



**TOWNS &
COMMUNITIES
OVERVIEW &
SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

14 November 2011

REPORT

Subject Heading:

**Requisition of Cabinet Decision -
Review of Community Halls - 26
October 2011**

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In accordance with paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rules, a requisition signed by two Members representing more than one Group (Councillors Clarence Barrett and Keith Darvill) have called in the decision of the Cabinet dated 26 October 2011. The text of the requisition appears at the end of this report (as Appendix A):

CABINET DECISION

At its meeting on 26 October 2011, Cabinet considered a report concerning a review of Community Hall provision within the borough. (A copy of the Cabinet report is attached as Appendix B. A copy of the draft Cabinet minute will follow)

Cabinet RESOLVED:

1. To the closure of Dukes Hall, as from April 1st 2012 and to delegate to the Lead Members for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities authority to agree terms for its disposal.
2. To agree to demolish Old Windmill Hall now, to be initially funded from Capital Contingency, which will be reimbursed from the Dukes Hall receipt
3. In principle, to a proportion of the capital receipt arising from the disposal of Dukes Hall being utilised to deal with urgent repair and maintenance issues at the New Windmill Hall and Tweed Way Hall, assuming that these two halls transfer to a community organisation under a Lease Agreement. To delegate the decision on the level of capital spend from the Dukes Hall receipt on alternative community halls managed by Culture and Leisure Services, to the Lead Member for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities.
4. In principle, to the transfer of the management of the New Windmill Hall to a community group or, in the event of this not proving possible, bring a further report back to Cabinet for consideration of subsequent options.
5. In principle, to the transfer of the management of the Tweed Way Hall to a community group or, in the event of this not proving possible, bring a further report back to Cabinet for consideration of subsequent options.
6. To delegate decisions on all property matters associated with the transfer of New Windmill Hall and / or Tweed Way Hall, including the criteria for selecting the preferred voluntary group if more than one group expresses an interest in managing one of the halls, the selection of the preferred community group (s) and finalising lease terms, to the Lead Member for Value and the Lead Member for Culture, Towns and Communities.
7. In principle, to protecting existing bookings at those community halls that transfer to a community group, to be set out in relevant agreements;
8. To the demolition of the Old Windmill Hall building given the danger it poses to people who might try to enter the site, subject to the Dukes Hall site being disposed of and to be funded from the associated capital receipt
9. To receive a further report on the option of disposing of the Old Windmill Hall site and adjoining land, to secure further investment in the New Windmill Hall facility for the purposes of leasing the building to a community group and surrounding facilities, in the context of

improving the local environment and taking account of the setting of nearby listed buildings.

10. In principle to Cottons Hall being reopened when a Lease can be agreed with a suitable community organisation or, if this does not prove possible, to receive a further report on the future of the site.

REASONS FOR REQUISITION

- A) That the Cabinet Report dated 26th October 2011 did not provide adequate and detailed information to facilitate an informed opinion on the proposals for the future of Community Halls referred to in the report. The report should have set out in detail inter alia the following:
 - 1) the capital cost of refurbishing each hall (paragraph 1.5 of the Report alludes to this but fails to explain);
 - 2) the current income and expenditure budgets for running each of the halls;
 - 3) the breakdown as to how the proposed revenue budget savings (£60k in 2012/13 and £107k in 2013/14) will be achieved;
 - 4) the approximate market value of capital receipt should Dukes Hall be sold and information as to whether the proposed sale includes the adjoining car park;
 - 5) the future plans for the Old Windmill site and the approximate resale value of the land upon which it is sited;
 - 6) the future of Cottons Hall should a lessee not be found;
- B) There is an absence of information about the consideration given (if any) to an alternative strategy of refurbishing the Halls without having to sell Dukes Hall.
- C) There is an absence of information about the past and possible improved/alternative marketing strategy that could be adopted to promote the use of Community Halls.
- D) There appears to be little or no consultation with the existing users regarding the proposals and a lack of information about the timescales involved.
- E) There remains uncertainty about the future of New Windmill and Tweed Way if lessees are not identified and contractual arrangements entered into. Recommendations 4 and 5 of the Report state that a further report will come back to Cabinet if lessees are not found, but paragraph 4.1 states that the halls will close if no lessees are found.

- F) There appears to be inadequate support and planning and an absence of assurances provided to the existing user groups at Dukes Hall who may have to relocate.
- G) Recommendation 7 in the Report indicates that existing bookings will be protected –however it does not state whether this protection extends to regular bookings as well as one-off bookings.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers the requisition of the decision of Cabinet and determines whether to uphold it.