

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 16th September 2024

Title: Public Halls Events Report

Contact Officer: Deputy Venue & Events Officer

Background

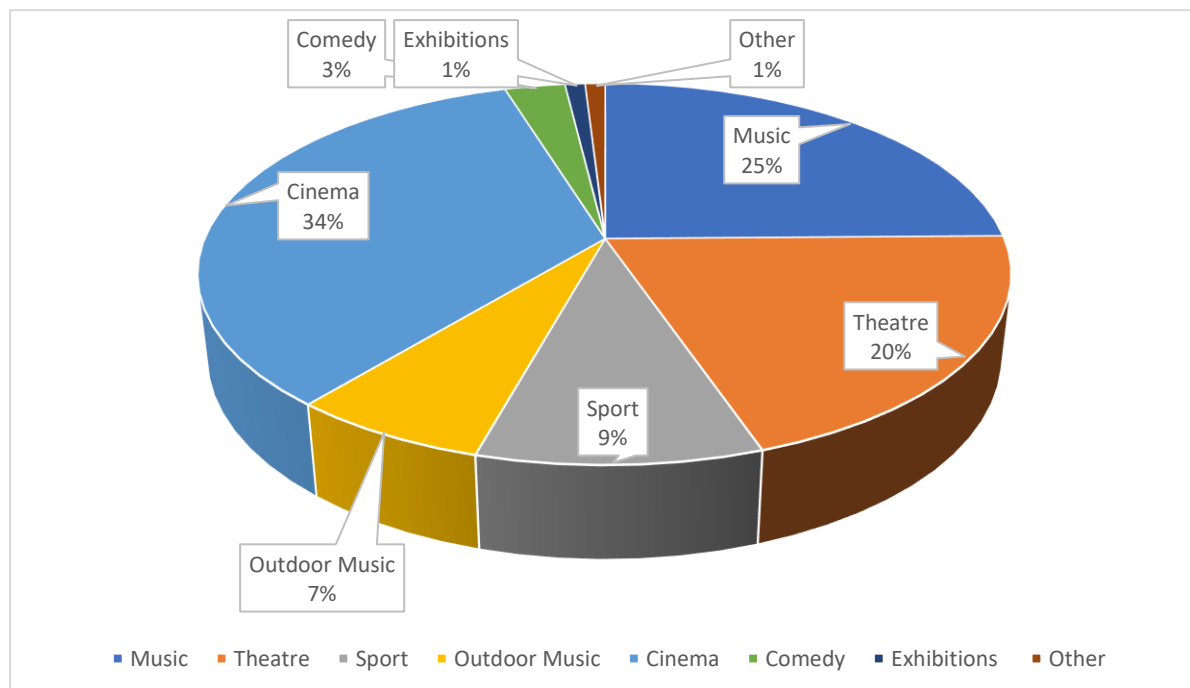
Witney Town Council has an obligation and objectives to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and community arts facility that is valued and supported by the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire.

This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

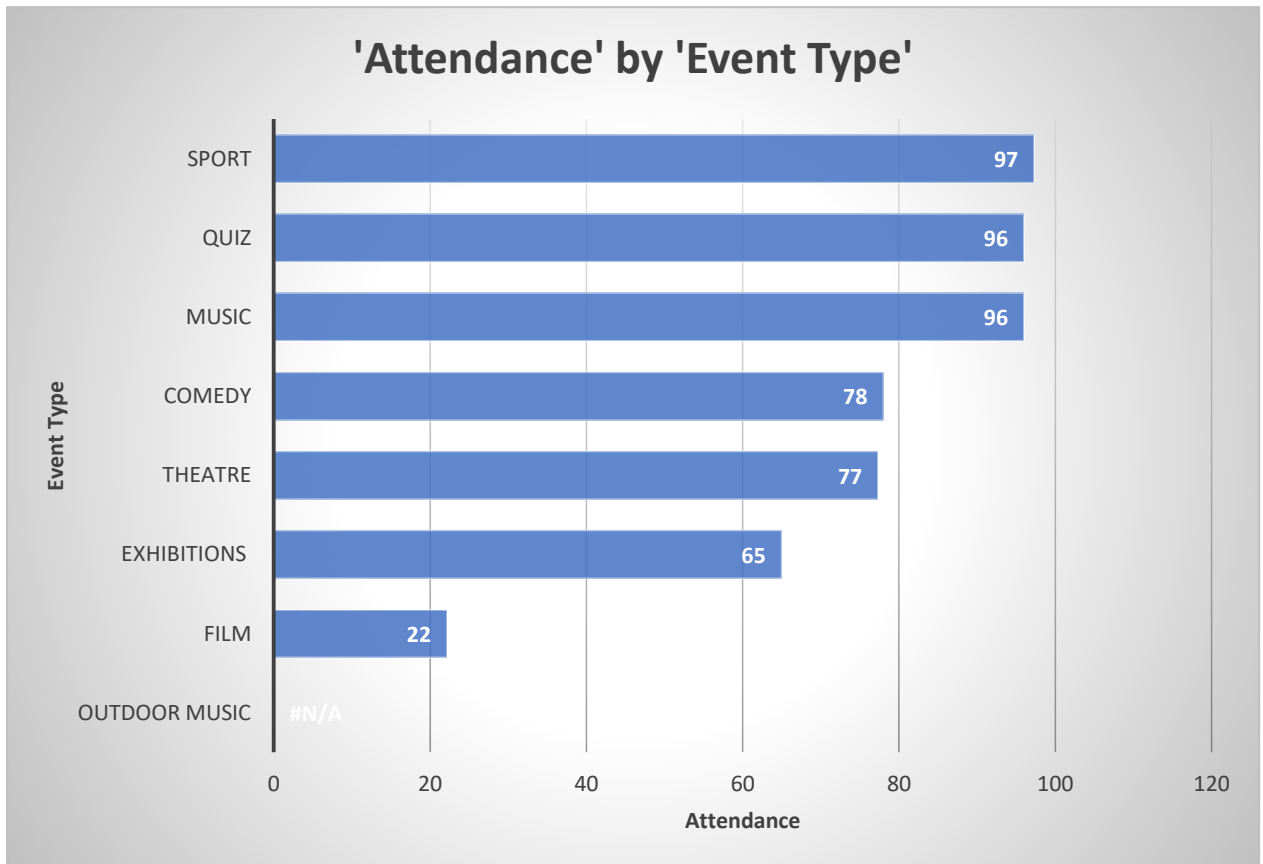
The Council will provide a professional, well-maintained and run hireable space for private events including parties, weddings and conferences.

Current Situation

Over the previous 12 months the chart below demonstrates the usage of the main hall with volumes of events.



The table below shows the average attendance per event for each event category. Please note that this data only reflects events organised by WTC, we do not have attendance data for third-party events or Outdoor Music. However, we have started to request this information from all event organisers going forward.



Recent events

England EURO 2024 Screenings

Screenings of England's EURO 2024 matches on The Corn Exchange Cinema Screen were organised targeting local youth football clubs and families. Witney Vikings Football Club were fully engaged advertising directly to their members and publicly on social media and have shown their appreciation for WTC delivering these screenings.

Lots of people have attended The Corn Exchange for the first time due to these screenings, which will help our public awareness going forward.

Excellent social value for the town aligning with the purpose of the Corn Exchange and business plan.

Officers have worked hard to ensure that these screenings are delivered to a high standard with improvements made to provide a higher quality picture. The hall contained England flags and a EURO's playlist was created for the bar pre-match to enhance the exciting atmosphere.

The pre-match experience for the Final included the town band performing outside the front of The Corn Exchange.

Final attendance figures were 641 attendees across the 7 screenings.

Wedding Fair

The Corn Exchange hosted its first wedding fair since the redevelopment of the Main Hall and decoration of the Gallery Room. This event was in collaboration with Bride & Beautiful Events.

The event hosted 24 local business stalls as well as a mock wedding set up to advertise the Corn Exchange as a wedding venue. We had 51 people booked in advance to attend plus several walk ins on the day.

Media from the event is being collated for post-event publicity.

Live Music Outdoors

The Live & Acoustic sessions outside The Corn Exchange, has been a successful series of events. We hosted 6 performances, costing £75 per performer (thanks to Smarts Fish and Chips also contributing £75 per performer), plus one free last-minute performance by myself on 19th July to capitalise on the heatwave.

Each session increased in attendance and bar sales, with some great positive feedback around the "European Holiday Atmosphere" created by the events.

Officers have discussed ways to improve these events for next summer, and how to increase bar sales.

Golden Era Show

Ticket sales were lower than expected for this event. As we were working on a 70/30 ticket split agreement with the artist, there were no risks of running at a loss in terms of event cost.

Officers have agreed that the successful "Shadowing Hank" show should return next year, instead of the Golden Era Show.

Cinema

Grease: Sing A Long – This event ran at the same time as a live music on the square event, with no issues of clashing. The screening was well received by 41 attendees, some in fancy dress! This event

has shown that themed screenings and specials have a greater appeal than the current classic film screenings.

Summer Holiday Cinema – After a hugely successful run of screenings in the summer of 2023, we decided to run these again this year. Despite using the same marketing techniques and channels, this year the screenings weren't as popular. This could be down to a number of factors including improved summer weather compared to last year – however, officers believe it is largely due to a decrease in social media reach on advertising pages such as spotted witney, that were successful last year.

Officers will work on different ways to reach the target audience before confirming future school holidays screenings, to see if the level of interest is worth running going forward.

Classic Film Club – Since restarting after the EURO's, the classic film club attendance has decreased to a level in which is not worth continuing in it's current format. Officers will be pausing this project, whilst working on new ways to deliver these screenings and reach our target audience to improve turnout. A focus on seasonal screenings, such as Halloween and Christmas will take place.

Daytime Cinema – Officers have carried out some market research for daytime film screenings at The Corn Exchange, via feedback forms in the 1863 Café. The quantity of feedback from our customers has been higher than expected, indicating that there is a good enough demand for this within our existing customer base. Therefore, we have started plans to launch these screenings from the start of October.

Third-Party Events

Witney Jazz – Witney Jazz have continued to host popular monthly shows at The Corn Exchange, plus some additional special events.

Disco Inferno (Buttercross Theatre) – A 70's themed musical by local group and regular hirers Buttercross Theatre Productions. The shows took place over the first weekend of September.

Upcoming Events

The Corn Exchange is now entering a busier period for events with a range of public events coming up over the next couple of months, including:

- **"A Fistful of Monday's"** – Country & Western themed show by Balancing Act
- **Yellow Submarine Ceilidh** – Chairty folk concert
- **Witney Wine Festival** – Wine festival organised by Eynsham Cellars
- **Elvis Tribute** – Soundbite UK
- **Queen Tribute** - Soundbite UK
- **The Denotones** – 60's band (WTC promoting with ticket split agreement)

Advent Fayre – Plans are beginning to form for this years Advent Fayre, which will take place on Sunday 1st December. As per previous years, this event requires a lot of assistance from staff and councillors to deliver successfully. We would like to ask councillors to volunteer for either the morning, afternoon or both sessions.

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.

The council will encourage people to walk or cycle to these events and noise levels will be kept to a level where not to cause annoyance to neighbouring businesses and residential.

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.

All events will be monitored to ensure any risks associated with financial loss are immediately identified to enable to action to be taken.

Recommendations

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

1. Members are invited to note the report.