

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	11 July 2012	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2452
TITLE:	Consideration of the Consultation and Options for the Future Use of Victoria Hall, Radstock	
WARD:	Radstock	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 - Copy of letter seeking consultation Appendix 2 - Copy of Questionnaire Appendix 3 - Summary of responses Appendix 4 - Response from Radstock Town Council		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 This report provides initial findings from the community consultation exercise undertaken in respect of Victoria Hall, Radstock and considers opportunities and possible options to take forward for the future use of the building.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 The initial outcomes of the Consultation Exercise are noted.

2.2 Because Crèche, Youth Club and Health Facilities are already being provided out of Greystones and the adjoining Children's/Youth Centre, and are regarded as well located, they are not included in the options to be progressed further.

2.3 Officers are requested to undertake more detailed assessments on the feasibility of adapting the building to make it suitable for a mixed community, meeting and exhibition space; which would also offer ongoing snooker facilities. Also to examine the scope for, and benefits of, locating the library in to the building

2.4 As part of this process, consideration is given to the benefits of retaining the caretaker's house as part of the facility or investigate the potential for its disposal to deliver wider community benefits.

2.5 A further report is made to Cabinet in September to provide detailed information on the options including ongoing revenue implications.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The building is known to be in need of substantial works to bring it in to repair and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. These works are estimated to be in the order of £250,000 which includes the provision of a lift access to the first floor.
- 3.2 Potential sources for the estimated £250,000 works, include the Radstock Regeneration Fund provisionally approved by Council in February 2012, Section 106 funds from the Alcan development in Westfield and the Council's Capital Contingency fund.
- 3.3 Current income from lettings is around £5,000 per annum and, although the works would be expected to result in new lettings, there is a need to look at uses which would increase income. The full revenue implications will be considered in light of the options now being further developed for report back to Cabinet in September.

4 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live – The building has the potential to provide a sustainable focus to the town centre, to the benefit of the local community.

5 THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 Victoria Hall was built in the latter part of the 19th Century and comprises a mixed use community facility including Offices, Reading Room, Billiard and Refreshment Rooms on the ground floor and Meeting Hall on the upper floor. There is a linked caretaker's house to the rear.
- 5.2 For the last 25 years the Hall has been used as a community facility and an administrative base for Norton Radstock Town Council. The new Radstock Town Council vacated the building at the end of February 2012.
- 5.3 The building has gradually fallen in to disrepair and it is estimated that a sum in the region of £250,000 is now required to bring the building back into a condition that would be suitable for its on-going use.
- 5.4 Initially the Hall was kept open for existing users and for playing snooker but detailed electrical inspections highlighted issues that created fires risks and potential danger of death with no immediate scope for resolution, coupled with asbestos which will require controlled removal before the electrical works can be resolved.
- 5.5 The Hall is now held vacant pending the outcome of consultation over its future.
- 5.6 Arrangements are in hand to remove asbestos from the building to facilitate further renovation.

Consultation

- 5.7 On week commencing 5th May letters were posted to residents of Radstock and Westfield seeking views on the future of Radstock Hall Appendix 1. It enclosed a simple questionnaire/feedback form which was replicated on the Council's website. Sample attached at Appendix 2.
- 5.8 The deadline for returns was 15th June. A summary of responses is attached at Appendix 3. Also attached is the response from Radstock Town Council (Appendix 4)
- 5.9 As respondents could choose as many suggestions as they felt appropriate and could make additional proposals, this graph shows the number of respondents who ticked those options provided on the questionnaire. The majority of respondents selected at least 4 options.
- 5.10 Of the respondents 255 (80.2%) indicated that they preferred to use the building for community uses. 94 respondents (29.6%), thought that office use would be desirable; of the suggested options this was the least favoured use. The choices of activity most selected were the use as community facilities, meeting space and exhibition space. There also strong support for the snooker facilities to be retained as well as the potential for food/beverage sales.
- 5.11 The recent development of Greystones and the adjoining Youth Centre, to facilitate a Children's Centre, linked Healthcare facilities as well as the ongoing Youth Centre provision is seen as accommodating for these needs within the Town and taking forward these options for further work is not recommended.
- 5.12 The potential to relocate the library to the Hall may provide benefits in terms of allowing for extended opening through use of volunteers, shared services etc.
- 5.13 As part of the process, consideration should be given to the benefits of retaining the caretaker's house as part of the facility or investigate the potential for its disposal to deliver wider community benefits.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance. The review is at an early stage and uses that emerge will be subject to risk assessment as they are developed.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An EqIA has not been completed because the options that arise from the public consultation process are not yet sufficiently developed. This will be examined as the process is taken forward.

8 RATIONALE

8.1 The initial analysis of the options allows for a broad picture of preferred uses to be established which, coupled with linked developments within the town, point at a use based on community facilities, meeting space and exhibition space. There is also strong support for the snooker facilities to be retained. The case for the use of this building for crèche, youth and health facilities is considered unproven given the recent development of a multi-use facility at the former Youth Club.

8.2 Further information in respect of the options available to deliver the proposed mix is required and this work can be undertaken to be able to give a firm view of the next stages for September Cabinet.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 To make a firm decision on the preferred final option at this stage without the further work indicated above is considered premature.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Ward Councillors; Cabinet members; Town Council; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Local Residents; Community Interest Groups; Youth Council; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer

10.2 Ward Councillors, the local community, businesses, Town Council and Community Interest Groups have had the opportunity to respond to this consultation exercise as described within the report and Appendix 4. Council officers and relevant Members have had the opportunity to comment on the draft of this report and their comments have been incorporated in to the body of the report.

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Social Inclusion; Sustainability; Property; Young People; Other Legal Considerations

12 ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	