

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

Held on Monday, 13 March 2023

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

Present:

Councillor M Jones (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	O Collins
	T Ashby	L Duncan
	D Butterfield	V Gwatkin
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	None.	

H130 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor P Hiles.

H131 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

H132 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 January 2023 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 16 January 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H133 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

H134 FINANCE REPORT

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

In addition to noting the quarterly figures and the Committees healthy financial situation, Members discussed the purchase of two repurposed post boxes for use in Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries as part of the “Letters to Heaven” scheme. This allowed individuals to post a letter to departed loved ones. The boxes, at a cost of approx. £200 each, would be installed and managed by the councils works team and the contents composted.

The proposal was carried, with the voting as follows:

In favour	6
Against	0
Abstention	1

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, that Letters to Heaven post boxes be installed in Windrush and Tower Hill Cemetery.

H135 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

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

The report concerned hall usage numbers, the newly installed screen and projector at the Corn Exchange, an update on the 1863 café and the success of the Anniversary Open Day.

Members discussed the introduction of a loyalty drink scheme which they were supportive of and the café furniture following a request for some items to be replaced. They asked that any replacement items did not reduce the capacity of the café and that any furniture replaced was offered to the community.

The committee discussed the proposed Film Club and were supportive of this providing the club was free to join but asked that officers investigate all costs to ensure this works in practice.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a loyalty drinks scheme be established in line with Council financial regulations and,
3. That, replacement furniture be purchased where required and,
4. That, items of furniture no longer needed be offered to the community and,
5. That, a film club be established with free membership following further investigation by officers on charges and costs.

H136 **CORN EXCHANGE - SEATING SPONSORSHIP**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer.

Members discussed the proposed scheme and believed it would be well received by supporters of the Corn Exchange. They agreed in principle to a cost of £150 for a five-year term and an Aluminium plaque to be fixed to the underside of the seat with screws was appropriate, though this should be a higher figure for corporate purchases.

The Committee would also like for sponsors to be given the ability to book seat in advance perhaps as part of the proposed “Friends of Witney Corn Exchange” scheme.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Officers draw up details of the scheme to present to a future meeting of the committee for consideration.

H137 **BURWELL HALL BOILER**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer.

Members discussed the new information provided on this project, however, were still concerned about lack of evidence of the Fuel Cell Technology being effective for Burwell Hall. The cost of the initial implementation was no longer an issue as the difference had reduced. The was whether the boiler had sufficient output to cope with the demands of the hall and its users.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the purchase of the Fuel Cell boiler would go some way to helping the council achieve its commitment of carbon neutrality by 2028, more so than a replacement gas boiler upgrade.

Members were supportive of procuring the fuel cell boiler in principle but asked that officers investigate and provide details on whether the council could be used as a case study or if a guarantee of output could be obtained from the Fuel Cell provider to ensure it covered the building’s needs

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, officers further investigate the option of being case study or obtaining a guarantee of output for the Micro Fuel Cell Boiler and,
3. That, officers provide an update to the next meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 27th March 2023 for a final decision.

H138 **CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members heard that since the change in Cemetery Regulations agreed by this Committee in October 2022, an issue regarding one of the changes had arisen in respect of pre-sold funeral plans by one or more of the local funeral directors.

Officers would be meeting with the funeral director soon and would discuss a resolution for future burials were the issue arises.

Members agreed to the burial of one set of ashes in Windrush Cemetery outside of the current rules & regulations whilst officers continue to explore further options and alternatives.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal report be noted and,

2. That, a burial of ashes be allowed at Windrush Cemetery outside of regulations and,
3. That, Officers further investigate this issue and report back to the next meeting of this committee on 5 June.

H139 TOWER HILL CEMETERY - PEDESTRIAN GATE

The Committee received the report of the Operations Manager.

Members were disappointed to hear of anti-social behavioural problems in the Tower Hill cemetery which appeared to have been brought about by the installation of the gate. They discussed the implementations of locking the gate in the evenings, thus restricting access to the cemetery however it was agreed that these changes were not appropriate.

The Committee was happy for a sign to be installed to advise that the gate would be locked during funeral services, they also asked that the Operations Manager investigate if a 'soft close' spring could be considered to ensure the gate closes over after use.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a sign be erected on the pedestrian gate to advise of closure when funerals are in progress.

H140 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H141 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding the Lakeside Allotment Access Road and action which needed to be implemented by the town council in this area.

Resolved:

That, the confidential verbal update be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.05 pm

Chair