

**HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 20 January 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	J Robertshaw
	J Aitman	R Smith
	D Edwards-Hughes	G Meadows (In place of O Collins)
	D Newcombe	
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Tomas Smith	Venue & Events Officer
Others:	None	

H26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins, Councillor G Meadows attended as a substitute.

H27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors R Smith & G Meadows declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 by virtue of knowing the filmmaker requesting free use of the Corn Exchange.

Councillor D Edwards-Hughes declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 12 by virtue of the CEO of the ICE centre being known to him as a fellow member of the West Oxfordshire Conservatives Association.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

H28 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 November 2024 were received.

H625 & H632 – Members were updated that the proposed Witney Allotment Association AGM had yet to take place and that the Town Clerk/CEO and Chair would be meeting with a WAA Committee Member to try and progress.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 11 November 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

H29 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

H30 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the Committee.

The Chair highlighted the net cost figures of running Café 1863 as outlined in the report. These were lower than those that had been reported by contributors via social media so he expressed the importance of ensuring residents were in receipt of accurate information.

Members were unanimous in agreement to approve the report and the management accounts of the Committee's services to 30 November 2024.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Committee be approved.

H31 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided updates on the improvements to Conferencing equipment, Website layout and the installations of notice boards and other promotional materials.

Members also considered the request for a subsidised hire of the Main Hall from a local young film director, the Committee heard of the costs to staff the bar however they believed bar sales would compensate those additional costs. Members were therefore unanimous in agreement to support the request.

Additionally, the Committee discussed the recommendation to restrict the use of the Corn Exchange kitchen to only Town Council staff. Members were considerate to the need for users to have an area to prepare light refreshments however, the Kitchen was not a suitable location due to the need to ensure that hygiene and safe working practices were maintained. All Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange be granted for the showing of Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake at a cost of £160 and,
3. That, third parties be excluded from using the Corn Exchange kitchen area so that Hygiene and safe working practices could be maintained, and this be communicated to all users.

(Cllr D Enright arrived at 6:20pm)

H32 **CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Venue & Events Officer concerning recent and upcoming events in the public halls.

Members were pleased to see the detailed illustrations of target attendance against actual attendance, as well as the report that another wedding and panto had been successfully held along with a show featuring solely young performers.

The Committee welcomed the proposals of a Folk event and the idea of the introduction of a variety event to better service the mix of performers that attend the regular open mic events.

The hall usage figures were reviewed and though Members found it useful to see year on year comparisons, it was requested that these be summarised in future and presented as part of the Officers report rather than as a statistical table.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a halls usage summary be included in future reports.

H33 **PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW**

The Venue & Events Officer advised this was a working document however, the item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee to allow him further time to prepare the review for presentation.

H34 **CEMETERY REGULATIONS**

The Committee Clerk advised this item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee to allow the Operations Manager to fully complete the revised regulations and allow Members sufficient time to review it due to the complexity of the document.

A Member asked that the Friends of the Cemeteries be advised of the changes to which the Committee Clerk confirmed that a request had been sent to make the necessary arrangements which he would follow up.

Resolved:

That, a meeting between Officers and Friends of the Cemeteries be arranged.

H35 **BURIAL FEES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager.

A verbal update was provided by the Committee Clerk to correct detail within the report. The cost of Exclusive Right of Burial had previously been agreed at 15% at the meeting of Policy, Governance & Finance on 25 November 2024 (Minute F660 Refers).

Members questions were answered, and they were reassured as to the reasons for the need for these increases, clarity was also provided to the monetary cost of interment and EROB

purchases. All members were in agreement with the following prices which would become effective from 1 April 2025.

Interments (Prices including 6.3% Increase)

Baby in baby plot	£286.50
Under 18 yrs if using Child Size grave double depth	£424.00
Under 18 yrs Second burial in existing double depth Child Size grave	£267.50
Double depth grave Adult Size grave	£841.50
Second burial in existing double depth grave Adult Size grave	£535.00
Interment of ashes for person	£186.50
Burial in single depth grave at Tower Hill Cemetery	£619.00

EROB (Prices Including 15% Increase)

Exclusive right of burial for a baby	£251.00
Exclusive right of burial for child under 18 years of age	£370.00
Exclusive right of burial for person over age of 18 years	£741.00
Exclusive right of burial for family ashes plot (Tower Hill)	£486.00
Exclusive right of burial for ashes plots	£269.00

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, interment charges are increased by 6.3% and,
3. That, the cost of purchasing the Exclusive Right of Burial rises by 15%.

H36 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H37 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk/CEO in relation to one of its property assets, Langdale Hall, following advice from its professional advisors.

Members heard that repairs to the Langdale Hall roof had commenced, and Officers would continue to review in order to further future proof the building.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential update be noted and,
2. That, Officers proceed with a review of the lease.

The meeting closed at: 6.59 pm

Chair