

Agenda Item: Public Halls Business Report

Meeting Date: 10th November 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. The report also provides an update on the recent business of 1863 Café & Bar.

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.

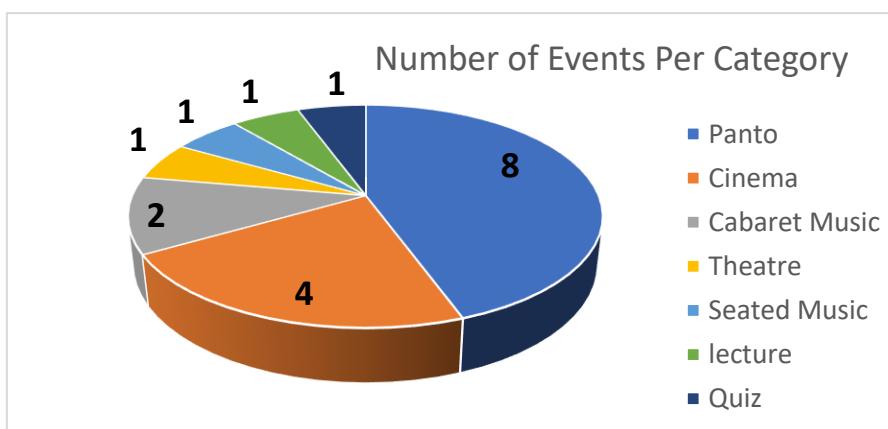
This includes providing availability to and encourage involvement from the entire community through offering a diverse range of music, arts and cultural events in the Corn Exchange.

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

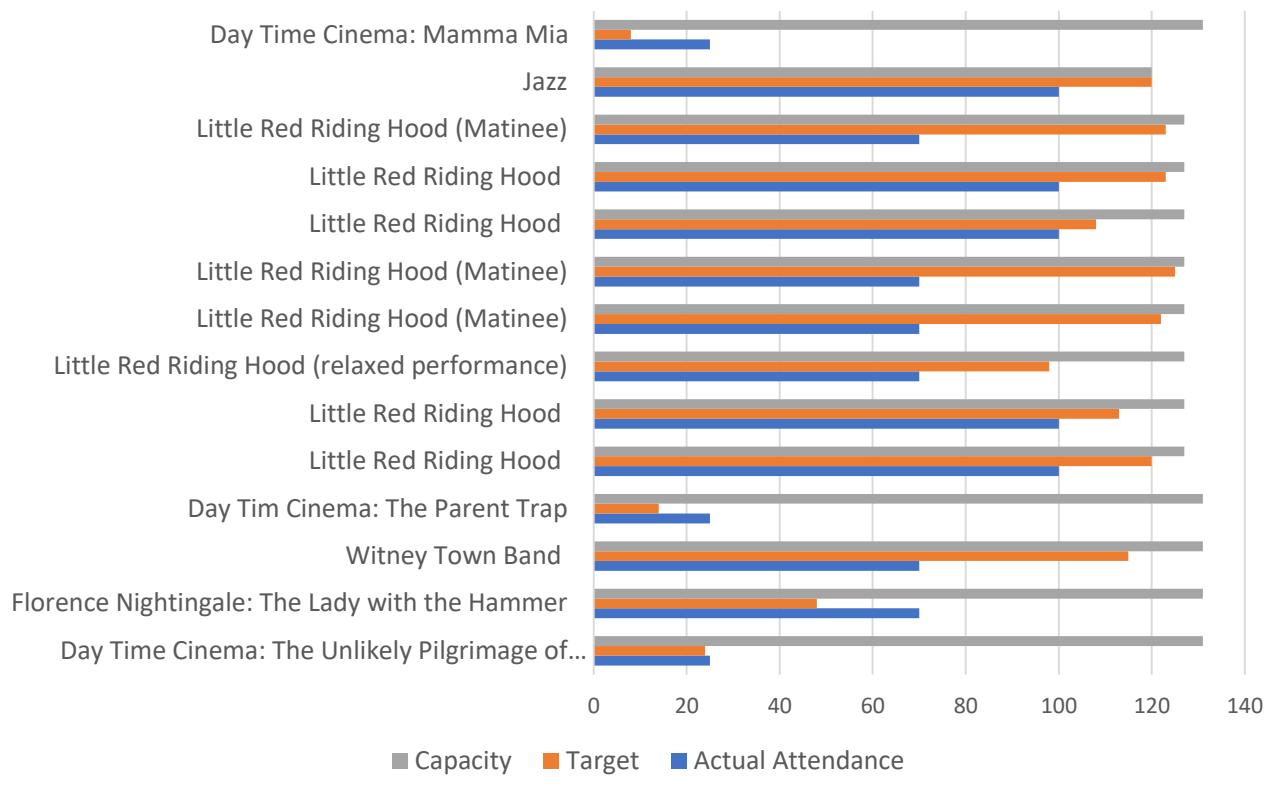
Current Situation

The Venue & Events team have been working hard to deliver a range of in-house and third-party events.

The graphs below show the number of ticketed events hosted by category, since the last report in November 2025, and attendance figures (where available) 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.



Capacity, Target and Actual Attendance per Event



Recent events

Witney Town Band Autumn Concert

Witney Town Band hosted their annual performance in the main hall at The Corn Exchange. This event furthers our positive relationship with the Town Band as we continue to work with them on other events hosted throughout the year. The event was well attended and the organisers felt it was a great success.

Day Time Cinema

The Day Time Cinema hosted 3 films since the November 10th with two further films in late January early February. Attendance has remained consistently low though those in attendance do express their positive feeling for the cinema. In January we have trialled a 3 for £10 ticket offer to encourage return customers while most attendees bought into the deal it did not have an effect on the overall attendance figures; however it may see an increase in ticket sales for the following 2 screenings given the advance purchases already received.

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. Impressively, the Witney Jazz show on Friday 2nd January sold out.

Witney Blues

Officers are delighted that the Little Live Music company, who promote the regular Witney Blues shows, have continued to host additional shows under a new brand "Music Box Events". This continues to add diversity to our events program and further builds on an already positive relationship with these event organisers. These shows have continued to prove popular with high attendances recorded.

Advent Fayre

Advent Fayre was once again a great success for the local community. The event was fully booked within a week of tickets becoming available. This event offers local families with young children a free festive activity that is inclusive to a variety of ages and ability levels. Suggestions and feedback have been gathered for next year to continue to develop and grow this community focused event. Officers appreciated the support and attendance by councillors.

Quiz Night

In December The Corn Exchange reconnected with the quiz master from the Mayor's Chairty Quiz events that had previously been held. Despite a short advertising period this event was a success with a 75% attendance and minimal expenditure. We will be hosting another quiz at the end of January with the intention of starting a regular quiz night.

Panto

Buttercross Theatre Productions produced Little Red Riding Hood, their annual pantomime across the last few weeks of December. The pantomime continued to be a success in 2025 with high attendance figures. This event is popular with local families and school groups.

The Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have also hosted several private events including regular group meetings, private parties, presentations etc.

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
- Multiple Classes hosted by Buttercross Theatre – Every Week
- Witney Speakers Club – Every other Wednesday
- Specsavers Coffee Morning – 1st Thursday of the month
- West Oxfordshire Art Society Lectures – Once a month
- St Mary's Art Group – Every Monday
- White Feather Spiritualist Church – Once a month

Upcoming Public Ticketed Events:

- 20th January - Day Time Cinema Presents: The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
- 23rd January - Lets Twist Again! Rock & Roll Dance Party
- 30th January - Quiz Night
- 3rd February - Day Time Cinema Presents: Sunshine on Leith
- 6th February - Witney Jazz Presents: Gripper & Jeffery Quartet
- 21st February - Angry Boater
- 27th February – Young Elton

- 28th February - The Dung Beatles – The Beatles Years & Beyond
- 7th March - Witney Jazz Presents: Marvin Muoneke Classic Swing Quartet
- 14th March - Decades Disco
- 26th – 28th March - Return to the Forbidden Planet

1863 Café & Bar

The 1863 Café & Bar has increased in popularity year-on-year. Since 1st April, overall takings from the Café and Bar are up 19.5% on the same period in 2024. This positive figure can be attributed to several factors. Good summer weather allowed us to maximise use of the pavement license on the square coupled with the Tunes on the Square event series providing consistent weekly trade. Improved reputation has led to more regular repeat café customers. An increase in event frequency and focus on promoting drinks for private events by the bar manager has encouraged an increase of bar sales.

The Cafe & Bar Manager hosted two successful fully booked Christmas Afternoon Tea events in December. The events carried a warm and welcoming festive atmosphere, incorporating local carol singers and were delivered with top quality service by the councils dedicated staff. The customer feedback was very positive and the events will be repeated next year.

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, providing people with an opportunity to connect through shared experiences, reducing loneliness.
- 1863 Café provides affordable hot drinks and has enabled social connection for lots of elderly people. Sharing tables is encouraged which allows us to serve more customers and creates a warm and friendly atmosphere.

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.