

Corn Exchange Working Party

Date:	4 th November 2019
Title:	Corn Exchange Phase Two Refurbishment
Contact Officer:	Office Manager (Adam Clapton)

Background

As members will be aware, the Corn Exchange re-opened as a multi-use venue in 2015 following several years' closure and subsequent refurbishment. Further phases of development were always envisaged and this Working Party has been established to formulate a detailed and costed plan for its future. Local interested stakeholders, individuals and performing group representatives have been invited to take part in these discussions to offer their thoughts and expertise in terms of staging, lighting, sound, logistics and charges etc. so the Council can achieve the best re-development possible.

Current Position

Following a pre-meeting of this Working Party the Council has agreed that the current set-up of the Corn Exchange is not the best use of the hall and while attempting to be all things to all people, it has resulted in an under-used facility. It has agreed in principle,

'To create a modern, accessible, and affordable arts venue for Witney and its community, capable of facilitating both local and professional arts and performances.'

The Town Council has opened initial discussions with consultants on how best to move this project forward and Council members are currently undertaking visits to other venues in the local area to see how they have achieved success. There are currently some key questions which include:

- What kind of seating or stage (or both) should be added in the Main Hall?
- How can the Council make the Corn Exchange a versatile and attractive performing space?
- How can the Council off-set community use against its running costs?
- Does future re-development need to be phased or should it be done at once?
- Is the back stage area legally compliant and how can it be re-developed to attract more users?

The Council is aware that there may well be differing views on the above questions and it will be down to this Working Party to find a compromise to achieve the best result for Witney and its residents.

Environmental Impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency the Council should also consider the impact of any events on the environment.

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.

Financial Implications

- The Town Council has a budget available from earmarked Section 106 Developer funding towards future development.
- Grant funding is actively being sought by officers from West Oxfordshire District Council and other sources.

Recommendations

- The Working Party is invited to note the report, and;
- Members are asked to identify the issues most important to them, and offer any advice moving forward with this project.