HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 14 September 2026

At 6.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	O Collins	J Doughty
	G Doughty	T Ashby (In place of J Robertshaw)
	J Treloar	J Aitman (In place of D Enright)
	R Smith	
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Three members of the public.	

H430 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright and J Robertshaw, Councillors J Aitman and T Ashby attended as substitutes respectively.

H431 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

H432 **MINUTES**

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 8 June 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 8 June 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H433 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from a local resident and advocate for the "Boys need Bins Campaign" which was included in Agenda Item 6.

Further representation was made by two members of the Witney Allotment Association Committee concerning Agenda Item 10.

The Committee reconvened.

H434 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the member of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

During the earlier public participation item, the Committee had heard detail regarding the need for the provision of sanitary disposal facilities in men's toilets and wider awareness of continence-related conditions.

Members received the report along with a verbal update from the Venue & Event Officer which advised that the installation of sanitary bins within men's toilet facilities at the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall had now taken place. The committee welcomed the initiative, discussed opportunities to promote the campaign more widely, and noted the positive impact on dignity, accessibility and inclusion.

Members also received details of the proposed Auracast and infrared hearing assistance systems for the main hall and gallery room at the Corn Exchange and noted that provision at Burwell Hall would be considered separately.

Additionally, two portable induction loops had been procured and were now operational in the town hall reception and café 1863.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the installation of the male sanitary bins be promoted via the council social media channels and;
3. That, the Auracast and infrared systems be installed at the Corn Exchange at a cost of £11,378.33 from identified budgets.

H435 **ALLOTMENTS - PROPOSED SEPARATION OF WITNEY ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee had heard earlier in the meeting from the representatives of the Witney Allotment Association (WAA) Committee who had outlined their proposal and process for the separation of the Association into two successor organisations. Members were advised that any separation would be subject to consultation with, and approval by, the Association's membership.

The Committee considered the detailed proposal submitted by the WAA, which set out the arrangements and governance framework for the proposed separation.

Members welcomed the thorough and considered approach, noting that the growing size of the Association and allotment provision within Witney would support two separate organisations, each of sufficient scale to manage its affairs effectively and potentially streamline administration

and governance. Members were pleased to see a clear plan setting out how any separation would be undertaken and consulted upon.

The Committee were unanimously in agreement.

Resolved:

That, the Committee supports, in principle, the proposed separation of the Witney Allotment Association, subject to the necessary membership approval and the establishment of suitably constituted successor associations.

The two members of the Witney Allotment Association left the meeting at 6:41pm

H436 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets within the remit of the Committee.

In considering 2027/28 capital budget priorities, Members requested the continued allocation of £50,000 towards property asset carbon reduction projects.

Members also identified potential kitchen and equipment improvements at the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall. Whilst recognising that officer capacity to deliver additional projects was currently limited, Members agreed that earmarking funding would enable such projects to be progressed when resources became available.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted; and
2. That, the management accounts of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee for the period 1 April to 31 July 2026 be approved and;
3. That, consideration be given, as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process, to maintaining an annual allocation of £50,000 for carbon reduction projects, together with the earmarking of funding for future improvements to facilities and equipment at the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.

H437 **PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS REPORT**

The Venue and Events Officer presented report and highlighted the continued success of events, in particular the summer Tunes on the Square programme. Members noted it had seen a growing attendance throughout the season with positive feedback from attendees and local businesses, and increased bar revenue. It was further noted that the earlier start time had benefited both the Corn Exchange and neighbouring food premises through increased footfall and sales.

Members congratulated officers and staff on the success of the programme, with the Mayor reporting positive feedback regarding the professionalism and welcoming approach of the venues team.

Members welcomed proposals to explore evening cinema screenings and discussed opportunities to strengthen future marketing and promotion of the variety of events the Corn Exchange hosted.

In considering future major sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup 2027, Members asked that opportunities to screen matches be explored. Officers advised that uncertainties around tournament progression could make reserving the venue challenging and potentially result in lost booking income, however they agreed to investigate options.

A Member queried attendance figures against attendance targets however, it was noted that over half of the events listed had met or exceeded their target attendance. Members also discussed the provision of additional seating for outdoor events. Officers heard that storage limitations remained a constraint and noted that attendees were encouraged to bring their own folding chairs where required.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, officers continue to explore options to maximise the venues event offerings

H438 **PUBLIC HALLS BUSINESS PLAN REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the report which focused on the business plan review and opportunities for future development. The Venue & Events Officer also provided a verbal update.

Members heard further details of the Tunes on the Square programme which considered extending the programme into May to maximise attendance and income, noting that whilst additional costs would be incurred through security provision and event infrastructure, these would be outweighed by increased bar sales. The potential installation of festoon lighting was also discussed as a means of enhancing the atmosphere within the Market Square.

Members received an update on marketing activities, including the introduction of a "What's On" brochure and a WhatsApp channel to promote events. It was noted that the existing publicity budget of £3,000 was largely committed to printing and event promotion. Members supported further consideration of increased marketing resources, particularly to improve engagement with older audiences through wider poster distribution, including the use of noticeboards across the town, supermarkets and the library. Officers advised that such promotion already formed part of marketing activity and that a list of poster locations would be included in a future report.

The Venue and Events Officer advised that proposals and options for future marketing investment would be presented to the next meeting in November.

During discussion, Members emphasised that the programme generated significant social and community value in addition to financial benefits and that this should not be underestimated when considering future investment.

It was also noted that the recommendation printed within the report was incorrect and that Members were simply being asked to note the update report at this stage.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

H439 **CEMETERY REGULATIONS REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the revised Cemetery Regulations prior to their submission to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.

Members welcomed the clearer drafting and simplification of the document and discussed the provisions relating to Islamic burials and the Council's efforts to accommodate faith requirements wherever reasonably practicable.

Members also considered the wording relating to liability for damage to memorials, the arrangements for the removal of seasonal tributes and other grave items.

Members also noted the success of the wildflower meadow area at Windrush Cemetery which had attracted favourable public comment. The Committee thanked Officers for the extensive review work undertaken and for producing a clearer and more user-friendly document.

Recommended:

That, the revised Cemetery Regulations be noted and forwarded to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for approval.

The meeting closed at: 7.29 pm

Chair