

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 22 January 2024

Title: Public Halls Events Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The Venue and Events Officer and the Venue and Events Assistant work to put on events which are run by Witney Town Council. Third party events are also put on and supported and facilitated by Witney Town Council Staff, these will contribute to approximately 60% of events with the Council run events making up the other 40%.

Current Situation

The Venue & Event staff are currently working on expanding the event program of the venue for 2024, after a busy festive period.

The past couple of months have seen a variety of popular events including:

- **Advent Fayre** – A very successful event this year, using a revised format and introducing booking slots which was well received by all in attendance. The feedback was very positive with some of the quotes received listed below.
 - Well organised and very kind people helping the children
 - This was such a special event for us. My three year old son, who has special needs, was able to meet Santa for the first time without getting upset due to the amazing and very understanding volunteers. Santa's flashing gloves were a great touch. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts.
 - Everything it was absolutely brilliant. My Daughter and her friend loved it and want to go again next year.
 - Face painting and wand making were excellent. Volunteers were friendly and helpful.
 - Such an improvement to previous years, the volunteers were absolutely lovely.
 - The variety of crafts, suitable for all ages and Santa.
 - It wasn't too crowded, there was lots to do and a lovely atmosphere.
 - We were able to do all the activities without the tables being full, the noise level was low which was great for my son who has sensory issues
 - Much better with the pre booked slots
 - I liked the idea of pre booked slots this year as it wasn't too busy
 - Well organised ticketing system. Plenty of craft materials. Friendly
 - The opportunity for the children to see Father Christmas. Most experiences like this are locked into an event cost with organisers charging £100+ so this aspect was great.
- **Pantomime** – This is a popular yearly traditional event for the Corn Exchange attracting local residents to enjoy a professional show. Buttercross theatre provided a total of 14 shows in December and reported a successful run of every show, and have again booked 14 shows for Christmas 2024.

- **Christmas Holidays Cinema** – The Corn Exchange screened The Grinch (animated version) during the school holidays, which again proved to be popular amongst local families. A total of 83 people were in attendance for this screening.

The following table breaks down the income and expenditure of our recent cinema screenings.

Film / Date	Tickets Sold	Ticket Revenue	Bar Revenue	Event Cost (License and staff)
The Shining 31/10/23	55	£344	£260.30	£104
Elf 05/12/23	22	£138.23	£38	£104
The Grinch 21/12/23	83	£294	N/a due to general café opening	£104

- **Live Music** – Monthly Jazz Club continues to be a popular show, selling out every month. Soundbite UK have also continued to provide well attended music tributes and comedy shows for The Corn Exchange and have already booked in a handful of shows for 2024. The Corn Exchange also hosted 2 of our own Live Music promotions in November and December, to coincide with the third-party promotions taking place.
 - Shadowing Hank on 10th November, a seated show featuring a tribute to Hank Marvin and a very impressive lights show. 126 people attended.
 - Lucile & The Lightning Soul Train on 9th December, a standing/dancefloor show featuring popular local funk/soul/disco band. 125 people in attendance.

The following table breaks down the income and expenditure of each of these events. It is recognised that; events of certain audience demographic require a greater profit margin to make up for the lack of income via bar sales. These 2 events are a clear example of the variation of bar income at events with an almost identical ticket price and audience turnout.

Event & Date	Tickets Sold	Ticket Revenue	Bar Revenue	Event Cost (License and staff)
Shadowing Hank 10/11/23	126	£1855	£266	£1261
Lucile & The Lightning Soul Train 09/12/23	125	£1833	£1632.30	£1813

- **Private Functions & Weddings** – The Corn Exchange has recently hosted some private functions and Weddings (ceremonies and evening receptions). The venue team work hard to present the venue for a variety of occasions and have had great feedback from hirers. The Venue & Events staff have begun work to define our offering to include clear “Wedding Packages”, giving hirers a clearer breakdown of the services that the venue can provide, and to will review hire charges accordingly.

Going forward:

Since returning from the festive break, the Venue & Event staff have continued to work on expanding the events program of The Corn Exchange for 2024 in line with the business plan.

- **Re-launch of “Classic Film Club and family cinema”** – The Venue & Event staff recognise the need to increase attendance of the Cinema and have been working on strategies to do this. The Classic Film Club will now be running regularly on 2nd and 4th Tuesday every month from 7:30pm, in order to generate regularity. The Venue & Events Assistant has created a public

Facebook group, to gather a community of classic film fans to help promote these screenings and bring people together. The group will be used alongside the mailing list already in place and will provide an opportunity for members of the public to be involved and have a say on the films they'd like to see and to discuss the upcoming screenings. The team are planning which films to show during the school holidays that provides an affordable outing for families with excellent customer feedback.

- **Return of 2023's Favourites** – The Venue & Event staff are delighted to confirm the return of two popular shows from last year, Thrill Collins and West End Magic taking place in February and April of this year. Both of which feature, top quality performers in their field touring nationally.
- **Third-Party Events** – The Venue & Event staff continues to work closely with existing third-party event organisers, as well as new hirers to help fill out the diary for 2024.
- **50th Anniversary** – Officers are working together to plan a series of themed events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Witney Town Council

The Venue & Event staff are aiming to provide a wide variety of events at The Corn Exchange, to take advantage of the venue's multi-purpose nature. Events will include tiered seating, table seating and standing settings.

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 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 implication

The Corn Exchange is operating to budget with no forecasted risk of annual overspend.

Recommendations

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

1. Members are invited to note the report.