

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 14th September, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - R Crouch, J Robertshaw, O Collins, G Doughty, J Treloar, R Smith, J Doughty and D Enright (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.

Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk in advance. Priority will be given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda.

Commitment to Civility and Respect

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with Witney Town Council's commitment to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Councillors, officers and members of the public are expected to treat one another with courtesy, dignity, and respect, ensuring that debate remains professional, objective and focused on the business being discussed. Personal criticism, intimidation, or behaviour that could undermine the wellbeing of those present is inconsistent with the standards expected of the Council.

Recording of Meetings

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, public meetings may be filmed, audio-recorded, or photographed. Anyone intending to record the proceedings is asked, as a courtesy, to inform the Committee Clerk before the meeting begins.

This meeting will be broadcast live via Microsoft Teams and recorded; by attending or participating, you consent to the recording and public sharing of audio and video, which may be made available for later viewing. For details on how personal data is handled, please see the Privacy Notice

To view the meeting please follow this link [Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee 14.09.2026](#)

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 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 4 - 10)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee held on 8 June 2026.

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.

5. **Finance Report** (Pages 11 - 21)

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee.

Public Halls

6. **Public Halls Report** (Pages 22 - 29)

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

7. **Public Halls Business Report** (Pages 30 - 39)

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

8. **Public Halls Business Plan Review** (Pages 40 - 71)

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

Cemeteries & Closed Churchyards

9. **Cemetery Regulations Review** (Pages 72 - 93)

To receive and consider updated regulations for the Council's cemeteries and burials service and recommend to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on their adoption.

Allotments

10. **Allotments - Proposed Separation of Witney Allotment Association** (Pages 94 - 103)

To receive correspondence from the Lakeside Co-Chair of Witney Allotment Association, together with a draft motion and Instrument of Dissolution, concerning the possible dissolution of the Association and the establishment of two successor associations: one managing Lakeside and the other managing Hailey Road, Newland and Windrush Place.

Representatives of Witney Allotment Association have been invited to attend the meeting to present the proposal and answer questions.

(Continues over the page)

The Committee is requested to consider the proposal and determine whether it supports the proposed separation in principle, subject to the necessary membership approval and the establishment of suitably constituted successor associations.

The documents have been provided by the WAA as a third party and contain information that is not intended for wider circulation at this stage. The documents have therefore been restricted from the published agenda pending consideration.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 8 June 2026

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

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	J Robertshaw	D Enright
	J Treloar	J Aitman (In place of O Collins)
	R Smith	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	None.	

H282 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Doughty & J Doughty.

A further apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins, Councillor J Aitman attended as a substitute.

The Committee Clerk reminded all Members of the importance of submitting their apologies directly to him ahead of the meeting so that they may accurately be recorded.

H283 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

H284 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J Treloar be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Jack Treloar be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

H285 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 March 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 March 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H286 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H287 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee considered whether any changes were needed to the current Terms of Reference.

No amendments were required therefore it was:

Recommended:

1. That, no amendments be made to the Terms of Reference and,
2. That, the Terms of Reference be recommended for approval by the Full Council at the meeting of 13 July 2026.

H288 **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.

Members were informed that the end-of-year adjustments were being undertaken. It was noted that the Committee held a relatively large number of earmarked reserves within its remit, which would be reflected in the general reserves following this work.

Members welcomed, the significant reductions in the running costs of Café 1863, which resulted in a lower overall net cost for the facility. The RFO provided additional detail and rationale regarding the continued decision to not “opt to tax” Burwell Hall and clarified the accounting treatment of the Council’s properties within the relevant framework.

Overall, it was reported that the service areas within the Committee’s remit had been delivered under budget for 2025/26. This could be attributed to the setting of a prudent initial budget, alongside stronger than anticipated income streams, particularly from Café 1863. Additionally, improved accuracy in the coding of expenditure and strengthened internal processes had contributed to greater transparency in financial reporting.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 be approved.

The Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at 6:19pm

H289 **ANNUAL RESIDENT'S SURVEY**

Members received the results of the annual resident survey which it was noted were consistent with previous discussions on this topic via Committees earlier in the cycle, Members observed that responses were often submitted predominantly by residents wishing to raise concerns, rather than those providing positive feedback.

Despite this, Members welcomed the positive comments that had been received. In particular, it was noted by Members that the Corn Exchange was a “wonderful asset” to the town, providing a valued and welcoming community space.

Members expressed a desire to obtain a broader and more balanced range of feedback throughout the year. It was requested that Officers review approaches to gathering feedback on an ongoing basis to ensure a more representative range of responses. Officers confirmed that this matter would be considered further at the forthcoming meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee.

Members also recommended that the Stronger Communities Committee consider the provision of a community litter picking station for the area around Burwell Hall area at its upcoming meeting.

Additionally, a Member reported having held an initial discussion with another local arts venue, which had expressed an interest in collaborating with officers. The Member confirmed that details would be shared with the Venue and Events Team for further exploration.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the Stronger Communities Committee along with Officers further review and implement improved methods for gathering resident feedback throughout the year, to ensure a broader and more representative range of responses and;
3. That, the Stronger Communities Committee gives consideration to the provision of a community litter-picking station at its meeting on 15 June and;
4. That, Officers explore the potential collaboration opportunity with the local arts venue, once details had been shared.

H290 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venues & Events Officer (V&EO), together with a verbal explanation on the technical aspects contained within it.

Members received updates on the “1 in 200” local author scheme and the local art display initiative. It was noted that both initiatives are generating interest among users of the Corn Exchange and Café 1863.

A request to light up the Corn Exchange for Long Covid Awareness day in March each year was considered and received unanimous approval.

Members considered the comprehensive report outlining proposed wedding packages for the Corn Exchange. It was agreed that the venue was a valuable asset, that would offer excellent value through the proposed three-tier package structure.

Members raised questions regarding catering arrangements and insurance requirements, which were addressed by the V&EO to the satisfaction of Members.

Members noted that offering the packages in a tiered format provided clarity for both Officers and customers from the outset, ensuring a shared understanding of the services to be delivered by the Venues and Events Team, both in advance of and on the day of events.

Members were unanimous in their support for the rollout of the wedding packages and looked forward to receiving updates following implementation.

Members noted that the previously approved budget for a basic hearing loop system would not, following further exploration by Officers, be sufficient or suitable for the Council's requirements. The report therefore presented alternative options for consideration.

Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed that the Auracast system be selected for installation at the Corn Exchange (Main Hall), and Infrared for Burwell Hall and the Corn Exchange (Gallery Room), at a cost of £20,000, based on the quote received. This would provide the best coverage for the bespoke needs of the venues, ensuring clarity of audio and confidentiality for hirers. Members also recognised that individuals with hearing difficulties did not always raise concerns when audio quality was poor, they emphasised the importance of ensuring accessibility so that all users are able to fully enjoy and engage with events.

In addition, Members agreed to the purchase of two independent and portable hearing loop systems, at a cost of £210 each. These would support one-to-one conversations and would be available within the Administration Office and Café 1863.

It was further suggested that an application be submitted to the Witney Town Hall Charity for grant support, alongside the continuation of the application to Arts Council England. Members also noted that the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) had advised that as part of the year-end review of available earmarked reserves, that a potential funding stream may become available and that this could be reported to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 22 June 2026.

Members discussed the findings of the recent fire safety audit at the Corn Exchange and considered a number of proposed improvements. It was unanimously agreed to amend the booking conditions to emphasise the importance of hirers recognising and fulfilling their responsibilities when using the Council's venues.

Members sought clarity regarding responsibility for the preparation of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), and how the Council could ensure that electrical equipment brought on site by hirers had undergone appropriate PAT testing. The V&EO confirmed that established procedures were in place to work with hirers to ensure these requirements were met and compliance was maintained.

Recommended:

1. That, the report together with the verbal update, be noted and;
2. That, the request to light up the Corn Exchange for Long Covid Day annually be approved and;

3. That, the proposed wedding packages for the Corn Exchange be recommended for approval and implementation and;
4. That, the Auracast system (Corn Exchange Main Hall) and Infrared systems (Burwell Hall and Corn Exchange Gallery Room) be approved for installation, together with the purchase of two portable hearing loop systems and;
5. That, Officers submit a grant application to the Witney Town Hall Charity and continue the application to Arts Council England to support the hearing loop project and;
6. That, the RFO reviews potential funding from earmarked reserves, with any proposals to be reported to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee and;
7. That, the proposed amendments to booking conditions, following the fire safety audit, be recommended for approval.

H291 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT

Members received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

Members noted the feedback on the recent events held at the Corn Exchange.

The Committee also received the forthcoming events calendar and venue usage figures, which demonstrated positive increases in activity levels. The continued popularity of Café 1863 again acknowledged following the improvements in income performance compared to previous years.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

H292 PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW

Members received and considered the updated Business Plan. The principal amendment was the inclusion of Café 1863, following an earlier request of the Committee.

The Venues and Events Officer (V&EO) outlined the vision and purpose sections of the Plan. Members were unanimously supportive of the three strategic pillars identified, which underpinned Café 1863 as an affordable, accessible, sustainable and community-focused venue.

Members noted that, wherever possible, Café 1863 sought to source products from local suppliers and those that were endorsed as Fairtrade. It was also recognised that this approach should be balanced with the Council's duty to ensure value for money and responsible use of public funds.

It was further noted that the integration of Café 1863 with the wider events offerings at the Corn Exchange was delivering improved financial performance. This would continue to be monitored and reported to the Committee through future updates.

Members discussed the potential role of the Corn Exchange in supporting provision for young people. It was recognised that the Council already contributed to youth engagement through its support of The Station's BREAK and that Café 1863 has been utilised during holiday periods. Members agreed that, while the Council remained committed to supporting youth provision, venues such as The Courtside Hub at the Leys may be better suited to regular youth focused activities, ensuring that provision could be accommodated without impacting on existing bookings and the operational viability of the Corn Exchange.

Resolved:

1. That, the updated Business Plan be noted and;
2. That, the three strategic pillars underpinning the Café 1863's vision and purpose to be a community social hub, support events and had commercial sustainability be approved.

The Venue & Events Officer left the meeting at 7:20pm

H293 COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE REQUEST - CORPORAL JOHN S. CHRISTIANSEN

Members received and considered the report of the Administration Assistant (Facilities) regarding a request for the establishment of a memorial plaque for a US soldier who was interred at Tower Hill Cemetery prior to repatriation to New York.

Members were unanimous in their approval of the purchase and installation of the plaque. It was further requested that a QR code be incorporated to provide access to additional information for those wishing to learn more.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the purchase and installation of a memorial plaque for Corporal John S. Christiansen at Tower Hill Cemetery be approved from budget 301/4350.
3. That, a QR code be included on the plaque to provide access to further historical information.

H294 CEMETERY REGULATIONS REVIEW

The Committee received and considered the report of the Senior Administration Officer regarding the forthcoming review of the Cemetery Regulations.

Members were pleased to note that cemetery users, funeral directors, and the Friends of the Cemetery were being consulted to gather their views on potential changes, which would be taken into consideration by Officers as part of the review process.

Members received details of requests to scatter ashes within the Cemeteries and heard that the Council was accommodating in this respect when compared to other local parishes. A specific request relating to scattering within plots on the Windrush Ashes Path had been received.

Following discussion, it was unanimously agreed that Officers should draft clear wording within the Cemetery Regulations to ensure that the process and conditions relating to the scattering of ashes were fully understood by all cemetery users.

Members also welcomed the opportunity to review the updated regulations and noted that these would be presented for approval at the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 14 September 2026.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, Officers carry out a full review of the cemetery regulations as proposed including clear wording regarding the scattering of ashes and;

3. That, the updated Cemetery Regulations be presented to the Committee for approval at its meeting on 14 September 2026.

H295 **BRAMM CEMETERY OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2026**

The Committee received and considered the invitation from BRAMM (Burial and Cremation Administration Register Management Mentorship) to enter the Cemetery of the year awards for 2026.

Members agreed that both the Tower Hill & Windrush Cemeteries should be entered as this offered the potential to gain feedback on the cemeteries and allow both Officers and the Council to focus its strategic and operational aims.

Resolved:

That, Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries be entered into the Parish, Town & Community Council category of the Cemetery of the Year Awards 2026.

The meeting closed at: 7.34 pm

Chair

HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report

Meeting Date: 14 September 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 10am on the day of the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting. E-mail nigel.warner@witney-tc.gov.uk and copy in townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed; these are the management accounts for this committee. The period to which this report relates is 1 April to 31 July 2026.

For the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee the following cost centres are in place.

Cost centre	Service
103	Bars
104	Corn Exchange
105	Burwell Hall
301	Tower Hill Cemetery
302	Windrush Cemetery
303	Closed churchyards – St Mary's/ Holy Trinity
305	Allotments

Cost centres, comprising three digits, typically represent a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further refine the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with "1" are income codes; codes commencing with "3" are direct costs of sales, relating only to cost centre 103; codes commencing with "4" are indirect expenditure codes.

A report are regularly presented to standing committees and previous reports are available on the relevant committee section of the website.

Current Situation

Council financial years run from 1 April to 31 March following. Consequently the management accounts to 31 July 2026 represent the first four months (one-third) of the year and detailed figures are attached.

A full commentary on budget lines will be undertaken as part of the budget process. However Members may wish to note the following in relation to the management accounts for the period:

1. The summary for the period is:

	April to July 2026 (actual)	Budget for 2026-27	Percentage of budget spent/received April to July 2026 (33% of the year)
Income	(£133,506)	(£453,228)	29.5%
Expenditure	£291,674	£1,028,300	28.5%
Net expenditure	£158,168	£575,072	27.5%

2. In relation to income this is 29.5% of the years' budget, on a straight line-basis this is £17,570 less than budget. A summary of the various income streams compared with the previous year is as follows:

Cost centre	April to July 2026	Budget 2026-27	% Spend of Budget	April to July 2025	Budget	% Spend of Budget
103 -1863 Café/bar	£ 75,874.00	£ 229,734.00	33.0%	£ 68,857.00	£ 182,638.00	37.7%
104 Corn Exchange	£ 26,073.00	£ 92,150.00	28.3%	£ 25,751.00	£ 86,431.00	29.8%
105- Burwell Hall	£ 10,510.00	£ 33,350.00	31.5%	£ 9,346.00	£ 31,950.00	29.3%
301-Tower Hill Cemetery	£ 6,931.00	£ 32,175.00	21.5%	£ 16,808.00	£ 30,500.00	55.1%
302- Windrush Cemetery	£ 14,118.00	£ 65,819.00	21.4%	£ 21,109.00	£ 63,409.00	31.7%

With regard to the 1863 Café/bar (cost centre 103) the income has strengthened since the end of July, with the income to 31 August 2026 being £100,194 (43.9% of budget in 41.6% of the year i.e. £4,471 over budget on a straight-line basis or 4.7%). This is primarily the result of the increasing popularity of the Music on the Square during the summer months.

Overall the income for the Corn Exchange and Burwell 29.1% of the annual budgeted income has been taken in the first four month compared with 29.6% during the same period last year although overall income is up by 4.2%.

With regard to income in the cemeteries this often fluctuates between months and years and will depend on many factors including the choices made by/ in relation to the deceased (ashes or burial), whether the deceased lived outside the parish and local mortality rates. This year the income to date is 21.5% of budget for Tower Hill and 21.4% for Windrush, which is lower than this time last year when the figures were 55.1% and 31.7% respectively.

3. Gross expenditure of £291,674 for the period to 31 July 2026 compares with £269,370 for the same period last year, being 28.5% and 29.7% of budget respectively. This is within budget as is net expenditure for the year to date – this is £158,168 which is 27.5% of budget in relation to 33.3% of the year. Further analysis will be undertaken in the coming weeks but indications are that the Committee expenditure for 2026-27 should be accommodated within budget.
4. There will always be an inevitable “lag” between expenditure being incurred and being shown in the accounts. Expenditure is not necessarily incurred evenly over the course of the year. For example most expenditure in relation to nominal ledger code 4025 (insurance) is incurred when the annual premium is paid in April. There will also be similar patterns on the income. However note that whilst on an annual basis the Council’s accounts are prepared on an accruals basis the Council does not accrue income or expenditure “in-year,” for reasons of proportionality.

REVENUE BUDGET 2026-27 AND CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS 2026-27 AND BEYOND

In line with normal Council procedures, the RFO will shortly be commencing the annual review of all the Committees to prepare the revenue budget for 2027-28 and the review of the medium-term financial plan.

Draft budgets are prepared based upon current activities and patterns of income and expenditure. Any additional revenue expenditure is considered separately as Revenue Growth Items.

It is also normal practice that during the budget cycle the Council considers the Capital and Special Revenue budget to identify which projects or schemes are to be implemented and undertaken during the next financial year.

In drafting budgets your officers will have due regard to the Council's Strategic Plan and other relevant policies.

This will again be a challenging budget round.

Members will be aware that the Council have a number of major projects in motion, the largest of which is the West Witney Project. There are also facilities due to be transferred from the Council and the 3G-pitch development at West Witney so there is an existing demand on financial and staffing resources. There are potential costs relating to local government reorganisation although there are many uncertainties regarding this matter. With continuing inflationary pressures and mindful of pressures on household budgets the Council is advised to be modest in relation to any additional proposals.

It should also be remembered that additional capital projects may have staffing implications – a sum in a budget to provide a new service or facility or organise an event will also mean that officer time needs to be dedicated to deliver the project.

Members are requested to consider items to be included in next year's budget and any other adjustments in the context of the Council's existing and upcoming service commitments. This will enable Officers to obtain costings and the RFO to draft as accurate budget estimates as possible.

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 – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

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

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and also in the attached appendices.

Recommendations

Members are invited:

1. To note and approve the report and the management accounts of the Halls, Cemeteries & Recreation Committee for the period 1 April to 31 July 2026.
2. Specify any items to be considered for inclusion or deletion from next year's revenue and capital/special revenue item budgets, noting that approval of such items will be for the Council to consider in the budget cycle of meetings.

08/09/2026

Witney Town Council Current Year

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Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
<u>Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments</u>								
<u>103 BAR/ CAFE</u>								
1000 C/EX. 1863 - SALES ALCOHOL	34,976	12,883	41,075	28,192			31.4%	
1001 C/EX. 1863 SALES - FOOD	46,433	16,155	48,280	32,125			33.5%	
1002 C/EX. 1863 BAR HIRE CHARGE	805	433	1,095	662			39.6%	
1003 C/EX. 1863 SALES - SOFT DRINKS	10,893	4,451	13,550	9,099			32.8%	
1009 CORN EX.1863 CAFE- HOT DRINKS	114,841	39,762	121,975	82,213			32.6%	
1010 BOOK SALES	0	33	0	(33)			0.0%	
1090 BURWELL HALL BAR - ALL DRINKS	5,367	2,138	3,600	1,462			59.4%	
1091 BURWELL HALL BAR HIRE CHARGE	(50)	0	159	159			0.0%	
1099 MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	166	0	0	0			0.0%	
1171 DONATIONS RECEIVED	0	20	0	(20)			0.0%	
BAR/ CAFE :- Income	213,433	75,874	229,734	153,860			33.0%	0
3000 BAR PURCHASES - DRINK	20,523	11,674	23,575	11,901		11,901	49.5%	
3001 BAR PURCHASES - FOOD	24,888	12,082	28,975	16,893		16,893	41.7%	
3009 CAFE PURCHASES - HOT	25,682	8,225	30,500	22,275		22,275	27.0%	
3010 PROMOTIONS	5,143	2,435	6,400	3,965		3,965	38.0%	
BAR/ CAFE :- Direct Expenditure	76,236	34,416	89,450	55,034	0	55,034	38.5%	0
4001 SALARIES	116,238	41,730	124,745	83,015		83,015	33.5%	
4002 ER'S NIC	10,071	3,631	10,600	6,969		6,969	34.3%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	9,301	3,690	14,850	11,160		11,160	24.8%	
4007 PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	0	0	250	250		250	0.0%	
4016 CLEANING MATERIALS	236	84	160	76		76	52.8%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	451	0	250	250		250	0.0%	
4042 EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	5,791	1,160	4,000	2,840		2,840	29.0%	
4059 OTHER PROF FEES	600	300	600	300		300	50.0%	
4064 HEALTH & SAFETY	0	15	0	(15)		(15)	0.0%	
4099 MISCELLANEOUS	615	19	300	281		281	6.2%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	5,001	1,687	5,079	3,392		3,392	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	1,444	529	1,454	925		925	36.4%	
BAR/ CAFE :- Indirect Expenditure	149,748	52,844	162,288	109,444	0	109,444	32.6%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(12,552)	(11,386)	(22,004)	(10,618)				
<u>104 CORN EXCHANGE</u>								
1007 CORN EXCHNGE LETTING	61,826	20,944	68,000	47,056			30.8%	
1014 EVENTS INCOME	19,314	3,845	18,000	14,155			21.4%	
1015 TEA DANCE INCOME	3,091	903	3,300	2,397			27.4%	

Continued over page

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Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
1016 FUNCTION REFRESHMENT	50	0	0	0			0.0%	
1017 CORN EXCHANGE WEDDING LETTING	246	246	2,200	1,954			11.2%	
1049 FACILITY HIRE - EQUIP	0	136	0	(136)			0.0%	
1052 EXPENSES RECOVERED	1,471	0	650	650			0.0%	
1099 MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	74	0	0	0			0.0%	
CORN EXCHANGE :- Income	86,072	26,073	92,150	66,077			28.3%	0
4001 SALARIES	75,882	29,980	82,632	52,652		52,652	36.3%	
4002 ER'S NIC	8,541	3,461	9,533	6,072		6,072	36.3%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	9,824	3,388	15,575	12,187		12,187	21.8%	
4007 PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	96	0	200	200		200	0.0%	
4008 TRAINING	1,339	420	1,020	600		600	41.1%	
4011 RATES	3,219	1,607	4,043	2,436		2,436	39.7%	
4012 WATER RATES	2,196	455	5,665	5,210		5,210	8.0%	
4014 ELECTRICITY	13,269	3,204	14,500	11,296		11,296	22.1%	
4015 GAS	5,297	1,037	8,900	7,863		7,863	11.7%	
4016 CLEANING MATERIALS	2,825	683	2,800	2,117		2,117	24.4%	
4017 CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	2,537	338	2,700	2,362		2,362	12.5%	
4018 PHOTOCOPIER COSTS	112	81	170	89		89	47.7%	
4021 TELEPHONE/FAX	1,420	365	1,600	1,235		1,235	22.8%	
4025 INSURANCE	977	2,048	1,350	(698)		(698)	151.7%	
4028 I.T.	2,087	613	2,100	1,487		1,487	29.2%	
4032 PUBLICITY	1,704	793	2,000	1,208		1,208	39.6%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	8,956	4,905	12,000	7,095		7,095	40.9%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	6,002	1,851	4,000	2,149		2,149	46.3%	
4042 EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	998	277	1,500	1,223		1,223	18.5%	
4043 SMALL TOOLS & EQUIPT	231	22	150	128		128	15.0%	
4045 LICENCES	2,628	3,071	2,800	(271)		(271)	109.7%	
4048 ENG.INSPEC.(VATABLE)	473	401	490	89		89	81.9%	
4064 HEALTH & SAFETY	121	75	100	25		25	74.7%	
4141 EVENTS	18,816	3,996	15,500	11,504		11,504	25.8%	
4142 TEA DANCE COSTS	4,482	1,530	6,300	4,770		4,770	24.3%	
4144 FILM CLUB	3,067	1,680	1,940	260		260	86.6%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	4,674	1,314	5,572	4,258		4,258	23.6%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	324	87	329	242		242	26.3%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	10,002	3,373	10,158	6,785		6,785	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	2,884	1,057	2,908	1,851		1,851	36.4%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	783	251	826	575		575	30.4%	
CORN EXCHANGE :- Indirect Expenditure	195,764	72,363	219,361	146,998	0	146,998	33.0%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(109,692)	(46,289)	(127,211)	(80,922)				

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
105 BURWELL HALL								
1005 BURWELL HALL LETTING	29,431	10,510	33,000	22,490			31.8%	
1052 EXPENSES RECOVERED	829	0	350	350			0.0%	
BURWELL HALL :- Income	30,260	10,510	33,350	22,840			31.5%	0
4001 SALARIES	42,271	17,608	47,959	30,351		30,351	36.7%	
4002 ER'S NIC	4,952	1,958	5,651	3,693		3,693	34.6%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	6,963	2,397	8,875	6,478		6,478	27.0%	
4007 PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	0	0	150	150		150	0.0%	
4008 TRAINING	13	0	250	250		250	0.0%	
4011 RATES	2,156	0	2,708	2,708		2,708	0.0%	
4012 WATER RATES	589	212	680	468		468	31.2%	
4014 ELECTRICITY	2,224	627	2,900	2,273		2,273	21.6%	
4015 GAS	1,595	731	3,400	2,669		2,669	21.5%	
4016 CLEANING MATERIALS	2,351	678	2,000	1,322		1,322	33.9%	
4017 CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	3,905	1,481	3,725	2,244		2,244	39.8%	
4021 TELEPHONE/FAX	402	124	285	161		161	43.6%	
4025 INSURANCE	459	907	625	(282)		(282)	145.1%	
4028 I.T.	1,543	706	1,550	844		844	45.6%	
4032 PUBLICITY	0	0	500	500		500	0.0%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	2,603	973	5,000	4,027		4,027	19.5%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	2,351	1,901	1,000	(901)		(901)	190.1%	
4042 EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	749	63	1,500	1,437		1,437	4.2%	
4045 LICENCES	512	502	530	28		28	94.7%	
4048 ENG.INSPEC.(VATABLE)	335	238	350	112		112	68.1%	
4064 HEALTH & SAFETY	452	69	0	(69)		(69)	0.0%	
4099 MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	100	100		100	0.0%	
4142 TEA DANCE COSTS	0	61	0	(61)		(61)	0.0%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	4,427	962	5,572	4,610		4,610	17.3%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	346	116	329	213		213	35.1%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	4,999	1,687	5,075	3,388		3,388	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	1,444	529	1,453	924		924	36.4%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	335	166	826	660		660	20.1%	
BURWELL HALL :- Indirect Expenditure	87,977	34,697	102,993	68,296	0	68,296	33.7%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(57,717)	(24,187)	(69,643)	(45,456)				
301 TOWER HILL CEMETERY								
1099 MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	31	33	0	(33)			0.0%	
1100 BURIAL FEES	10,554	2,576	9,965	7,389			25.9%	
1101 GRANT OF RIGHTS	935	551	1,040	490			52.9%	

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
1102 INTERMENT OF ASHES	9,747	2,236	14,600	12,364			15.3%	
1105 MEMORIAL FEES	4,392	1,267	5,600	4,333			22.6%	
1106 MEMORIAL PLAQUES	419	137	520	383			26.4%	
1108 CHAPEL FEES	402	132	450	318			29.3%	
TOWER HILL CEMETERY :- Income	26,479	6,931	32,175	25,244			21.5%	0
4001 SALARIES	13,965	5,021	15,548	10,527		10,527	32.3%	
4002 ER'S NIC	1,691	611	1,894	1,283		1,283	32.3%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	3,030	954	3,076	2,122		2,122	31.0%	
4011 RATES	3,792	1,556	3,936	2,380		2,380	39.5%	
4012 WATER RATES	609	189	1,800	1,611		1,611	10.5%	
4014 ELECTRICITY	517	151	900	749		749	16.7%	
4016 CLEANING MATERIALS	0	0	30	30		30	0.0%	
4017 CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	1,250	325	1,700	1,375		1,375	19.1%	
4025 INSURANCE	274	460	375	(85)		(85)	122.7%	
4028 I.T.	309	193	0	(193)		(193)	0.0%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	7,167	48	7,000	6,952		6,952	0.7%	
4037 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	25	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	22	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4040 ARBORICULTURE	1,588	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4041 EQUIPMENT HIRE	200	0	400	400		400	0.0%	
4042 EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	0	0	100	100		100	0.0%	
4064 HEALTH & SAFETY	69	0	100	100		100	0.0%	
4099 MISCELLANEOUS	151	0	200	200		200	0.0%	
4350 PLAQUES PURCHASED	387	77	400	323		323	19.3%	
4355 MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE	1,845	540	1,800	1,260		1,260	30.0%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	83,158	23,896	122,580	98,684		98,684	19.5%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	5,582	1,880	7,243	5,363		5,363	26.0%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	15,005	5,060	15,239	10,179		10,179	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	4,326	1,586	4,363	2,777		2,777	36.3%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	14,042	5,060	18,171	13,111		13,111	27.8%	
TOWER HILL CEMETERY :- Indirect Expenditure	159,005	47,606	206,855	159,249	0	159,249	23.0%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(132,526)	(40,675)	(174,680)	(134,005)				
302 WINDRUSH CEMETERY								
1100 BURIAL FEES	23,530	5,423	23,651	18,229			22.9%	
1101 GRANT OF RIGHTS	27,972	5,515	28,683	23,168			19.2%	
1102 INTERMENT OF ASHES	5,522	582	5,599	5,017			10.4%	
1105 MEMORIAL FEES	6,096	2,536	7,886	5,350			32.2%	
1106 MEMORIAL PLAQUES	195	62	0	(62)			0.0%	
WINDRUSH CEMETERY :- Income	63,314	14,118	65,819	51,702			21.4%	0

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
4001 SALARIES	13,965	5,021	15,548	10,527		10,527	32.3%	
4002 ER'S NIC	1,691	611	1,894	1,283		1,283	32.3%	
4003 ER'S SUPERANN	3,030	954	3,076	2,122		2,122	31.0%	
4011 RATES	7,984	3,136	8,287	5,152		5,152	37.8%	
4012 WATER RATES	329	138	360	222		222	38.4%	
4014 ELECTRICITY	2,000	384	2,100	1,716		1,716	18.3%	
4016 CLEANING MATERIALS	0	0	30	30		30	0.0%	
4017 CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	4,941	2,045	2,700	655		655	75.7%	
4025 INSURANCE	138	235	175	(60)		(60)	134.4%	
4028 I.T.	309	449	0	(449)		(449)	0.0%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	1,249	200	2,000	1,800	50	1,750	12.5%	
4037 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	120	0	530	530		530	0.0%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	720	507	1,000	493		493	50.7%	
4042 EQUIPMENT INC. FURNITURE	600	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
4043 SMALL TOOLS & EQUIPT	0	0	0	0	0	(0)	0.0%	
4059 OTHER PROF FEES	0	0	1,059	1,059		1,059	0.0%	
4064 HEALTH & SAFETY	48	0	106	106		106	0.0%	
4099 MISCELLANEOUS	13	0	0	0		0	0.0%	
4350 PLAQUES PURCHASED	264	0	235	235		235	0.0%	
4355 MEMORIAL MAINTENANCE	592	0	1,300	1,300		1,300	0.0%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	78,009	17,208	122,580	105,372		105,372	14.0%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	5,582	1,041	7,243	6,202		6,202	14.4%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	15,006	5,060	15,241	10,181		10,181	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	4,325	1,586	4,363	2,777		2,777	36.3%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	11,996	3,952	18,171	14,219		14,219	21.8%	
WINDRUSH CEMETERY :- Indirect Expenditure	152,909	42,527	208,998	166,471	50	166,421	20.4%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(89,595)	(28,410)	(143,179)	(114,769)				
303 CLOSED CH'YARDS ST MARYS/HOLY								
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	448	0	10,000	10,000		10,000	0.0%	
4040 ARBORICULTURE	0	500	1,000	500		500	50.0%	
4059 OTHER PROF FEES	0	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	7,802	3,560	9,801	6,241		6,241	36.3%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	594	338	579	241		241	58.3%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	1,270	795	1,453	658		658	54.7%	
CLOSED CH'YARDS ST MARYS/HOLY :- Indirect Expenditure	10,115	5,192	23,833	18,641	0	18,641	21.8%	0
Net Expenditure	(10,115)	(5,192)	(23,833)	(18,641)				

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/07/2026

Month No: 4

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee: Draft management accounts April to July 2026

	Actual Last Year	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual	Variance Annual	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
305 ALLOTMENTS								
4013 RENT PAID	0	0	125	125		125	0.0%	
4036 PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	0	0	1,600	1,600		1,600	0.0%	
4037 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	240	0	500	500		500	0.0%	
4038 OTHER MAINTENANCE	2,529	0	0	0	871	(871)	0.0%	
4888 O/S STAFF RECHARGE	6,715	254	6,129	5,875		5,875	4.1%	
4890 O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	515	16	362	346		346	4.4%	
4892 C/S STAFF RCHG	3,751	1,265	3,807	2,542		2,542	33.2%	
4893 C/S O'HEAD RCHG	1,082	396	1,090	694		694	36.3%	
4899 DEPOT REALLOCATION	1,095	98	909	811		811	10.8%	
ALLOTMENTS :- Indirect Expenditure	15,927	2,029	14,522	12,493	871	11,622	20.0%	0
Net Expenditure	(15,927)	(2,029)	(14,522)	(12,493)				
Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments :- Income	419,557	133,506	453,228	319,722			29.5%	
Expenditure	847,681	291,674	1,028,300	736,626	921	735,706	28.5%	
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(428,124)	(158,168)	(575,072)	(416,904)				
Grand Totals:- Income	419,557	133,506	453,228	319,722			29.5%	
Expenditure	847,681	291,674	1,028,300	736,626	921	735,706	28.5%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(428,124)	(158,168)	(575,072)	(416,904)				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(428,124)	(158,168)	(575,072)	(416,904)				

HALLS CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Public Halls Report

Meeting Date: 14th September 2026

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide operational updates regarding the management of Witney Town Council's venues and seek recommendations for operational actions.

Current Situation

Assistive Listening Project

Officers have sourced the Contacta Portable Induction Loop systems for the admin office and 1863 Café and Bar counter.

Officers have secured a quotation within the available budget for the installation of an Auracast assistive listening system in the Main Hall and an infrared system in the Gallery Room at The Corn Exchange. The proposed supplier has an established and positive working relationship with the venue and is therefore well placed to integrate the new systems with the venue's existing audio equipment.

The available budget does not extend to the installation of an assistive listening system at Burwell Hall during the current financial year. However, a budget has been earmarked for future refurbishment works at Burwell Hall. As these plans develop, consideration can be given to incorporating an appropriate assistive listening solution alongside audio system improvements.

It is recommended that Officers proceed with the installation of the Auracast and infrared systems at The Corn Exchange, whilst incorporating provision for an appropriate assistive listening system at Burwell Hall into a wider refurbishment and audio upgrade project.

Sanitary Bins in Men's Toilets

Following discussions with a local resident and campaigner raising awareness through the "Boys Need Bins" campaign, the Officer is working with the Council's current sanitary waste supplier to explore the introduction of sanitary bins within the male toilets at The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. The Boys Need Bins campaign, aims to ensure men who use stoma bags, incontinence pads or other continence products have somewhere hygienic to dispose of waste.

Providing sanitary bins in all toilet cubicles would improve access to appropriate sanitary waste facilities for individuals who may require them, including those living with conditions such as Crohn's disease and colitis.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

4. A Respectful Community

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 proposed assistive listening technology will improve accessibility and participation for people with hearing loss or other hearing impairments, supporting their equal access to the Council's facilities and events.

Providing sanitary bins in male toilets will support equal access to appropriate sanitary facilities for all users, including men and boys who require them, helping to ensure the facilities are inclusive and accessible.

- b) Biodiversity -
- c) Crime & Disorder -
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency -

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.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

1. The cost of the assistive listening installation in the main hall and gallery room is **£11,378.33**
2. The cost of the Contacta Portable Induction Loops is **£215.99** each, totalling **£431.98**.
3. The cost of adding additional sanitary bins into the male cubicles at Corn Exchange (3 cubicles) and Burwell Hall (1 cubicle) is **£46.00 per quarter**.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Approve the installation of the Auracast and Infrared systems at The Corn Exchange and defer the Burwell Hall system to form part of the wider refurbishment of the venue.

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HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Public Halls Business Report

Meeting Date: 14th September 2026

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 aims to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive community arts facility that is valued and supported by the residents of Witney and West Oxfordshire. This objective is supported by funding from West Oxfordshire District Council for this purpose.

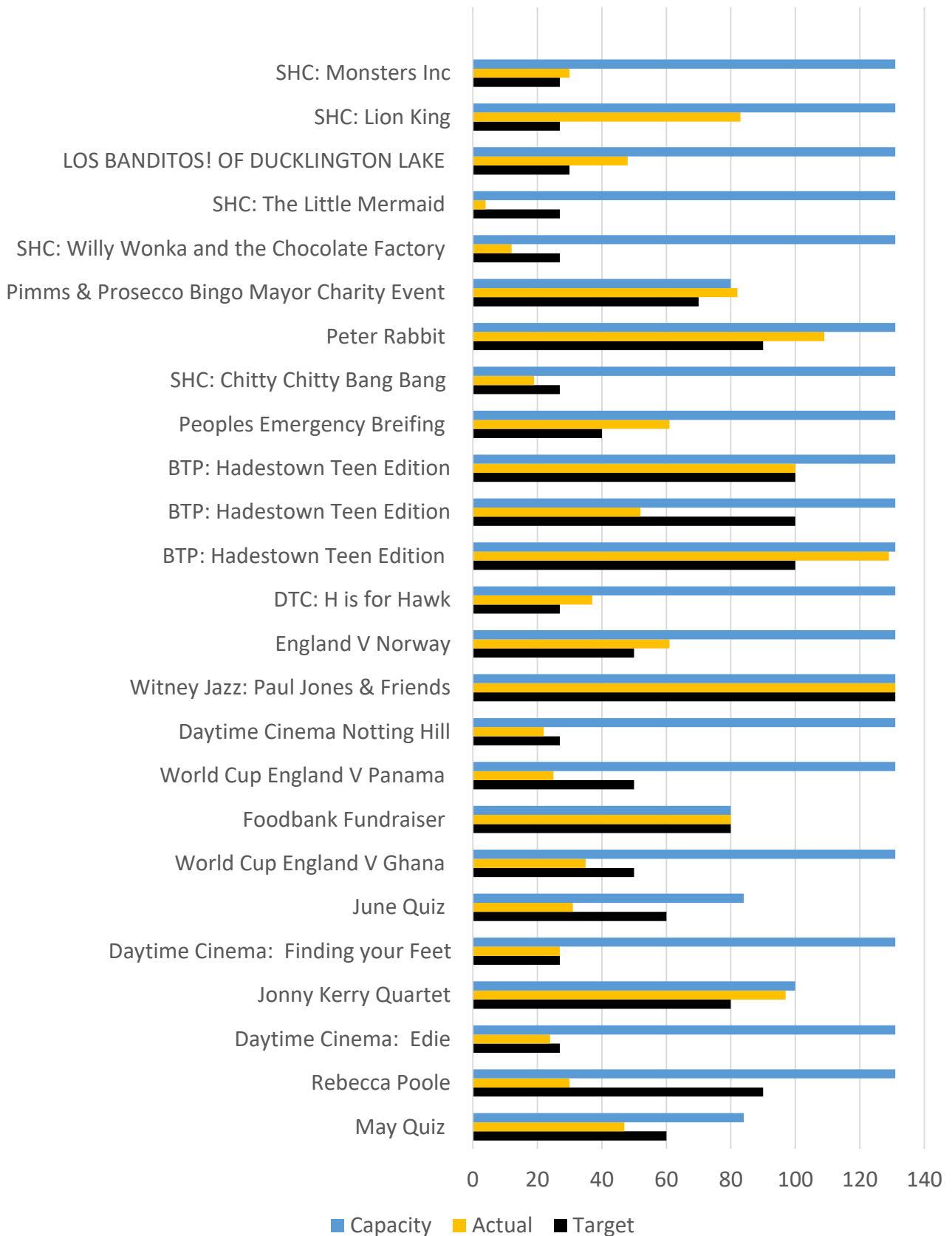
The Council seeks to make the Corn Exchange accessible to the whole community by encouraging participation and offering a diverse programme of music, arts and cultural events. In addition, the Council will provide a professional, well-maintained venue available to hire for private events such as parties, weddings, and conferences.

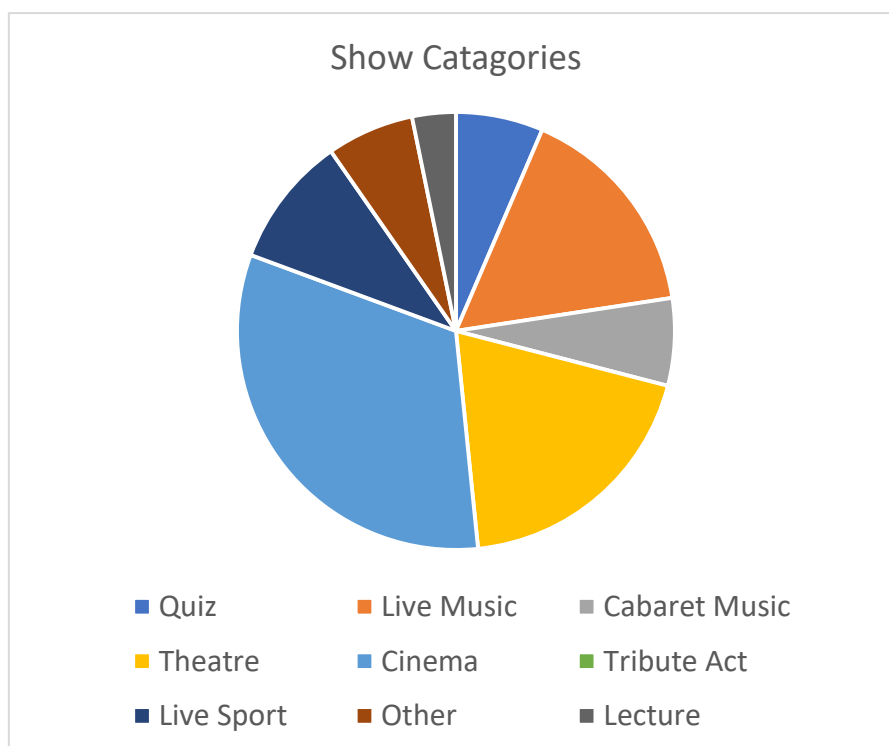
Current Situation

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 June 2026, including attendance figures and 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.

Target Attendance, Actual Attendance and Capacity





Recent

Tunes on the Square

Tunes on the Square has been hugely successful this year. The event has been consistently well attended, with audience numbers increasing week on week.

The increased popularity of the event created additional staffing requirements. Officers responded by deploying additional staff and opening a second outside bar during periods of peak demand. This increased service capacity, reduced queues and enabled the venue to maximise bar sales.

Overall feedback has been very positive, with attendees making recommendations for how the event could be developed further next year, including suggestions to expand the event across a greater area of the Square. The pavement license renewal application has been submitted with an amended layout, to cover the width of the square up to the access road.

The events have had a positive impact on bar revenue, evident by a **26.5% increase** in revenue (source of data is EPOS reports) during the period 19th June – 29th August in comparison to last year. Direct comparison of revenue on the Fridays that the event took place, show a **110% increase** in total bar revenue generated on these days compared to last year. This comparison includes daytime takings and, on some dates, other events taking place within the venue. It therefore should not be interpreted as a direct measure of revenue attributable solely to Tunes on the Square; however, it provides a useful indicator of the event's positive impact on overall bar performance.

The event has also had a positive community impact, providing a regular weekly opportunity for residents to meet, socialise and enjoy live music in the town centre. The event has attracted repeat attendees throughout the series, as well as visitors from surrounding communities including Bampton and Carterton.

Events

The decision was made to amend the time to 19:00 – 21:00 this year, which had a number of benefits:

- **Increased window for sales:** customers arrived earlier each week to secure their seats, leading to a longer window of drinks sales. It also meant that people are able to stay for a drink after the performance.
- **More daylight:** By bringing the finish time forward to 21:00, we had more daylight for a longer period of the series. Officers are looking for some atmospheric lighting solution for next year, as the trees are unable to be lit during nesting season.
- **Less conflict with other venues:** Other local venues with live music tend to start at 21:00, meaning people are still able to support these other venues after attending Tunes on The Square.

Based on the success of the 2026 series, officers recommend continuing Tunes on the Square in 2027, with consideration given to expanding the event footprint, starting the series earlier in the year, and exploring additional atmospheric lighting options. The experience gained this year will also enable staffing and bar operations to be planned more effectively around anticipated demand.



Witney Jazz & Blues

Witney Jazz & Blues events continue to be popular and successful, with the programme gaining increasing traction. The Paul Jones performance was particularly successful, selling out several months in advance of the show date. These regular events are now a staple of the Corn Exchange calendar, with tickets frequently requested during Box Office sessions.

Cinema

Recent daytime cinema screenings have included:

- *Edie*
- *Finding Your Feet*
- *Notting Hill*
- *H is for Hawk*

The Daytime Cinema programme continues to grow and develop, with an average attendance of 25 people per screening since January. The lowest-attended screening this quarter was *Notting Hill*, with 22 attendees, while *H is for Hawk* attracted 37 attendees.

Audiences have consistently expressed enthusiasm for the return of Daytime Cinema following the summer break. Officers are considering the potential to move to weekly screenings, which may make the programme easier to market to a wider audience and help establish a more consistent routine for customers.

Following audience feedback regarding public transport and bus times, we will be moving screenings slightly later in the day.

Officers are additionally in discussion about reintroducing evening cinema screenings to broaden the programme and reach new audiences.

Summer Holiday Cinema

The Summer Holiday Cinema programme was an overall success, although it took a couple of weeks for attendance to build.

Attendance figures were:

- *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* – 19
- *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* – 12
- *The Little Mermaid* – 4
- *The Lion King* – 83
- *Monsters, Inc.* – 30

The screening of *The Lion King* benefited from the attendance of 40 members and staff from the ICE Centre, significantly increasing the overall audience. This has established a positive relationship that officers will look to develop further for future holiday programmes.

The attendance figures and audience response have also helped inform potential themes for next year's programme. We have decided on the theme '90's Nostalgia' and have begun to shortlist films.

World Cup Matches

The Corn Exchange streamed England matches during the summer. A small number of matches could not be screened due to time-zone considerations and existing bookings in the Main Hall. The target audience for these events was affected by the later kick-off times.

The key selling point of the screenings in previous years was their family-friendly environment, providing an alternative for people who may not feel comfortable watching matches in a pub. However, with some matches kicking off between 9pm and 1am and several taking place mid-week, many families opted to watch from home.

As England progressed through the tournament, audience numbers increased. Unfortunately, the venue was unable to screen the quarter-final due to existing commitments.

Mayoral Charity Fundraisers

Two Mayoral charity fundraising events have taken place since the previous report. Both events were reported as successful in achieving their fundraising objectives.

Hadestown: Teen Edition

Buttercross Theatre Productions presented *Hadestown: Teen Edition*, providing an opportunity for their young performers to showcase their work.

The young performers also provided a warm-up performance for Tunes on the Square to help market their upcoming show. This was a positive addition to the event and is something that could potentially continue in future years.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny

The Tale of Peter Rabbit and Benjamin Bunny was well attended and received positively.

There were also strong sales of drinks, ice creams and snacks. Although these sales cannot be directly measured through the till figures, there was a noticeable number of audience members taking refreshments purchased in 1863 into the auditorium. The theatre company continues to provide a cost-effective programme and is keen to return next year with a production of *The Wind in the Willows*.

Los Banditos! of Ducklington Lake

Los Banditos! of Ducklington Lake attracted fewer attendees than anticipated; however, the screening provided a valuable opportunity to showcase the work of a local young filmmaker.

The post-screening Q&A with members of the cast and crew was a particularly positive addition, providing audiences with an opportunity to engage directly with those involved in the production.

Candy Girls

Following slow sales and feedback from customers, the *Candy Girls* event has been postponed until March. Feedback indicated that August may not be the most suitable time of year for theatre-style or higher-commitment events.

The event will therefore be revisited in March, when audience availability is expected to be more favourable.

Private Events and Venue Hire

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have hosted a variety of private and community events during this period, including regular group meetings, private parties, presentations and other activities.

Recent hires have included:

- Two dance showcases
- A birthday party
- Teacher training
- A conference
- A photography exhibition
- Recruitment events for other businesses

Most hirers have completed feedback forms, providing valuable information on their experience of the venues and highlighting areas for continued development.

Upcoming Events

The Corn Exchange will continue to host a range of regular in-house and third-party events, including:

- Witney Jazz & Blues – First Friday of every month
- Tea Dance – Every Wednesday
- Buttercross Theatre Productions classes – Multiple classes every week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- Specsavers Coffee Morning – First Thursday of each month
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday
- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

Several new groups have also been added for the upcoming term, including a support group and a teaching group.

Upcoming Public Ticketed Events

- Witney Jazz & Blues
 - Linley Hamilton Quartet – 4 September
 - Burt Bacharach Reimagined – 2 October
 - Hank Theessink – Colo Blues – 23 October
- Magic of Film Music – Lecture – 5 September
- Buttercross Theatre Productions: Cluedo – 10–12 September
- Quiz Nights – 18 September, 9 October and 13 November
- Witney Wine Festival – 3 October
- Danny Lee Grew – 24K Magic – 10 October
- Shadowing Hank – 17 October
- Witney Dramatic Society: The Hound of the Baskervilles – 29–31 October
- Status Quo Tribute (with John Coghlan) – 7 November
- Daytime Cinema
 - *My Fair Lady* – 22 September
 - *The Penguin Lessons* – 6 October
 - *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* – 20 October
 - *The Great Escaper* – 3 November
 - *Evita* – 17 November
 - *White Christmas* – 1 December

Venue Usage

As well as hosting public events, The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall are hireable spaces available for a wide variety of bookings. Both venues receive a range of regular hirers as well as one-off private hirers.

The summer is a typically quieter period for bookings, due to the term time nature of many of our hirers. This year has seen an increased usage across all three hireable spaces, compared to the same period in 2025.

The usage report for the period **15th June – 20th September** indicates a **3.2% increase** in hours booked for the Corn Exchange Main Hall, a **3.6% increase** for the Gallery Room and a **16% increase** for Burwell Hall.

Week commencing	15th June	22nd June	29th June	6th July	13th July	20th July	27th July	3rd Aug	10th Aug	17th Aug	24th Aug	31st Aug	7th Sept	14th Sept		
CORN EX 2026 - 27																
Hours booked	28.00	27.00	39.00	38.00	45.00	33.00	30.00	25.00	38.00	20.00	35.00	40.00	44.00	28.00	470.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	33.00	32.00	47.00	45.00	54.00	39.00	35.00	30.00	45.00	24.00	42.00	48.00	52.00	33.00	39.93	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2025 - 26																
CORN EXCHANGE																
Hours booked	51.00	31.00	47.00	31.00	38.00	35.00	31.00	20.00	22.00	12.00	15.00	49.00	29.00	44.00	455.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	61.00	37.00	56.00	36.00	45.00	42.00	37.00	24.00	26.00	14.00	18.00	58.00	35.00	52.00	38.64	Average %
GALLERY 2026 - 27																
Hours booked	22.00	29.00	22.00	8.00	23.00	22.00	17.00	22.00	13.00	29.00	23.00	14.00	16.00	20.00	280.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	26.00	34.00	26.00	9.00	28.00	26.00	20.00	26.00	15.00	34.00	28.00	17.00	19.00	24.00	23.71	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2025 - 26																
GALLERY																
Hours booked	34.00	27.00	14.00	50.00	20.00	12.00	6.00	18.00	11.00	13.00	8.00	20.00	20.00	17.00	270.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	40.00	32.00	17.00	60.00	23.00	15.00	7.00	21.00	13.00	15.00	10.00	24.00	24.00	20.00	22.93	Average %
Burwell Hall																
MAIN HALL 2026 - 27																
Hours booked	38.00	46.00	44.00	47.00	39.00	45.00	18.00	23.00	29.00	30.00	24.00	26.00	40.00	53.00	502.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	45.00	55.00	52.00	56.00	46.00	53.00	21.00	27.00	34.00	35.00	28.00	30.00	47.00	63.00	42.29	Average %
SAME PERIOD 2025 - 26																
MAIN HALL																
Hours booked	37.00	39.00	31.00	41.00	40.00	35.00	31.00	18.00	23.00	15.00	18.00	20.00	41.00	33.00	422.00	Total Hrs
Usage Percentage	44.00	46.00	37.00	49.00	47.00	42.00	37.00	38.00	28.00	18.00	21.00	23.00	49.00	39.00	37.00	Average %

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

1863 Café & Bar

The 1863 Café & Bar continues to provide a valuable and well-loved community space for many local residents.

As reported at the end of the financial year March 2025, the 1863 Café and Bar revenue increased by around 20% in comparison to the previous year. So far this year, EPOS figures indicate that the revenue has increased a further 15.6% for the period April – August. This is due to the continued increase in daily turnover in the

café, as well as the huge success of Tunes on The Square during the summer months.

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 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



HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Corn Exchange Business Plan

Meeting Date: Monday 14th September

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Appendix Summary

Appendix 1 (page 3): Corn Exchange Business Plan (June 2026 Update)

The purpose of this report is to outline projects and objectives planned in relation to the business plan, ahead of budget setting cycle in November.

Background

The primary purpose of the Business Plan is to define clear objectives and establish the strategies and procedures required to achieve them. The Corn Exchange Business Plan is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the venue's ongoing development and operational changes.

As a community arts venue, the Corn Exchange places social value and community benefit at the core of its mission, while also recognising the importance of long-term financial stability. The Business Plan therefore seeks to balance these priorities; ensuring that the Corn Exchange continues to serve as a vibrant, accessible, and sustainable cultural hub for years to come.

Current Situation

Marketing

Whilst many comparable venues benefit from staff whose sole focus is marketing and audience development, these responsibilities at The Corn Exchange are currently undertaken by the Venue & Events Co-ordinator alongside a wide range of operational and event management duties, supported by the Venue & Events Officer.

Consequently, marketing has been identified as a key area for further development within the venue. The Venue & Events Co-ordinator has made significant progress in enhancing the venue's profile through initiatives such as an improved social media strategy, the introduction of a WhatsApp channel, and the production of a regular "What's On" brochure, all of which have contributed to increasing event attendance. However, there is an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive marketing strategy to further strengthen the venue's position and promote its

wider commercial offer, including weddings, hybrid conferencing, third-party events and general room hire.

The venue currently has a £3,000 “Publicity” budget for 2025/26, which includes marketing elements such as poster printing, advertising etc. Members should consider an increase to this budget line for 2026/27 to allow officers to work to a marketing strategy with the aim to increase; event attendances, wedding bookings, hybrid conference hirers, third-party shows and other general bookings.

Officers will research and provide proposed costed marketing projects for the November cycle, including; additional printing for what’s on and wedding brochures, third-party marketing agency options etc.

Tunes on The Square

Following the success of Tunes on the Square in 2026, officers recommend extending the period of these events in 2027, by starting in May to capitalise on the high footfall and bar sales. This would result in a greater spend on the events budget – however, members should be aware that due to the sales going through the bar and not tickets, there won’t be a direct reflection of the income from these events seen in the venues event budget line.

Officers will include Tunes on The Square as a key event within the business plan for 2027, with forecasted spend and strategy to maximise bar revenue, whilst maintaining the community feel of the event.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the inclusion of 1863 Café and Bar Business plan within the Corn Exchange Business Plan at the next review.

Witney Town Council

Corn Exchange

Business Plan



November 2023

*"To create a modern, accessible, and affordable arts venue for **Witney** and its community, providing a space capable of hosting both **local** and **professional** arts performances, fostering creativity, and enriching the cultural life of the area."*

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Document Owner	Tom Smith	Venue & Events Officer
Date Created	06/11/2023	Tom Smith
Next review date	29/05/2024	Tom Smith
Next review date	03/03/25	Tom Smith
Next review date	27/10/25	Tom Davies

Amendments		
Additions or changes made	Date	WTC Officer
Vision in Exec Summery, staff roles,	29/05/24	Tom Smith
Review progress of objectives	7/3/24	Tom Smith
Update Staffing Structure, update pricing structure, provide updates on year 1 projects and objectives, update year 2 objectives.	Nov 2025	Tom Davies

Introduction of 1863 Café and Bar section Updated Hiring Fee's Updates on year 2 projects	June 2026	Tom Davies

Executive Summary

Witney Town Council's key objective in serving the community through the Corn Exchange is 'Bringing and supporting the arts to everyone in Witney and West Oxfordshire'.

This business plan will demonstrate the benefits of the strategic actions ahead to ensure we provide a facility of choice, and all of our customers enjoy a professional and pleasant experience.

At all times the Town Council's commitment to working within the remit of a declared climate emergency. Consideration will be given to ensure our operations and facility are as efficient and effective as possible.

Background

Witney is a medium sized Market Town with a population of approximately 30,000 and serves as a gateway for the Cotswold's as well as being a popular destination in its own right. Situated in West Oxfordshire and having the potential scope to draw audiences from far and wide, Witney can be looked at as a destination town, saving people the travel time to get to Oxford or Cheltenham.

The Corn Exchange historical and current use

Until the mid-19th century, corn merchants traded from the ground floor of Witney Town Hall. In the early 1860s, a group of local businessmen decided to form a company, to be known as the "Witney Corn Exchange and Public Rooms Company", to finance and commission a purpose-built corn exchange for the town. The site they chose in Market Street had accommodated the "Corn Returns Office", a structure, which was designed in the Tudor style using timber-frame construction, and which dated from 1593.

The new building was designed by John Collier of Putney in the neoclassical style, built by a local builder, Malachi Bartlett, in ashlar stone at a cost of £2,500 and was officially opened on 17 September 1863. The design involved a symmetrical main frontage of three bays facing onto Market Street. The central bay featured a round headed doorway with a fanlight and a rusticated surround. There was a cross-window, with a segmental pediment and a balcony, supported by brackets, on the first floor. The outer bays were fenestrated by

segmental headed sash windows with rusticated architraves on the ground floor and by square headed sash windows with cornices on the first floor. At roof level there was an entablature inscribed with the words "Corn Exchange", a modillioned cornice and a central pediment. The central pediment contained a clock, which was flanked by pairs of pilasters, in the tympanum. Internally, the principal room was the main hall which was 70 feet (21 m) long and 35 feet (11 m) wide.

The use of the building as a corn exchange declined significantly in the wake of the Great Depression of British Agriculture in the late 19th century. After the area was advanced to the status of urban district in 1895, the new civic leaders decided to hold their meetings in the corn exchange, rather than in Witney Town Hall. The council went on to raise the necessary money to acquire the corn exchange, after the Witney Corn Exchange and Public Rooms Company was placed into liquidation in January 1911.

During the First World War the local branch of the Volunteer Training Corps used the corn exchange for drill practice on a weekly basis. Witney Urban District Council relocated from the corn exchange to a large Victorian era property at 26 Church Green in 1936. During the Second World War, the corn exchange was requisitioned for use as an entertainment place for soldiers and was also used by the council for fund raising in support of War Weapons Week.

The building became very dilapidated in the 1960s and was closed for public use in 1968. A local petition was initiated, demanding that the building be restored in the 1970s. Witney Town Council acquired the corn exchange in July 1977: an extensive programme of refurbishment works costing £150,000 was carried out and the building was re-opened by the mayor, Michael Chadwick, in February 1979. The building was remodelled internally, to enable the ground floor to be used as a cinema, in 1992. Two programmes from the BBC Radio 4 show, Gardeners' Question Time, were recorded in the building in February 2004. The ground floor was further upgraded in 2020 when the cafe/bar, 1863, was installed in the lobby area, run by the Town Council and operating as an ancillary function to the hall. Further improvements to the hall have been installed including tiered seating, which was completed 2022 giving the main hall a seated capacity of 131, as well as the re-introduction of the cinema screen and projector, thereby enabling the building to be re-opened by the then mayor, Liz Duncan, as an arts and performance hub in March 2023.

The Corn Exchange is open to all, not just to the hirers of the building and as such as part of the Town Councils commitment to a vibrant and welcoming community hub, the Corn Exchange is designated as both a cool and warm space, dependant on season, as well as a safe space for those who need it.

Historically the entrance to the Corn Exchange was divided into two rooms acting as a venue office and the other as small hireable space. This area was developed during the original refurbishment in 2015 and opened into one large hireable space, the area was never fully utilised and became an office area for the caretakers and bookings officer. With the appointment of a dedicated Venue Manager in 2019, one of the first decisions was to

change the use and create a café and bar area which was to be run by the Town Council. 1863 Café Bar was opened in 2020. Initially opening on just a Monday and Tuesday and being ran by a very small team of staff. After an interrupted first few months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the café & bar was fully reopened in 2021 and since has become a popular destination point for regular customers. The Bar is equipped with EPOS till system and a bespoke bar designed and installed by a local carpenter.

Management Structure



The current staffing has evolved as the Corn Exchange has evolved, 5 years ago there was only a requirement for caretakers to facilitate the smooth running of the hall. This was deemed sufficient for the types of bookings that were being made at this time as well as managing the level of customer expectation associated with those bookings.

Now there is a wide variety of diverse events being held in the Corn Exchange every week throughout the year, the types of bookings have changed, the frequency of bookings have changed and as such the need for a different staffing structure has become apparent to fulfil the Town Council's vision of a destination venue in the centre of Witney. Customer expectation has grown with the development of the hall, and the staffing level in the hall has had to grow alongside this to support the new bookings being made.

The café and bar, 1863, has been installed to offer the public a reason to start using the Corn Exchange and to encourage new bookings as well as providing decent support to the multitude of events that are run in the hall. This was initially implemented and run by the Venue and Events Officer but due to the success of the business it has outgrown the

achievability of one or two people to successfully run it. Due to other areas which require the Venue and Events Officers time, the café has had to be restructured to allow it to grow.

Venue and Events Officer

- **Event Programming and Management:** Overseeing the delivery of events and ensuring they run smoothly, maintaining high standards of customer service, and attention to detail.
- **Staff Development and Wellbeing:** Ensuring the team is properly trained, developed, and supported, promoting a positive work environment.
- **Business Growth and Strategy:** Taking a strategic approach to the venue's growth, analysing opportunities for development while maintaining sustainability.
- **Licensing and Risk Management:** Ensuring all legal and safety requirements are met, including managing risk assessments, licenses, and ensuring the safety of the public and staff.
- **Hirer Relationships and Code of Conduct:** Managing relationships with event hirers, ensuring they adhere to a code of conduct, and maintaining the professional standards of the venue.
- **Caretaking and Support:** Overseeing the caretaking team at both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall, ensuring the spaces are maintained and well-prepared for events.

Venue & Events Co-Ordinator

After a small re-structure in 2025, the previous Deputy Venue & Events Officer moved into the Venue & Events Officer role, and the deputy role was replaced by a Venue & Events Co-Ordinator role. This role is designed to be hands-on, co-ordinating day-day operations of the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall, as well as playing a key part in developing the events program and marketing delivery.

Café and Bar Manager

The Café and Bar Manager is responsible for the daily management and smooth operation of the café and bar at the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. This role involves managing service standards, overseeing stock control, coordinating casual staff, and ensuring a high level of customer service is delivered at all times.

Caretakers

There are two part time caretakers currently working for the halls with responsibility to lock and unlock the halls, set up hirers' rooms, meet and greet hirers as well as providing support for the hirer during their booking. Caretakers are deployed in The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.

Café and Bar Staff

1863 employs approximately 10 staff who are all deployed at different hours to suit the needs of the business. Daily running of the café and support for evening bar events. Café

staff are usually the first contact for someone entering the Corn Exchange, so it is vitally important that they are trained to provide excellent customer service as well as working knowledge about what events are happening in the hall on any given day.

Future Staffing

As the business grows, so will the level of staffing required to maintain and deliver the excellent level of customer service and varying diverse events which will be delivered by the Events team.

Regular reviews will be undertaken to ensure the correct level of resource is in place to match the growth and demand. This will adhere with the vision of the Town Council of the hall being a destination arts hub.

Market Appraisal and Approach

What are we offering?

Café 1863 is a vibrant, community-focused café located within the Corn Exchange, open six days a week (08:30 – 17:00, Monday to Saturday). Offering a wide selection of locally sourced hot and cold food and drinks, the café is known for its affordable and competitive prices. Designed to provide a welcoming and friendly environment, Café 1863 is a perfect spot for locals and visitors to enjoy a relaxing break, whether for a coffee, lunch, or a light snack.

On selected Fridays, Café 1863 stays open later until 22:00 to run the popular Fizzy Friday offer, where guests can enjoy a range of sparkling beverages and evening treats.

This is a licensed premises to serve alcohol that supplements the activities and events held in Gallery Room and Main Hall.

Gallery Room: A function room with IT facilities enabling video conferencing is available for hire and Council use that provides a broad range of use for the local community.

This includes, weddings, parties, art events, mental health and wellbeing support, business meetings, training, to name a few.

Main Hall: Available to hire 7 days a week between 08:00-23:00 offering a space that can be hired for a wide variety of events. The retractable tiered seating increases the type of events that can be held in the hall along with very good stage lighting, sound system, projector and screen.

Some of the types of events held are, music, theatre, dance school, religious services, comedy, magic shows, lectures, drama and film clubs etc.

Who are we targeting?

The main objective of the Corn Exchange is to provide high-quality facilities and services to the local Witney community and West Oxfordshire residents, as well as organisations, associations, societies, clubs, groups, and businesses. By offering a versatile and welcoming space, the Corn Exchange aims to support a wide variety of events, activities, and functions that enrich the cultural, social, and business life of the community.

Regional and Local Residents/Businesses

The table below details the use of the facilities in the Corn Exchange.

Corn Exchange	Local Residents	Regional Residents & Visitors
Café 1863	75%	25%

Corn Exchange	Local Businesses and Groups	Regional Businesses & Groups
Main Hall	80%	20%
Gallery Room	80%	20%

Local Residents and businesses: These are mainly repeat loyal customers that appreciate the services and facilities we provided.

Regional Residents and businesses: These vary with lots of scope to increase customer base via promoting our services.

Tourist Visitors: It's difficult to measure the ratio of tourist however through general observations and discussions it is deemed to be in the region of 5%.

Comparable Local Businesses

In Witney the Corn Exchange is unique when compared to other operators and premises where it provides multiple facilities. These include a vibrant and busy Café, a safe space in extreme conditions, a refuge in the event of disasters to act as a temporary shelter, public toilets, function room and main hall hire, all with charitable concessions.

Langdale Hall, (leased by Witney Town Council) is located almost adjacent to the Corn Exchange, which boasts a capacity of 400 but offers no tiered seating or cinema facility. Similarly, to the Corn Exchange, Langdale Hall is used for a variety of different events, and boasts a wide range of different hall hires. Generally used for disco and band nights as well as being available for private function hire.

Halfway down Corn Street there is Fat Lils, another entertainment venue located on Corn Street, but this is quite a significantly different business, not one that would be booked out for a variety of events, instead dedicated to live music.

Located at the bottom of the High Street, is the Methodist Church, which also offers more hireable space however restrictions and the normal church activities limit the events that can be held.

Also, in local proximity there is the Masonic Hall on Church Green. This is a smart function hall which is smaller than the Corn Exchange, but it does include an on-site bar within the hall.

When comparing the Corn Exchange hire rates to other local venues the Council are providing an affordable vital hub for the community that is capable of holding many diverse events

Hall	Capacity	Minimum Booking Time	Cost	Additional Hours	Exclusive Use	Sundries Tea/Coffee/water etc
Main Hall	131 Tiered Seating 200 Standing	2 hrs	Group 1: £78.50 Group 2: £115.50 Group 3: £184.00	£30.50 per hour	Y	Hot water/cold water
Gallery Room	90	2 hrs	Group 1: 34.50 Group 2: 50.50 Group 3: 76.75	£30.50 per hour	Y	Hot water/cold water
Langdale Hall	300	2hrs	By negotiation	By negotiation	Y	Hot/Cold water
Masonic Hall	100	4 hrs	£200	£25 per hour	Y	Hot/Cold water
Methodist Church	400	4 hrs	£150	£25	N	Hot/Cold water
Madley Hall	400	2 hrs	By negotioation	By negotiation	Y	Hot/Cold water
Ducklington Hall	100	1hr	£12 per hour	£12 per hour	Y	Hot/Cold water
Part & Parcel conferencing room	20	4 hrs/8hrs	£100 4 hrs £200 8 hrs	N/A	Y	Included

Competitor Analysis

The Corn Exchange stands out in the local market, offering a unique experience that differentiates it from all other venues in the area. One of the main challenges in the past has been increasing public awareness of the venue, but over time, this has improved significantly.

Feedback from hall users has been largely positive, with many appreciating the recent improvements and the continued development of the space.

Similarly, Café 1863 has built a loyal following and is a popular destination for shoppers in the town. Its success is further supported by the café's convenient location, just a short distance from the bus stops across the Market Square, making it easily accessible for those visiting the area.

Financial Appraisal

Corn Exchange

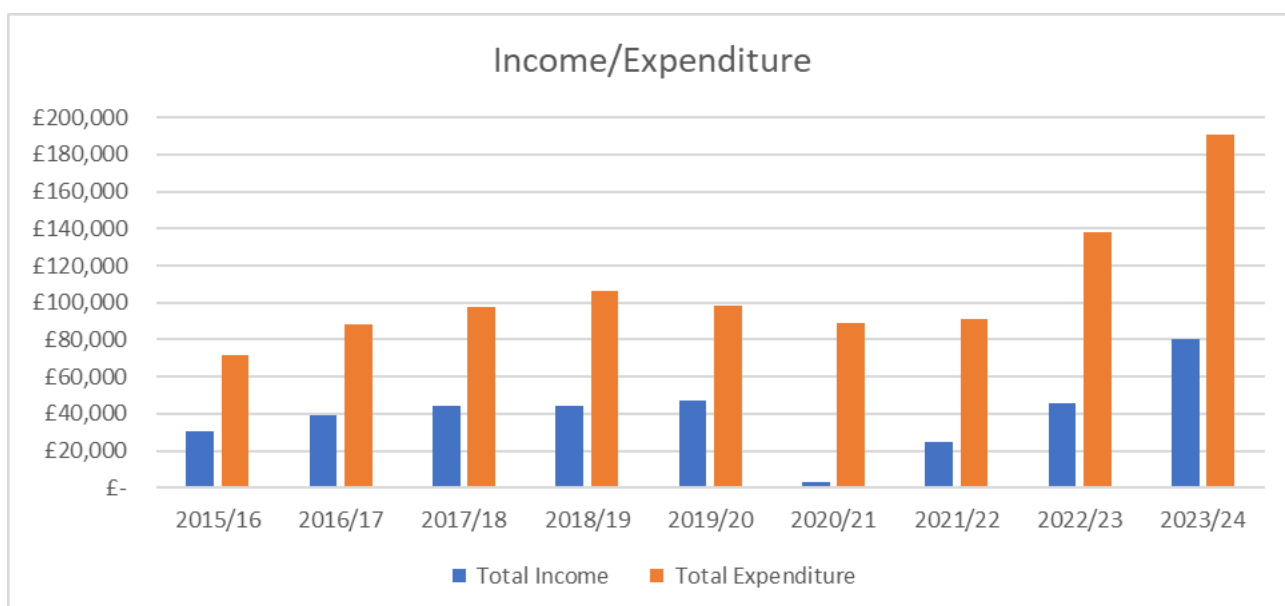
The table below details the income generated and expenditure costs for the previous 8 years.

DEPT 104 - CORN EXCHANGE	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 Covid	2021/22 Covid	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025	2025/26
Total Income	30,631	39,286	43,934	44,117	46,791	3,401	24,846	45,693	80,399	77,654	86,072
Total Expenditure	71,595	87,983	97,930	106,438	98,507	88,749	90,785	138,368	190,984	205,275	195,764
NET EXPENDITURE	-40,964	-48,697	-53,996	-62,321	-51,716	-85,348	-65,939	-92,675	-110,585	-127,621	-109,692
Percentage of income vs expenditure	43%	45%	45%	41%	48%	4%	27%	33%	42%	37%	44%

Note the green section is affected by the pandemic and the 2023/24 year is forecasted amounts and this does not include the income and expenditure for the café/bar.

The total income this year is estimated to exceed last years, primarily due to the increased number of well attended events with the new equipment now installed in the main hall such as the new retractable main hall seating, lighting and sound infrastructure.

The increase in expenditure 2023/24 includes an increase in energy costs linked to the rise in gas and electricity rates, plastering and redecoration of the Gallery room, an upgrade to the pigeon deterrent system, and an increase in staff allocated to the total salary costs to the running of the Corn Exchange.



The projection for future years expenditure and income has not been included in this report at this stage however the Council are working to collate this information to enable future targets to be incorporated.

1863 Café and Bar

Vision and Purpose

The 1863 café and bar operation functions as both an independent daytime hospitality offer and an integrated service for performances, cinema screenings, community activities, private hire, and cultural events within the Corn Exchange venue. Positioned in the reception of the Corn Exchange, this naturally provides a welcoming front of house for visitors of the wider venue as well as its own customers.

The vision of 1863 café and bar is to work towards three primary goals:

1. Community Social Hub

- To provide a warm welcoming, accessible and inclusive environment for residents
- Affordable pricing on hot drinks and loyalty cards to reward regular customers
- Primary customers are elderly residents, but also includes town centre workers, families, and tourists.

2. Supporting Events

- Provides a valuable service for public and private events, boosting customer experience
- Increases venue revenue through bar sales
- Enables packages and advanced sales at private bookings, generating guaranteed revenue.
- Provides solid regular footfall and audience for event marketing

3. Commercial Sustainability

- By increasing bar sales through events, to help keep our daytime café prices affordable and accessible for the whole community.

Operating Model

Opening Hours:

Monday – Saturday 8:30 – 17:00

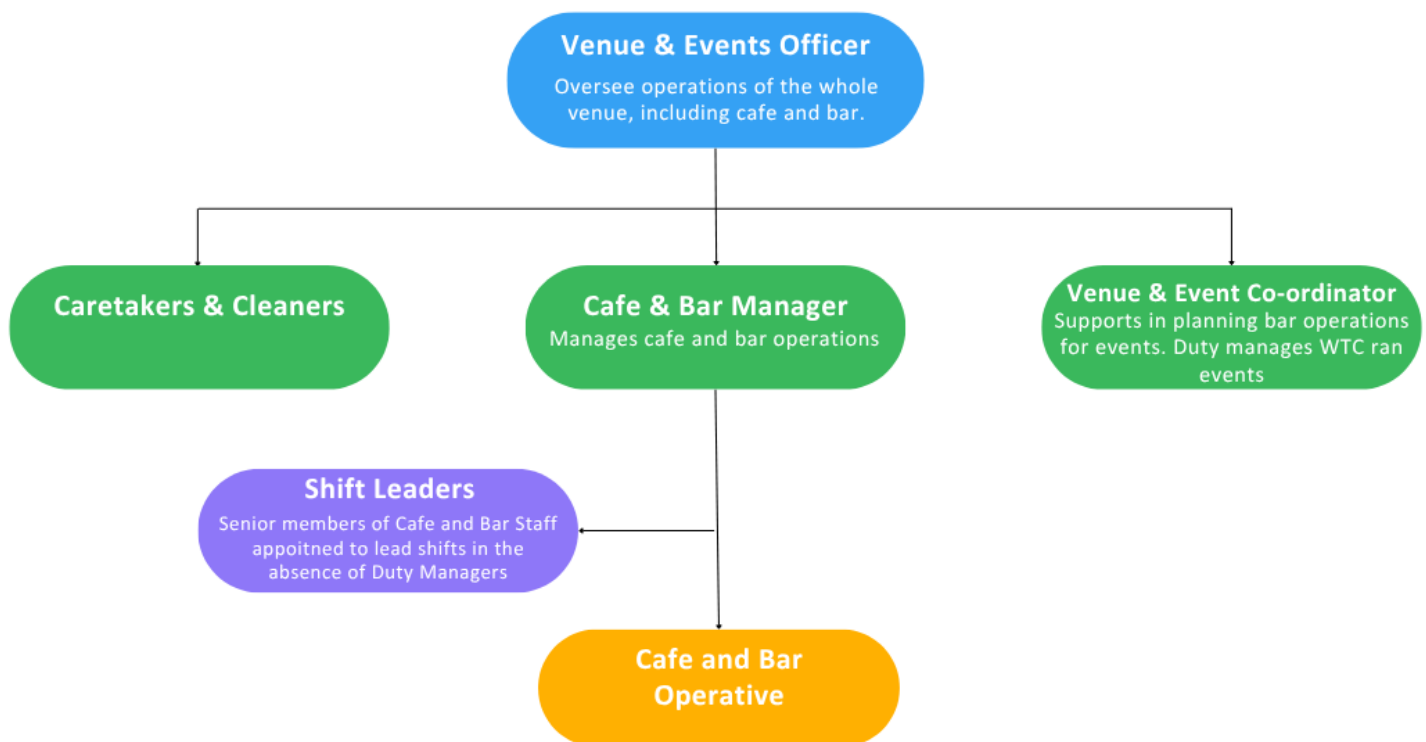
Evenings for Events

Fridays until 10pm during summer months to facilitate “Tunes on The Square”

Daytime Café transition to Evening Event

Café closes between 17:00 and the opening time of the event to reduce staffing cost. The transition between café and bar set up after closure is minimal, allowing it to be done by one member of staff.

The below model outlines the staffing structure of Corn Exchange in relation to the 1863 Café and Bar.



Food and Drink Offer

- High-quality coffee, tea and cold beverages.
- Light lunches, cakes and snacks.
- Locally sourced products where commercially viable.
- Seasonal and event-specific offers.
- Flexible menu designed to meet customer demand while minimising waste.

Integration with Events

A key area in reaching the goal of commercial sustainability, is through integrating with events. The café and bar provides a service which enhances the audiences experience and creates a revenue generating opportunity.

Enhanced Visitor Experience

- Provides a welcoming space for audiences before and after events.
- Encourages visitors to arrive earlier and remain on site longer.
- Improves the overall customer experience through convenient access to food and drink.
- Creates opportunities for social interaction and community engagement around events.

Additional Revenue Generation

- Generates secondary spend from event attendees through food and beverage sales.
- Increases average customer spend per visit.
- Provides revenue opportunities before performances and during intervals
- Supports financial sustainability through diversified income streams beyond ticket sales.

Private Hire and Commercial Events

- Enhances the attractiveness of the venue for private hire.
- Provides in-house bar services for corporate events, receptions and community functions.
- Creates opportunities for tailored hospitality packages, generating up-front sales.
- Increases revenue generated from venue hires.
- Operates on Minimum Spend Policy to ensure financial responsibility of the service.

Audience Development and Cross-Marketing

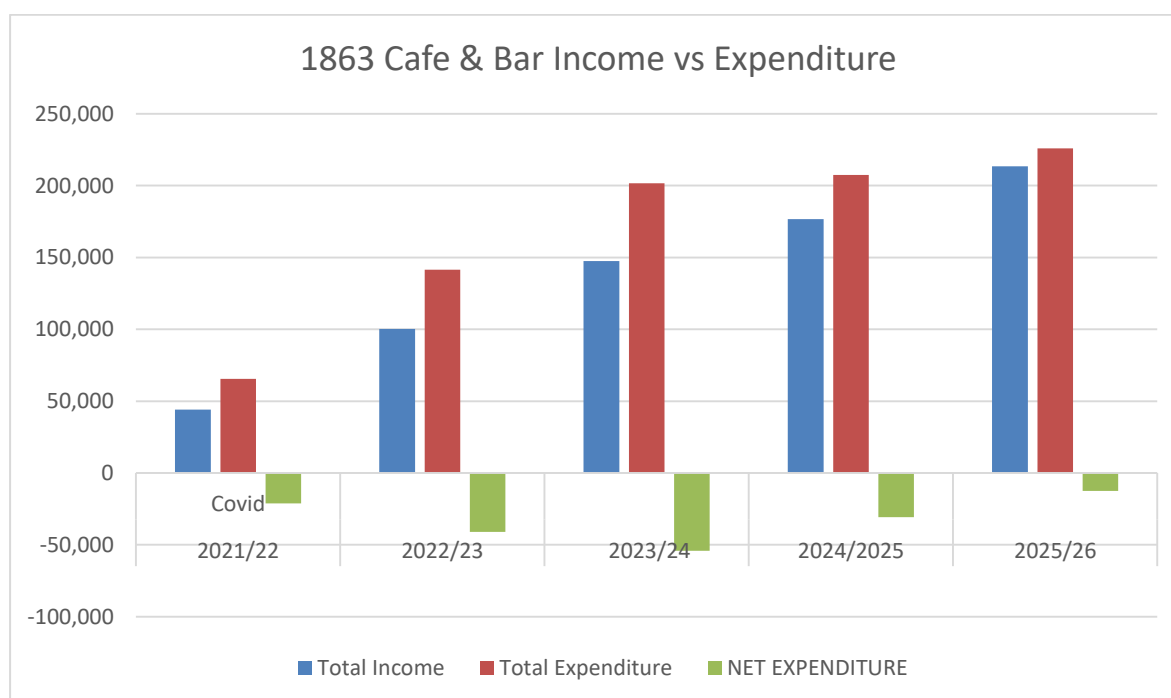
- Café customers are exposed to event marketing through venue displays and promotional activity.
- Event attendees are encouraged to return during daytime trading hours.
- Private hire customers gain confidence in the venue through their experience of the café and bar service.
- Regular café users represent a valuable audience for future cultural programming and community events.

Risk Management

- Café staffing levels adjusted in line with demand.
- Event bar operation activated only where financially viable.
- Minimum spend requirements for private hire bookings.
- Regular review of product pricing and supplier costs.
- Monitoring of waste and stock control procedures.

1863 Café & Bar Finances

DEPT 104 - CORN EXCHANGE	2021/22 Covid	2022/23	2023/24	2024/2025	2025/26
Total Income	24,846	100,339	147,473	176,648	213,433
Total Expenditure	90,785	141,395	201,616	142,077	149,748
NET EXPENDITURE	-65,939	-92,675	-110,585	-30,681	-12,552
Percentage of income vs expenditure	27%	33%	42%	37%	44%



The above data shows the growth in financial performance year-on-year as the deficit narrows. It is important to note that 1863 Café and Bar reported figures don't absorb utility costs, making the burden fall greater onto the 104 Corn Exchange cost-centre. However, this has been the case since the creation of the Café & Bar and therefore the tables above are an accurate reflection of the progress being made.

The 1863 Café & Bar is designed to deliver both community and commercial value. By balancing affordable daytime provision with income-generating event activity, the operation supports the

Corn Exchange's wider objectives of accessibility, community engagement and long-term financial sustainability.

Current Pricing for Venue Hire

Hire charges for the Corn Exchange function rooms are determined by the Town Council and typically increase by approximately 5% at the start of each new financial year. The current hire prices (2026/27) are as follows:

CORN EXCHANGE (Vatable)	£
THE MAIN HALL - WEEKDAY	
GROUP 1 - CHARITY OR LOCAL ORGANISATION	168.00
GROUP 2 - NON-CHARITABLE EVENTS	247.00
GROUP 3 COMMERCIAL AND SALES	394.00
THE MAIN HALL - WEEKEND	
GROUP 1 - CHARITY OR LOCAL ORGANISATION	215.50
GROUP 2 - NON-CHARITABLE EVENTS	325.50
GROUP 3 COMMERCIAL AND SALES	514.50
THE GALLERY ROOM - WEEKDAY	
GROUP 1 - CHARITY OR LOCAL ORGANISATION	73.50
GROUP 2 - NON-CHARITABLE EVENTS	108.50
GROUP 3 COMMERCIAL AND SALES	168.00
THE GALLERY ROOM - WEEKEND	
GROUP 1 - CHARITY OR LOCAL ORGANISATION	102.00
GROUP 2 - NON-CHARITABLE EVENTS	143.00
GROUP 3 COMMERCIAL AND SALES	189.00

3 Year Objectives

Year	Main Hall
Year 1	Asset Equipment: Review of current equipment, new furniture and painting of the green rooms and backstage area. Identified need, established from feedback, for led lighting to be installed on steps as luminescent strips don't hold charge long enough and make use of the stairs difficult in softer light. Officers have asked seating supplier for a quote to install LED lighting on the stairs of the tiered seating. Analise the costs for full surround sound in the main hall triggered by results of customer feedback suggesting this that would provide an enhanced experience. Original installers of Halll upgrade have been approached for quotes. Update Nov2025: This is being re-visited as part of NT Live requirements and will be reported to members for consideration once costings and potential benefits are confirmed. Research costs of modular stage, more flexibility and easier set up for different events. Easier to store and reduced resource required. Officers are in the process of obtaining quotes. Work with Project Officer to erect partition and doorway to storage area in the corridor behind the retractable seating. The work to update and improve storage in the Corn Exchange has been completed. There is now additional storage underneath the main staircase, lockable storage behind the seating in the Main Hall and behind the stage area also in the Main Hall. The addition of this storage allows for better housekeeping standards to be maintained. Updating furniture in artists rest area will make the C/E look more professional and attractive to visiting groups. Addition of smart sockets in Main Hall and artists rest areas Events Continue work on a yearly schedule of events to provide the town with the diverse and desired programme of events. Continual analysis of popularity, demand and success will help shape future events. Pilot new events to determine interest and value. Officers are working on a busy Autumn/Winter season and all events will be marketed via the What's On guide, website, social media and physical advertising and reported to committee.

The Corn Exchange is establishing a regular Film Club that is intended to appeal to a different market to those that are going to visit Cineworld or Similar. The Film Club focusses on classic films which aren't often shown on the big screen and the films screened are chosen by feedback from attendees of the screenings and advice from Officers who have a vested interest in film. The Film club is going to be held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month throughout the year to build momentum and gain regular audience numbers. This is actioned and implemented. Officers are also working on an afternoon film club for those that either don't want or can't attend evening screenings.

Update Nov2025: See year 2 below.

The weekly Tea Dance that has proven to be an essential activity with many benefits (exercise, social interaction etc) supported by the Council serving the older residents of Witney and the surrounding areas. Explore opportunities for increased attendance.

To introduce a box office counter to support the ever popular and well attended annual Christmas pantomime includes up to 15 performances that is extremely popular including a relaxed performance, a show that's been adapted to suit people who might require a more relaxed environment when going to the theatre. Usually, these are adults or children with learning difficulties, autism or sensory communication disorders.

Update Nov2025: Officers will research the possibility of introducing a centralised booking system for all shows at The Corn Exchange. This will improve customer experience as the confusion between in-house and third-party show ticketing is a frequent consumer pain point. A centralised system, embedded into the venues website, would professionalise our approach to ticketing whilst solving this consumer pain. Once this is in place, officers can explore a permanent solution to an in-person box office, an essential service for much of our customer base.

The accompany the annual Civic Events that are a compulsory part of a Councils working year that includes Citizen of the Year, the Annual Civic Reception and the Annual Town Meeting, we shall make use of the projector screen to display the achievements to suit the event. These are accounted for by a transfer of funds from the Democratic Budget to the Corn Exchange meaning no significant impact on the halls bottom line. This has already worked really well with the successful running of the Civic Reception which utilised all the new equipment in the Main Hall.

To reinstate the Council managed Indoor Markets to be held 2-4 times per month. This will be dependent on uptake however with planned promotions and liaison this is the target that has been set. The focus will be on themed markets on a rolling cycle i.e., antiques market, craft & gift market and tabletop car boot market. By defining the type of trade, we can advertise and promote accordingly to attract more sellers and drive footfall through the hall. Officer exploring this possibility and will implement if there is opportunity.

Update Nov2025: The current Venue & Events Officer does not endorse the idea of WTC ran markets at The Corn Exchange, as it will directly compete with a long-standing hirer of The Corn Exchange. Running our own market in conjunction with this hirer could damage our relationship and potentially lead to a loss of a regular commercial booking. Officers would have to spend time and resource to try and replace this income through their own ran market, when that time and resource could be better spent producing other events whilst the market is still run by a third-party.

Work on developing and marketing a physical 'what's on' brochure, can be distributed in town and serve to boost awareness of the Corn Exchange increase and ticket sales. The Deputy Venue & Events Officer has started work on this.

Update Nov2025: The Venue & Events Co-Ordinator is working on designing a brochure for The Corn Exchange. This will include detail on upcoming events as well as information on regular groups and classes available at the venue, advertising 1863 Café & Bar and private hire packages for both Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. The brochure will act as an all-in-one advert for The Corn Exchange and help promote all operations of the venue.

Quotes are being obtained for the cost printing of these, the design is being done in-house to reduce costs.

Review options for digital marketing to include notice boards increasing professional visibility and attendance. Officers are looking into the cost and feasibility of this.

Update Nov2025: This project is not urgent and can be re-visited in year 3. Officers identify a need to improve the marketing strategy across the board and more cost-effective approaches will be tried and tested, before committing to a spend of this nature. For example, increasing social media coverage and engagement, improving SEO to increase online visibility, engaging with more local groups and organisations forming mutually beneficial partnerships,

Work with Project Officer to research funding streams, grants etc This will allow for more events with a higher level of promotion and enhanced reputation.

Update Nov2025: Officers to explore additional revenue streams for Corn Exchange to help improve financial stability. Possible avenues include grant funding for projects & improvements, sponsorship opportunities and increasing commercial bookings through target marketing.

Explore National Theatre Live to determine feasibility of screening live productions. Budget for the equipment required to meet their minimum standards will be a primary factor.

Update Nov2025: See year 2 below.

Year 2	Asset Looking ahead at projects for 2026/27: Hearing Loops: To promote accessibility and ensure compliance with the Equality Act (2010), Officers are looking to implement hearing loop systems into The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. Exact quotes are TBC but look to be at least £2,000 per system. Officers are searching for suppliers to come and give a specific quote and will ensure the best value for money option is sought after. Update June 2026: Project update provided in Public Halls Report Seat Sponsorship: Full proposal has been presented to HCA committee, who expressed eagerness to launch this initiative ahead of Christmas 2025. This project is an opportunity to raise funds for the Corn Exchange via sponsorship whilst increasing community engagement with the venue. Update June 2026: Only one uptake in May 2026 (ongoing enquiry). Kitchen Facilities The existing kitchen facilities at the Corn Exchange are not currently equipped to operate as a fully functional café kitchen, which limits the range and quality of the food offering within the 1863 Café. To enhance the café's performance and support increased revenue through food sales, there is a clear need to review and upgrade the kitchen infrastructure. Ensuring the café's financial sustainability will remain central to this process. The Venue & Events Officer will work closely with the Café Manager to assess current operations and develop a practical improvement plan focused on boosting efficiency, expanding menu options, and enabling the café to better meet customer expectations while contributing more effectively to the venue's overall income. Update June 2026: Café has continued to operate with existing facilities whilst officers have had to prioritise other projects. Year 2 Assets and Projects Summary: Planned investment into assets and venue infrastructure improvements are minimal for this year, to allow a greater focus on improving operational procedures, functions and events, with a view to increase the financial sustainability of the venue through increased hirings, ticket sales and expanding revenue streams. Officers will continue to review essential improvements, such as urgent repairs, compliance issues (such as hearing loops) etc. Events & Functions Review of past 12 months, reconfirm which events were successful and those that weren't, learning which ones to promote in the coming year.
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In-House Events

Cinema Screenings

The Daytime Cinema events experienced varying success last year. The purpose of these screenings is to provide a low-cost, warm space daytime activity during the colder months. The screenings attendances declined in the approach to summer 2025, which also coincided with the Corn Exchange management personnel being down a role. The Venue & Events Co-Ordinator has been tasked with re-introducing these screenings, with a target attendance to reach to ensure they are not operating at a loss. Update June 2026: Average attendances have increased in-line with break even point as of 2026. Officers will continue with the screenings and review periodically.

Tunes on the square

This event series, utilising the Corn Exchange pavement license on Market Square, proved to be a popular feature of the summer program. This event ran every Friday from 13th June – 5th September, either independently, or in conjunction with an event on inside The Corn Exchange with very minimal disruption caused to those events – organisers happy with the events running at the same time. Officers estimate that, when being ran independently, these events averaged a 12% NET profit on the bar when accounting for staffing, estimated overheads and our 50% share of the artist fee.

Officers have collected feedback from attendees, which was overwhelmingly positive. Many attendees have noted the positive community atmosphere and holiday like feel to the square during the evenings. These events will be re-introduced next year based on the positive feedback and successful takings – officers will explore how to improve this further by increasing footfall and takings.

Update June 2026: This event series is returning with an amended time of 19:00 – 21:00 following attendee feedback. This will also increase the window to trade relating to this event as we can continue to serve until 22:00 following the performance.

Touring Performances

Corn Exchange has hosted some touring performances in-house, operating on a 70/30 net ticket split for most of them. This arrangement has allowed us to host shows with minimal financial risk, by eliminating up-front fees.

Update June 2026: This has continued to be a successful provision in 2026, with high attendances and top quality shows. The Corn Exchange is the only venue in the area with the ability to host touring theatre productions and provides great value to the community by doing so.

Seated Shows

The Corn Exchange offers a unique experience for Witney, as the only venue with a tiered seating option for live shows. This gives the venue a unique selling point, allowing excellent visibility and comfort and ensuring every attendee enjoys an unobstructed view of performances. However, these shows often generate a poor level of bar income, in comparison to standing shows which often receive at least 2x bar spend per head. To address lower bar sales typically seen at seated events, officers have already adjusted shift patterns to reduce spend, but more importantly will implement a targeted strategy to enhance audience engagement and increase average spend per head. Options currently being explored include promoting pre-show and interval drinks through advance ordering systems, opening the bar earlier to encourage pre-event socialising, mobile or interval bar services to improve convenience, and “drink and ticket” bundles to incentivise purchases at the point of sale. Each option presents its own challenges to be overcome so careful consideration is vital before launching, to avoid further loss or reputational damage.

Standing Shows

As outlined above, standing shows frequently generate greater bar income than seated shows. This is down to the individual nature of each event type - with increased bar access, crowd movement and drinking culture at standing shows, naturally, bar income is higher as a result.

Officers will look to increase the number of standing shows hosted at Corn Exchange in 2026, to help increase bar income. Whilst the venue needs to make use of the tiered seating and plans to increase revenue associated with its use, standing shows also make the most of the versatile nature of the venue.

New Events

The Venue & Events Officer and Co-Ordinator are working together on building a diverse 2026 events program. A varied and well-curated events programme will be central to the Corn Exchange Witney’s strategy for driving audience growth, community engagement, and financial sustainability. By offering a balanced calendar of arts, cultural, business, and social events, the venue can attract a broad demographic and maximising use throughout the year. Popular and high-yield events such as live music, comedy, themed parties, and business networking sessions will generate strong bar, ticket and venue hire revenues, while community-led activities, workshops, and family-friendly events will reinforce the venue’s community impact and social value. This combination of commercial and community programming not only diversifies income streams but also positions the Corn Exchange Witney as a vibrant, inclusive hub for entertainment, learning, and connection within West Oxfordshire.

Ideas in the pipeline include but not limited to:

- **Big Quiz** – capitalising on the popular Mayor Charity Quizzes and utilising the big screen and sound system, separating us from ordinary pub quizzes.
- **Disco Nights** – after a successful “Decade’s Disco” in 2025, these are a low-cost event with high potential income through ticket sales and bar revenue. They can remain financially accessible for attendees due to the low-production cost in comparison to live performance-based shows and provide a safe and enjoyable night out for locals. Regular themed disco’s will be trialled in 2026. **Update June 2026:** Disco well attended in March, date TBD for a second one in autumn.
- **Business Networking Events** – Corn Exchange has the capacity to host small – medium business networking events and officers will explore the possibility of collaborating with an organiser of these events. In-person networking events have risen in popularity year-on-year post pandemic, outlining an opportunity to be explored.
This is not only a possibility for an income generative event for the venue but also increases awareness of the venue to potential commercial hirers of both the main hall and gallery room. This could lead to more commercial events such as seminars / workshops, product launches etc. **Update June 2026:** Officers are in discussion with a Business Networking professional looking to hire the venue for two types of recurring event.
- **National Theatre Live:** The Venue & Events Co-Ordinator is in contact with NT Live to determine if we have the facilities to be able to screen them. Once the minimum specifications are outlined, Officers will explore the cost of what is needed to be able to screen NT Live and report to members. It’s important to note that NT Live is currently available at Cineworld Witney, however, their pricing is at the maximum NT Live allows – this means that we can explore the potential to host the screenings at a more accessible price, if operating costs allow. **Update June 2026:** Audio upgrades required have been looked into and indicative costs are around £9,000. Officers don’t feel this is a viable investment, due to local competition and that the finances would likely not be recovered from hosting these screenings.

Third-Party Venue Hire & Events

An essential element to The Corn Exchange as a local community arts hub, is the ability for the public to hire the venue for events and classes, including public shows. The Corn Exchange hosts multiple shows ran by three locally based drama organisations as well as classes, workshops and seminars from more local art groups. This function not only provides a platform for local organisations but also makes up a steady revenue stream for the venue. Officers recognise gaps in the diary that can be filled by third-party hirings and are also conscious to explore more potential commercial / private hirers to increase hiring income alongside usage.

- **Private Venue Hire** - Events such as Weddings, Parties, Awards Ceremonies etc. Officers recognise the income potential of these events through venue hire and bar income and actively work to promote drinks revenue with these bookings, such as suggesting welcome drinks, table wine, pre-ordered drinks and running tabs for hirers to increase bar sales. Part of improving the venues marketing strategy includes increasing awareness of the venue as a space for these private events. Officers are working on packages, advertising materials and collaborating with local suppliers within the private event industry to help increase these types of bookings. Wedding packages will remain low-commitment from the venue due to the minimal staffing structure in place. The Corn Exchange is not designed or staffed as a full-time wedding venue and our packages must be realistic to reflect that. However, officers will be exploring how to promote the Corn Exchange as a wedding venue to increase hirings, and how to provide the best service it can with the current staffing set up whilst maximising revenue from these events. Opportunities include; collaborating with local suppliers, tiered packages to upsell services the venue can deliver, drinks packages and a minimum bar spend (*proposed policy for approval included in Public Halls Report to HCA on 10th November 2025*)

Update June 2026: Minimum spend policy has been approved and rolled out for future private hire bookings, to ensure financial sustainability in providing a bar for private events.

Officers have drafted a proposal to re-structure the Wedding charges and introduce tiered packages to reflect the additional services available to wedding couples, whilst keeping the venue as an affordable option. The proposal is included in the Public Halls Report to be considered on 8th June 2025.

- **Private Cinema Hire** – The Corn Exchange has hosted two private cinema bookings, via a couple of local organisations, which have been operated successfully. Officers are exploring launching a private cinema package to advertise, which will increase usage of the Cinema equipment whilst also increasing venue hire income.

Update June 2026: An additional reoccurring private cinema hirer has taken place for the past few months. Officers are yet to develop dedicated marketing for this due to other projects taking priority.

Third-Party Event Promotions – The Corn Exchange benefits from Third-Party event promoters who can hire the venue for a flat fee and promote their own show (keeping ticket revenue). This arrangement provides the venue with a fixed income figure, generates bar revenue, increases usage and adds to the venues public event diary, without the need for officer time organising the event. Officers will actively seek new Third-Party Event Promoters to help add to the calendar of events alongside our in-house events.

Year 3	Asset Equipment: Review current usage, maintain, update and purchase as required. Review of floor condition, need to maintain standard to continue building reputation. Events Continue to build up catalogue of repeat events, look to be the destination go to venue in west Oxfordshire. Regular competitor analysis will drive pricing and format for the years events.
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Year	Gallery Room
Year 1	Asset Large room available for hire with capacity to display artwork additionally being licenced for weddings. Equipment: replace and increase capacity of picture hanging system with the aim of attracting local artists, schools, photography clubs etc who would be interested in hiring the space. This would increase Highstreet visibility by driving footfall from different areas and to a different demographic. Officer are researching and will reach out to interested parties to have artwork displayed in the room. Modernise the IT infrastructure by installing USB plug points and conferencing equipment to modernise existing offer for users. This would result in a more desirable function room with a better offer and industry standard facilities. Officers are in the process of obtaining quotes for this. Work with project officer to ascertain feasibility of a ceiling mounted projector and wall mounted retractable screen. This is a standard in other halls and one that will increase use of the room when advertised correctly. The Conferencing system is being finalised and will be installed shortly. Update Nov2025: Conferencing system has been installed and trialled internally for hybrid meetings as well as being used by hirers for presentations. Final amendments are being made to improve the appearance, which will be followed by a plan to advertise and generate bookings to use the space as a hybrid meeting room. Events & Functions Officers promoting the Corn Exchange as a wedding venue, increasing the use of the room and a fostering a reputation as a multipurpose hall. Update 2025: The Gallery Room will be included in the Wedding packages, mentioned in the Corn Exchange Year 2 Objectives. Improvements to the decoration of the room have helped make the room more suitable for wedding ceremonies. Officers are working on ways to ensure the presence of the new IT equipment does not hinder the presentation of the venue for ceremonial events. To improve the IT equipment for the hosting of regular council and committee meetings and working parties. The Conferencing system is being finalised and will be installed shortly.

For the Arts week (2 weeks) the aim is to increase the number of groups being given the opportunity to show their art with the focus on local talent.

Reach out to local business and promote as solid space for training, conferencing etc. Increasing visibility and reach in the local area. Once conferencing equipment is installed, the Gallery Room will be marketed and promoted to increase use.

Continuous communication with existing groups to garner feedback and act on day-to-day issues. Shows we listen and understand hiring group's needs.

Year 2	Asset Large room available for hire with capacity to display artwork additionally being licenced for weddings. Equipment: Review of equipment, look to update and maintain as required to keep room as viable destination for multitude of different events. Review state of general decoration including wear to the carpet, keep the room looking fresh and well maintained, this will encourage continued use and strong reputation. Events & Functions Review wedding and corporate bookings to ascertain if successful, what worked well and what needs to be improved on.
Year 3	Asset Large room available for hire with capacity to display artwork additionally being licenced for weddings. Equipment: Review of equipment, update as necessary. Events & Functions Review past year, focus on which bookings work and where to focus marketing and advertising. By regular review of type of booking we can look to target most profitable bookings.

Marketing

Visual Identity and Marketing Strategy of the Corn Exchange

The visual identity of the Corn Exchange has been developed over the years with the support of Rumbl Ltd, a local web and graphic design company, alongside internal Council Officers. These efforts have utilized a mix of modern and traditional advertising methods to effectively reach and engage the public.

The Council will continue to leverage modern technology and communication platforms to connect with our target audience. A more targeted approach to social media updates is now in place, with a focus on Facebook and Instagram to ensure our events reach the right people. The Officers are also collaborating on coordinated social media campaigns to maximize audience engagement.

Networking with key organizations is a priority to further promote the venue and its facilities. Officers will continue to promote the Corn Exchange brand within Witney and the surrounding areas, reaching out to local businesses, organizations, groups, and residents.

The Corn Exchange website will be continuously updated and developed by the management team to ensure it is user-friendly, visually appealing, and effective in driving event engagement. In addition, regular content updates across social media platforms will ensure vibrant and timely updates. Recent improvements to the website have enhanced event visibility, particularly for events in both halls, and dedicated group pages have been launched for regular use.

By utilising modern technology, the marketing strategy will focus on targeting key stakeholders, expanding the visibility of events, and encouraging early ticket bookings. This approach is now a standard part of marketing for the venue and its facilities.

Additionally, public-facing information events will be organized to invite local businesses and groups into the hall, showcasing the flexibility of the venue. Officers will market and promote these events, particularly once the new conferencing equipment in the Gallery Room is successfully installed.

Risk

The table below summarises key areas of risk, the impact and how we mitigate these.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Decrease in bookings	Lack of suitable affordable facility for key groups and organisations and loss of revenue.	Adherence to business plan and operational process with regular reviews of performance and position.

Poor Customer Service	Witney Town Council Reputation	Good staff management, monitoring, and training.
Injury or sickness caused to customers	Reputation, legal implications, and cost.	Adherence to operating procedures, monitoring and training.
Failure to adhere to building compliance	Possible injury, shut down, fire etc.	Adherence to operating procedures, monitoring and training.
Non-competitive in the market	Decrease in use.	Continuous monitoring of competitors and liaison with event programmes.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Quarterly and monthly evaluation will enable managers to measure and review performance, adherence to the business plan and progress.

The key performance indicators are listed below.

- Programme of Events - Report being produced and in house, external and digital comms being created This will be updated quarterly and reviewed.
- Health and Safety - Dedicated staff members have responsibility over areas of H&S, which is audited by and external Health and Safety consultant.
- Marketing - A marketing update is going to be produced for each HC&A meeting to social value, finances, impact and return on investment.
- Financial Position – monthly analysis
- Staff – The training matrix has been developed and is maintained to monitor compliance. Customer Satisfaction - Customer feedback cards have been introduced in the café with excellent result to date. Feedback forms for hall hire are sent out at the point of booking.
- Facilities - A register of assets is compiled and stored internally, Officers understand value and condition of all equipment in the hall. This is updated as required and any asset deemed broken or unusable is disposed of via the asset disposal guidelines outlined by the RFO.
- Alignment with the Councils vision and direction – Achievements to date with the strategy identified demonstrate Officers are in alignment with the business plan.

Reporting

Regular progress reports will be compiled and presented to the Council's committee for review. These reports, generated by the Venue & Events Officer will be included in the regular HC&A Council meetings.

The reports will track the progress of the venues, events, and other relevant activities, ensuring transparency and accountability. The format of the reporting will be regularly reviewed and refined to ensure it remains effective and aligns with the needs of the Council, with a focus on continuous improvement.

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Cemetery Regulations Review

Meeting Date: Monday 14 September 2026

Contact Officer: Senior Administration Officer

The purpose of this report is to present the revised Cemetery Regulations for Member consideration ahead of submission to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.

Background

Witney Town Council as the burial authority is responsible for the management and operation of Tower Hill Cemetery and Windrush Cemetery.

The Council's Cemetery Regulations establish the requirements applying to the use and management of both cemeteries. They provide information and direction for bereaved families, funeral organisers, memorial masons, Council officers and other cemetery users.

The existing regulations have been subject to a comprehensive review to ensure that they remain clear, consistent and reflective of the Council's current cemetery operations.

Current Situation

A revised draft of the Cemetery Regulations is attached to this report. The review covers the regulations in their entirety and provides a clearer and more consistent framework for the operation of the Council's cemeteries and for those using or providing cemetery services.

Members are invited to consider the revised regulations and identify any further amendments. Subject to Members' comments, the final draft will be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

The revision of the Cemetery Regulations supports this objective by ensuring that the Council maintains a clear, current and effective framework for the administration and operation of its cemeteries.

The revised regulations also support respectful and consistent service delivery to bereaved families and other cemetery users.

The guidance explains that this pillar concerns representing the community on strategic matters and ensuring that the Council's actions remain aligned with its overall direction and long-term goals.

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 revised regulations are intended to apply fairly and consistently to all cemetery users. They recognise a range of burial practices and interment options and provide clearer information on the Council's requirements. No adverse equality impacts have been identified.
- b) Biodiversity - The revised regulations include provisions for the management of meadow and woodland burial areas. These support the maintenance and development of designated areas in accordance with their intended environmental character.
- c) Crime & Disorder - The revised regulations provide clearer requirements governing conduct within the cemeteries, including activities that may constitute an offence. No significant adverse impact on crime and disorder has been identified.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - The regulations recognise environmentally conscious burial options and include provisions relating to biodegradable materials, woodland habitat creation and wildflower management. Clear controls over planting, memorial materials and items placed on graves will also support appropriate grounds maintenance.

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.

Maintaining clear and current Cemetery Regulations assists the Council in applying its requirements consistently, fairly and transparently.

Without an updated regulatory framework, there is a risk that existing provisions may not adequately reflect current cemetery operations or may be interpreted inconsistently by cemetery users, contractors and Council officers.

The proposed revisions seek to reduce these risks by clarifying responsibilities, application processes and operational requirements. The regulations will remain subject to periodic review and may be amended where required by operational experience or changes in legislation.

Social Value

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

The revised regulations support social value by providing a clear, respectful and consistent framework for services used by bereaved families and the wider community.

They also support the continued provision of a range of burial and memorial options, together with the appropriate maintenance and environmental management of the Council's cemeteries.

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising solely from consideration of the revised Cemetery Regulations.

Fees and charges relating to interments, Exclusive Rights of Burial, memorials and other cemetery services will continue to be determined through the Council's approved schedule of burial charges.

Some provisions within the revised regulations clarify circumstances in which additional charges may apply. These include late arrivals or departures, changes to confirmed interment dates, oversized burials and additional operational requirements. The applicable amounts will remain those specified in the Council's approved burial charges schedule.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the revised Cemetery Regulations and provide any comments or proposed amendments; and
2. Recommend that, subject to the incorporation of any amendments arising from this meeting, the revised Cemetery Regulations be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for agreement on 28 September 2026.

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1. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
WTC, Town Council or Council	Witney Town Council, acting as the local burial authority responsible for managing and providing burial grounds.
EROB	An Exclusive Right of Burial.
Spent	An Exclusive Right of Burial is considered spent when no usable grave space remains for a further permitted interment.
Interment	The burial of a human body or cremated human remains.
Green Form or Registrar's Certificate	The certificate authorising the burial of a body or the interment of cremated remains, where applicable.
Statutory Declaration	A formal written statement of fact that is declared to be true and signed in the presence of a person authorised to administer the declaration.
Grant	The document issued by the Burial Authority evidencing the Exclusive Right of Burial for a specified grave space.
Grantee	The person named on the Grant as the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial.
Funeral organiser	The funeral director, undertaker or other person responsible for making arrangements for an interment.

2. Law and Jurisdiction

These regulations shall be governed by the laws of England and shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

3. Variations

These Cemetery Regulations supersede and replace all previous cemetery regulations, terms and conditions issued by Witney Town Council.

Witney Town Council may, **at its sole discretion and at any time**, amend, replace, withdraw or add to these Cemetery Regulations. The Council is **not required to provide prior notice** of any amendment, except where notice is required by law.

Any amendment will take effect immediately on the effective date stated in the revised document, unless the Council specifies a different commencement date.

From that date, the revised Cemetery Regulations will apply to all cemetery activities, applications, permissions and works undertaken within cemeteries managed by Witney Town Council, subject to any statutory requirements or transitional arrangements expressly determined by the Council.

It is the responsibility of applicants, funeral organisers, funeral directors, memorial masons, holders of Exclusive Rights of Burial and other cemetery users to ensure that they refer to the current version of these Cemetery Regulations before making an application, arranging an interment or undertaking any work within a cemetery.

4. General Cemetery Information

4.1 Windrush Cemetery Access

Windrush Cemetery is permanently open to members of the public with parking available near the entrance to the cemetery.

The road around the grave sections is only designed as an access road for works vehicles and funeral cortège.

The cemetery is not open for vehicles during ceremonies.

A sign will be placed on the entrance and car parking controlled by cemetery operatives.

4.2 Tower Hill Cemetery Access

Period	Opening hours	Vehicle access to Sections 6, 7 and 8
Monday to Friday	09:00 to 16:00	The access bollards can be removed on request. Requests must be made via 01993 704379 at least 24 hours before the proposed visit.
Saturday and Sunday	07:00 to 11:00	The access bollards are removed to permit vehicle access around Sections 6, 7 and 8.

The gates are opened and closed by Town Council staff or authorised contractors.

4.3 Closures for ceremonies

During a ceremony, the main vehicle gates and the north pedestrian gate will be temporarily locked for the duration of the ceremony. No advance notice of an individual ceremony closure will be provided.

5. Cemetery Rules

The following rules apply within both cemeteries. Some activities may also constitute an offence under applicable legislation.

5.1 General Rules

Dogs are permitted in the cemetery but must always be on leads and all waste must be cleared up.

No parking is permitted in any area that is not a designated parking space.

Bicycles must not be ridden within the cemetery.

All rubbish must be cleared away.

Music or other sound must not be amplified in a manner that causes disturbance to other cemetery users or neighbouring properties.

5.2 Offences Within the Cemetery

To wilfully create any disturbance in a cemetery.

To commit any nuisance in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, tombstone or other memorial, or flowers or plants.

To play any game or sport in a cemetery.

6. Burial Plots and Interment Options

6.1 Lawn Burials

Lawn burials are the standard burial plot offered at both Windrush and Tower Hill Cemetery.

They can accommodate one or two full interments depending on the cemetery.

Lawn graves at Windrush Cemetery are double-depth and may accommodate up to two full interments. Lawn graves at Tower Hill Cemetery are single-depth and may accommodate one full interment. Cremated remains may only be interred after the grave has received its permitted number of full interments.

Subject to arrangement with the Council, cremated remains may be placed beneath the turf of a grave by carefully lifting the turf and placing the ashes directly onto the soil beneath. This constitutes an authorised interment of cremated remains and is not the same as the scattering of ashes over the surface of a grave, which is prohibited.

The charge will be the same as an ashes interment.

To perform a future burial the layer of soil will need to be disturbed, and the cremated remains moved from the resting place.

Tower Hill lawn burials are single depth.

All bodies must be interred within a coffin.

The coffin must have a nameplate.

Due to double-depth burials, cemetery staff must be able to identify the first interment before interring a second body.

6.2 Burials in Accordance with Islamic Practices

Burial plots are provided and oriented to accommodate burials undertaken in accordance with Islamic practices.

All plots designated for burials in accordance with Islamic practices are single-depth graves.

Burials may take place in either a coffin or a burial shroud, subject to these Regulations and any applicable legal and operational requirements.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before council staff complete backfilling.

A suitable container must be used to transport the deceased to the graveside.

Brushwood or softwood boards may be used to line the base of the grave to a maximum depth of 30mm.

Upon expiry of burial rights any headstone may be removed by the Council, but no further interments will take place in any available remaining grave space.

6.3 Meadow Burials

A wildflower meadow is provided at Windrush Cemetery for interments.

The purpose of this area is to establish and maintain a flowering meadow environment.

The meadow may receive up to three cuts per year during spring, summer and autumn.

The principal summer cut may involve collection of vegetation.

Additional winter maintenance cuts may be undertaken to control weeds.

Supplementary seeding may be undertaken during March and April.

Once the ground has recompacted following an interment, a wildflower seed mix will be sown over the grave.

Rules Specific to Meadow Burials

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No grave marker may be installed.

Identification

As no grave marker may be placed, the burial will be recorded using the standard Council burial records system.

In addition, a grave marker peg will be buried within the plot.

Plots may subsequently be identified through a grave marker peg containing an electronically readable RFID tag.

The RFID tag number will be recorded in both the burial register and the cemetery management software.

6.4 Woodland Burials

Woodland burials are located within the lower section of Windrush Cemetery.

They are intended to provide an environmentally conscious and lower cost burial option.

The woodland burial area has been designed to provide the lowest carbon footprint burial option available within Witney Town Council cemeteries.

Rules Specific to Woodland Burials

Only single-depth interments are permitted.

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No form of grave marker may be installed.

This restriction includes the period immediately following an interment, and all flowers will be removed by Council staff following the interment.

The purpose of the area is to maintain an environmentally conscious approach and flowers are therefore discouraged.

All woodland burials must take place in an environmentally friendly coffin or burial shroud made from biodegradable materials, such as bamboo, banana leaf, willow or cardboard. Other biodegradable materials may be accepted with the prior approval of Witney Town Council.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before Council staff complete the backfilling process.

Oversized coffins are not permitted.

Plots may be identified in future through a grave marker peg containing an RFID tag.

When designated sections of the woodland burial area reach capacity, trees and perennial wildflower bulbs may be planted to create woodland habitat areas.

6.5 Children's and Baby Plots

Separate children's and baby burial plots are provided at Windrush Cemetery.

These plots are intended for use alongside the Children's Funeral Fund and have a longer EROB period to allow the later interment of the ashes of parents, guardians or other family members.

Plot Dimensions

Plot type	Dimensions
Baby plot	0.9 metres long by 0.66 metres wide
Children's plot	1.5 metres long by 0.99 metres wide

Additional Provisions

Exclusive Rights of Burial for children's and baby plots are granted for a period of 90 years.

Following a full interment, up to two sets of cremated remains may be interred within the plot.

Memorials for children's and baby plots are subject to the dimensions specified within the Memorial Sizes document.

6.6 Ashes Path – Windrush Cemetery

Windrush Cemetery contains a paved ashes path for the interment of ashes caskets.

Each ashes plot is designed to accommodate up to two caskets. Any additional caskets would only be granted permission from the Council as the time of the additional interment.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

Only a sloping desk tablet memorial may be installed.

6.7 Family Ashes Plots – Tower Hill Cemetery

Tower Hill Cemetery provides family ashes plots for the interment of cremated remains.

Each plot may accommodate up to eight ashes caskets.

Only a standing memorial may be installed.

6.8 Scattering of Ashes – Windrush & Tower Hill Cemeteries

Ashes may be scattered within designated ashes scattering beds. Permission must be sought and a date and time agreed in advance with the Council offices prior to any scattering.

Any unauthorised scattering of ashes will be stopped if prior permission has not been granted.

The scattering of ashes on grave plots is strictly not permitted, even where the Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased for the plot. This restriction is necessary to ensure scattered ashes are not distributed onto neighbouring plots by weather conditions or during the scattering process, which may cause distress or offence to other grave owners and visitors.

Any unauthorised scattering or disposal of ashes may be collected and interred by the council into an unmarked area.

6.9 Memorial Plaques and Stones

Memorial plaques may be installed on the memorial wall at Tower Hill Cemetery or on the memorial monolith at Windrush Cemetery.

Memorial pebbles may be installed into the designated area within the children's memorial garden at Windrush Cemetery.

The individual named on a memorial plaque or pebble need not be interred within the cemetery.

A completed application form must be submitted and approval granted prior to a memorial plaque or stone being installed.

The size, material and inlay colour of memorial plaques will be determined by cemetery officers to maintain a consistent and uniform appearance.

7. Schedule of Interment

The Town Council will follow the process below for all interments within its cemeteries. The interment process will be managed in cooperation with the funeral organiser.

Interment Application

A completed interment form must be submitted to the Council as formal notice of the interment. The form must include the grave plot number and the proposed date and time of the interment.

Where the grave plot is not owned by the deceased, the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial must provide written permission for the plot to be used. This permission must be submitted with the interment form.

Date and Time

The date and time of the interment must be arranged with the Town Council before arrangements are confirmed with any other party.

The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date and time. However, as the burial authority, the final date and time of an interment will be determined by the Town Council.

Interment dates and times will be managed with regard to factors including:

- Other interment bookings
- Staffing
- Equipment availability
- Grave location
- Proximity to open graves
- Excavation time
- Public holidays

Grave Preparation and Documentation

Once a completed interment form has been received, cemetery operatives will begin the process of excavating and preparing the grave space.

All required paperwork must be submitted no later than 24 hours before the scheduled time of the interment.

Following the interment, cemetery operatives will record the burial in the relevant cemetery burial register. The register entry must be signed by the funeral organiser.

8. Graveside Preparation and Backfilling

Graves will be prepared to minimise the visibility of excavated soil. The graveside will be dressed with artificial grass, and excavated soil will be covered where appropriate. This also applies to ashes interments within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery.

Excavated soil will normally be placed temporarily on the nearest neighbouring grave until the interment and backfilling have been completed. The Council will seek to minimise the duration of its placement and any disturbance to neighbouring graves.

Any request for excavated soil to be placed elsewhere must be made when the first notice of interment is given and is subject to the Council's approval. An additional charge will apply as specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Following the interment, the grave will be backfilled and the surrounding area reinstated. Any ground damage arising from the works will be repaired when weather, ground and seasonal conditions permit.

9. Cancellations and Additional Charges

9.1 Cancellations

Where an interment is cancelled by Witney Town Council because the required paperwork has not been submitted, the full burial charge will be payable by the funeral organiser.

The deadline for submission of all required paperwork is 24 hours before the scheduled time of interment. By that point, the grave plot may already have been prepared and, in some circumstances, may need to be backfilled following cancellation.

The funeral organiser is responsible for ensuring that the funeral procession arrives at the time stated on the interment form.

The Town Council may take exceptional circumstances into account when considering a cancellation charge. Any reduction or waiver will be at the discretion of the Town Council.

9.2 Late Arrivals and Departures

The Funeral Organiser is responsible for the timekeeping of the ceremony.

The standard time allocated for a ceremony is 45 minutes. Additional fees will be charged for late arrivals or departures in increments of 15 minutes, at the rate specified in the current burial charges schedule.

9.3 Existing Memorials

Where a second interment is proposed within a lawn burial plot or ashes plot, the Funeral Organiser will be responsible for any charges associated with the removal of an existing memorial from the grave plot being used for the interment.

The presence of an existing memorial must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

9.4 Changes to Interment Dates

A fee, as specified in the current burial charges schedule, will be charged where an amendment is made to a final submitted interment date. The date stated on the submitted interment form will be treated as the final submitted date.

Booking an interment date removes that date and time from availability for other applicants. Reasonable changes to the time of an interment will not normally incur a charge.

9.5 Oversized Burials

An additional oversized burial fee will apply where the coffin or casket exceeds any of the maximum dimensions shown below. The applicable oversized burial fee, in addition to the standard burial fee is specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Measurement	Maximum size
Length	213 cm / 84 inches

Measurement	Maximum size
Width	71 cm / 28 inches
Depth	58 cm / 23 inches

9.6 Weekend Burials

In exceptional circumstances, a weekend burial may be arranged at the discretion of Witney Town Council, subject to the availability of three cemetery operatives. Weekend burials cannot be guaranteed and, where accommodated, will be charged at the applicable weekend hourly rate for three cemetery operatives, together with the standard burial fee and any other charges set out in the current burial charges schedule.

10. Burial Times

Burials are available within both cemeteries from Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. Available burial times vary throughout the year in accordance with daylight hours.

Period	Days	Available booking times
November to March	Monday to Friday	11:00 to 14:00
April to October	Monday to Thursday	11:00 to 15:00
April to October	Friday	11:00 to 14:00

The times stated above are booking times and are not inclusive of the total ceremony duration. A burial booking may be accepted for the latest stated time within the applicable period.

11. Burial Notice

A minimum of three working days' notice, excluding the day of interment, is required to allow sufficient time for the Council to complete the necessary administration and prepare the grave or ashes plot. The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date, but operational circumstances may require a longer notice period.

Where an existing headstone or memorial must be removed to permit excavation, the funeral organiser is responsible for arranging its removal. Excavation and preparation of the grave cannot begin until the headstone or memorial has been removed.

The Certificate for Burial or Cremation, commonly known as the Green Form or Registrar's Certificate, must be provided to the Town Council no later than 24 hours before the interment.

The certificate may be:

- Emailed
- Posted
- Delivered in person

Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for certificates lost in the postal system and no burial will be allowed to take proceed prior to receipt of the certificate.

It is an offence for a burial certificate to be forged, or otherwise improperly handled. (Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953)

12. Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial permits the Grantee to authorise burials within a specified grave space. The Exclusive Right of Burial also grants permission to erect a memorial, subject to compliance with the Cemetery Regulations.

The grant will contain details including:

- Burial authority
- Cost of the grant
- Grave space number
- Cemetery
- Section reference
- Date of purchase
- Duration of the grant
- Grantee contact information

The grant will be issued to the Grantee.

A copy will be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

12.1 Limitations

An Exclusive Right of Burial does not convey ownership of the land.

The right only permits the Grantee to:

- Determine who may be buried within the grave space
- Authorise the installation of a memorial

All other cemetery rules and regulations remain applicable.

12.2 Term of Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial is granted for a fixed period from the date of purchase. The applicable term will be stated on the Grant.

The current term granted for non-baby or child plots is:

Cemetery	Current term
Windrush Cemetery	30 years
Tower Hill Cemetery	30 years

Witney Town Council may amend the term applicable to future purchases and renewals.

The Council does not grant or renew burial rights to be held in perpetuity or for periods that would exceed one hundred years.

An exception applies to Commonwealth War Graves, where rights may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

12.3 Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial Back to the Burial Authority

The Grantee may transfer an Exclusive Right of Burial back to the Council at any time.

The Council will purchase the right at the original purchase price paid as stated on the grant.

The Council will only repurchase rights where usable grave space remains.

13. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial

All transfers of Exclusive Rights of Burial shall be administered by the burial authority.

Witney Town Council will charge a transfer fee as set out within the burial charges schedule.

Only the remaining term of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be carried over on transfer.

A revised grant shall be issued to the new Grantee.

A copy of the grant shall be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

13.1 Living Grantee

An owner of an Exclusive Right of Burial may transfer the right to another person at any time. The original Grant must be produced together with supporting documentation.

The following documentation must be provided:

- Proof of identity of the current owner.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.
- Proof of residency of the proposed new Grantee.

Where the proposed new Grantee does not meet the Council's residency requirements, or where satisfactory evidence of residency cannot be provided, the transfer will be treated as a non-resident transaction. The Council reserves the right to charge an additional amount, up to the full non-resident Exclusive Right of Burial fee applicable at the date of transfer, taking account of any resident fee already paid.

The fee shall only be payable where usable grave space remains available for a future full burial or additional ashes interment.

Written and signed confirmation of the transfer must be provided by the existing Grantee.

The transfer document must clearly identify the person receiving the Exclusive Right of Burial.

13.2 Deceased Grantee

Where the Grantee is the deceased person being interred within the grave space, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial is not required before the interment takes place.

Where the Exclusive Right of Burial has not been spent and future use remains possible, transfer to a successor Grantee should be arranged.

There is no requirement to transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial immediately upon the death of the owner.

Transfer is only required where a beneficiary wishes to make use of an unspent Exclusive Right of Burial.

Documentation Required

To transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial following the death of a Grantee, the following documents must be provided:

- The original Exclusive Right of Burial grant.
- The deceased Grantee Will, where one exists.
- Original Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration where applicable.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.

Statutory Declarations

Where the deceased owner did not specifically leave the Exclusive Right of Burial to a named beneficiary, the burial authority may transfer the right through a Statutory Declaration.

Such transfers may be made to a family member with a valid claim to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The cost of investigations and due diligence associated with the transfer shall be borne by the applicant.

Where multiple family members have potential claims, each claimant must formally renounce their claim before a Statutory Declaration can be completed.

Where competing claimants cannot be contacted or do not renounce their claim, the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot be transferred.

Memorial Permission Pending Transfer

At the discretion of the burial authority, permission may be granted for a memorial to be erected before a transfer has been completed.

Any such permission shall be given on the basis that the applicant accepts responsibility for removal of the memorial at their own expense should a competing claimant subsequently establish a legal entitlement to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

14. Renewal of Exclusive Rights of Burial

A Grantee may renew an Exclusive Right of Burial on its expiry date or within the 90 day period immediately preceding expiry.

The renewal fee and renewal term shall be those in force at the date of renewal.

Witney Town Council will endeavour to contact Grantees whose Exclusive Rights of Burial are approaching expiry where usable grave space remains available.

The purpose of such contact is to allow the Grantee the opportunity to renew before the Council considers future re-use of available grave space.

Renewal procedures will only be considered where future burials can be accommodated without disturbing previous interments and where unused grave capacity remains available.

The Council may attempt contact using:

- Telephone.
- Post.
- Email.
- Updated contact details held on Council records.
- Notices attached to the memorial where appropriate.

If a period of 90 days has passed following the first contact attempt, no further attempts may be made.

Where all reasonable efforts to contact the Grantee have been exhausted and the renewal period has elapsed, the Council may commence procedures to re-use available grave space in accordance with its regulations.

15. Re-use of Grave Space

Following the expiry of an Exclusive Right of Burial, the Town Council may reclaim and reallocate any unused burial capacity remaining within the grave space, provided that a further interment can be accommodated without disturbing any existing interment.

Any re-use of grave space shall be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procedures for expired Exclusive Rights of Burial.

The Council reserves the right where appropriate, to raise the level of the ground above an existing single interment in order to create sufficient depth for a future burial. Such measures will only be considered following the expiry of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

16. Commonwealth War Graves

As the burial authority, Witney Town Council may grant permission to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to install or maintain a memorial on an identified Commonwealth War Grave.

Exclusive Rights of Burial relating to Commonwealth War Graves may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

The Town Council shall not exercise powers to remove a Commonwealth War Grave memorial without the consent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

17. Public Graves

Public graves, also known as common graves, have no associated Exclusive Right of Burial and may be used where no alternative burial arrangements have been made. No private memorial, headstone, plaque or monument may be placed on a public grave.

18. Record Keeping

All interments shall be recorded on the date of burial within the cemetery burial register.

Interments shall also be recorded separately within the Register of Burials maintained by the Council.

The Register of Burials shall record:

- Surname
- Forenames
- Address
- Profession
- Age
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Date of burial
- Section and grave number

For woodland and meadow burials, the RFID tag number shall also be recorded within both the burial register and the Council's digital burial management system.

Full details of all interments shall be retained within the Council's digital burial records system.

Plans of graves are held in either digital or physical form at the Town Council offices.

19. Residency

For the purposes of these Regulations, a resident of Witney is defined as a person who:

- Currently resides within the Witney town boundary; or
- Has resided within Witney during the previous five years; or
- Has accumulated a total of thirty years' residence within Witney.

For non-residents, Exclusive Rights of Burial and interment fees will be charged at double the resident rate shown on the burial charges schedule.

Where a grave space is reserved, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased and the residency status of the purchaser shall determine the applicable Exclusive Right of Burial fee.

The interment fee shall be determined by the residency status of the deceased rather than the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

Proof of identity and residency may be required when purchasing an Exclusive Right of Burial.

Acceptable evidence may include:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Utility bill dated within the previous three months
- Bank statement dated within the previous three months

Where the Certificate for Burial or Cremation records an address outside the Witney town boundary, proof of identity and residency may be required with the interment application

20. Reserving a Grave Space

Grave spaces may only be reserved for the following plot types:

- Lawn burial plots.
- Ashes plots.
- Family ashes plots.

Separate areas of the cemetery are designated for reserved grave spaces and immediate need burials.

When reserving a grave space, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

No individual may reserve more than two burial plots.

21. Children's Funeral Fund

The Children's Funeral Fund for England (CFF) may assist with the funeral costs of a child under 18 or a baby stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy. Witney Town Council will submit any eligible claim relating to its burial fees.

Applicants should contact the CFF directly for current information about eligibility, available support and the application process:

Website: childfuneralcharity.org.uk

Telephone: 01480 276088

Email: enquiries@childfuneralcharity.org.uk

The Children's Funeral Fund will only cover the cost of an appropriately sized grave suitable for the child being interred. Full body interments are currently available only within Windrush Cemetery, where adult, child and baby plots are provided. Witney Town Council will only claim funding for a grave size appropriate to the deceased. Where an applicant requests a full-sized double-depth adult grave, any difference in cost must be paid by the applicant. Where a child or baby plot is unavailable, a full-sized adult grave may be offered as an alternative.

22. Cemeteries Maintenance

22.1 Grave Mounds

For a period of one year following an interment, a soil mound will be maintained at approximately 20 centimetres above ground level.

This mound is required because excavated soil gradually recompacts over time following burial.

The grave mound shall not be planted during this period.

Flowers and wreaths may be placed on the grave, although they may be moved to the head of the grave when soil levels require topping up.

22.2 Levelling

Approximately one year after the date of interment, the grave may be levelled during the following spring or autumn maintenance programme.

The grave shall be levelled using topsoil free from large stones and reseeded with grass.

Graves may subsequently require additional levelling in order to maintain safe and consistent ground levels for cemetery maintenance purposes.

Levelling works are generally undertaken on a sectional basis.

Notice of works may be provided through signs displayed within the cemetery.

22.3 Grounds Maintenance

Tower Hill Cemetery and Windrush Cemetery are generally maintained as lawn cemeteries with regularly cut grassed areas.

The historic central section of Tower Hill Cemetery is maintained under a wildflower management regime.

The meadow and woodland burial sections of Windrush Cemetery are also maintained using wildflower management practices.

23. Memorial Testing

All memorials shall undergo a formal safety inspection every five years.

Safety inspections shall be carried out by Witney Town Council, either through its employees or appointed contractors acting on behalf of the burial authority. All inspections shall be undertaken by personnel trained in S.I.A.M. (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials).

The inspection process uses non-intrusive methods to assess the safety and stability of memorials against recognised N.A.M.M. standards.

Advance notification of memorial testing may be provided through signs displayed within the relevant cemetery.

Responsibility for remedial works arising from memorial testing rests with the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The Town Council will attempt to contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and advise them of any remedial works considered necessary.

Where an adequate period has elapsed following notification and no remedial action has been taken or an immediate risk is identified, the Town Council may make the memorial safe using the most practical and economical method available.

Such actions may include:

- Laying the memorial flat on the ground.
- Fencing off the grave area for safety purposes.

24. Damage to Memorials

The Town Council accepts no liability for damage to memorials except where such damage has been caused other than through the gross negligence of cemetery operatives.

The Council shall not normally be held responsible for minor damage resulting from routine cemetery maintenance activities, including grass cutting operations.

Where damage is caused through gross negligence, such as plant machinery striking and fracturing a memorial, the Council may accept responsibility for repair costs.

To establish liability, the incident must be documented.

Evidence may include:

- An incident report.
- Photographic evidence.
- Other supporting records.

Owners of Exclusive Rights of Burial are advised to obtain appropriate insurance cover for memorials, including public liability insurance where applicable.

25. Removing Headstones to Gain Access to Reserved Plots

Access to certain reserved grave spaces may require the temporary removal of existing memorials.

Notice of the proposed removal shall be issued, where possible, to the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial recorded on the grant.

The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot refuse removal where it is necessary for the burial authority to facilitate access.

The Town Council shall meet the cost of removal and may offer cleaning of the memorial prior to its reinstatement.

26. Removing Headstones for a Second Interment

Where a further interment is proposed within a grave containing an existing memorial, responsibility for arranging and paying for the removal of the memorial rests with the Funeral Organiser. The memorial must be removed before excavation of the grave begins. Its presence must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

27. Item Clearance

Additional cemetery clearance operations may be undertaken periodically throughout the year.

These are typically carried out following periods when large numbers of commemorative items are placed within the cemetery, including:

- Christmas.
- Easter.

- Mother's Day.
- Father's Day.

Such clearance operations will normally occur approximately one month after the relevant occasion.

28. Tree Works

The Council will not normally accept liability for damage caused by severe weather, natural events or the unforeseen failure of a tree or branch where the risk could not reasonably have been identified or prevented. This does not exclude liability arising from the Council's negligence or breach of a legal duty.

29. Stone Masons

Stone masons carrying out work within Witney Town Council cemeteries must be registered with the Town Council.

The following documentation must be provided annually and maintained in a current and valid condition.

Public Liability Insurance

Stone masons must maintain Public Liability Insurance with a minimum indemnity value of £5 million.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment covering all activities undertaken within a burial ground must be provided.

The risk assessment should address all aspects of memorial installation, repair, maintenance and removal activities conducted within the cemeteries.

Professional Registration

Stone masons must be registered under the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) scheme.

All works must be carried out in accordance with the NAMM Code of Working Practice.

30. Memorials

30.1 Memorial Application and Approval Process

A memorial may only be commissioned by the Grantee and must receive the written approval of Witney Town Council before it is manufactured or installed.

Where a memorial is intended to cover two adjoining grave plots, the applicant must hold the Exclusive Right of Burial for both plots.

A completed memorial application must be submitted to the Council and must include full details of the proposed memorial, including its dimensions, materials, inscription and design. The memorial must comply with the specifications set out in the Council's Memorial Sizes document.

A permanent memorial may only be installed on a lawn grave after 12 months have elapsed from the date of interment. This period allows the ground to settle and the grass cover to become established.

During the 12-month waiting period, a temporary plaque or wooden cross may be placed on the grave. A temporary marker must not exceed 10 centimetres in width and 25 centimetres in height. Temporary markers may be removed during grass seeding or other grave-maintenance works and placed in storage within the cemetery depot.

Before installation, the memorial delivered to the cemetery will be checked against the approved application. Installation will be refused where the memorial:

- differs from the approved application;
- does not comply with the Council's Memorial Sizes document; or
- has not received written approval from the Council.

Any memorial installed without permission, or which differs from the approved application, will be removed by the Council. The Grantee will be responsible for all associated removal, storage and, where applicable, reinstatement costs.

30.2 Memorial Materials, Designs and Inscriptions

With the exception of approved wooden crosses, memorials must be manufactured from stone.

All inscriptions, images, symbols, artwork and designs must be dignified, respectful and suitable for the cemetery environment. The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription, image, symbol, artwork or design that it considers offensive, inappropriate or unsuitable.

Every memorial must display the cemetery section and grave number on the rear of the base stone in lettering at least 15 millimetres high.

The Council's decision regarding the acceptability of the material, inscription or design of a memorial will be final.

30.3 Headstones

All headstones installed within Witney Town Council cemeteries must comprise:

- A foundation slab.
- A base stone.
- A headstone.

The upper surface of the foundation slab must be installed level with the surrounding ground level.

30.4 Monoliths

Where a monolith is installed without a foundation or shoe, a minimum of one-third of the total stone height must be located below ground level.

Where a monolith is installed using a shoe or foundation system, at least one-third of the total structure, including its foundation, must be located below ground level.

The maximum height of a monolith is 111 centimetres with at least 37 centimetres installed below ground level.

30.5 Wooden Crosses

Wooden crosses are permitted within the cemeteries provided they are constructed in a professional and durable manner. A memorial application must still be submitted.

The application must include a detailed drawing or photograph along with full measurements of each component of the cross.

Conditions of Approval

Wooden crosses must:

- Comply with the maximum memorial dimensions.
- Have at least one-third of their total height located below ground level.
- Be manufactured from hardwood.
- Not contain ornate or excessive decorative features.
- Display the name of the deceased through engraving or an attached plaque.
- Display the section and grave number on the reverse side.

Wooden crosses shall be inspected annually to assess their condition.

If a wooden cross deteriorates, the Town Council will contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and request restoration or removal. Where no action is taken within six weeks of the notification, cemetery operatives may remove the cross and place it into storage within the cemetery depot for no longer than 30 days before disposal.

30.6 Babies' and Children's Memorials

Due to the smaller dimensions of children's and baby graves, reduced memorial sizes apply.

The maximum permitted memorial height for these plots is 75 centimetres.

30.7 Memorial Tablets

Only sloping desk-style memorial tablets are permitted within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery and must comply with the dimensions and specifications set out in the Memorial Sizes document.

31. Placement of Items on Graves and Gardens

Graves may be adorned with flowers and small commemorative items made from safe, non-hazardous materials, including wood, plastic and ceramic. Ceramic items are permitted as they generally present less risk than glass, although they should be sufficiently robust and maintained in a safe condition. All items must be placed within the designated garden area or on the memorial foundation slab. Items placed elsewhere, or found to be broken or hazardous, may be removed without prior notice and stored at the cemetery depot for collection. Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for items lost or damaged during removal or storage.

Prohibited Items

The following items are not permitted within the cemeteries. This list is not exhaustive, and Witney Town Council may prohibit other items where necessary for safety, maintenance or the appropriate appearance of the cemetery:

- Glass objects, including candle holders, photo frames and ornaments containing glass.
- Shrubs and trees planted in or placed on graves.
- Electrical items, including solar-powered lights.
- Fencing, kerbing or other structures intended to define or enclose a grave.
- Large ornamental items, including statues, unless approved by the Council.
- Balloons and large floral displays as permanent grave adornments.

Balloons and large floral tributes placed following an interment may remain temporarily but will normally be removed seven days after the interment.

Prohibited, unsafe or unauthorised items may be removed without prior notice and disposed of immediately. Where an item appears to have significant financial or personal value, the Council may retain it temporarily for collection. However, the Council cannot reasonably identify the sentimental value of every item and does not guarantee that any removed item will be retained.

Where appropriate, the Council may contact the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial and allow up to six weeks for a large or unauthorised item to be removed. If no action is taken, the Council may remove, store or dispose of the item.

32. Garden Area

All lawn graves include a designated garden area which may be used by the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial for the placement of permitted commemorative items.

The permitted garden area is the width of the memorial foundation slab and extends to a depth of 45 centimetres from the base of the memorial.

Where no memorial has been installed and the owner wishes only to create a garden area, the permitted area may be extended to a maximum square area measuring 90 centimetres by 90 centimetres.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must still be purchased before a garden area may be established.

Fencing, kerbing or other forms of enclosure are not permitted around garden areas and shrubs and trees must not be planted within garden areas.

33. Vaults

The construction and reopening of vaults shall be strictly managed by Witney Town Council.

Applications may be submitted for the construction of the following types of vault at Tower Hill Cemetery or Windrush Cemetery:

- Brick vaults.

- Concrete block vaults.
- Concrete chambers.
- Vault liners.

Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may be refused where the installation of a vault is not considered practical or appropriate.

Factors that may influence a decision include:

- Ground conditions.
- Availability of suitable plot sizes.
- The presence of neighbouring oversized plots.
- Achievable excavation depth.

Vault construction should ideally be undertaken at the same time as the reservation of the grave space.

Where a vault is requested at the time of an interment application, the burial timescale shall be determined at the discretion of Witney Town Council.

Charges for vault construction shall comprise:

- The contractor construction cost incurred by the Council.
- An administration and project management fee.

Interments into vaults shall be charged at the applicable single-depth burial rate.

Reopening of Vaults

Notice of a request to reopen an existing vault must be provided to Witney Town Council before an interment booking is made.

This requirement allows Council staff sufficient time to:

- Open the vault.
- Inspect its condition.
- Measure the internal dimensions.
- Confirm the maximum coffin size that can be accommodated.

34. Review and Adoption Information

These Cemetery Regulations shall be monitored and reviewed by the Council's Policy, Governance and Finance Committee every twelve months, or sooner where changes in legislation require review.

Adopted by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on xxx

Minute Number: xxxx

Proposed Review Date: xxx.

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