explored by officers.

H149 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer which outlined the recent events and hirings at the Corn Exchange.

Members were pleased to see a wider variety of successful events and associated ticket sales, including a decade's disco but asked if the hall capacity could be added to future reports for reference.

The Committee also considered the request to permit essential companion tickets and agreed a policy would bring the Corn Exchange in line with similar venues. The policy would be for town council run events and could provide a certain number, for example four or five. It would be difficult to insist hirers of the hall must do the same, but it should be included in the terms and conditions that Witney Town Council operates this policy and encourages event promoters to offer the same.

In addition, the report advised smoke/haze effected were being explored and a Member requested whether the Council could offer an O.A.P discount as well as the companion tickets, although understood this may result in the viability of events.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, maximum capacity is included with target attendance in future reports and,
3. That, an essential companion tickets policy be approved for town council run events in the Corn Exchange and;
4. That, an amendment be added to the terms and conditions for third party event hire in the Corn Exchange encouraging promoters to also offer essential companion tickets.

Cllr Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly during the following item between 6:40 and 6:42pm

H150 PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the updated Business Plan action plan provided by the Venue & Events Officer.

Members welcomed the updates to the action plan for the year which helped track progress and demonstrate this to others. They noted it was a live document and provided a moment in time for public hall improvements.

Resolved:

That, the updated action plan be noted.

H151 CEMETERY & BURIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager, with accompanying review of cemetery and burial regulations.

Members welcomed the review which would ensure compliance with legislation and offer clear guidance for residents and funeral directors on what was permissible. Key changes were highlighted by officers in the report and once agreed by the Council, they would be communicated to customers.

The Committee also noted officers had consulted the Friends of the Cemeteries forum on their thoughts which had been favourable to the changes.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, the reviewed cemetery regulations be recommended for approval and;
3. That, delegation be provided to officers to complete any formatting changes before being published.

Cllr O Collins left the meeting briefly between 6:51 and 6:53pm

H152 CLOSED CHURCHYARDS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager.

Members discussed the re-wilding areas at both Holy Trinity and St Mary's churchyards, noting the success of the former. With St. Mary's there was acknowledgement that this wildflower area had not been as successful; this was alongside a key right of Way and entrance to Witney Town centre and it would be more welcoming if the area was better kempt.

It was agreed officers should meet with the Churches eco group to discuss future options and a costed strategy based on the requirements to be an eco-churchyard while considering the cost to the Council for continuing maintenance.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, officers meet with the churches eco group to discuss re-wilding options for St Mary's churchyard.

H153 FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERIES

The Committee received the notes of the Friends of the Cemeteries meeting held on 5 March 2025.

Members welcomed the notes which showed a positive and productive meeting regarding a range of issues and projects in the cemeteries. They were particularly pleased to see funeral directors would be invited to future meetings.

Resolved:

That, the minutes be noted.

H154 ALLOTMENT SITE PROVISION

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the provision of allotment sites.

Members were informed that this item had been included following a request from a member of the public to assess whether the Council's allotment provision was sufficient. The waiting list for allotments in Witney was notably high, and while there was no legislation specifying the required number of allotment plots an authority must provide, it was noted that there were varying figures, including best practice to mark them against. Based on the figures provided, the Council's current provision exceeded them in some areas but fell short in others, especially when calculated as full plot equivalents.

The Committee determined that its current strategy of waiting for land to be allocated or requested from large developments was appropriate, given the limited availability of affordable land within the parish and its surrounding areas. However, it acknowledged the need to adopt a more proactive approach in ensuring that the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) was effectively managing the existing plots and to stay vigilant for any new land opportunities which may arise.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the current Council strategy of obtaining allotment land from larger developments be continued and;
3. That, the Council should be vigilant to any suitable and affordable land opportunities and;
4. That, the town council requests the Witney Allotment Association updates their waiting list and takes action to free up unkempt or unused allotment sites. Following this it would be able to assess provision with more accurate figures.

H155 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.

H156 WITNEY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair and Leader of the Council following the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) Annual General Meeting held on 16 March 2025.

Members were advised the WAA had agreed to retain an over-arching Committee with a joint treasurer and waiting list co-ordinator with two separate sub-committees. These would be named North and South; South would contain Lakeside and North would contain the current remaining allotment sites with each of these having their own Chair and Secretary. The main Committee would meet twice a year.

The Committee were hopeful this would resolve any administrative issues within the organisation and thanked Councillors and officers for their input. The WAA resolution re-affirmed the decision of the Council taken on 25 November 2024.

Recommended:

1. That, the verbal update be noted
2. That, the recommendations of the Witney Allotment Association, as set out by this committee on 25 November 2024 be re-affirmed, thereby creating North and South sub-committees.

The meeting closed at: 7.35 pm

Chair

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Terms of Reference

Meeting Date: Monday, 19th May 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is for Members to review and recommend terms of reference for the Committee for the forthcoming municipal year.

Background

At the Annual Council Meeting held on 7th May 2025, it was resolved that terms of reference for each Committee would be reviewed at each meeting in the current meeting cycle.

Current Situation

The current terms of Reference for the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee are:

- a) To operate, maintain and control the Corn Exchange, Burwell Hall, Langdale Hall and Madley Park Hall in all matters relative to their use as public halls be it through direct management or via trusteeships;
- b) The operation of such other buildings as the Council may from time to time acquire if so instructed;
- c) To operate and maintain the Cemeteries, burial responsibilities and associated duties, consequential to Statutory or Council requirements, together with the War Memorials;
- d) To carry out the Council's obligations with regard to the Closed Churchyards of St Mary's and Holy Trinity.
- e) To maintain and supervise the Park Road Allotment site and oversee the management of Hailey Road, Lakeside, Newland and Windrush Place Allotments whilst leased to the Witney Allotment Association;
- f) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- g) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

The Committee is asked if it would like to make any amendments to the terms for the forthcoming municipal year. The Committee may like to consider the following:

- (e) To oversee the management of Hailey Road, Lakeside, Newland and Windrush Place Allotments whilst leased to the Witney Allotment Association.
And,
- To oversee the development and management of the Corn Exchange (including the 1863 café bar) as a community hub and arts centre in line with the Council's vision and long-term business plan for the venue.

- Within all its decision making ensure that the green environment and biodiversity of public open spaces is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations.
- To oversee any development and investment in Council-owned public halls, and the supporting infrastructure, ensuring they meet the needs of the community, remain safe and compliant.

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 direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

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.

Without clear terms of reference, Council committees face significant risks including role confusion, lack of accountability, and potential legal challenges. This can lead to inefficient decision-making, strategic misalignment, resource misallocation, and reduced transparency. The absence of defined responsibilities and authority undermines governance, impairs stakeholder trust, and can result in poor outcomes that do not align with the council's objectives. Clear, regularly reviewed terms of reference are essential to ensure effective, transparent, and accountable committee operations.

Social Value

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

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Review the terms of reference; and
2. Consider any changes to the terms of reference; and
3. Recommend such changes be made to Full Council on 23rd June 2025.

HALL CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year

Meeting Date: Monday, 12 May 2025

Contact Officer: Town Clerk/CEO

The purpose of this report is to give consideration to this Committee's objectives/priorities for the municipal year in order for the Town Clerk to ensure there is a manageable programme of works, and to deploy the necessary resources appropriately.

Current Situation

The Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee is responsible for overseeing the Town Council's public halls, cemetery grounds, closed churchyards, and allotments. The Committee has been working through some historical/long term aspirational projects to fulfil its mandate to transform the Corn Exchange into a vibrant community arts centre, while simultaneously addressing essential maintenance priorities for aging infrastructure and facilities under its management.

These dual responsibilities reflect the Committee's commitment to both enhancing community cultural assets and ensuring the sustainable stewardship of the Town's ceremonial and recreational spaces. The Committee manages several properties and facilities that require ongoing maintenance and improvement. Below is a summary of projects that are completed, in progress, or scheduled for future implementation.

Completed Projects:

- **Corn Exchange Internal Decoration:** Gallery Room, Café/Bar & stairs completed at a cost of £4,993
- **Corn Exchange Storage Solutions:** Additional storage cupboards created to accommodate furniture
- **Burwell Hall Heating System:** Upgraded at a final cost of £31,729
- **Burwell Hall Blinds:** Installed in the hall at a cost of £2,250
- **Burwell Hall Toilets:** Ladies & Gents toilets refurbished at a cost of £13,152
- **Burwell Hall Security Upgrades:** installation of CCTV installation.
- **Madley Park Hall:** The major issue of the dividing wall/doors has been resolved by installing smaller doors. This was funded through the contingency set aside for maintenance under the Landlord obligations provided in EMR 329; the cost was approximately £8k.
- **Langdale Hall:** Roof repairs carried out at approx. cost of £16k funded through EMR.
- **St Mary's Church Wall:** As a Closed Churchyard, the Town Council maintains responsibility for the perimeter dry stone wall. A substantial section of wall repairs was completed earlier this year at a cost of £34,588, funded through EMR 376.

Additional restoration work remains necessary but has been temporarily suspended while the Council prudently allocates budget reserves and Officers secure the required faculties for the next phase of restoration.

Projects In Progress:

- **Memorial Maintenance:** The Council has an obligation to carry out periodic inspections in the cemeteries and closed churchyard. Previously the Council has used an external specialist to undertake these inspections; however, the Operations Manager has brought this inhouse and will be undertaken when resources allow. A substantial EMR (A/c 318) is set aside.
- **Corn Exchange Door Entry System:** Approved by full Council. Officers are refreshing the quote to include linking to the fire alarm system.
- **Corn Exchange Seating Sponsorship:** Officers Scoping the best way to proceed with this project.

Projects in Preparation Pool/Part or Unfunded:

- **St Mary's Church Wall:** Additional restoration work remains necessary but has been temporarily suspended while the Council prudently allocates budget reserves and Officers secure the required faculties for the next phase of restoration.
- **Cemetery Access Road:** This relates to Windrush Cemetery and providing an internal road when/if the entrance off Cogges Estate is agreed as part of the Witney East development. EMR A/c 327 currently stands at approximately £150,000.
- **Tower Hill Cemetery Buildings:** Being an old Victorian cemetery with two Chapels, EMR 362 of £21,500 is set aside to maintain these historic buildings. Open Spaces Strategy Ref **IS3** applies to undertake a full options survey of the unused buildings at the cemeteries. Status: £10,000 budget set for survey to be commissioned to appoint professionals for an options appraisal, which has not yet been progressed.
- **Corn Exchange Lift Replacement:** EMR 363 of £40k is held for the replacement of the lift when it fails or needs replacing.
- **Langdale Hall:** Working with tenants on a programme of external repairs to help improve energy efficiency rating and the longevity of use.
- **Allotment Capacity:** Open Spaces Strategy Ref **LP1** applies Continued work on seeking options to increase allotment capacity. Land has been requested for allotments in both North Witney and East Witney developments.

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** - Projects are designed to improve accessibility to Town Council facilities for all residents. Particular attention is being paid to ensuring halls and community spaces are accessible to people with disabilities.

b) **Biodiversity** - The Committee is integrating biodiversity considerations into cemetery and allotment management, including pollinator-friendly planting in appropriate areas and sustainable management practices.

c) **Crime & Disorder** - Security upgrades at public halls incorporate measures to deter anti-social behaviour and improve public safety.

d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** - Energy efficiency improvements in public buildings and sustainable management practices in cemeteries and allotments contribute to the Council's climate emergency commitments.

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.

When considering its priorities, the committee should be mindful of all resources -- financial as well as human resources -- and the competing demands from other Committees. There needs to be a clear programme of works to ensure that the council is realistic in what it can achieve in the next 12 months.

Key risks identified:

1. Aging infrastructure in historic buildings requiring increasing maintenance
2. Limited resources to address all identified projects simultaneously
3. Rising costs of building materials and services affecting project budgets
4. Potential delays in faculty approval for church wall repairs
5. Competing priorities across multiple Council properties

Social Value

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

The Committee's work programme delivers significant social value through:

- Providing well-maintained community halls that support social cohesion and community activities
- Ensuring dignified and accessible cemetery facilities for residents
- Supporting healthy lifestyles and food sustainability through allotment provision
- Preserving historical buildings and structures for future generations
- Creating spaces for community gathering and engagement

Financial implications

The financial implications are detailed in the report. Key points include:

- Several major projects are funded through Earmarked Reserves
- Ongoing maintenance requirements need to be factored into future financial planning
- Rising costs may necessitate review of project scopes and priorities

- Some projects may require additional budget allocations in future years

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and review and approve the priority order of projects for the 2025/26 municipal year

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Public Halls Report

Meeting Date: Monday 19th May 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide updates and seek direction for the operation and management of the two public halls under the ownership and management of Witney Town Council. These facilities serve as vital community spaces for events, meetings, and public activities, providing an accessible environment for residents and local organisations. It is important that these halls are maintained to a high standard, both in terms of physical condition and service delivery, to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community and support the Town Council's strategic objectives.

Background

In line with the Witney Town Council's commitment to creating vibrant, inclusive public spaces, the operation of these halls must align with council policies and ensure that they remain accessible, well-maintained, and effectively managed. As part of its overarching mission, the Town Council has set forth several guidelines regarding the management, booking, maintenance, and use of these halls to ensure they are operated in accordance with the highest standards of safety, accessibility, and community engagement.

Current Situation

While the recruitment process for a new Venue and Events Officer is underway, the Deputy Venue & Events Officer has taken the lead in maintaining the safe and high-quality delivery of operational services across Public Halls and Events, and is able to provide the following report

Flags Project – Update and Revised Proposal

Following a review of the previous proposal to install decorative and promotional flags using the existing flagpole brackets on the side of the building, several practical and aesthetic concerns have been identified. The current positioning of the brackets is too low to accommodate flags of a sufficient size to achieve the desired visual impact. Additionally, the flags would hang within reach from ground level, potentially increasing the risk of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Considering these concerns, the project is being reconsidered with a view to identifying a more effective and visually appropriate solution. One option under exploration is the installation of building-mounted vertical banners, similar to those commonly seen on theatres and other public buildings nationwide.

Due to the Grade II listed status of the building, any alterations will require consultation with the Conservation Officer to determine what changes, if any, are permissible under planning and heritage guidelines.

Although further investigation is required, an initial quotation for a similar banner type has been received at a cost of £239 (excluding VAT) per unit. Based on the current approved budget, this would allow for the purchase of two banners. Each banner could feature a different design on either side, enabling the same visual presentation from both directions of approach to the building



Example of Banner on Old Fire Station Oxford

TVAA Clothes Recycling Unit

An agreement has been signed with the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Recycling Solutions for the placement of a clothes recycling unit outside Burwell Hall. This is due to be delivered and installed on Wednesday 14th May 2025.

Internal Notice Board

The new internal notice board has been installed in the corridor at The Corn Exchange.

Los Banditos Screening

The film has been certified by WODC licensing team as suitable to screen for ages 15 and above. Officers have a copy of the film and will view this ahead of the screening as well. The premiere is now advertised, and tickets are available to purchase.

Advent Fayre – Recommendation for 2025 Event

Following two successful years, characterised by strong attendance figures and positive community feedback, it is recommended that the Advent Fayre be held once again as a free event for the children of Witney. The proposed date for the 2025 Advent Fayre is Sunday, 30th November 2025.

In order to deliver the event efficiently and cost-effectively, voluntary support from Councillors is essential. A minimum of six volunteers per session is required to ensure the smooth running of the event. Volunteer duties will include welcoming attendees and checking bookings, supervising activity stalls, and assisting in the management of the grotto.

Each session will last approximately three hours, with an additional 30 minutes required before and after each session for set-up and tidying. Any roles not covered by volunteers will need to be fulfilled by Town Council staff.

The event will be overseen by a designated member of the Public Halls and Events team, with 1863 café open to attendees and operated by the council's café operatives.

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) Biodiversity – All matters relating to Biodiversity will be considered when making decisions for both halls – The recycling of clothing provides many benefits such as conserving water resources and minimizing waste and pollution, ultimately lessening the strain on natural habitats and ecosystems
- c) Crime & Disorder – The continued use of halls as a safe space
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Recycling of clothing also reduces the demand for new raw materials and energy and avoids the release of methane from decomposing textiles

Risk

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

1. The **TVAA** recycling bin at Burwell, if not managed properly could look untidy and cause negative reaction to the local community. RS have stated that they will respond promptly to any reports of items being dumped in this location.

Social Value

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

1. By allowing the **TVAA** clothes recycling bin to be installed at Burwell Hall, WTC will be supporting an accessible way for the community to reduce textile waste, support sustainable practices, and extend the life of usable clothing through reuse or responsible recycling.
2. The Advent Fayre provides a free activity to families of Witney at a typically expensive time of year, offering a joyful and inclusive experience without the financial burden that often accompanies the festive season. For families who may be struggling, this event creates a rare opportunity to celebrate together, enjoy seasonal activities, and feel part of the community, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Financial implications

- Members should be aware of the staff time and costs to manage these sessions in the event of the lack of availability of councillors.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Decide whether to host the Advent Fayre again in 2025.
2. Decide if the flag project should be revisited as per the plans above and the relevant permissions to do so perused.

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee



Agenda Item: Public Halls Business Report

Meeting Date: Monday 19th May 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy 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.

Background

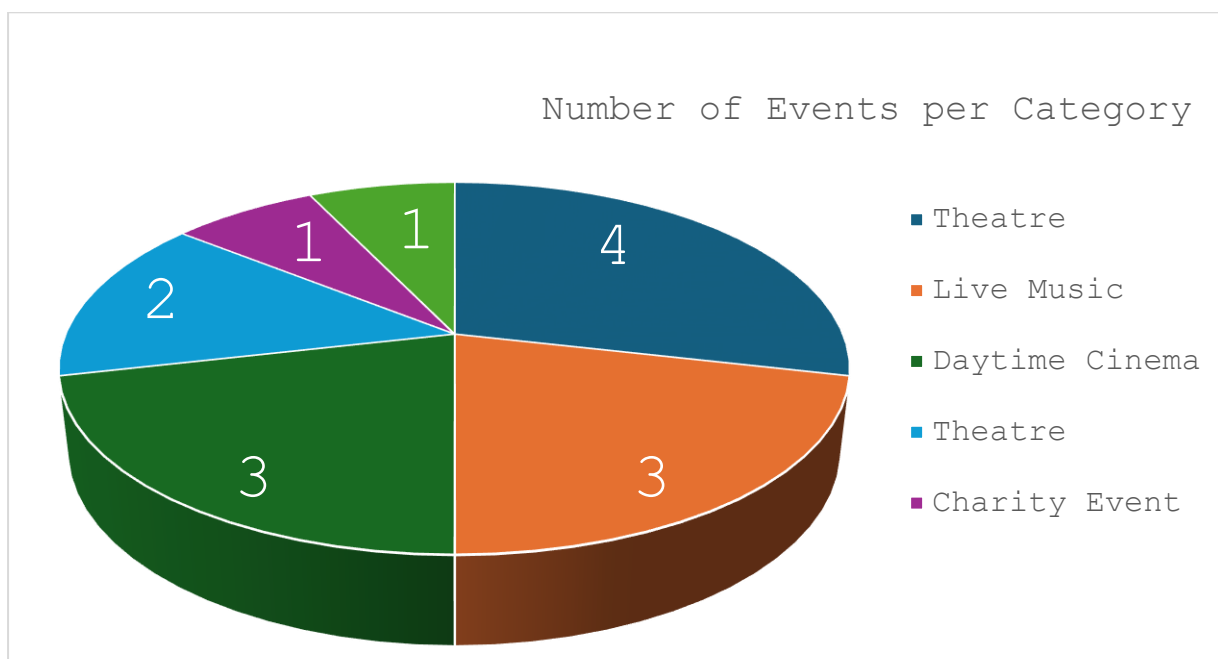
Witney Town Council has an obligation and objectives to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and community arts facility that is valued and supported by the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire.

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.

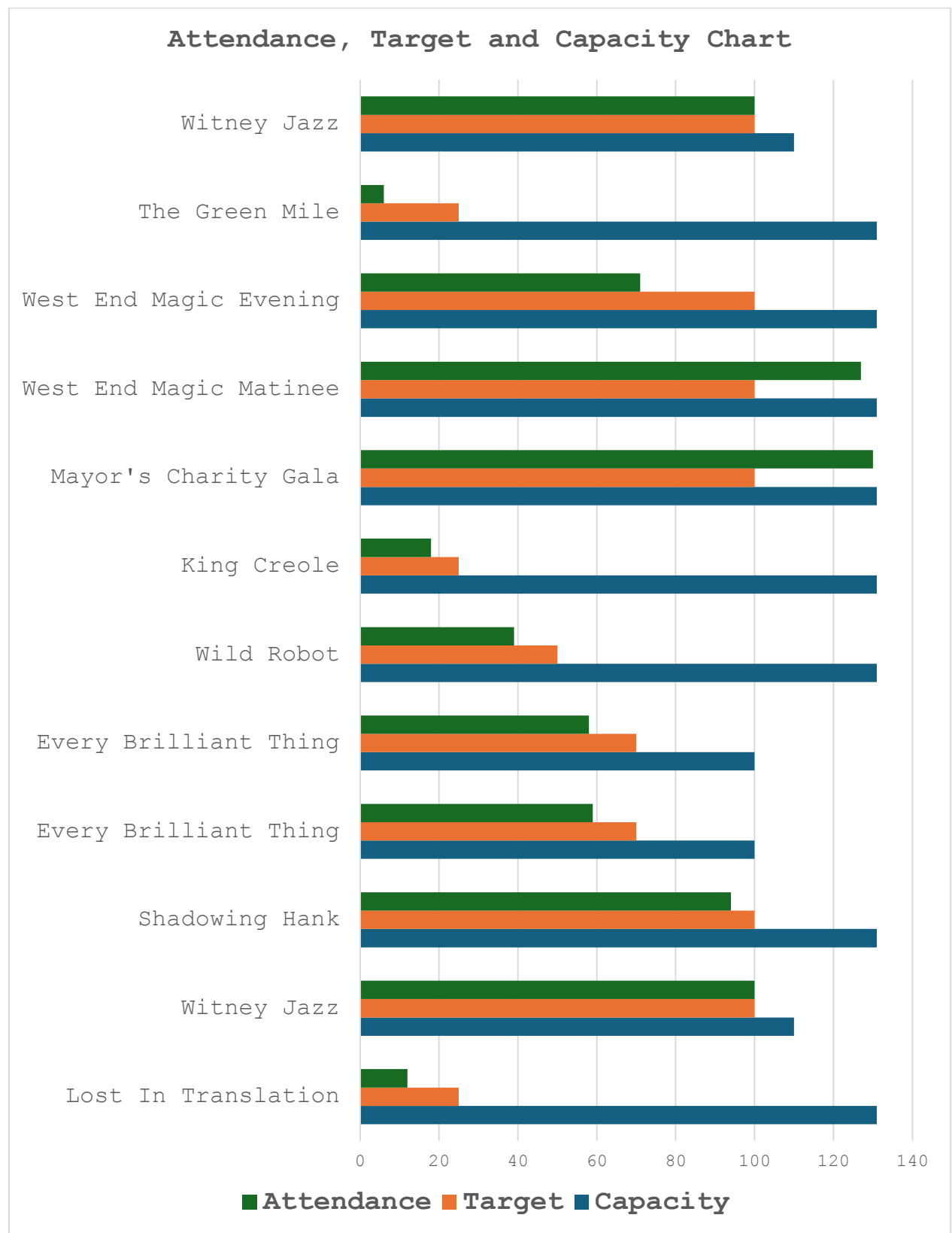
The Council will provide a professional, well-maintained, and run hireable space for private events including parties, weddings and conferences.

Current Situation

The graph below shows the number of events hosted by category, since the last report in March 2025.



The table below shows attendance and target attendance figures for each event at the Corn Exchange since the last report. The event capacity has also been included, upon request from members.



Recent Events – Corn Exchange

Buttercross Theatre Presents: *The Wedding Singer*

Regular hirers and local performing arts group, Buttercross Theatre, returned to the Corn Exchange in late March to present their annual spring production, *The Wedding Singer*. These performances continue to be a staple in the events calendar and provide a valuable platform for local arts and theatre within the community.

Shadowing Hank

Following a near sell-out performance in November 2023, Shadowing Hank—a tribute act to Hank Marvin—returned to the venue. Although attendance was lower than the previous show, the event still achieved a respectable turnout of 94 attendees.

Every Brilliant Thing

The Corn Exchange hosted two performances of *Every Brilliant Thing*, a play by Witney-educated playwright Duncan Macmillan. Staged over two evenings, the event successfully raised funds for the Mayor of Witney's chosen charities.

Mayor's Charity Gala

On Friday 25th April, Mayor Owen Collins hosted his final and largest event of the mayoral year. The evening featured performances from a range of local talent, including Witney Town Band, Buttercross Theatre, Buttercross Ukulele Group, Jill Stew School of Dance, and others. The gala was well attended with 130 guests and provided a valuable showcase for community arts and culture.

Witney Jazz

The Witney Jazz series continues to be a highly popular fixture in the events programme, regularly drawing audiences of over 100 attendees. Due to sustained demand, organisers have booked additional dates in 2025 to supplement their established monthly slot. Officers are pleased to maintain a strong working relationship with the organisers and look forward to further collaboration.

Daytime Cinema

Attendance at the daytime cinema screenings has shown a recent decline. This may be attributed to improved weather conditions and reduced promotional capacity resulting from staffing pressures. Attendance will be monitored in the coming weeks, and consideration will be given to temporarily pausing the series during the summer months, with a potential resumption in the autumn.

Wedding Hire – 12th April

The Corn Exchange hosted a wedding ceremony and reception on Saturday 12th April. The event utilised the full venue: the Gallery Room for the ceremony, the Bar area for welcome drinks and speeches, and the Main Hall for the evening reception. Positive feedback has been received from the couple regarding the venue and staff, which has been formally recorded.

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

Witney Blues

Officers are delighted that Little Live Music company, who promote the regular Witney Jazz shows, will also be hosting additional shows under a new brand **“Witney Blues”**. This move adds to the diversity of our events program and continues to build on an already positive relationship with these event organisers.

Folk Music Counters Creek, an acoustic Folk band previously booked by Little Live Music company are returning on Wednesday 30th July. This event will help gauge interest in a regular folk music event series at The Corn Exchange.

Outdoor Music

Plans are in motion to launch the popular Live Music on The Square series in mid-June, following plenty of positive feedback from residents last year. A “soft launch” took place on Thursday 1st May at our regular Open Mic night due to the sunny weather. This attracted more public attendance than the usual Open Mic and served as a great word of mouth marketing opportunity for the upcoming dates in the summer.

Los Banditos

The Corn Exchange is showcasing a local student directors Film, shot in Witney (including scenes at The Corn Exchange) at a premiere screening on Friday 13th June.

The listing of public events at The Corn Exchange for May – July



CORN EXCHANGE WITNEY WHAT'S ON?

REGULAR EVENTS

Daytime Cinema
Every other Tuesday
1:00PM



Tea Dance
Every Wednesday
1:00PM



Open Mic Night
First Thursday of Every Month
7:00PM



MAY

Friday 2nd May
Witney Jazz

Saturday 10th May
Mynt Image Craft Market

Sunday 11 May
Cheltenham Singers

Tuesday 13 May
Daytime Cinema

Friday 23 May
Witney Blues

Tuesday 27 May
Daytime Cinema

Saturday 31 May
Take @ That

JUNE

Thursday 5 June
Open Mic Music Showcase

Saturday 7 June
Mynt Image Craft Market

Saturday 7 June
Witney Jazz

Tuesday 10 June
Daytime Cinema

Friday 13 June
Los Banditos Film Premier

JULY

Saturday 14 June
FAME Junior Production

17 - 21 June
A Few Mondays More Theatre Production

Tuesday 24 June
Daytime Cinema

Friday 4 July
Witney Jazz

Saturday 5 July
Witney Photo Group Exhibition

Tuesday 8 July
Daytime Cinema

Saturday 12 July
Mynt Image Craft Market

Saturday 12 July
Witney Blues

Saturday 19 July
Chicago Teen Edition

Tuesday 22 July
Daytime Cinema

Tuesday 30 July
Counters Creek (Folk Band)



MORE SHOWS TBA!
For full listing, tickets and more info visit:
www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk



Public Halls Usage

The public halls usage report indicates an average 6.9% increase in usage year on year across all hireable spaces, for the period between 24th March and 19th May.

Corn Exchange Main Hall

- Booked a total of **380.5 hours**
- Increase of **16.5 hours** compared to **364 hours** in the same period in 2024.
- This represents a **4.5% growth** in booked hours this period.

The Gallery Room

- Booked a total of **221 hours**
- Increase of **25.5 hours** compared to **195.50 hours** in the same period of 2024. This represents a **13% increase** in usage year on year.

Burwell Hall

- Booked a total of **322 hours**
- Increase of **17.5 hours** compared to **304.5 hours** in the same period in 2024.
- This represents a **5.7% growth** in booked hours this period.

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.

- 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

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

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS



Agenda Item:	Lakeside Flooding Options
Meeting Date:	19 th of May 2025
Contact Officer:	Operations Manager – Angus Whitburn

Background

Lakeside allotments have been prone to flooding in the wet seasons. When the site does flood it can destroy cultivated land, damage crops and make the site unusable. The allotment site has historically flooded in the wet season but in recent years the flooding has become more common.

The site is split over Flood Zones 2 and 1 detailed in the environmental agencies' flood maps, as the site isn't suitable for development it is designated and used as an allotment site.

At Hall, Cemeteries & Allotment meeting on the 24th of May 2021 the committee approved the commissioning of a topographical survey to determine the extent of the bund required to prevent flooding of the site. At the Hall, Cemeteries & Allotment meeting on the 8th of November 2021 this information was presented to the committee. The cost of the works were prohibitive so it was resolved that officers look at possible remedial works to alleviate flooding issues.

The work proposed was to drive sheet piles and trench sheets to form a barrier to the flood water and raise the bank levels by 450mm. This would be 40m on the south side of the site, 60m along Queen Emma's Dyke and 100m on the north side. There was still a risk with this scope of work as it couldn't prevent the site from flooding as the water would enter through the west side. Plus there was the added risk that any water entering the site would then be trapped by the same defences.

From the last update to the committee on the 8th of November 2021 no remedial works have been made to the site to prevent flooding. This is because the only solution to the issue is what was proposed.

Current Situation

Lakeside reps have raised multiple causes of the flooding with officers, however, most have been previously explored and addressed or are non-factual. The ditch running along the north side was claimed to have been blocked for the flooding in November 2024. However, it had been cleared in October 2024 and was still clear post-flooding.

The ditch will not prevent the allotments from flooding, as it is level with Queen Emmas Dyke. From the information available the ditch only appears to take the rainwater from the hotel gutters and drain toward Queen Emmas Dyke. The ditch does cause issues when Queen Emma's dykes levels rise, the water then diverts down into the ditch, and then over into the allotments. To prevent this issue it would require a levy or barrier to be built. Although the original proposed works indicated raising this bank by 450mm it would in fact require closer to 1000mm to bring it level with the hotel and residential homes neighbouring the allotments.

It has also been raised that there is an unmaintained ditch running alongside the entrance road of the site, found on the south side. Officers have inspected and researched these claims but no evidence can be found. If there were to be a ditch there would be outflow and none can be found the only evidence of a ditch once existing is the ground is slightly below the level of the road. However the roads construction is the probable cause of this.

The only solution to the problem is the development of a levy or barrier system that surrounds the site. The scale of these works is excessive and the cost would be prohibitive. But more troublesome is the logistical and operational issues surrounding trying to achieve these works. As previously raised by officers in 2021 around 60 plots would have to be reduced and cleared, furthermore, a work area would have to be made by felling trees and removing vegetation. Additionally, the banks on the east and north sides of the allotments which are most subsepitable to flooding would require some sort of protection to stop flood water passing through the ground.

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) Biodiversity – If any of the works detailed in the report were to be undertaken, permission would need to be gained from the Environment Agency.

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.

Lakeside allotments will continue to flood, if no action is taken this could lead to bad press for the council and damage the relationship between the Allotment Association and the Council. Contradictory to this, if it is made public that excessive money is getting spent to protect an allotment site as opposed to residential and business properties in Witney this could also generate bad press.

Social Value

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

The allotment sites are an important provision by the council. They can offer the residents of Witney with small or no garden, extensions to their outdoor space for cultivation purposes. The loss of allotments for any period of the year would be detrimental to these residents.

Financial implications

- There is a deferred grant for the allotment sites available of £190,703.00
- The works proposed in November 2021 were quoted at £100,622
- Before the construction of a levy or barrier system approval from the environment agency will need to be granted, this application currently costs £1000.00.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Consider if the value of the allotments permits such scale of work, and whether an acceptance that the allotment will flood needs to be understood.
2. If the committee would like to proceed with the proposed works delegate officers to produce a final costing and plan of works for a future meeting.