

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 11 September 2023

Title: Public Halls Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The Summer holidays have finished, with both halls having different groups and events through this period and now looking forward to the autumn/winter season.

Current Situation

Both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have been busy over the summer with various events and groups using both halls all throughout the school holidays. Some of the regular term groups stop until September, with some of them adding additional summer bookings. This is mainly at Burwell Hall; the Corn Exchange operates with more groups who tend to attend year-round. Additionally, the Corn Exchange has welcomed another wedding over the summer which was a real success; the couple, and the guests were extremely happy with the assistance they have received, and the support staff were able to offer.

The current booking usage figures since the last meeting are attached as Appendix A.

Decorating and Maintenance

The Corn Exchange is about to undergo light decoration works from a local contractor; the Gallery Room will be decorated in a heritage light grey to compliment the carpet which was installed last year as well as having the ceiling redecorated now that work has been completed to repair water damage above one of the windows. The neutral colour will complement hirers using the room, especially with weddings as a growing area of the business; this colour can be a good starting point for decorating for a special event.

The terracotta in both the stairwell and the café will be replaced with heritage sage green, a freshening up of the hall which will continue the modernising feel that has been undertaken in the hall without drastically altering anything significant.

At Burwell Hall the works team have spent a week repainting the walls and undertaking minor works to tidy up and maintain the rest of the building. Within the next month the old curtains are being replaced with bespoke blinds.

Summer Film Club

The Events team in the halls decided to run a Monday daytime children's film club throughout the summer holidays, these were aimed at young children and priced at £2.00 per ticket for children and £5.00 for accompanying adults. They have proved to be a huge success and over 280 people attended over the course of the 4 films. Being reasonably priced meant that this was an affordable summer activity to offer to the families in Witney and the surrounding area.

Women's World Cup

The Corn Exchange offered free viewing of the latter stages of the Women's World Cup on the big screen, engaging with local football teams and inviting them first before offering tickets to the general public. With over 330 people booking tickets over three matches this has been a fantastic achievement by all involved and has boosted the Town Council's reputation with the local football clubs and wider community in Witney.

There was so much positivity generated for the Town Council at both of the above events and they received some wonderful feedback which really shows the desire for people to engage in with the Corn Exchange as well as showcasing the transformation that has undertaken over the past few years.

- *Huge thanks to [Corn Exchange Witney](#) for their showing of the Quarter Finals earlier. Brilliant to celebrate with a load of other Witney folk.*
- *What a great experience! Thank you, [Corn Exchange Witney](#) and [Witney Town Council](#) for making this campaign a memorable one. (In regards to the football)*
- *Loved seeing the Lionesses play on a big screen at [Corn Exchange Witney](#) today.*
- *Congrats to the Lionesses [England football team](#) on a great game vs Colombia! And thanks to [Witney Town Council](#) & [Corn Exchange Witney](#) for putting on a lovely event. Great to watch the match on a big screen!*

We have also received this recommendation on Facebook:

"The Corn Exchange is a venue I have walked past a thousand times, not really taking much notice of it. But this week, because I have my nephew staying with me, I attended to watch the Women's World Cup quarter final game. This was a lovely FREE event, we enjoyed waving our complimentary flags and cheering on the Lionesses.

But more importantly, I was so surprised at the huge range of events running at the Exchange, and immediately came home to book us in to the kid's cinema performance this week. We attended this today and had a lovely time - great price too, £7 for both of us. The cafe offers a good range of quality snacks and cakes, and the kids snack bags for cinema showings are great value.

We are looking forward to coming again on Wednesday for the semi-final game.

This is a great venue which I will definitely be attending more often in the future now I know the range of events on offer.

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Over the Summer the café and bar has been consistently busy, with more customers through the door than in previous years, the café now offers a wider selection of food and has a more dedicated customer base meaning it is really becoming the social hub envisaged by the Town Council. This increase in footfall also allows more people to be exposed to the Corn Exchange and to see what the Town Council has been doing. The success has meant that we have now recruited a new Café and Bar Manager to oversee this important business, with the expectation to increase sales further and to network with more local groups in Witney promoting the Corn Exchange and building on the success already in place.

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.

➤ none

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.