

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

**Held on Monday 7 December 2015**  
**at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present**

Councillor: Cllr P J Dorward (Chair)

Councillors: C Brown                      C Holliday  
Mrs B J Churchill                      J S King  
D S Enright                              C E Reynolds

Officers: Town Clerk                      Democratic Services Officer  
Responsible Financial Officer      Works and Contracts Supervisor

H601 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr C K Woodward. He had tried to get a substitute but no one was available.

H602 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs B J Churchill declared an interest in agenda items 5 and 7 on the Corn Exchange as she was a trustee on the Witney Corn Exchange Shadow Trust.

H603 **MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:**
  - I) A member reported that the proposed Boxing Day event in the Corn Exchange would not take place as the time frame was too short for advertising. However it was hoped that it would be held in February 2016 instead.
  - II) The Town Clerk reported that Third Eye had written to the local MP about the Corn Exchange charges. The refund had been issued so the Town Clerk was able to report this back to the MP. They had since written another letter to the Town Council complaining about the charges. A member commented that they had incorrectly been charged a charity rate previously and another member added that she had had a conversation with the hirer and they had been aware that they would need to hire more than one room.

H604 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

H605 **PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. She highlighted that the snagging issues were being resolved with Ridge and Knowles. The Works and Contracts Supervisor had obtained a cost for a roll up mat to protect the floor in the Corn Exchange which would be £90. The alternative would be to remove a section of the floor and sink in some coir matting so that it would be flush. Members were not keen on the idea of a permanent mat and preferred a removable one that could be cleaned more easily.

The Works and Contracts Supervisor informed the Committee that he was looking to get quotes for new doors for the main hall to ensure it was water tight.

The Town Clerk reported that the new floor cleaning regime was in progress with the correct products and machinery. There had not been any point in the manufacturers coming out to give advice as until very recently the correct cleaning procedures had not been followed. The plastic caps for the table feet were working.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that a non-fixed mat was put down in the Corn Exchange side door and quotes obtained for new watertight doors;
- 3) that the Council's deposit scheme is change to allow for a £500 deposit charge for high risk events such as Boxing. The Town Clerk would make the decision on what events fell under this category.

H606 **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL PROJECTS PROGRAMME – REVISED BUDGET 2015/16 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2016/17**

The Committee received and considered reports prepared by the RFO.

- 1) *Revised Revenue Budget for 2015/16 and base revenue budget for 2016/17*

A member commented that she felt that apportioning all the salaries to Burwell Hall was inappropriate and distorted things. This would be the only hall that the Council would be able to hire out and the projection was a loss of £62,000 this year. A large proportion of this was salaries. The RFO advised that she had reapportioned everything from the Langdale Hall and the Corn Exchange as the staffing review had not been finalised. Members discussed the budgets projections for Burwell Hall in detail.

The RFO suggested leaving the figures as they were but adding a note to say they would be revaluated once the staffing review had taken place. The Town Clerk said that the Council was obliged to operate a recharge system for salaries and overheads. The RFO added that it would vary each month as recharges were not a flat rate but based on timesheets.

A member said that she appreciated the hall was a community hall but she felt the projected loss was excessive. The Chairman agreed and said that the cost needed to be managed. The Town Clerk commented that the hall was run at capacity so advertising would not help.

2) *Revenue budget growth items 2016/17 and capital/special revenue projects programme 2016/17 and beyond if appropriate*

A member asked if the curtains for the Corn Exchange could come from the 15/16 budget as money was allocated for this. She also felt that the work on acoustics could wait as once curtains were in this might not be needed.

*Cllr Enright left the meeting at 6.23pm and re-entered at 6.24pm.*

Members agreed with the RFO's suggestion to put £2,000 into an earmarked reserve for Madley Park Hall if it was not spent on maintenance. The Town Clerk confirmed that the hall was still inspected annually.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the budget priorities are as follows:-
  - Curtains in the Corn Exchange – to come from the 2015/16 budget
  - An earmarked reserve be set up for the Corn Exchange general maintenance (funded from the sale of the Langdale Hall)
  - That earmarked reserves for property maintenance for Burwell and Madley Park Halls are set up.

The acoustics in the Corn Exchange and the extension of the patio and improvements to external lighting at Burwell Hall would be deferred.

3) *Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges for 2016/17*

The Committee received and considered proposed fees and charges for Burwell Hall. The increase was 1.5% and the RFO felt that an increase of this level year on year was easier for the public to swallow rather than one large increase every few years.

A member asked if the figures could be rounded up or down to the nearest £5 as she thought that it was psychologically more acceptable.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the increase to hall charges as detailed by the RFO be agreed with the figures being rounded up to the nearest £5.

H607 **UPDATE FROM THE CORN EXCHANGE SHADOW TRUST**

The Committee received an update from the Member representative on the Shadow Trust and the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk suggested that the Council might wish to fund the legal fees for the cost of the lease, which could come out of the start-up grant, in line with how matters were dealt

with when Madley Hall Trust was set-up. Members discussed this and the Town Clerk and agreed that this was the most appropriate route to take.

The member of the Shadow Trust present at the meeting explained that the Trust did not yet have a bank account, and asked if the Committee wanted it to set one up. The Town Clerk pointed that the Trust was considering recruiting soon and if they were to pay staff they would need a bank account. The Committee agreed with this, and this would be fed back to the Trust.

The Committee discussed inviting members of the Trust to the next meeting and this was agreed.

The Town Clerk explained that she had suggested that the Trust seek legal advice on the TUPE of staff, but it had not reacted well to this. The Member of the Shadow Trust present said that the Trust wanted to know how many staff were involved and what the costs would be. The Town Clerk pointed out that this depended on how the Trust wanted to run the Corn Exchange.

The Town Clerk said that the issue of storage space was on going and she was still in dialogue with WODC on what would be acceptable.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the verbal reports be noted;
2. that the Council agrees to fund the legal costs of the lease;
3. that the legal costs be funded from the start up grant;
4. that members of the Shadow Trust be invited to the next meeting.

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The meeting closed at 6.55pm.

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Chairman