

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee



Agenda Item: Public Halls Business Report

Meeting Date: Monday 19th May 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the events that have taken place since the last committee meeting and report on forthcoming events in the diary.

Background

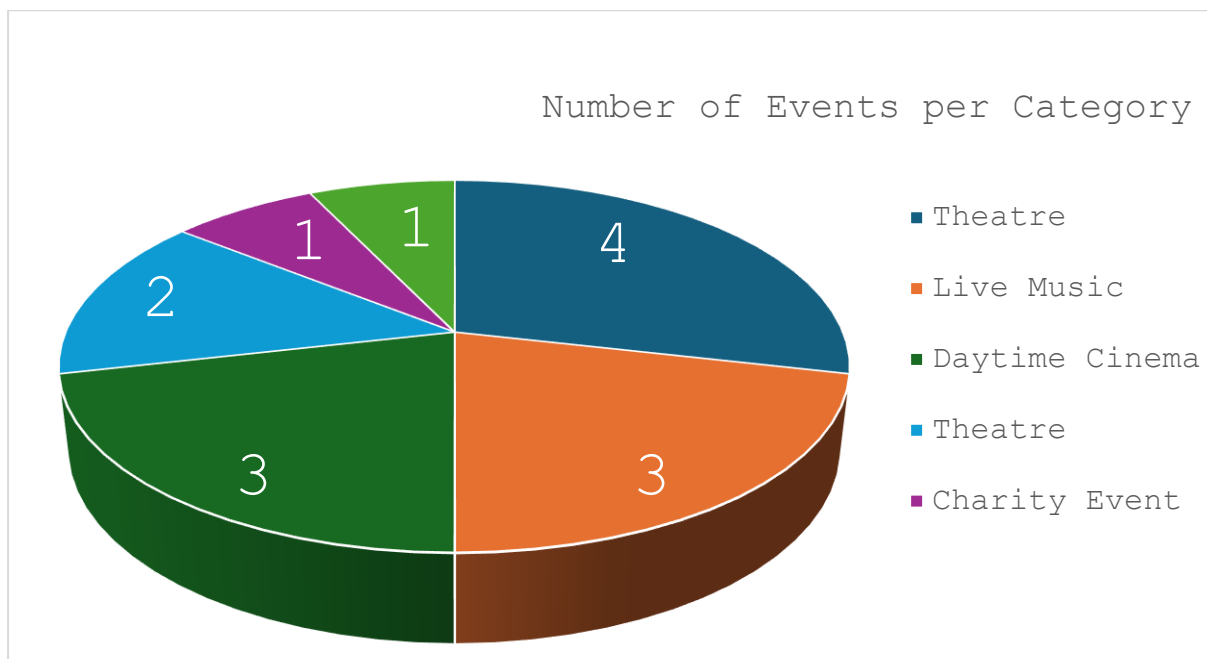
Witney Town Council has an obligation and objectives to provide an affordable, sustainable, inclusive and community arts facility that is valued and supported by the people of Witney and West Oxfordshire.

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.

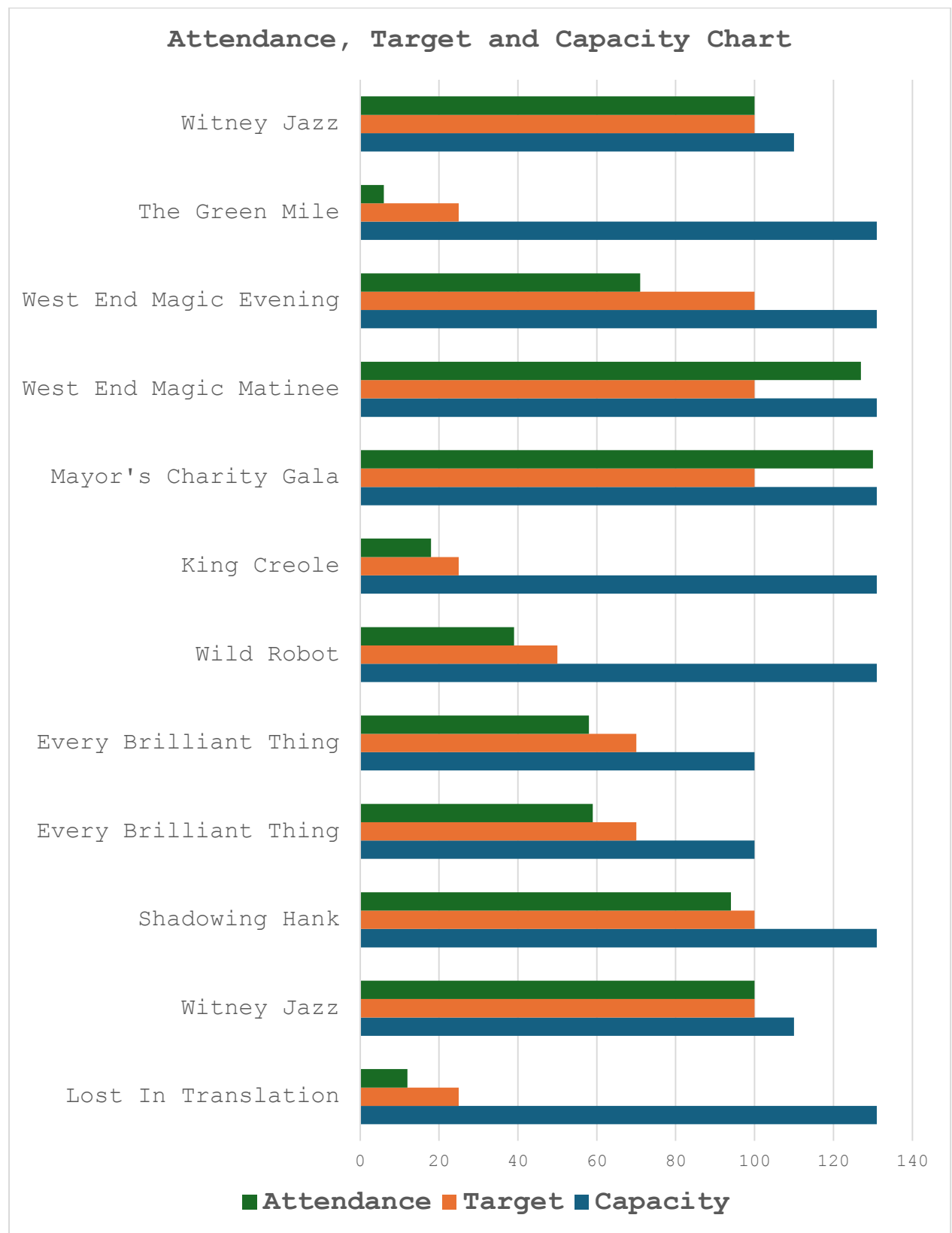
The Council will provide a professional, well-maintained, and run hireable space for private events including parties, weddings and conferences.

Current Situation

The graph below shows the number of events hosted by category, since the last report in March 2025.



The table below shows attendance and target attendance figures for each event at the Corn Exchange since the last report. The event capacity has also been included, upon request from members.



Recent Events – Corn Exchange

Buttercross Theatre Presents: *The Wedding Singer*

Regular hirers and local performing arts group, Buttercross Theatre, returned to the Corn Exchange in late March to present their annual spring production, *The Wedding Singer*. These performances continue to be a staple in the events calendar and provide a valuable platform for local arts and theatre within the community.

Shadowing Hank

Following a near sell-out performance in November 2023, Shadowing Hank—a tribute act to Hank Marvin—returned to the venue. Although attendance was lower than the previous show, the event still achieved a respectable turnout of 94 attendees.

Every Brilliant Thing

The Corn Exchange hosted two performances of *Every Brilliant Thing*, a play by Witney-educated playwright Duncan Macmillan. Staged over two evenings, the event successfully raised funds for the Mayor of Witney's chosen charities.

Mayor's Charity Gala

On Friday 25th April, Mayor Owen Collins hosted his final and largest event of the mayoral year. The evening featured performances from a range of local talent, including Witney Town Band, Buttercross Theatre, Buttercross Ukulele Group, Jill Stew School of Dance, and others. The gala was well attended with 130 guests and provided a valuable showcase for community arts and culture.

Witney Jazz

The Witney Jazz series continues to be a highly popular fixture in the events programme, regularly drawing audiences of over 100 attendees. Due to sustained demand, organisers have booked additional dates in 2025 to supplement their established monthly slot. Officers are pleased to maintain a strong working relationship with the organisers and look forward to further collaboration.

Daytime Cinema

Attendance at the daytime cinema screenings has shown a recent decline. This may be attributed to improved weather conditions and reduced promotional capacity resulting from staffing pressures. Attendance will be monitored in the coming weeks, and consideration will be given to temporarily pausing the series during the summer months, with a potential resumption in the autumn.

Wedding Hire – 12th April

The Corn Exchange hosted a wedding ceremony and reception on Saturday 12th April. The event utilised the full venue: the Gallery Room for the ceremony, the Bar area for welcome drinks and speeches, and the Main Hall for the evening reception. Positive feedback has been received from the couple regarding the venue and staff, which has been formally recorded.

Upcoming Events

The Corn Exchange will continue to host the regular repeated in-house and third-party events below:

- Open Mic – First Thursday Every Month
- Witney Jazz – First Friday Every Month
- Tea Dance – Every Wednesday
- Daytime Cinema – Every other Tuesday
- Multiple Classes hosted by Buttercross Theatre – Every Week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday
- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

Witney Blues

Officers are delighted that Little Live Music company, who promote the regular Witney Jazz shows, will also be hosting additional shows under a new brand **“Witney Blues”**. This move adds to the diversity of our events program and continues to build on an already positive relationship with these event organisers.

Folk Music Counters Creek, an acoustic Folk band previously booked by Little Live Music company are returning on Wednesday 30th July. This event will help gauge interest in a regular folk music event series at The Corn Exchange.

Outdoor Music

Plans are in motion to launch the popular Live Music on The Square series in mid-June, following plenty of positive feedback from residents last year. A “soft launch” took place on Thursday 1st May at our regular Open Mic night due to the sunny weather. This attracted more public attendance than the usual Open Mic and served as a great word of mouth marketing opportunity for the upcoming dates in the summer.

Los Banditos

The Corn Exchange is showcasing a local student directors Film, shot in Witney (including scenes at The Corn Exchange) at a premiere screening on Friday 13th June.

The listing of public events at The Corn Exchange for May – July



CORN EXCHANGE WITNEY WHAT'S ON?

REGULAR EVENTS

2025

Daytime Cinema
Every other Tuesday
1:00PM



Tea Dance
Every Wednesday
1:00PM



Open Mic Night
First Thursday of Every
Month
7:00PM



MAY

Friday 2nd May
Witney Jazz

Saturday 10th May
Mynt Image Craft Market

Sunday 11 May
Cheltenham Singers

Tuesday 13 May
Daytime Cinema

Friday 23 May
Witney Blues

Tuesday 27 May
Daytime Cinema

Saturday 31 May
Take @ That

JUNE

Thursday 5 June
Open Mic Music Showcase

Saturday 7 June
Mynt Image Craft Market

Saturday 7 June
Witney Jazz

Tuesday 10 June
Daytime Cinema

Friday 13 June
Los Banditos Film Premier

Saturday 14 June
FAME Junior Production

17 - 21 June
*A Few Mondays More Theatre
Production*

Tuesday 24 June
Daytime Cinema

Friday 4 July
Witney Jazz

JULY

Saturday 5 July
Witney Photo Group Exhibition

Tuesday 8 July
Daytime Cinema

Saturday 12 July
Mynt Image Craft Market

Saturday 12 July
Witney Blues

Saturday 19 July
Chicago Teen Edition

Tuesday 22 July
Daytime Cinema

Tuesday 30 July
Counters Creek (Folk Band)



MORE SHOWS TBA!

For full listing, tickets and more info visit:
www.cornexchangewitney.org.uk



Public Halls Usage

The public halls usage report indicates an average 6.9% increase in usage year on year across all hireable spaces, for the period between 24th March and 19th May.

Corn Exchange Main Hall

- Booked a total of **380.5 hours**
- Increase of **16.5 hours** compared to **364 hours** in the same period in 2024.
- This represents a **4.5% growth** in booked hours this period.

The Gallery Room

- Booked a total of **221 hours**
- Increase of **25.5 hours** compared to **195.50 hours** in the same period of 2024. This represents a **13% increase** in usage year on year.

Burwell Hall

- Booked a total of **322 hours**
- Increase of **17.5 hours** compared to **304.5 hours** in the same period in 2024.
- This represents a **5.7% growth** in booked hours this period.

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 - The concept of equality when reporting on events is very important to the council, as it ensures fair and impartial coverage of all events and social groups within the community to reflect fairness, representation, and inclusivity.
- b) Biodiversity – Officers focus on the broader context of their actions when organising events to maintain the Council's environmental and conservation efforts.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Council policies and operational processes adhered to by Officers include a multi-faceted approach that integrates crowd control, prevention of criminal activity, security planning, and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Officers assess the risks relating to events ensuring the necessary due diligence, reviews, sign off and monitoring is completed. Post event analysis data is used to review opportunities for continuous improvement.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Careful consideration is given to the environmental and climate impacts to reduce negative effects and promote sustainability. Many aspects of event planning by the Council include venue location, transportation, recycling, local produce, and energy usage. By incorporating sustainable practices into every stage of event planning, the Council aims to reduce the environmental impact, create a positive attendee experience, and help lead the way for more responsible event management in the future.

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.

Managing risks for Council events is a crucial aspect of event planning and requires careful thought to ensure the safety and success of all events. The Council's risk management control measures for events covers legal considerations, safety protocols, insurance, and other key factors ensure these are delivered successfully.

Social Value

The Corn Exchange is registered as a warm space this winter, providing a cosy refuge from the cold, as well as a welcoming environment for socialising and engaging in conversation.

The Corn Exchange also hosts some events with a community focus.

- Open Mic – Provides a supportive environment for beginner local musicians perform and allows more established local artists a chance to share original music.
- Daytime Cinema – An affordable daytime activity, specifically an opportunity for pensioners to have a warm activity during the winter.

Financial implications

All events are evaluated from the planning stage to post event analysis to manage financial risk and maximise income.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report