

**CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Thursday, 24 November 2022

At 4.15 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	L Duncan
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Angus Whitburn Tomas Smith Nicky Cayley	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Operations Manager Venue & Events Officer Project Officer
Others:	None.	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Ashbourne and D Harvey.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Corn Exchange Working Party meeting held on 16 May 2022 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party meeting held on 16 May 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

4 REFURBISHMENT OPENING/160TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer regarding opening and 160th anniversary events, referred by the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee.

A joint opening and 160th anniversary event had been suggested, and members were keen to hold this as soon as possible after the seating had been installed. The summer seemed to be too

far in the future, so officers were asked to explore suitable dates in February and March. Officers advised that a budget of £1,000 for the event would be adequate.

In addition to this event, members agreed that the Corn Exchange logo should be enhanced from January to include 160 which would denote the anniversary.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a joint opening, and anniversary event be held during February or March 2023 and,
3. That, a budget of £1,000 is set of this event and,
4. That, 160 is incorporated into the Corn Exchange logo from January 2023, for the year.

5 **GALLERY ROOM CARPET & REDECORATION**

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning carpeting and redecoration.

The issue had been referred from the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee and Members were supportive of the enhancements which would help market the Gallery Room as a wedding venue; they were however, conscious of the years' remaining budgets. They agreed the flooring was the most pressing issue and should be the priority along with scheduled building maintenance tasks.

Redecoration, although desirable was not urgent and could be deferred to the next fiscal year if budgets would allow as a provisional quote was currently unaffordable. They asked that the colour of the flooring be as neutral as possible to compliment any new paint colour scheme.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the new carpet is installed in the Corn Exchange Gallery Room, Landing and Stairs for the sum of £2,824.56 (less VAT) and,
3. That, the colour of the carpet is delegated to the Venue & Events Officer and,
4. That, if the sum of the maintenance work should be more than required, additional funds are sought from the Public Halls earmarked reserve 328 and,
5. That, redecoration of the Gallery Room is deferred until 2023/24.

6 **FEES AND CHARGES**

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer regarding charges for 2023/24.

This item had been referred from the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee and concerned a potential new Group 4 charge in the Council's fees and charges.

Members heard that, in order to be fair and transparent, a set charge should be created for performances. With the Corn Exchange refurbishment complete, it was envisaged that more local groups would be coming forward to hire the hall for technical run throughs and performance days. The Venue & Events Officer explained that the charges outlined in the report would not work out more expensive than what is currently charged but would provide clarity and consistency.

The Working Party agreed that a new Group 4 should be created and implemented for local West Oxfordshire performing groups, in line with the Council's vision for the Hall.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a new Group 4 charge be incorporated into the Council's public halls fees and charges for local West Oxfordshire performing groups.

7 **RETRACTABLE SEATING SPONSORSHIP**

The Working Party considered the suggestion that new seating in the Main Hall of the Corn Exchange could be sponsored.

Funds from this could assist with further refurbishment or a renewal earmarked reserve and many theatrical venues offered something similar. Members asked officers to explore finer details and provide a report to a future meeting.

Recommended:

That, a report on seating sponsorship is presented to the next meeting of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee.

8 **CORN EXCHANGE EQUIPMENT ENHANCEMENTS**

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer regarding lights to mark occasions and a cinema projector.

The issues had been referred from the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee and members heard that the lights currently in use for lighting up the building, although excellent performance lights, didn't offer flexibility for their need. It was agreed that smart bulbs be tested in Café 1863 and the original lights left in the Gallery Room for later review.

Members were presented with details of a cinema projector and screen which would be capable of facilitating film nights at the Corn Exchange. It was confirmed it would not be compatible with National Theatre Live due to the specifications. Although the Working Party would like to offer the NT performances, the costs were much higher, and the local cinema screened these already.

There was agreement to go ahead with the projector identified in the report from the existing theatrical equipment supplier, but it was over budget and both Officers and Members would prefer a larger size. It was preferable to have all equipment for the same supplier so officers would explore the scale of the costs with the company. Either way, it was agreed that any additional funds needed above the £20,000 budget – approximately £4-7,000 could be covered from the Public Halls earmarked reserve.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, smart bulbs/hub be purchased to 'light up' Café 1863 for requested occasions and,
3. That, a cinema projector and screen be purchased for between £24-£27,000. The additional funds being covered from the Public Halls earmarked reserve 328.

The meeting closed at: 5.18 pm

Chair