HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects

Meeting Date: 9th November 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

The purpose of this report is to consider Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects in relation to this Committee's services for 2027-28 onwards.

Background

In line with the Council's Financial Regulations the purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider proposed works and projects discussed over the course of the year for potential inclusion in the budgets for 2027-28 and/or subsequent financial years.

Note that these matters are brought to this Committee for consideration but that revenue growth and capital projects are matters for recommendation by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 23rd November 2026. It will be for the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee to prioritise projects and recommend funding to the full Council.

Current Situation

2026-27 budget

During 2026-27 the capital budgets affecting the work of Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee include the following and these will be reviewed by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee when reviewing the capital programme:

(i) Corn Exchange refurbishment - £6,000. This was for hearing loops. Note that subsequently, based on received quotes, a budget of £12,000 was agreed with additional amount coming from the general reserve.

(ii) Public Halls Property - £50,000.

The capital programme also includes the following items for which provision was made in previous financial years:

Corn Exchange lighting – main hall £15,000.

2027-28 budget items for consideration

The following budget items for 2027-28 were discussed at the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee in September 2026 for further consideration in the budget cycle:

(i) The Committee wished that consideration be given to maintaining an annual capital 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. This would be in addition to the £50,000 already in the capital budget for the current (2026-27) set aside for this purpose (line 4949/800 – Halls Property.

The Climate & Biodiversity Committee of 8th September 2026 also recommended "That, a provisional request of £50,000 for carbon reduction projects be considered within the 2027/28 budget setting process, subject to future review." (Min CB425). This was not specifically linked to the public halls although the minutes reference the proposal as matching the previous years' budget. The RFO is assuming that these two proposals would result in one budget bid for £50,000 but this is a matter for the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee and then the Full Council, to consider. Clearly carbon reduction in the public halls is a major part of the Council's adopted Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan but not the only part so there will need to be a clarity in relation to the prioritisation and whether it would be earmarked specifically for the public halls or whether there would be other projects which would draw on this budget.

(ii) The Committee also identified potential kitchen and equipment improvements at both 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. For the 2027-28 your officers would be looking to make some improvements in relation to the existing kitchen configuration, for which a modest budget of £1,000 would be sufficient. Members may then wish to consider an additional £5,000 to be earmarked for improvements from 2028/29 onwards, in the capital budget. With regard to improvements the intention is that when proposals come forward these would be presented in the context of how much additional revenue could be generated if the improvements are made.

(iii) When the Committee considered the Corn Exchange Business Plan (minute H437), it received an update on marketing activities, including the introduction of a "What's On" brochure and a WhatsApp channel to promote events. In the ensuing discussion 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. The Venue and Events Officer has a

proposal within his report for an additional revenue budget to cover the cost of a new brochure, in the sum of £1,060 per annum from 2027/28 onwards and Members are referred to that report.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

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.

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a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. There are likely to be financial implications in relation to the previously agreed revenue growth items in relation to new and enhanced facilities.

With regard to the items suggested at the September meeting of this Committee the financial implications are:

(i) Halls capital – carbon reduction £50,000. The same amount was allowed for in the 2026-27 capital budget, funded from revenue and so, viewed in isolation, would not result in an additional sum in relation to the Council Tax. However note the comments above regarding the proposal from the September meeting of the Climate and Biodiversity Committee.

(ii) Improved kitchen facilities – sum of £1,000 for the 2027-28 and an additional £5,000 to be earmarked for improvements for the period 2028/29 onwards.

(iii) The proposals in relation to marketing would require an additional recurring revenue budget of £1,060 for 2028/29 onwards.

This report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure incurred to be reviewed and to be compared with the Council's budgets.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report.

It should be noted that the existing revenue growth items and special revenue/capital projects will be considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee later in the budget cycle.

The Committee is requested to consider the items suggested at the September meeting of this Committee and whether they should be included in the budget for 2027-28.