

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 10 July 2023  
**Title:** Public Halls Report  
**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

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### **Background**

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall are both busy at this time of year with groups entering the last few weeks before some will break up for the summer holidays. This will affect term time groups, however there are some groups that add additional summer bookings and some that carry on throughout the year ensuring that there is still usage in both halls. It is at this time of year that both halls pick up summer bookings which are one offs which help boost usage.

### **Current Situation**

The Venue and Events Officer and the Venue and Events Assistant are currently working on a What's On guide which will give customers and hirers the opportunity to see what events have been programmed in for the next 12 months. There is also the potential to have sponsorship for the guide, this is currently being researched by the Venue and Events Officer.

The Venue and Events Officer has approached three local Painting companies for quotes to decorate the Gallery Room, Staircase and parts of the bar in the Corn Exchange. None have come back in time for this report.

### Cool Spaces

It has been suggested that the Corn Exchange should be a designated 'Cool Space' during the warm weather, offering shelter to those who need it. The Venue and Events Officer has instructed the café staff in 1863 to put out jug/s of water and glasses every day with a small blackboard stating that people can help themselves. The Corn Exchange does not have air conditioning, instead relying on fans to keep staff and customers cool. There is one floor fan in the hall and the recommendation would be to purchase another one. Locally, costs are £49.99 at a regular Council supplier.

Another approach would be to purchase a portable air conditioning unit for use in the summer. Due to the size of the café (approximately 50m<sup>2</sup>) the requirement would be for two units and the Venue and Events Officer has found suitable options all around £300 per unit.

## Witney Churches Summer Voucher Scheme

Witney Community Church based at Burwell Hall, has approached Witney Town Council to support an initiative with Home School link and various Witney Churches to contribute to 60 voucher packs to offer something to those who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford any treats throughout the summer. The proposal is for a voucher for a piece of cake and a tea, coffee or soft drink per person be created for use in 1863 café bar. This has been agreed in principle by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.

### **1863 Café Bar**

1863 has welcomed its first act in the live music on the square series which was successfully attended. It provides a wonderful opportunity for people to stop, purchase a drink at the bar and enjoy top quality music on the square at no additional cost. All feedback gathered from those on the night was overwhelmingly positive.

Staffing in 1863 is vital, and although we have lost some great team members as they have returned to university, we have also gained some wonderful new café assistants who are able to deliver the level of customer service which is essential for any hospitality business to thrive.

The position of Café and Bar Manager will shortly be filled allowing for the café to always grow as a business with more structure and direction from a regular management presence on the floor.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding 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.

- The cost of providing the voucher for Home Start (provisionally agreed from the discretionary grants budget, up to the value of £300)
- Whether to purchase new floor fan or air conditioning unit to enhance a Cool Spaces offering. These could be funded from the property maintenance budget 4036/104

### **Recommendations**

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

1. To purchase additional floor fan or air conditioning units for the Corn Exchange in line with the cool space's initiative.