

number of bookings. An illustration of the increase in capacity usage would be better than noting the number of users. The Facilities Supervisor said that he would look into this for future reports.

Cllr Churchill said that she thought there was a limit to the number of users in terms of health and safety. Cllr R Curry explained that he was talking about how many hours were used out of all of the available hours.

Cllr Baker noted that at Burwell Hall the Main Hall usage was up by 6% but the meeting room usage was down by 6% - she asked if this made a difference financially. The Facilities Supervisor commented that the Main Hall was the big earner financially, and the 6% increase did translate into higher income.

Cllr King noted the 5% reported increase in hire of the drill hall but questioned what the 5% was. The Facilities Manager explained that there were 11 available hours per day, or 77 available hours per week and within those hours there was a 5% increase in number of hours booked. She said that Burwell Hall was booked for 69% of the bookable hours and the Langdale Drill Hall was booked for 54% of the bookable hours.

The Chair brought the Committee's notice to the recommendations to resurface the floor of the Langdale Hall and to note the condition of the Corn Exchange. Cllr King asked if the floor would be able to last another 11 months to cover the period before the hall closed. The Facilities Supervisor said that it probably could but not any longer than that. Cllr King proposed that the Committee should not proceed at this point but should review the condition of the floor in six months.

Cllr Churchill thought that the Committee should be mindful not to lose bookings because of this. Cllr King said that if there were complaints, the issue could be brought back to the Committee before six months. Cllr Woodward asked where the main areas of concern were – was the floor patchy all over or was it just certain areas that were worn? The Facilities Supervisor said that the central area was the most affected, but it would be silly not to do the whole floor at once. Cllr R Curry remarked that financially it might be better not to do the floor and lose some customers. Cllr Enright said that there was nowhere else to dance in Witney. He felt that a six month review would suit everybody.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the Langdale Hall floor works not be progressed at the present time and that the situation be reassessed in six months' time.
- 2) that the condition of the Corn Exchange be noted.

H019 **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2014/15 MUNICIPAL YEAR – FREQUENCY OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer as circulated with the agenda. The Chair asked if members were happy with the frequency of meetings and the 6pm start time, and all confirmed that they were.

RECOMMENDED: that the current frequency and timings of meetings continued in the next municipal year

H020 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the Council's Contract Accountants, DCK Beavers, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to part b of the report in relation to the unfortunate situation of the VAT Partial Exemption Calculation for 2011/12 and 2012/13. Due to the closure of the Corn Exchange, during both these years the Council undertook major capital works in the other public halls and as a result the Council had exceeded the partial exemption de minimis limits. This did impact on the Public Halls figures. The Chair commented that this was a timing issue – the Council had to pay back money that it should not have had in the first place.

In answer to Cllr Baker's question the Town Clerk confirmed that this would have to be met from the Council's General Fund.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

H021 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that there had been misreporting in the press which had not been well received by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and could have potentially jeopardised the Council's grant application. Reports for consideration at this meeting contained commercially sensitive information for discussion. She advised members to resolve to exclude the press and public and reminded them that they were governed by the code of conduct.

Cllr R Curry proposed allowing the member of the public to remain as he was a member of the Corn Exchange Advisory Board.

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.

Mr Powell was allowed to remain as he was a member of the Corn Exchange Advisory Board.

H022 **CORN EXCHANGE PROJECT**

The Committee received and considered the notes of Corn Exchange Advisory Board meeting and the Concept Design as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk updated Members on the meeting held earlier that day with the consultants particularly on their estimates for the refurbishment. She highlighted the fact that there was a lot of risk and contingency factored into the budget. The recommendation was to go to tender with the current specification as it might be possible to get more for less than the money available given the current climate. There were also some things that could be done "in house" subject to an asbestos survey.

The Consultants were looking to go out to tender in March/April. The Closing date for the Heritage Lottery Fund Application was 24 February. Oxford Inspires was working on this with the Town Clerk. The outcome would be reported in early July. Contractors would not be appointed until then but the idea was to be in a position to do so. The Town Clerk

advised the Committee that if the funding bid was not successful the Council would need to review its position.

Cllr King commented that he did not want work done in phase one to have to be redone in phase two due to lack of foresight. The Town Clerk said that the consultants were very aware of this. He asked if the tender would need to go out to the European Competitive Tender process, but the Town Clerk confirmed that the construction costs for the refurbishment were under the OJEU limit.

The Town Clerk explained the Council's usual procurement rules, however, in this instance she was proposing the Consultants deal with this, due to time constraints. She confirmed they had a list of recommended local contractors which had been vetted.

In response to Cllr King's question, Cllr R Curry confirmed that it was the intention to have a portable bar as and when required. Cllr King asked why there were two offices in the proposed designs. Cllr R Curry advised that the downstairs office was intended as a box office. He also asked why there was central access to the "stage area". He thought that left or right access would be better. Cllr Churchill agreed with this.

There was a discussion on what other venues had and Cllr R Curry explained that these types of things would be in phase two. In the interim period, equipment from the Langdale Hall would be used.

Cllr Dorward left the meeting at 6.40pm.

Cllr Baker said that the meeting earlier that day had been very useful, but the Council must take care not to jeopardise the grant application. The consultants would put a programme together for the works and would ensure future proofing. The stage and seating would come from the Langdale Hall to ensure that the works were within costs. She felt that all of the issues raised by Cllr King had been addressed.

In response to Cllr Enright's question the Town Clerk explained how the consultants had been appointed. It was confirmed they had done work locally and in the past for the Town Council. He asked why the ladies' toilets were upstairs and the men's downstairs and it was explained by Cllr R Curry that it would cost more money to swap them around.

Cllr Enright wondered if the foyer could not open before the rest of the building. The Chair said that it might be more expensive to mobilise contractors and then stand them down and then re mobilise them, it would add extra costs. Cllr R Curry said that it had been recommended to open the building in one go, and the whole of phase one would only take around three months.

Cllr Churchill appealed for the lift to be replaced. The current one was obsolete and it would be more cost effective to install a new one for disabled access. She also commented that the downstairs toilets became blocked when they were used a lot. This needed to be sorted out. She also agreed with Cllr King's comments about access being to the left or the right of the "stage area". Cllr Churchill asked if the floor underneath the stage was in reasonable condition. The Town Clerk said that replacement had been included in the proposal.

Cllr Churchill queried the facilities in the kitchen. The Facilities Supervisor said that a lot of people would like to see a better kitchen in the Langdale Hall and he had lost potential hirers because of the lack of a proper kitchen. The kitchen was used a lot at Burwell Hall, and he felt if the Council wanted to attract weddings etc. then a good kitchen was needed.

Cllr Churchill asked how soon a business plan would be ready and how soon the Langdale Hall would be sold. The Town Clerk said that a simple business plan for the HLF application was in essence ready as figures had to be fed into the grant application. Cllr Churchill asked the Town Clerk to circulate the grant application by email when available.

Cllr Curry felt that the advantage of phased work was that there was time to learn what people wanted and fundraising could start when the building was open to help with purchasing of equipment. The Chair thanked the Advisory Group for its hard work and asked if members were happy to ask the consultants to do the tender and procurement. Cllr Baker said that the Council would be kept informed at every step. Cllr King asked if the Town Council would have any control over the consultants and Cllr Baker reiterated that the Council would be kept informed at every stage and would retain control over the process.

Members discussed how soon the press and the public could be informed about the plans. The Committee was mindful of previous reports in the press and the issues it had caused with the HLF. The Chair did not want to jeopardise the grant application or raise people's expectations too high. Cllr King felt that the time for any news to be released would be when the grant had been secured and the tender was about to be awarded. A press release could be ready for this.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the notes of the Advisory Board be noted
2. that Ridge and Partners commission a full asbestos survey for the Corn Exchange
3. that Ridge and Partners tender the works as set out in the concept design.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

Chair