

HALL CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year

Meeting Date: Monday, 12 May 2025

Contact Officer: Town Clerk/CEO

The purpose of this report is to give consideration to this Committee's objectives/priorities for the municipal year in order for the Town Clerk to ensure there is a manageable programme of works, and to deploy the necessary resources appropriately.

Current Situation

The Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee is responsible for overseeing the Town Council's public halls, cemetery grounds, closed churchyards, and allotments. The Committee has been working through some historical/long term aspirational projects to fulfil its mandate to transform the Corn Exchange into a vibrant community arts centre, while simultaneously addressing essential maintenance priorities for aging infrastructure and facilities under its management.

These dual responsibilities reflect the Committee's commitment to both enhancing community cultural assets and ensuring the sustainable stewardship of the Town's ceremonial and recreational spaces. The Committee manages several properties and facilities that require ongoing maintenance and improvement. Below is a summary of projects that are completed, in progress, or scheduled for future implementation.

Completed Projects:

- **Corn Exchange Internal Decoration:** Gallery Room, Café/Bar & stairs completed at a cost of £4,993
- **Corn Exchange Storage Solutions:** Additional storage cupboards created to accommodate furniture
- **Burwell Hall Heating System:** Upgraded at a final cost of £31,729
- **Burwell Hall Blinds:** Installed in the hall at a cost of £2,250
- **Burwell Hall Toilets:** Ladies & Gents toilets refurbished at a cost of £13,152
- **Burwell Hall Security Upgrades:** installation of CCTV installation.
- **Madley Park Hall:** The major issue of the dividing wall/doors has been resolved by installing smaller doors. This was funded through the contingency set aside for maintenance under the Landlord obligations provided in EMR 329; the cost was approximately £8k.
- **Langdale Hall:** Roof repairs carried out at approx. cost of £16k funded through EMR.
- **St Mary's Church Wall:** As a Closed Churchyard, the Town Council maintains responsibility for the perimeter dry stone wall. A substantial section of wall repairs was completed earlier this year at a cost of £34,588, funded through EMR 376.

Additional restoration work remains necessary but has been temporarily suspended while the Council prudently allocates budget reserves and Officers secure the required faculties for the next phase of restoration.

Projects In Progress:

- **Memorial Maintenance:** The Council has an obligation to carry out periodic inspections in the cemeteries and closed churchyard. Previously the Council has used an external specialist to undertake these inspections; however, the Operations Manager has brought this inhouse and will be undertaken when resources allow. A substantial EMR (A/c 318) is set aside.
- **Corn Exchange Door Entry System:** Approved by full Council. Officers are refreshing the quote to include linking to the fire alarm system.
- **Corn Exchange Seating Sponsorship:** Officers Scoping the best way to proceed with this project.

Projects in Preparation Pool/Part or Unfunded:

- **St Mary's Church Wall:** Additional restoration work remains necessary but has been temporarily suspended while the Council prudently allocates budget reserves and Officers secure the required faculties for the next phase of restoration.
- **Cemetery Access Road:** This relates to Windrush Cemetery and providing an internal road when/if the entrance off Cogges Estate is agreed as part of the Witney East development. EMR A/c 327 currently stands at approximately £150,000.
- **Tower Hill Cemetery Buildings:** Being an old Victorian cemetery with two Chapels, EMR 362 of £21,500 is set aside to maintain these historic buildings. Open Spaces Strategy Ref **IS3** applies to undertake a full options survey of the unused buildings at the cemeteries. Status: £10,000 budget set for survey to be commissioned to appoint professionals for an options appraisal, which has not yet been progressed.
- **Corn Exchange Lift Replacement:** EMR 363 of £40k is held for the replacement of the lift when it fails or needs replacing.
- **Langdale Hall:** Working with tenants on a programme of external repairs to help improve energy efficiency rating and the longevity of use.
- **Allotment Capacity:** Open Spaces Strategy Ref **LP1** applies Continued work on seeking options to increase allotment capacity. Land has been requested for allotments in both North Witney and East Witney developments.

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** - Projects are designed to improve accessibility to Town Council facilities for all residents. Particular attention is being paid to ensuring halls and community spaces are accessible to people with disabilities.

b) **Biodiversity** - The Committee is integrating biodiversity considerations into cemetery and allotment management, including pollinator-friendly planting in appropriate areas and sustainable management practices.

c) **Crime & Disorder** - Security upgrades at public halls incorporate measures to deter anti-social behaviour and improve public safety.

d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** - Energy efficiency improvements in public buildings and sustainable management practices in cemeteries and allotments contribute to the Council's climate emergency commitments.

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.

When considering its priorities, the committee should be mindful of all resources -- financial as well as human resources -- and the competing demands from other Committees. There needs to be a clear programme of works to ensure that the council is realistic in what it can achieve in the next 12 months.

Key risks identified:

1. Aging infrastructure in historic buildings requiring increasing maintenance
2. Limited resources to address all identified projects simultaneously
3. Rising costs of building materials and services affecting project budgets
4. Potential delays in faculty approval for church wall repairs
5. Competing priorities across multiple Council properties

Social Value

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

The Committee's work programme delivers significant social value through:

- Providing well-maintained community halls that support social cohesion and community activities
- Ensuring dignified and accessible cemetery facilities for residents
- Supporting healthy lifestyles and food sustainability through allotment provision
- Preserving historical buildings and structures for future generations
- Creating spaces for community gathering and engagement

Financial implications

The financial implications are detailed in the report. Key points include:

- Several major projects are funded through Earmarked Reserves
- Ongoing maintenance requirements need to be factored into future financial planning
- Rising costs may necessitate review of project scopes and priorities

- Some projects may require additional budget allocations in future years

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and review and approve the priority order of projects for the 2025/26 municipal year