

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 8 July 2024
Title: Public Halls Report
Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

Background

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall are heading into the summer season and with that there comes the opportunity to maximise footfall into the halls, as well as supporting regular hirers.

Corn Exchange Gallery Room Conferencing Equipment

The Venue and Events Officer has taken over implementation of the updated conferencing equipment that will be installed in the Gallery Room. The projector screen that was in the Main Hall is being reused and installed in the Gallery Room, there has been a hold up while officers wait for a projector screen bracket to be fabricated as one was unusable.

As soon as this is complete the screen can be installed while the rest of the equipment is being procured within the agreed budget.

Officers have investigated to option for wireless microphones and have found while these can offer wire free flexibility, they also provide less quality and clarity with the added risk of less security as detailed in the previous halls report. Training of use will be provided after installation.

1863

The coffee machine is 1863 is approaching the end of its original lease taken out in 2020, there are three options regarding the best way to continue which can be seen in confidential Appendix A.

Burwell Hall

External lights: The Venue and Events Officer has commissioned the work to be undertaken on the external lights at Burwell Hall by the Council's preferred electrical contractors. They will rewire and replace the 5 external low-level lights on the exterior of the hall. These have been out of commission for years and by replacing them this will add added security to users of the hall when the nights start drawing in.

Staff will have the capability to set a timer on them to make sure they switch off at the end of a booking so that they aren't left on all night. The lights are an updated version of the

existing broken ones, they are IP44 rated for wet weather and are extremely durable and will be robust against any potential vandalism.



Picture above old, damaged lights, used to show positioning of exterior lighting.



New lights being installed at Burwell Hall

The front PIR (passive infrared) light is also not working, this will also be replaced at the same time with a new fitting which will also be set on a timer. The current fitting can only be on or off resulting in it being left on overnight in some instances.

Burwell Hall Tea, Coffee and Ice Creams

The Venue and Events Officer is in the process of exploring the option to provide regular weekend refreshment facilities at Burwell Hall. Having spoken to users of the field at weekends, there is a collective desire for this style of operation to be available.

Witney Vikings have long expressed a desire for somewhere which serves refreshments. The offer would be kept basic with a pared down offer of the main 1863 drinks menu which would suit the available space at Burwell Hall. This would operate during the weekends throughout the summer and for the duration of the football season and staffed by 2 x casual weekend staff using only sustainable recyclable cups. There is a recycle bin already at Burwell so this could be utilised for this operation.

This proposal would require a coffee machine to be installed in the hall, if WTC purchased the older machine currently in the Corn Exchange that could be relocated to Burwell Hall and installed in the Bar area. There is mains water and electric already in situ so installation would be a simple process.

To not interfere with any hall bookings the plan would be to manufacture a 'pop up' counter to be erected at the rear of the bar, allowing the hall to be used uninterrupted, the area outlined in red on the picture below would be the proposed operating area. If feasible the addition of 3 – 4 wooden picnic benches on the grass area would make this an attractive space to spend time for all users of Burwell Recreation Ground and Park. Parasols could be used in the summer and stored on the hall when not in use. A blackboard with menu could be put up and removed every trading day and operating hours advertised in the notice board at the front of the hall.

Additionally, the Venue & Events Officer would like to sell ice cream from Burwell Hall in conjunction with the coffee proposal. There is already adequate freezer space at the hall, so it's just a case of bringing stock to the hall.

To keep familiarity and increase brand exposure this could be named 1863 at Burwell Hall or similar. This would go to committee for ratification and ideas.



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 consider 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 installing new lights at Burwell Hall was £411
- The cost implication of any coffee machine, either lease hire or to purchase outright.
- The cost of an external bespoke café bar for Burwell Hall. Figures would be obtained should the proposal to explore this opportunity be approved.

Recommendations

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

1. That a new coffee machine lease contract of 36 months is taken out to commence at the end of September 2024 (Option 3) for use in 1863 café in the Corn Exchange.
2. That Officers explore and fully cost the proposal for refreshments to be served at Burwell Hall during agreed times.