

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Public Halls Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Venue & Events Officer

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The purpose of this report is to provide updates and seek direction for 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 organisations. 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.

### Background

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

While the recruitment process for a new Venue and Events Officer is underway, the Deputy Venue & Events Officer has taken the lead in maintaining the safe and high-quality delivery of operational services across Public Halls and Events, and is able to provide the following report

#### Flags Project – Update and Revised Proposal

Following a review of the previous proposal to install decorative and promotional flags using the existing flagpole brackets on the side of the building, several practical and aesthetic concerns have been identified. The current positioning of the brackets is too low to accommodate flags of a sufficient size to achieve the desired visual impact. Additionally, the flags would hang within reach from ground level, potentially increasing the risk of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

Considering these concerns, the project is being reconsidered with a view to identifying a more effective and visually appropriate solution. One option under exploration is the installation of building-mounted vertical banners, similar to those commonly seen on theatres and other public buildings nationwide.

Due to the Grade II listed status of the building, any alterations will require consultation with the Conservation Officer to determine what changes, if any, are permissible under planning and heritage guidelines.

Although further investigation is required, an initial quotation for a similar banner type has been received at a cost of £239 (excluding VAT) per unit. Based on the current approved budget, this would allow for the purchase of two banners. Each banner could feature a different design on either side, enabling the same visual presentation from both directions of approach to the building



Example of Banner on Old Fire Station Oxford

### **TVAA Clothes Recycling Unit**

An agreement has been signed with the Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Recycling Solutions for the placement of a clothes recycling unit outside Burwell Hall. This is due to be delivered and installed on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

### **Internal Notice Board**

The new internal notice board has been installed in the corridor at The Corn Exchange.

### **Los Banditos Screening**

The film has been certified by WODC licensing team as suitable to screen for ages 15 and above. Officers have a copy of the film and will view this ahead of the screening as well. The premiere is now advertised, and tickets are available to purchase.

### **Advent Fayre – Recommendation for 2025 Event**

Following two successful years, characterised by strong attendance figures and positive community feedback, it is recommended that the Advent Fayre be held once again as a free event for the children of Witney. The proposed date for the 2025 Advent Fayre is Sunday, 30th November 2025.

In order to deliver the event efficiently and cost-effectively, voluntary support from Councillors is essential. A minimum of six volunteers per session is required to ensure the smooth running of the event. Volunteer duties will include welcoming attendees and checking bookings, supervising activity stalls, and assisting in the management of the grotto.

Each session will last approximately three hours, with an additional 30 minutes required before and after each session for set-up and tidying. Any roles not covered by volunteers will need to be fulfilled by Town Council staff.

The event will be overseen by a designated member of the Public Halls and Events team, with 1863 café open to attendees and operated by the council's café operatives.

### **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 consider 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 promptly to any reports of items being dumped in this location.

### **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, WTC will be supporting an accessible way for the community to reduce textile waste, support sustainable practices, and extend the life of usable clothing through reuse or responsible recycling.
2. The Advent Fayre provides a free activity to families of Witney at a typically expensive time of year, offering a joyful and inclusive experience without the financial burden that often accompanies the festive season. For families who may be struggling, this event creates a rare opportunity to celebrate together, enjoy seasonal activities, and feel part of the community, regardless of their financial circumstances.

### **Financial implications**

- Members should be aware of the staff time and costs to manage these sessions in the event of the lack of availability of councillors.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Decide whether to host the Advent Fayre again in 2025.
2. Decide if the flag project should be revisited as per the plans above and the relevant permissions to do so perused.