
Agenda Item:	Public Halls Report
Meeting Date:	Monday 16 th March
Contact Officer:	Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide updates and seek direction on the management of the Town Council's two public halls. These important community venues must be well maintained and effectively operated to meet local needs and support the Council's strategic objectives.

This report outlines a draft policy for the Local Art Display in 1863 Café, a proposed initiative (1 in 200) supporting local authors and additional operational updates.

1863 Local Art Display Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a simple and accessible framework for the display of local artwork within the café. The initiative aims to:

- Support and promote local artists, including emerging and young artists
- Enhance the café environment for visitors
- Provide a fair and manageable system for staff to administer

This scheme will operate in a straightforward manner to ensure ease of management and equitable access.

Principles

The Café Artwork Display Scheme will operate under the following principles:

- **Accessibility:** Opportunities will be open to local artists, with encouragement for emerging and young artists.
- **Fair Rotation:** Display periods will be limited to **6 weeks** to prevent any single artist from dominating the space.
- **Simplicity:** Application, selection, installation, and sales arrangements will be kept straightforward to minimise administrative burden.
- **Transparency:** Selection criteria and commission arrangements will be clear and openly communicated.

Eligibility

- Applicants must be **local artists** or have a **clear connection to the local area**.
- Both established and emerging artists may apply.
- Priority may be given to first-time exhibitors, young artists, or those who have not recently displayed work in the café.

The Council reserves the right to decline applications that are not suitable for a public café setting.

Display Arrangements

- Artwork will be displayed only in the designated wall space within the café.
- The standard display period will be 6 weeks.
- Artists are responsible for providing work that is ready to hang, clearly labelled, and compliant with any health and safety requirements.
- Officers will determine the number of pieces permitted per exhibition to ensure balanced use of space.

Sales and Commission

- No fee will be charged to artists for displaying their work.
- If Artists would like their artwork to be available for sale, they should outline the price on their application and provide contact details to WTC.
- Exhibitors will be able to enquire about purchasing artwork and will be provided with contact information for the artist.
- Where artwork is sold during the exhibition period, artists will be asked to offer an honest 15% commission to the Council.
- WTC must charge 20% VAT on top of the commission.

The commission income will contribute to supporting the continuation of the scheme and related community initiatives.

Application and Selection Process

- Artists must complete a simple application form and provide images of their work they wish to be displayed.
- Officers will assess applications against eligibility criteria, suitability for the space, and rotation considerations.
- Decisions will be made to ensure fairness, variety, and broad representation of local talent.

Where demand exceeds available space, a waiting list may be maintained and reducing the standard display duration will be considered.

Responsibilities

Artists

- Deliver and collect artwork at agreed times
- Ensure work is appropriately insured
- Provide accurate pricing and contact information
- Comply with agreed display dates

Council

- Allocate display periods
- Maintain a simple record of exhibitors and sales
- Provide reasonable care of the artwork while on display

Security

- The display area is in frame of the CCTV in the café
- WTC is NOT responsible for theft or damage caused by members of the public.

Review

This policy will be reviewed after 6 months and every 12 months thereafter to ensure it remains effective, accessible, and manageable for staff.

1 in 200 Initiative for Local Authors

Background

The **1 in 200 Initiative for Local Authors** is an Oxfordshire-based project that supports local independent writers by helping place their books in local bookshops, cafés, and community spaces.

Council officers have met with the founders, Laury Conn and Colin Wade, to discuss introducing the scheme within The Corn Exchange, specifically through the 1863 Café.

Proposed Arrangement

If approved, the initiative would operate as follows:

A dedicated bookshelf will be installed in the 1863 Café displaying books by local authors.

The display will include “1 in 200” branding, including an A4 poster frame explaining the scheme.

The **1 in 200 initiative** will:

- Manage **applications from authors**, ensuring an initial level of quality control.
- Provide a **catalogue of available titles** for venues to choose from.
- Handle the administrative coordination with authors.

Officers will **select a collection of titles quarterly** from the catalogue.

Financial Considerations

- There is **no cost to WTC to join the scheme**.
- WTC will receive **40% commission** on any books sold through the 1863 Café
- Books will be sold at their **recommended retail price (RRP)**.

Local Context

The Corn Exchange would be the **only participating venue in Witney**, with the nearest participating location currently in Burford. This provides an opportunity to support local authors while enhancing the café’s cultural offer.

Operational Requirements

The administrative requirements are expected to be manageable and will include:

- Uploading selected books into the café’s **EPOS system** using the provided RRP to enable sales tracking.
- **Promoting the scheme** through WTC’s social media channels and website.
- **Managing sales transactions** through the **1863 Café till**.
- Periodically **reviewing and refreshing the book selection** (quarterly).

Benefits

- Supports **local authors and the Oxfordshire creative community**.

- Enhances the **cultural offer of The Corn Exchange and 1863 Café**.
- Provides a **small revenue stream** through book sales.
- Encourages **community engagement and local pride** in creative talent.

Additional Operational Updates

Hearing Loop / Assisted Listening

Although an initial estimate quote fell within budget, two contractors who visited in December and January have provided quotes significantly out of the agreed budget. Officers are exploring further options to proceed with systems similar to those outlined in the first estimate.

Officers have also discovered through archive meeting minutes that a loop system was installed in the Corn Exchange Main Hall in 2016. The copper loop cable and connection point has been identified, but the amplifier detailed in the reports is not on site – this system has not been in use during the current officer's time at the council. Initial tests with a different amplifier and a listening device found in the venue have not confirmed that the loop system is still in working order. Contact has been made with suppliers to see if this infrastructure is still usable and can be combined with our current PA system, to help reduce costs and increase our options.

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 – By sourcing assisted listening solutions, WTC will improve access to its venues.
- b) Biodiversity – No impact
- c) Crime & Disorder – No impact
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – No impact

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Social Value

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

- The 1863 Local Art Display proposal will support the council's mission to use The Corn Exchange as a hub for local arts.
- The 1 in 200 Initiative is an opportunity for the council to support local authors, expanding the creative landscape

Financial implications

- Zero facility / equipment cost to introduce Local Art Display and 1 in 200 Author Scheme.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the approval of the 1863 Local Art Display Policy
2. Consider the commencement of the 1 in 200 Local Author Scheme