
Agenda Item:	Public Halls Report
Meeting Date:	Monday 17 th March 2025
Contact Officer:	Venue & Events Officer

Background

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the operation and management of the two public halls under the ownership and management of Witney Town Council. These facilities serve as vital community spaces for events, meetings, and public activities, providing an accessible environment for residents and local organizations. It is important that these halls are maintained to a high standard, both in terms of physical condition and service delivery, to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community and support the Town Council's strategic objectives.

The two public halls are in central areas of Witney, each offering unique spaces that cater to a range of events, from small community gatherings to larger functions. These venues have become integral to the town's social fabric, providing a space for everything from local meetings, educational programs, and cultural events to celebrations such as weddings and family gatherings.

In line with the Witney Town Council's commitment to creating vibrant, inclusive public spaces, the operation of these halls must align with council policies and ensure that they remain accessible, well-maintained, and effectively managed. As part of its overarching mission, the Town Council has set forth several guidelines regarding the management, booking, maintenance, and use of these halls to ensure they are operated in accordance with the highest standards of safety, accessibility, and community engagement.

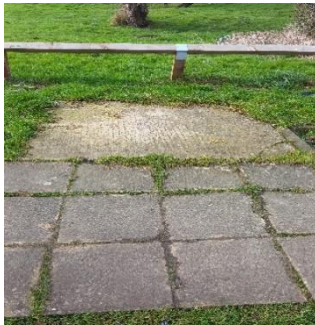
Current Situation

Thames Valley Air Ambulance Clothes Recycling Bin

WTC have been contacted by Thames Valley Air Ambulance Charity (**TVAA**) to explore the possibility of having clothing recycling bin located at Burwell Hall. Officers have liaised with representatives from the charity and looked at the most feasible locations available to accommodate this.

TVAA work in partnership with Recycling Systems Northwest (**RS**) who are members of the Fundraising Regulator Scheme and the Textile Recycling Association.

The proposed location is to the right of the hall when approached from the carpark, on a patch of concrete which used to be the location of a Grundon Wheelie Bin which is no longer used.



RS have a contract with the **TVAA** to make a financial donation from the gross proceeds of the saleable donated items, and the vast majority of donated items will be recycled and not destroyed for ragging, extending the useable life of an item and reducing its carbon footprint.

The maintenance and cleanliness of the recycling bin would be looked after by **RS** as part of their agreement with **TVAA**, with initial collections running every two weeks, if this is not feasible, then this can be increased to every week or every day. There is a 24-hour, 7 day a week contact line which WTC can use to raise any issues, and these will be responded to and rectified within 24 hours.

This also works for the general cleanliness around the bin, with **RS** available to respond to any excess rubbish left by the bin which isn't clothing donations. This will ensure that the area remains tidy and that the area around the hall; remains tidy and appealing to people using the hall or the playing fields.

Due to the cause that the recycling bank is being used for and the lack of risk associated with having the bin in an area that was previously used for a bin, there are no real problems having the bin located at Burwell Hall from a halls management position.

If the Council want to proceed with supporting the clothes recycling bin, the lead time to get it installed would be 3 weeks, and if the Council wanted to get it removed, this can be arranged by giving 2 months' notice to **RS** in writing

Local Film & Media Student – Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake

The Venue & Events Officer has approached the creator of *Los Banditos* and requested a pre-screening to ensure that all content is suitable for a wider audience. A member of staff will view the suitability of the film at a pre-screening which will be held approximately 1 month before the premiere, which is confirmed for Friday, 13th June, and will be advertised in due course.

This exciting project, which the Council is proud to support, not only highlights the talent of young local creators but also serves as an opportunity to showcase the Corn Exchange as a

vibrant community venue. The event promises to bring attention to both the venue and the creative work being produced locally, offering a unique experience for the audience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyxCdkRrGIY> (Link to trailer.)

Corn Exchange Gallery Room Conferencing Equipment

The Gallery Room Conferencing System has been completed and a user guide written by Officers which will allow all groups to easily use the facilities for any scenario where it might be needed. The user guide has been trialled by WTC staff and will be attached to any booking looking to use the installed equipment.

Officers have identified that there are three main functions of the conferencing system,

- Using the projector and screen wirelessly – this allows hirers to connect remotely to the projector and display their device onto the projector screen. The downside to this is that sound will only be played through the projector speaker which isn't as clear as the Rally Bar.
- Using the projector and screen by hardwiring – this allows hirers to connect to the projector and screen and utilise the Rally bar (this works as a sound bar). This set up is ideal for those wanting to play video and utilise a better sound than the projector alone.
- Using the projector and screen for Microsoft Teams Hybrid Conferencing – This is the original purpose of the conferencing system being installed in the first place. Hirers can now book the room for any type of meeting that they need. The Rally bar incorporates an HD camera with microphone pods that connect to allow for professional set up. The user guide shows how to action this in an easy step by step fashion, with Officers intention to be on hand for the first bookings to make sure that all runs smoothly. The user guide will be added to if there are any updates that require explaining, and to any bookings using the equipment.

It is hoped that with careful marketing and advertising that the conferencing facilities will bring in new revenue streams and allow the Corn Exchange to attract different hirers than those currently using the hall.

Flags

Four new flags and flagpoles are currently being procured, with the intention of having them installed on the exterior of the Corn Exchange in April. The flagpoles will feature interchangeable flags, allowing for flexibility in promoting both the hall and any events being run by the council.

This addition aims to increase the visibility of the Corn Exchange, drawing attention to the venue and its upcoming activities while enhancing the building's aesthetic appeal. The new flags will serve as a dynamic, eye-catching tool for communicating with the public and encouraging greater community engagement with the events hosted at the Corn Exchange.

Internal Notice Board

A new notice board is expected to be installed shortly in the lobby of the Corn Exchange.

The notice board is finished in grey, carefully chosen to complement the existing aesthetic and décor of the Corn Exchange. This new addition will not only serve as an essential communication tool for displaying upcoming events, council policies, regulatory notices and community announcements but will also enhance the overall look and feel of the venue.

The design has been selected to ensure that it blends seamlessly with the historical character of the building while providing a functional, easily accessible space for keeping the public informed.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – Providing a supportive environment for people to express themselves through creativity.
- b) Biodiversity – All matters relating to Biodiversity will be considered when making decisions for both halls – The recycling of clothing provides many benefits such as conserving water resources and minimizing waste and pollution, ultimately lessening the strain on natural habitats and ecosystems
- c) Crime & Disorder – The continued use of halls as a safe space
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Recycling of clothing also reduces the demand for new raw materials and energy and avoids the release of methane from decomposing textiles

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.

1. The **TVAA** recycling bin at Burwell, if not managed properly could look untidy and cause negative reaction to the local community. RS have stated that they will respond to any

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

1. By allowing the **TVAA** clothes recycling bin to be installed at Burwell Hall, this could be seen as a good thing for the Council to show support for those who need it.

Financial implications

- Zero as all associated costs of keeping the recycling bin in a fit for purpose standard will be managed by **RS** with support available from **TVAA**

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. To decide on whether to support **TVAA** in locating a clothes recycling facility at Burwell Hall.