

PUBLIC HALLS COMMITTEE OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

**Held on Monday 11 March 2013
at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Witney**

Present

Councillor: T J Morris (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs J C Baker D A Snow (from 6.30pm)
P J Dorward C K Woodward
H B Eaglestone

Non Committee Member: J S King

Officers: Town Clerk Facilities Manager
Democratic Services Officer Deputy Town Clerk

Also present: Jacqui Ibbotson, Oxford Inspires (for part of the meeting)
1 Members of the public

H109 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Councillor D S Enright

H110 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be considered at the meeting.

H111 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the following meetings be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

Ordinary meeting held on 21 January 2013

Special meeting held on 27 February 2013

H112 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of the public present did not wish to speak

(As the Oxford Inspires representative was delayed, the meeting progressed to the next item on the agenda.)

H113 **PUBLIC HALLS OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda.

Members considered that the underutilisation of the Drill Hall was regrettable. The Facilities Manager also reminded Members that the Windrush Room was upstairs, with no disabled access and was therefore unsuitable for some of the groups which had used the Corn Exchange

The Committee considered the report regarding the graffiti on the exterior walls of the Burwell Hall, which had been there for some time. They were pleased to note that there had been no new instances of graffiti.

A Member circulated details of a request for a venue for the West Oxfordshire Food Bank. They had wondered whether Langdale Hall would be viable premises and had requested answers to several questions. These were included in the circulated paper. It was suggested that a meeting be arranged to find out exactly what is required to bring back to the next meeting of this Committee.

In answer to a question, the Facilities Manager confirmed that she had commissioned a suitable structure to fit onto the balcony of the Corn Exchange to deter nesting pigeons.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the exterior walls of the Burwell Hall should be cleaned and one coat of anti-graffiti applied. The cost of £1,450 being paid from the maintenance budget.
- 3) that the Facilities Manager arranges a meeting to discuss the viability of using Langdale Hall for the food bank.

H114 **CORN EXCHANGE/OXFORD INSPIRES**

Jacqui Ibbotson from Oxford Inspires apologised for being late.

She commented that a progress report had been previously circulated and she was attending this evening to give a verbal update and meet the Committee. Oxford Inspires intended to have the Feasibility Study available in April. Oxford Inspires was aware of the urgency and strength of public feeling and was continuing to consult with leaders of the community groups. She had worked in arts centres and with advisory groups on local projects and commented that she was keen to ensure a balance between subsidy and earned income, and that the Council required a community product and advice and guidance on how to manage it. With this in mind they would also be formulating a business plan to look at costs.

Further investigations were looking at how extra income could be earned, perhaps by other businesses using parts of the building. For example, large changing rooms were good for theatrical productions, etc. however; there were ways in which these could be utilised at other times and for other purposes. It was important to use the space well, community groups might need different space to professionals, and therefore she advised that the architects brief should not be defined until the Council was sure what was needed.

A Member enquired whether Oxford Inspires had any ideas for finance. Jacqui confirmed that there would be subsidies available at the appropriate time; they were currently looking into heritage lottery funding.

In answer to a question, Jacqui confirmed that extra revenue would need to be generated and they were looking at the possibilities, i.e. front space as a café. She considered that if a kitchen and bar were required, it would be logical to have café space.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the land at the back of the building belonged to West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Chairman thanked Oxford Inspires for the work they had done so far and that the Members were looking forward to receiving the Feasibility Report for presentation to Council on 8 April.

RECOMMENDED: that the verbal report be noted.

(Cllr D Snow entered the meeting during the above discussion, being 6.30pm. Jacqui Ibbotson and the member of the public left at the conclusion of the above item).

H115 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk, as circulated with the agenda.

In answer to questions, officers identified and confirmed spending for various budgets. The Facilities Manager confirmed that the fire risk assessment report was all good, with no implications and no actions. The Town Clerk confirmed that the budget for cleaning had been set prior to the engagement of contract cleaners and that there were salary savings to compensation for the over spend in this budget. The revised budget for 2013/14 did reflect this.

Members considered the budget for Burwell Hall, which is a well performing hall. The Facilities Manager commented that she would be loathed to see the management of this hall handed over.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that the staff recharges for the Langdale Hall would decrease for the next year, as a lot of maintenance had been undertaken over the past year.

In answer to a question, the Facilities Manager confirmed that the car boot sales would continue, being run by an individual who would also be responsible for advertising.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

H116 **MADLEY PARK HALL**

The Committee received and considered the verbal report of the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk explained the current situation with regard to the lease. At the request of the Trustees wording had been changed and it was now agreed that the Town Council would maintain the fabric of the building. However, the Trustees were still requesting that the wording was more explicit to avoid misunderstandings when things go wrong. The Facilities Manager confirmed that she had set up a maintenance schedule and contracts to roll forward and that the Trust could look for alternatives if not happy.

As the Councillor Trustee was away for several weeks, the Town Clerk had been unable to gain clarification for this meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the verbal report be noted.
- 2) that the Town Clerk be given delegated responsibility, in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee, to continue negotiations with the Trustees in order to agree a full repairing lease which also gives protection to the Trustees.
- 3) that the wording "with full title guarantee" be clarified.

H117 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: that the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting in accordance with Section 1 of the Local Government Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

H118 **LANGDALE HALL**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report.

As a point of order, a Member requested that e-mail conversations on confidential matters be kept to a minimum and response is made to originator only. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was due process to circulate information to all Councillors at the same time, not just relevant committee members.

The Town Clerk gave background to the report on previous discussions regarding the Langdale Hall.

The Chairman commented that current Council policy was to consolidate into one town centre hall, the future of the Langdale Hall being another debate.

The Facilities Manager commented that she had been requested, one year ago, to maintain and ensure the running of the Langdale Hall for a period of three years.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that Oxford Inspires be notified the Council propose to run only one town centre hall.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm

Chairman