

**MEETING OF THE PUBLIC HALLS SUB-COMMITTEE**  
**Of the AMENITIES COMMITTEE**

**Held on 5 September 2016**  
**at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present**

Councillor: Cllr P J Dorward (Chair)

Councillors:	C Brown	H W Chirgwin
	B J Churchill	C K Woodward
Ex-Officio:	C Holliday	T J Morris
Non-Committee Members:	J M Doughty (sub for Dr S Bartington)	
	H B Eaglestone	A Beames
Officers:	Town Clerk	RFO

H466 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Dr S E Bartington, and Cllr Mrs Doughty substituted for her.

H467 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs B J Churchill and C K Woodward declared an interest in agenda items relating to the Corn Exchange as they were trustees on the Corn Exchange Witney Trust.

H468 **MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman;
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there was one matter arising relating to minute number H387 and the loan of furniture and equipment belonging to Witney Town Council. The Clerk advised that the policy not to loan equipment and furniture had been extended to all Witney Town Council property. This was with the exception of groups using the curtilage in front of the Corn Exchange and the undercroft at the Town Hall.

H469 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

H670 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted.

2. that Members deferred making a virement from the grant funding set aside in respect of the CEWT to cover the running costs of the Corn Exchange and Langdale Hall until the next cycle of meetings when the half year accounts would be available

H671 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H672 **CORN EXCHANGE**

The committee considered the confidential report from the Town Clerk and correspondence from the Corn Exchange Witney Trust (CEWT) as circulated with the agenda. Cllr T Morris stated that in his introduction to the motion brought to Full Council on 3 August 2016 it had been made clear the revisions to the lease and there was no requirement to make any further changes. Therefore the reference made by CEWT to 'main services' was not and would not be included.

Also included in the introduction to the motion was, that if the CEWT were applying for grant funding which required security of tenure of in excess of the 15 year lease agreed, then the Town Council would review the existing lease. This discussion had already been through Council. Therefore there was no need for a 'side' letter; furthermore the Town Clerk advised that this could potentially compromise the de minimis situation with regard to the valuation of the lease under than £2 million.

The Committee also discussed the CEWT's request for the remainder of the £50k grant (once the start-up costs had been taken out) to be paid in October 2016 on signing of the lease. The RFO explained that if Council decided to do this then the CEWT would not be due anymore funding until 1 January 2018 and this being their second year of operation it would be payable quarterly on receipt of management accounts, as previously agreed by the Council. At the moment the CEWT was not due to receive any funding until 1 January 2017 when it proposed to take over the running of the Corn Exchange. The grant would be £37386.35 in 4 quarterly payments of £9346.58 towards operational expenditure, this being in line with the business plan previously provided by the CEWT.

The Councillors were reminded that they need to be continually aware that all monies spent were public monies and that they were answerable to the tax payers of Witney.

Finally Cllr Morris updated the members on what he had said to the Chair of the CEWT when reservations over the future of Langdale Hall and its possible reopening as a public hall had been expressed. Cllr Morris had said it would not be in the Town Council's interests to try and compete with the trust. If Langdale Hall did reopen then it would be open to all users and not the specific clientele that the CEWT were aiming at.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that there is no requirement for a 'side' letter as the details are in the minutes of introduction of the motion brought to Council on 3 August 2016;

3. that the Council was pleased to note the CEWT timeframe to take over the running of the Corn Exchange from 1 January 2017. With regard to funding towards the operational costs for running the Corn Exchange in years 2, 3 and 4 this would be quarterly on receipt of management accounts. The request for the remainder of the 1<sup>st</sup> year grant funding to be issued in October 2016 to be discussed with the CEWT once the lease is signed on the understanding that there would then be no more funding until 1 January 2018;
4. that the Town Clerk write to the CEWT to confirm the dates and activities to which the Town Council will ask to use the Corn Exchange free of charge for the duration of the lease;
5. The future of Langdale Hall be considered under the next agenda item.

**H673 LANGDALE HALL**

The committee considered the confidential report from the Town Clerk who had, earlier in the day, met with Alder King and an architect who was going to produce a fee proposal for a master plan for Langdale Hall and West Witney Sports Ground. In the meantime, the existing policy was still to sell Langdale Hall and if an approach was received this should be explored fully.

Cllr Morris explained a further opportunity working with other partners in order to realise emergency accommodation for homeless people in the Witney area, as well as possibly incorporating office space for the Council.

The Town Clerk highlighted the comments which had been posted on Facebook and the obvious desire by the public to retain the building as a public hall. At this stage the Committee said that they would not rule anything out, and were keeping an open mind with regard to the halls future, but would make a full assessment when it had more information for opportunities.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the confidential report be noted;
2. that the current policy to sell Langdale Hall still stands;
3. that the external areas of the Langdale Hall site should be weeded and maintained;
4. that Cllr Morris reports back to the next meeting on his discussions with other partners regarding emergency accommodation;
5. that no further action be taken until fee proposal from Alder King is received

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The meeting closed at 7.05pm.

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Chairman