

Agenda Item 11	
Committee	Finance & Establishment
Month	November 2022
Report Title	Income from hiring of Town Council Assets
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Attachments	None

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Purpose of Report

To provide Committee with an update on income and income generators for Town Council owned assets.

Bookings, and therefore income, from the hiring of Town Council assets/venues has increased considerably over the last few years. There are a number of reasons for this including:

1. Increased usage and interest as people emerge from covid lockdown and restrictions
2. SWTC increased and improved relationships with hirers
3. Increased Officer focus on income generation

Town Hall

This year has seen a significant increase in activity in the Town Hall including children's theatre, comedy, music, meetings and school holiday entertainment sessions. We were lucky enough to be the venue chosen to host the Walled Kitchen Garden Networks annual general meeting. They held their meeting with 100 guests from all over the UK and Europe in the Assembly Hall before going off for the afternoon to Audley End House for a talk. They included Nathan in their talks at the Town Hall free of charge. Their guests were staying in local guest houses and hotels so it was great for Saffron Walden economy.

By working with the local theatre groups, we have picked up bookings for their rehearsal space, these bookings used to be in other venues. The theatre groups have designated people who manage the Town Hall on behalf of SWTC during rehearsals this means we do not have to staff the building for the rehearsals saving considerable SWTC staffing costs (these theatre staff act under instruction from SWTC).

As identified in the table below, the amount of income generated from theatre groups has significantly increased over the last 6 years, we have great relationships with these groups and they work well with our staff.

Table 1: Income from Theatre Groups

Saffron Walden Youth Musical Theatre Group	Saffron Players
2016/17 income £2,659	2016/17 Income £ 2,500
2017/18 Income £2,760	2017/18 Income £2630
2018/19 income ££3,084	2018/19 Income £3496
2019/20 Income £3160	2019/20 Income £3160
2020 Nothing due to Covid	Nothing due to Covid
2021/22 Income £3202	2021/22 Income £4324
2022 year to date Income £3202	Predicted 2022 Income around £4423 as pantomime is in January.

We have a great working partnership with one of the local comedy and tribute act promoters, he has brought to the Town Hall acts such as Alan Carr, Russell Kane, Adam Hill, Romesh Ranganathan and coming in December Griff Rhys Jones, as well as top tribute acts such as Noasis and Absolute Bowie. We have been working to get Saffron Walden on the

map as one of the venues in Essex that has comedy warm up tours. Tickets for these gigs are sold through the Tourist Information Centre (recognising a commission on ticket sales for them) and on Cambridge Live so people have a choice where to purchase them. For these nights the hall is at full seating capacity and normally sold out.

As well as holding meetings and parties in the hall this year we have also had the addition of Barclays joining us twice a week. I met with one of the gentlemen responsible for overseeing the closure of the Saffron Walden Branch, showed him the Committee Room and discussed how we could work together to keep an outreach point for them in town. They agreed and have signed up to use the Town Hall Committee Room for a minimum term of one year. This will be bringing in over £20,000 revenue to SWTC this year and this booking may continue after the year as the service has been greatly received by the public and is very busy. Last week Barclays staff welcomed the CEO of Barclays Bank UK, Matt Hammerstein to the Town Hall to look around at their pop-up space. Out of 150 pop up branches they chose Saffron Walden as the one to visit; it is the first onsite visit he has made to the pop-up branches. The CEO was very impressed with the working operation and relationship between SWTC and Barclays and whilst here, they carried out filming that they will be using onto their social media platforms. Barclays and SWTC were included in the filming.

The Town Hall is busy all year round with shows, meetings, Emporiums, weddings and other events. We have reached full booking capacity for the Town Hall with current staffing levels. Existing staff already cover a range of events during the week and weekend (market, weddings in Bridge End Gardens, evening events). Should Council wish to book the Town Hall to its maximum capacity, we would need to employ weekend staff to support and cover additional events. This report does not seek to specifically address that query but rather notes it as a potential query and a matter for further exploration.

It is known that one of the greatest income generators is income from the bar at events. Additional staff would be required to run and manage these. Staff already on site for large events are there for the protection of the public and the building and are not available to staff the bar area. SWTC could offer the bar service as an integral part of the hall hire offer to groups and weddings. Alternatively, if hirers wanted a dry hire they could use the bar area at a charge and bring in their own drinks and staff. It is possible that a permanent bar could be created in the Scrivener Room to fully recognise the income potential from the bar.

Table 2: Town Hall income as a whole

Year	Town Hall Income
2017/18	£19,943
2018/19	£36,363
2019/20	£35,696
2020/21	£3,766 (impact of Covid)
2021/22	£31,282
2022/23 to date (October 2022)	£26,661 actual year to date £25,339 anticipated income to year end £52,000 anticipated total annual income

Town Hall & Bridge End Gardens as wedding venues

Weddings & Civil Partnerships have gone through the roof this year, the Town Hall is on the map as one of the few places to get married in Saffron Walden. On Saturday mornings we offer a 'Community Venue' Ceremony, it is a smaller scaled back ceremony that takes place before 12.30pm with up to 14 guests. This is something that UDC offer Monday – Friday but as they are not open on Saturday mornings we have been able to pick up these bookings and have had lots this year. There is an established process and definition of a 'Community Wedding' and SWTC only holds the authorization to have these on Saturday mornings with UDC retaining the right (from ECC) to run 'Community Weddings' Monday – Friday. By the end of March 2022, we will have hosted 40 wedding ceremonies in the Town Hall and already have 8 planned for next year with inquiries coming in daily for 2023 and beyond.

Bridge End Gardens has also become a popular venue for wedding receptions over the last few years and we have struck up working relationships with lots of local suppliers who have been back to the gardens for many receptions. We have a brochure that I put together that gives couples a list of these local suppliers, keeping business within the town. Covid gave a bit of a knock for weddings with people choosing to postpone them, these have been caught up on, we have three bookings for Bridge End Gardens for next year and enquires for the next couple of years ahead. Income from wedding bookings only are shown below (note this income is shown in the table above)

Table 3: Income from Weddings

Bridge End Garden Weddings	Town Hall Weddings
2017/18 Income £960	2017/18 Income £198
2018/19 Income £4240	2018/19 Income £2497
2019/20 Income £3600	2019/20 income £475
2020/21 Income £1,800	2020/21 income £1550
2021/22 Income £1,800	2021/22 Income £6961
2022/23 year to date Income £10,400	2022/23 year to date Income £9619

We are also working with a local businessman who is putting together plans for an outdoor film festival, taking place every weekend throughout July on the Main Lawn. He is hoping to bring family, historical and educational films old and new to the gardens and back them up with talks from the Blue Badge guides, other historical and local groups. As we have more details come through we will let the Council know.

The Common

This year saw a mixed response to some events on the Common, with all covid restrictions lifted some people chose the outdoor option to help keep transmission rates down and make people feel more comfortable coming to the events. All the events had a large number of attendees and went off without any trouble, the local police were happy. People stayed in hotels, ate in restaurants and cafes and brought business into the town centre. Not all events were to everyone's liking but we have had a number of emails in support of and thanking SWTC for allowing these events to happen in our town, usually they take place in London and larger towns. A few of the DJ's who came to play at the Ibiza Chillout party flew in from Ibiza especially for the event, they promoted it all over their social media which brought people into the town who may not have ever visited. The age range for this weekend of events was between 30 – 65, with a large number of 40+ bracket at the Ibiza Chillout Party.

Off the Beaten Truck (OTBT) have been operating a Street Food Night on Thursdays from March – November from the Common. We take a rent form this, each month. This is an event that is wholly staffed by OTBT so no staffing outlay for SWTC. During the winter months they are using the Railway Arms as a base to operate from as the Common is far too wet to pull onto. This year, the OTBT events concluded with a summer food night in the market square, it was a great success with people enjoying food, drink and music from a local DJ. It has been fabulous working with Beca and the OTBT crew over the last few years, we have seen their business model go from strength to strength, they have built a fantastic group of traders who offer amazing food from all over the world. They offer food at the Cambridge Food Park and all across Cambridge and Essex, with many of the traders living locally.

The Common is looking busy again for next year with charity fun days, car shows, fun fair and circuses booked in already. There will undoubtedly be further events hosted by SWTC including the King's Coronation and Armed Forces Day.

Table 4: Income from The Common and other Public Open Spaces

Year	Other Open Spaces
2017/18	£14,399
2018/19	£16,980
2019/20	£10,872
2020/21	£5,578
2021/22	£9,865
2022/23	2022 to October - £28,750

Golden Acre Community Centre

Golden Acre was significantly affected by Covid with a few classes not returning due to poor attendance figures or the classes were for older people who have not returned to these activities. Fortunately, these free spaces have been filled by other existing hirers adding in additional classes or moving classes to the Golden Acre from other venues. Golden Acre is still hugely popular for children's parties, with many of the weekends over the winter months fully booked with 2 parties a day.

We have welcomed a new customer to the GACC, a Warhammer gaming group who meet 4 times a year. They operate over a weekend with battles taking place Saturday and Sunday with presentations of awards at the end of the weekend. They have grown and become so popular they will be meeting in the Town Hall next year. Their popularity and presence has even caught the eye of companies who make the gaming boards and now sponsor the event. Next year, when in the Town Hall, they will live stream the event as it is so popular they do not have the space for everyone to play. Their tickets for the event sold out in hours with a waiting list of nearly 100 people who want to join and battle. They came to us and asked who we would use for catering, they have been working with OTBT who provide the catering for the event with a food truck at the hall to provide 2 meals which are included in their ticket price.

Table 5: Golden Acre Income

Year	Golden Acre Income
2017/18	£20,378
2018/19	£22,891
2020/21	£24,853
2021/22	£4,047
2021/22	£19,129
2022/23 year to date	£12,718 actual year to date £10,782 anticipated income to year end £23,500 anticipated total annual income

Saffron Walden Market

The success and virtues of SW Market are well-known and evidenced by a range of indicators, including a swathe of national market awards, long-standing regular traders, a large trader waiting list, positive posts from visitors/residents along with excellent working relationships with all market traders.

The market has recognised a healthy income for a number of years, this the result of cost-savings on operational costs along with a concerted effort to increase income from regular and casual traders. Income is shown below:

Table 6: Market Income

Year	Market income
2017/18	£74,967
2018/19	£81,321
2019/20	£84,226
2020/21	£48,368
2021/22	£83,795
2022/23 to date	£49,659 actual year to date £47,841 anticipated income to year end £97,500 anticipated total annual income

It is likely the market has reached full income capacity as it is restricted by its footprint, and no further stalls or concessions can fit on the market space.

Summary

This report has brought together and recorded the income derived since 2017/18 from Town Council bookings. Notably this report does not seek to recognise all income (for example income from the cemetery and income from events are omitted) but it does recognise income from the hiring of Town Council assets. Committee receives monthly reports on the total Town Council income.

Year	Total Income
2017/18	£129,687
2018/19	£157,555
2019/20	£155,647
2020/21	£61,759 (income affected by covid)
2021/22	£144,071
2022/23 to date	£117,788 actual year to date £83,962 anticipated income to year end £201,750.00 anticipated total annual income