

THE MANAGEMENT OF ST GEORGES HALL, CALSHOT**1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The management of St Georges Church hall has recently come under the spotlight following the successful completion of works to improve the play area and access adjacent to Council owned housing in Tristan Close, Calshot.
- 1.2 The area in question is known to be deprived and has a number of social and community needs for the residents in the immediate area and this was reinforced following the Participatory Needs Assessment (PNA) carried out during 2005. As a result of the PNA the Council committed to investment in the area to improve play and social facilities in the area. St Georges Hall is adjacent to the play area and Tristan Close, a small Council owned estate, and is the only community facility available in the immediate area.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The hall has been leased since the late 1970s. The current lease dates back to 1990 for a term of 28 years. Initially the rent was set at £1000 per annum but this was subsequently reduced to £500 per annum because of repeated funding shortfalls. The rent is reviewed periodically on a 5 year cycle, the next review being 2008.
- 2.2 The lease provides that the tenant shall pay the rent, rates and insurance on the building and maintain the structure. It also provides the constitution for the Trust and the Management Committee which oversees the running and management of the hall.
- 2.3 In recent years there has been some difficulty in establishing a properly constituted Management Committee and the burden of running the hall has fallen on one or two local residents. This has placed some strain on the individuals concerned, and it would be appropriate here to recognise the efforts they have made to keep the premises open.
- 2.4 Notwithstanding the notable efforts made to keep the hall open, the limited opportunity to raise revenue from the few bookings and activities that do occur has placed significant constraints on the ability to invest in the upkeep of the premises.
- 2.5 As mentioned above the current arrangements for the hall management puts the responsibility for repairs and maintenance fully on the Trustees. They have never been fully able to completely fulfil these responsibilities and the Council have been required on occasion to step in and carry out repairs to protect their asset. Recently this has included the replacement of the boiler at a cost of nearly £2,000.

- 2.6 Cabinet members may recall a similar situation existed earlier in 2007 with arrangements for the management of Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre. In this situation the Trustees were unable to continue with their responsibilities and the Council have now taken responsibility for all maintenance and repair but allowed the community to manage the Centre with support from Totton College.
- 2.7 Arrangements similar to that at Blackfield Neighbourhood Centre would ensure that fabric of the building is maintained while this valuable community asset is protected, at the same time ensuring that the community continue to be involved in the management of the facility. Such proposals will hopefully ensure that the community continues to have an active involvement in the area and this will engender good community spirit and help to lessen social problems in this area. This may not happen if the Council fully take on the direct management of the Hall. Due to the nature of the current use and the location, planning constraints would be severely restrict the scope for alternative uses and thus the market value of the premises.

3 LOCAL NEED

- 3.1 As previously mentioned the local area of Calshot and particularly Tristan Close is one of very high social need. St Georges Hall and the adjacent play area provides an important facility to those families living in the immediate area.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Discussions have been held with the existing Trustees regarding the future arrangements for managing the building and ensuring the maximum amount of community use continues.
- 4.2 As a result of these discussions, Officers believe that the Council should fully take on responsibility for the repairs and maintenance of the Hall but delegate full responsibility for the day-to-day management to an appropriately constituted Hall Management Committee comprising local representatives.
- 4.3 The proposal would see the current lease being replaced with a new agreement which would enable any revenue generated from hall bookings to pay for the day today running costs, (utilities and consumables etc) but would relieve the Committee from the burden of expensive repairs.
- 4.4 As the current lease sets out the constitution of the Trust and Management Committee there is a formal process that would need to be followed to terminate the existing arrangements. It is proposed that officers would assist the current Committee in this process.
- 4.5 The proposed manner of dealing with the repairs to the Hall and possible management arrangements have been discussed with existing Trustees and they have indicated that they would be in favour of such proposals.
- 4.6 The arrangements suggested above would ensure that the Hall remains open and continues to provide a community facility for local residents. Such arrangements would also ensure that local Trustees or other residents would not be faced with

onerous financial liabilities that past experience has shown that they struggle to meet.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Calshot is an area of high social need and the Hall is a centre point of activity in the immediate area. Although no significant episodes of vandalism have occurred to the Hall in recent years, if the building were to close it is inevitable that incidents of vandalism would increase.

5.2 In ensuring the Hall remains open and viable the services that can be provided in the building provide an important local resource and clearly will help to reduce the incidence of crime and disorder in the area.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no significant environmental implications as a direct result of this report.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As previously mentioned the local area of Calshot is one of very high social need. St Georges Hall and the adjacent play area provides an important facility to those families living in the immediate area. The proposals will help the community to have an active involvement in the area which in turn will engender good community spirit.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The costs that will be incurred by the Council in meeting the day to day and on-going repair and maintenance liabilities are estimated to be approximately £15,000 over the next three-year period.

8.2 Whilst no specific budget allocation has been made for these costs it is considered that sufficient funds can be made available from within the Housing Revenue Account to meet this necessary expenditure.

9 HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

9.1 I am aware of the importance of St Georges Hall and adjacent play area to the local community at Calshot and fully support the recommendation contained in this report to ensure that the community use is supported and continues.

10 EMPLOYEMENT, HEALTH AND WELL BEING PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

10.1 I strongly support the recommendations as I am aware of the importance of St Georges Hall and the adjacent play area to the local community. Having been involved in a number of meetings with the local community in the recent past I know how the facility is valued by local residents and how crucial it is to ensure that Calshot and the immediate surrounding areas are supported by New Forest District Council in the positive way proposed in this report.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That the proposals for the future management of St George's Hall, Calshot be agreed.

For Further Information Please contact: Background Papers

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