

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 20th May 2024
Title: Public Halls Report
Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

Background

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall are heading into the summer season and with that there comes the opportunity to expand our café offer and look to bring in different types of bookings in the halls.

Gallery Room Conferencing Equipment

Officers have been looking to install the updated conferencing equipment into the Gallery Room, the plan is to use the existing projector screen which used to be in the Main Hall, this will be supplemented with the addition of a new projector which will be ceiling mounted as well as a conferencing sound bar which will also be wall mounted.

The works team are in the process of mounting the projector screen and will also help install the projector. Officers have been researching the options of wireless microphones as requested by the Council which are to be used in conjunction with the new system. Officers have approached suppliers and can confirm that they usually recommend wired microphones as these are an industry standard. To get wired microphones to a similar standard there is more cost incurred.

Wireless microphones cost £438 per microphone with 6 being recommended for a room the Gallery Rooms size, additionally there will need to be a wireless interface to link costing £2,225. Total **£4,853**.

The wired microphone option is £349 per microphone, total £2,094 and the interface is £1,396 with a total of **£3,490**. This is a difference of £1,363.

The Venue and Events Officer has spoken to one of the contacted suppliers of the conferencing system, Cloudy IT who explained their reasoning for using wired microphones:

- **Battery life:** Most wireless microphones rely on batteries for power, and these batteries will need to be replaced or recharged on a regular basis. This can be a minor inconvenience, however something to keep in mind if planning on using the microphone for extended periods of time.
- **Reliability and Fidelity.** A wired mic is making a direct connection, so it should be (and almost always is) more reliable than wireless . Wired mics will sound better than their

wireless counterparts using an equivalent quality mic, because wireless technology uses a process called companding to squeeze the audio signal into wireless audio's limited bandwidth.

- **Setup issues.** This is pretty much exclusive to wireless. The transmitter needs to see the receiver antenna for best results, the batteries must have the correct voltage, receivers shouldn't be adjacent to digital devices (computers, DVD players, digital reverbs, etc.) whose radiation can interfere with your wireless setup. If there are multiple, interfering wireless devices within range such as smart phones, tablets, and laptops, most devices—from computer modems, to headphones, to TVs to phones—work better with wired connections, this is the same for AV and audio equipment.
- **Logitech right sound 2.** Logitech have always used an industry leading advanced noise filtering process called right sound; in recent weeks this has been further improved with the launch of right sound 2, this has introduced the use of AI algorithms to give best in class noise filtering and audio pick-up, this requires computing power that cannot be delivered wirelessly, simply put, there isn't a wireless mic option that can deliver anything close to the quality delivered by right sound and right sound 2.

The conferencing system need to be of the highest standards, so the Venue and Events Officer believes it is worth considering the opinion of the company who specialise in providing conferencing support for Councils and are partners with both NALC and SLCC.

Storage in the Corn Exchange

George Murray, has completed the work converting three areas of the Corn Exchange which were dead space into practical and usable storage solutions which will help with the smooth and professional appearance that Officers want to deliver to hall users.

This works ensures that these areas look tidy and professional.

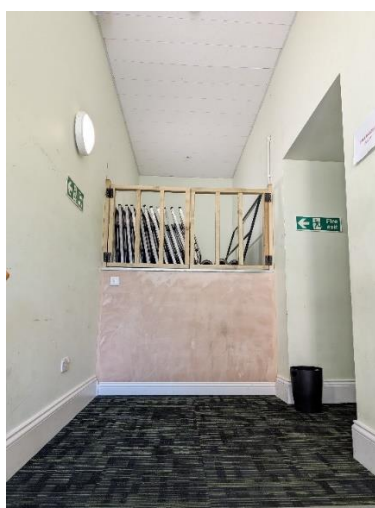
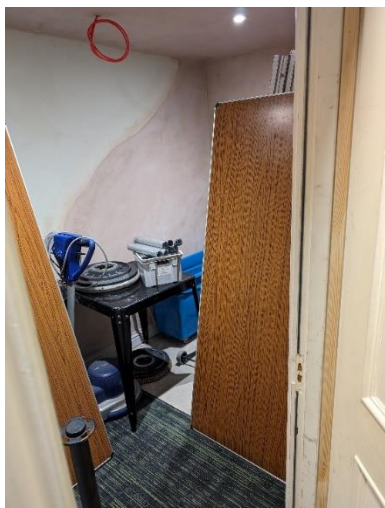
- **Understairs:** Work has been completed to create a cupboard which will serve to store the Banners and the 'A Frames' used to advertise events, this will keep signs out of the way in the evening when the café is closed, as well as looking more presentable for people visiting the venue.



- **Behind seating Main Hall Storage:** The area behind the seating has now been transformed into a practical and highly useful lockable storage area. This will house both the banquet tables as well as exterior café tables when not being used. As a secondary benefit, this now enables the control panel for the retractable seating to be safely locked away and reduces the risk of it being tampered with.



- **Stage Storage:** Further work took place in the hallway leading to the green rooms. This area has been converted into a storage room complete with emergency lighting and infrastructure to install a smoke detector which will be linked to the fire alarm. The door has been rehung to open into the hall allowing for more usable space in the room. Additionally, the top of the room has been utilised to allow for additional storage, safety rails have been installed to prevent equipment falling out and the bare walls will be decorated by the caretakers to make it look in keeping with the other parts of the hall.



1863

The café has been busy with the nice weather having offered us the opportunity to bring out the outdoor seating and double the amount of covers we can accommodate; the popular Fizzy Friday offer will be back from the beginning of June and will run to the end of the school holidays. This will mean that the café will offer 1 x bottle of prosecco for £12.50 or 4 x 330ml beers for £10.00. Margin is held at 40% for the prosecco and 70% for the beers. The opening hours will change on the Friday to 08:30 – 22:00.

Additionally, the events team are looking at having regular music on the square (all within licencing conditions) to help boost footfall on these evenings. The events team will market the event with digital and physical event promo material. It is hoped that when 1863 is open later it will be an opportunity to maximise marketing for the other upcoming events that will be held in the hall. This high street visibility is the main reason that the pavement licence was applied for, it allows advertising of the hall just by being open, visibility is strong from the bus stops, attracting people to the Market Square throughout the summer months is great for the hall, as well as offering something different for local residents and visitors.



Burwell Hall

The Venue and Events Officer is meeting with contractors to get quotes to repair the 5 outside lights on the hall. These have been vandalised over the years and have never been replaced. For security reasons Officers feel that this is a necessary investment to help with evening security.

Staffing

All staff continue to work well and strive to uphold the reputation of the Town Council and hirers using the halls. There have been no recent change of personnel.

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 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.

- Extended opening of 1863 for the Frizzy Friday offer. Additional staffing of 10 hours per week. This will be covered by the additional bar takings during the offer.

Recommendations

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

1. That members note and decide on the style of microphone to be used in the Gallery Room for the updated conferencing system.
2. That the café can restart the Fizzy Friday offer from Friday 7th June.