HALLS CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Public Halls Report

Meeting Date: 9th November 2026

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to provide operational updates regarding the management of Witney Town Council's venues and seek recommendations for operational actions.

Background

Current Situation

Assistive Listening Project

Following approval at the last Full Council meeting, officers are now liaising with the agreed supplier to arrange installation of the assistive listening solutions in the Main Hall and Gallery room of Corn Exchange.

Sanitary Bins in Men's Toilets

The decision to install Sanitary Bins in the Men's toilets in the council's public halls has been received well with lots of positive comments via social media.

Corn Exchange Volunteer Scheme

Officers propose the introduction of a volunteer scheme at the Corn Exchange to support the delivery of events and performances, whilst providing opportunities for members of the local community to become more involved with the venue.

Volunteers would primarily assist with front-of-house duties, including welcoming and checking in attendees, directing customers to their seats, distributing programmes and providing general assistance before, during and after performances. In return for their time, volunteers would be offered the opportunity to watch the performances they are supporting, subject to availability and operational requirements.

The scheme would operate in accordance with the Council's existing Volunteer Policy, ensuring appropriate recruitment, induction, training and supervision arrangements are in place. Volunteers would complement existing staff rather than replace paid roles, helping to improve the customer experience and support the efficient operation of events.

It is anticipated that the scheme would be particularly beneficial for theatre performances, concerts and other ticketed events, whilst helping to strengthen community engagement with the Corn Exchange.

Marketing Budget

Officers introduced a *What's On* brochure for the first time this year, made possible by the increasing number of confirmed events and performances at the Corn Exchange. Following its introduction, Officers propose producing the brochure on a quarterly basis, providing a consistent and professional marketing resource to promote the venue's programme of events and activities.

The estimated printing cost is £285 for 500 brochures per quarter, equating to an annual cost of £1,140. Whilst the introduction of quarterly brochures is expected to reduce the requirement for individual A5 promotional flyers, the venue will continue to produce A1 posters and other marketing materials for Council-organised events.

Officers therefore recommend allocating an additional £1,140 to the publicity budget for 2027/28 to support the production of quarterly brochures as part of the Corn Exchange's wider marketing strategy. This would allow the existing publicity budget to continue supporting other printing and promotional activities.

The introduction of a regular brochure would provide an opportunity to increase awareness of the venue's programme, encourage advance ticket sales and attract new audiences. Increased attendance could also generate additional secondary income through Café & Bar sales, helping to offset the cost of production.

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.

a) Equality – The proposed assistive listening technology will improve accessibility and participation for people with hearing loss or other hearing impairments, supporting their equal access to the Council's facilities and events.
   Providing sanitary bins in male toilets will support equal access to appropriate sanitary facilities for all users, including men and boys who require them, helping to ensure the facilities are inclusive and accessible.
b) Biodiversity - n/a

c) Crime & Disorder – n/a
d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Officers are proceeding with a cautionary quantity of brochure printing, ensuring there are not excess brochures printed.

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.

Social Value

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

Financial implications

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the proposed introduction of a volunteer scheme at the Corn Exchange, with Officers progressing its development in accordance with the Council's existing Volunteer Policy.
2. Consider an additional allocation of £1,140 to the 2027/28 publicity budget to support the quarterly production of the Corn Exchange What's On brochure.