

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 14 March 2022

Title: Public Halls Report

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer - Tomas Smith

Background

The Corn Exchange is now open without Covid Restrictions and all groups who were expected to return have done so. Staffing remains the same with two part time caretakers and two part time café staff.

Current Situation

Halls Usage Figures (attached as Appendix A)

Current usage is 23% in the Corn Exchange and 30% in Burwell Hall. This is below where the Council wants to be, but officers are working to promote and fill the remaining bookable slots coming into the Spring Season. This involves promoting the Gallery Room as a Wedding Ceremony destination and promoting both halls with different twice weekly FB and Twitter posts to engage with people looking to hire the spaces.

This percentage of usage of both halls does include the Christmas period where most groups have a break. The numbers of hours booked does rise again from week commencing 10th January. The halls have three bookable slots per day, morning (08:30 – 12:30), afternoon (13:00 – 17:00) and evening (18:00 – 22: 00) working with the current staffing and the current usage levels this is manageable but if extra slots were to be filled, the Council would require an additional staff member in order to maintain the levels of service it expects.

Public Halls Update

The refurbishment of the Burwell bar has been completed so this is another addition to what the Council can offer. Burwell Hall regularly has groups in every day of the week and on average there are 11 bookings per week of the 21 available.

The Corn Exchange has continued to be worked on to complete the refurbishment in the Main Hall. Confidence is high that when this work is completed the Hall will become a much more attractive space for hirers and the bookings will reflect the hard work and effort that has gone on behind the scenes to make this possible.

1863 Café Bar

The café continues to be popular and is regularly full every day, this will prove to be a vital source of advertising as word of mouth, posters and what's on guides will be made accessible to all who are entering.

It has been necessary to implement a corkage charge for the bar in response to a request from a hirer who wanted to have the bar open but wanted to provide their own drinks for the evening. The Venue & Events Officer has proposed this charge as:

- £12 per bottle of wine
- £15 per bottle of prosecco
- £25 per bottle of champagne

These charges offer a fair price which is comparable with other venues.

The income/expenditure for the bar from 1st January – 28th February 2022 can be seen below:

Income

Daytime Café takings	£4,426.81 (net)
Evening Café takings	£1,542.96 (net) from 3 openings
	<u>£5,969.77</u>

Expenditure

Supply Costs	£3,949.42 (net)
Equipment Costs	£367.54 (net)
Newspaper Sub Costs	£142.50
Staffing Costs (inc. NI)	£6,008.00 approx. (not including the Venue & Events Officer)
	<u>£10,467.46</u>

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 with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

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.

If a corkage charge is not implemented, the Council will be missing a source of income to offset costs of staffing the bar area.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- Existing cost of running the halls
- Income generated from introducing a corkage charge

Recommendations

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

1. Agreeing the corkage charge which would be effective in the bars at both the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.