

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 5 June 2023

Title: Public Halls Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

Background

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have been busy over Spring and have continued to be used by a variety of groups both old and new and as we move into the traditionally busier summer season there will be opportunity to offer different events to the people of Witney. The Corn Exchange holds a wedding licence and has been looking to develop this side of the business. The Halls continue to run with support from Management staff, café team, caretakers and cleaner.

Current Situation

There have been many successful events in the Corn Exchange over the past few months, ranging from West End Magic, sold out local music performances, tribute bands, theatrical performances, lectures as well as the start of the Corn Exchange Film Club.

Additionally, the Corn Exchange has already welcomed its first full Wedding, Wedding Breakfast and Evening Reception and received positive feedback from the guests about the standard of the Venue and helpfulness of the staff. There are more weddings booked for later in the year, and the Corn Exchange is increasingly looking like a professional venue thanks to hard work from all employees of WTC.

The Corn Exchange is continuing to attract interest from a wide selection of groups who are now interested in the building due to its upgraded facilities. The Hall will be welcoming back Witney Dramatic Society and has been working with Buttercross Theatre Company and Balancing Act productions to showcase the full versatility of the space. There is a London based Opera Trio looking to use the hall, having visited last year before the installation of the seating, and now with the seating in situ they are happy to use the space for their concert. Alongside the new bookings the hall continues to welcome existing groups, St Mary's Art Group, Mynt Image Craft Markets, The Arts Society of West Oxfordshire and more.

Last year new carpets installed in the Gallery Room and on the Main Staircase, The Venue and Events Officer would like to repaint the Gallery Room and downstairs area to a different fresh colour. The suggestion would be a light grey in the Gallery room and a heritage sage green for the other areas currently painted a terracotta colour. The Venue and Events Officer can

confirm that there are no objections from the building conservation officer as the interior of the building isn't listed. The colour would, however, be chosen from a palette available in the 19th Century. The Venue and Events Officer will obtain three professional quotes and compare the cost implication of utilising the works team in a potential shutdown maintenance week.

Hall usage figures for both Public Halls are attached as an appendix to this report.

1863 Café Bar

The cafe/bar 1863 has been getting much busier with repeat customers coming in every day and enjoying the service and product on offer. Alongside the café, 1863 easily transitions into a bar for evening events which the Town Council Operates and is proving to be a vital addition to service, revenue, and customer satisfaction.

1863 also works as a vital tool in advertising the hall, with different people coming in there is an opportunity for advertising the building and associated services.

The continued success of 1863 means that The Venue and Events Officer is looking to recruit a full-time Café and Bar Manager to help with the successful delivery of service to all events, and the public who frequent the venue every day. The events are either run by Witney Town Council or by third party hires who require the bar to be open. When the position has been filled the Management team at the Corn Exchange will be complete, with the option of having three duty managers available for any events which require them.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

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.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- Then cost to repaint as detailed in the report. It is envisaged this will be funded from current budgets for the year.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Repainting of Gallery Room, staircase, and bar area in line with comments in the report (and within existing budgets).