
Agenda Item: Corn Exchange Business Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 7th July 2025

Contact Officer: 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.

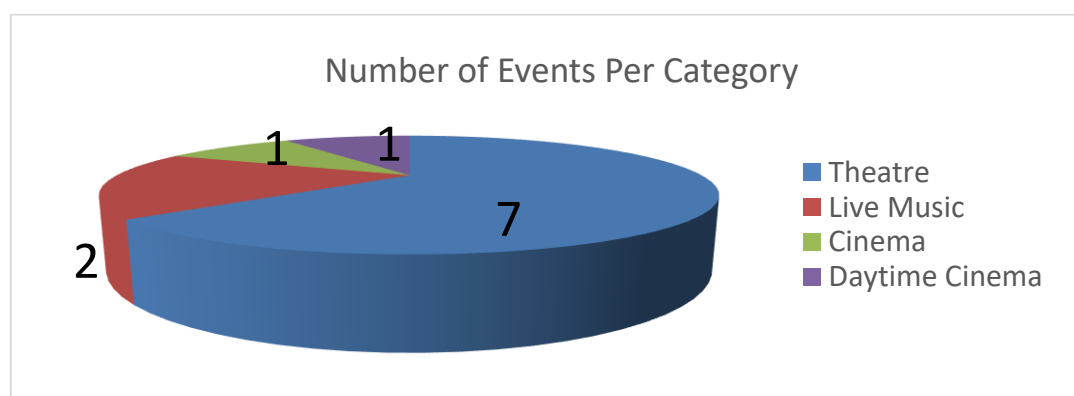
This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

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

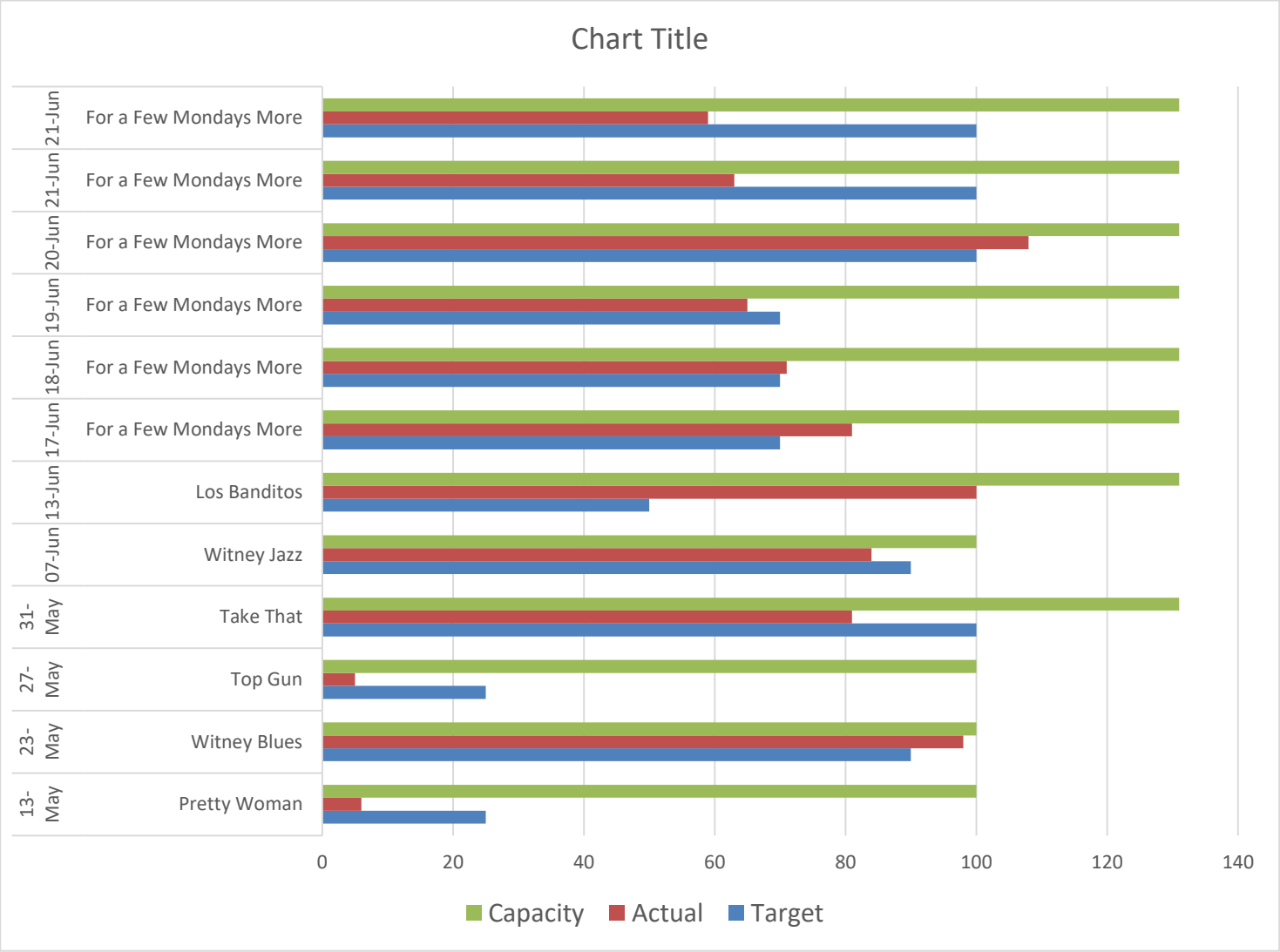
Current Situation

To maintain the services of the Venue and Events team has been a challenge during this period while we have been recruiting the vacant Venue and Events Co-ordinator role. The team has pulled together to deliver all events and fulfil our commitments with the Caretakers stepping up to support.

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



The table below shows attendance figures for each event at The Corn Exchange since the last report, alongside a target attendance to show how each event is performing in line with officers’ goals and expectations. Each event capacity has also been included, upon request from members.



Recent events

Buttercross Theatre Presents: FAME Junior

Regular venue hirers, Buttercross Theatre, presented a junior production of FAME in June. Both shows were well attended and a great opportunity for local young people to be part of a performance. Data for these events will be included in the next report.

Witney Jazz

The Witney Jazz events continue to be a popular addition to our events program, with very good levels of consistent attendance. These events utilise the flexibility of the venue by combining a partial amount of tiered seating, with cabaret tables for an intimate Jazz club atmosphere.

Daytime Cinema

The attendance for the daytime cinema continued at a low level in May, and a decision was made to postpone this recurring event until an assessment has been completed to determine future screenings taking into account the impact on seasonal change affecting the demand for indoor activities.

A Venue & Events Co-ordinator has been successfully recruited who will be starting with the Town Council at the beginning of August. Assessing how the Cinema can provide entertainment for the town to include children films during the school holidays, sporting events etc, will be one the many tasks the successful candidate will perform.

Witney Blues

Officers are delighted that Little Live Music company, who promote the regular Witney Jazz shows, have begun 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. The first of these shows sold out in May, suggesting there is a clear demand for Blues shows that The Corn Exchange can now cater to.

Premier Screening of Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake

The Corn Exchange showcased a local student directors’ film, shot in Witney (including scenes at The Corn Exchange) at a premiere screening on Friday 13th June. The screening event was a huge success with 100 people in attendance. BBC Oxford also reported on the event and organised a good luck message from Oxford based comedian, Paul Shahidi, was screened prior to the film.

A Few Mondays More

Balancing Act, locally based theatre production group hosted a sequel to their popular 2024 show, A Fistful of Mondays. A Few Mondays More ran from 17th – 21st June with to a great reception from their audiences totalling over 450 people attending.

Outdoor Music

The summer event series “Tunes on The Square” is now running weekly with locals gathering on the square, purchasing drinks from the bar and food from Smarts Fish & Chips, a real buzz has been generated from these events. This will continue weekly through to the first week of September.

Open Mic Showcase Night:

The regular Open Mic was hosted in the theatre for the first time, providing a bigger and more professional performance area for local artists. This proved to be a popular change with a higher turnout of musicians than the usual open mic. When the monthly open mic started in the bar area, the purpose was to provide a performance space for the many local artists in Witney. Since then, many more open mics in pubs and bars in and around the town have started on a regular basis, meaning we are no longer offering a unique or valued opportunity. Therefore, the Open Mic Showcase Night will replace the regular monthly open mic in the bar and will take place every three months. This is to provide a unique opportunity to the local artists who already perform at the many open mics around the town.

Other Events:

As well as the above events, The Corn Exchange has also hosted a number of public events including, community events, presentations, exhibitions and markets etc. from local and national organisations including:

- Teddy Bears of Witney Exhibition
- Parkers Estate Agents
- Oxfordshire Dementia Action – Rock n Roll Disco
- Specsavers Coffee Morning
- Mynt Image Market

Upcoming Events

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

- 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

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.

Upcoming Public Events

4 th July	Witney Jazz
5 th July	Witney Photo Group Exhibition
12 th July	Mynt Image Market
12 th July	Witney Blues
18 th / 19 th July	Chicago Teen Edition
30 th July	Counters Creek – UK Folk
1 st August	Witney Jazz
14 th August	Quantum Theatre Presents Jemima Puddle Duck
30 th August 440	Theatre Presents: Macbeth & Much Ado About Nothing double header
5 th September	Witney Jazz
11 th – 13 th September	Buttercross Theatre: Vintage Hitchcock
19 th September	Witney Blues
20 th September	Denotones 60's Experience
27 th September	WhatYouWill Presents As You Like It
4 th October	Thrill Collins

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 event 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

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

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

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

- Open Mic Showcase – Provides a supportive environment and unique opportunity for beginner local musicians perform on a stage 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

Members are invited to note the report.