

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS

Date: Monday 14 September 2020

Title: Public Halls Report

Contact Officer: Venue Manager – Tomas Smith

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the operational aspects of the Council's public halls since the last meeting of this Committee.

Current Situation

Corn Exchange Refurbishment Works

The new '1863' café and bar has been installed in the lobby of the Corn Exchange since the last meeting of this committee and offers a warm and welcoming entrance to the building. It will be opening for events only at the moment with the view to open every day as soon as is deemed safe due to the current pandemic. It will offer tea and coffee as well as being fully licenced for alcohol sales.

The Corn Exchange Working Party is looking at retractable seating in the Main Hall, and will be tendering this in line with the Council's Financial Regulations. Alongside this the addition of lighting and sound for the Corn Exchange is also being researched, the seating will affect the acoustics in the main hall, so the recommended works timeframe would be to install the seating first, followed by the rest of the infrastructure. *Members are referred to the separate agenda item of the Minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party meeting held on 7 September 2020.*

Covid-19 Mitigation

Through the work of officers, both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall have been designated secure works and event spaces, and as such have the following protocols in place: Contact tracing, hand sanitizer on entry to hall, clear directional tape, 2-meter tape in front of Venue Manager and Booking Administrator's desk and clear signage on entry requesting face masks to be worn. Each event organiser also must provide a clear risk assessment of their event which is considered by the Venue Manager and Compliance and Environment Officer.

The halls are open for business, but with much reduced numbers and altered setups as previously advised.

Bookings Update

From August, Mynt Image Craft Fayre returned to their monthly Saturday bookings in the Main Hall of the Corn Exchange. White Feather Spiritualists also made a return.

September welcomes back following regular hirers:

- Witney Jazz Club: Corn Exchange - 4th
- Oxford Sport & Traditional Martial Arts: Burwell Hall - 10th
- Tumble Tots: Burwell Hall - 11th
- Dancemania: Burwell Hall - 14th
- Monkey Music: Burwell Hall - 15th
- St Mary's Art Group: Corn Exchange - 21st
- Sarah Moncrieff Paintings: Corn Exchange - 30th
-

In addition to this, a new group has been welcomed – K9 Dreamers Dog Training School who will be hiring the Main Hall at Burwell every Friday afternoon.

From October, we look to reinstate the following bookings:

- Life Carers: Corn Exchange - 8th
- M.S. Society: Burwell Hall – date yet to be confirmed.
- Redeemed Church of God – Burwell Hall, date yet to be confirmed.

Lighting Up of the Corn Exchange for National Events

Officers are currently investigating the best possible way of installing lighting to mark local/national events and occasions with Cllr Ashbourne per the resolution of the Policy, Governance & Finance committee on 13th July 2020. A draft policy on this issue will be presented to the next meeting of that committee on 28th September.

Current requests have been received to light up the Corn Exchange to mark Baby Loss Awareness Week, 15th October and Polio Awareness Week, 31st October. The first of these was provisionally given the go-ahead regardless of whether lights have been installed in the building, or if previously borrowed lights are once again used.

Environmental impact

Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

There are no perceived risks resulting from items in this report.

Financial implications

There are no perceived cost implications resulting from items in this report. The return to income into the Public Halls is welcome from returning hirers and from the Café/Bar.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.