

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 17 January 2022
Title: Public Halls Usage Report
Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

Background

The Corn Exchange, 1863 café and Burwell Hall have had groups using the facilities throughout the winter with the Covid Pandemic still affecting the levels of footfall and confidence of some groups to return.

Current Situation

The Corn Exchange has had most regular existing groups returning to the hall except for a few who decided not to return after the Summer. There were further cancellations from various annual hirers in the run up to Christmas due to the pandemic with others cancelling at short notice due to the current situation. The weekly Tea Dance has re-started on a trial basis and we are looking to welcome back a further regular weekly group in February.

Overall usage of the Main Hall and the Gallery room for the Corn Exchange from the beginning of September to the end of December are as follows:

Gallery Room occupancy **32%**

Main Hall occupancy **56%**

The Main Hall has increased its use due to the Buttercross Theatre Company using the space for both drama classes and the Pantomime which ran through December. The Venue and Events Officer would like to increase the usage in both rooms and feels that this will be attainable as the works on the Corn Exchange are completed and as we move out of the pandemic.

And at Burwell Hall the usage for the same period is as follows:

Burwell Hall occupancy **85%**

All groups have returned Monday to Friday, and there was a run of party bookings (primarily children's parties) on the weekends throughout this period.

1863 Café Bar

1863 has opened Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm and for evening events over the last three months, the trading figures are as follows:

Income

Daytime Café takings	£7,979,62 (net)
Evening Café takings	£4,367,20 (net) from 15 openings
	<u>£12,346.82</u>

Expenditure

Supply Costs	£3,962.39 (net)
Equipment Costs	£551.31 (net)
Staffing Costs (inc. NI)	£9,012.00 approx. (not including the Venue & Events Officer)
	<u>£13,525.70</u>

The staff on shift regularly open and lock up the Corn Exchange negating the need for a caretaker on these occasions which is helping to reduce the staff costs. Taking this into consideration the café is effectively breaking even.

Feedback about the café has been positive, with all patrons and hirers commenting on how good it is to offer this service in the Corn Exchange.

The evening events have proved especially successful and the relationship with groups using the facility has been much improved. This is especially true of the monthly jazz night which is as popular as ever.

Having the café open has resulted in people visiting the Corn Exchange every day and has proven a useful point of conversation about Witney Town Council its services and the halls and green spaces which come under its remit.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

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

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

➤ See report

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. To note the contents of the report.