

**Heather House Community Centre**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Communities, Housing & Environment Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	John Littlemore, Head of Housing & Communities
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Matt Roberts, Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Park Wood

**Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the situation at Heather House following the report presented to the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and subsequent decision to carry out repairs to bring Heather House to a useable standard while plans are developed for a replacement.

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That Heather House remains open, unless there is significant deterioration to the fabric of the building or the roof, and any repairs and maintenance necessary be undertaken.
2. That since the current options for a replacement facility have reached an impasse, plans for a replacement facility should be suspended for the time being.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Communities, Housing & Environment	19 June 2018

# Heather House Community Centre

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the situation at Heather House following the report presented to the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and subsequent decision to carry out repairs to bring Heather House to a useable standard while plans are developed for a replacement.

## 2 REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

- 2.1 The repairs required to bring the building to a useable standard where it could be reopened included: replacing the two boilers with a single boiler; patching the roof and gutters; and; carrying out external repairs needed. Once complete these repairs would extend the life of the building for around two years and give time for plans to provide a replacement community centre to be developed and a costed proposal presented to the Committee.
- 2.2 As of the date of this report the most essential repairs have been completed at a cost of £23,855 as follows:
- The gutters have been cleared and leaking sections of the roof repaired at a cost of £5,960.
  - A new boiler and controls have been installed at a cost of £15,320.
  - Repairs to the flooring in Chamberlain Hall (the main hall) have been undertaken at a cost of £3,050. This repair was necessary as the cold and damp had caused the floor to warp.
- 2.3 This work has been funded from the corporate property capital maintenance budget.

## 3 BOOKINGS

- 3.1 With the repairs complete the hall is now heated and is dry. Bookings for the hall are being taken direct via [HeatherHouse@Maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:HeatherHouse@Maidstone.gov.uk) until the web form goes live.
- 3.2 Reed Hall, the smaller of the two halls at Heather House, will be used in future exclusively by Maidstone Boxing Club. A lease with the club has been agreed in principle and they are in the process of decorating the hall and fitting it out for use as a boxing gym.
- 3.3 The Iman from Maidstone Mosque has been in conversation with us and wishes to use the main hall for prayers from July for a period of a year until the building improvements being carried out to the mosque on Mote Road are completed around July 2019. They will be using the main hall on Friday evenings for two hours from the 6<sup>th</sup> July and wish to use the hall on Saturday mornings for two hours from September onwards.
- 3.4 The majority of the clubs who frequently used the hall before it closed have now returned. In addition we have received a number of enquiries for bookings for parties and other events; this increase is following the promotion of the hall by Cllr Matt Burton and others in the locality.

## **4 AVAILABLE OPTIONS - BUSINESS CASE FOR A REPLACEMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE**

- 4.1 On the 14 November 2017 the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee took the decision to keep the facility open. When this decision was made it was understood that the potential long-term options to rebuild or refurbish Heather House facility would broadly be as follows;
- A. New community centre and GP surgery / health hub funded by redevelopment of the Royal British Legion (RBL) site, which is owned by the Council, for residential.
  - B. New community centre funded by redevelopment of the Royal British Legion (RBL) site, which is owned by the Council, for residential.
  - C. New community centre and GP surgery / health hub solely on the existing Heather House site.
  - D. New community centre solely on the existing Heather House site.
  - E. Comprehensively refurbished community centre solely on the existing Heather House site.
- 4.2 Officers sought the views from ward members as to the preferred redevelopment option before entering into discussions with relevant parties. Options A, B and C require the cooperation of the RBL and/or the West Kent NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- 4.3 The RBL have a lease of 125 years which does not expire until 2114. Officers have approached their treasurer to explore the possibility of entering into a negotiation with them to re-provide their facility as part of a broader redevelopment of both sites. Regrettably, the RBL are resistant to this concept, and it is understood that Cllr Matt Burton has received a similar response.
- 4.4 Officers have also met with senior officers within the West Kent NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to gauge their appetite to either provide a GP surgery, Health Hub, or indeed a hybrid of the two, at the site. Once again, the response was lukewarm at best, as the CCG are currently undertaking a significant review of their estate, and will not be in a position to make decisions on the matter for the time being. Furthermore, they appear to have reservations as to the suitability of the site for their needs.
- 4.5 Therefore, given the impasse with both the RBL and CCG, regrettably options A, B and C are not currently deliverable. If the position of either RBL and /or CCG ever changes, they can of course be revisited.
- 4.6 At this time only options D and E are possible options but neither are financially viable, the reasons are as follows:
- 4.7 Option D – The current Heather House facility is of almost 700m<sup>2</sup> of size. To demolish and rebuild to a modern standard would cost in the region of £2,000 per square metre, so £1.4m plus fees (of around 5%). Any uplift in bookings and income that this investment could generate would not come close to justifying this quantum of investment from a commercial perspective. There are not presently any S106 contributions that could be applied to this type of community use either, nor does it feature on the CIL S123 list.

- 4.8 Option E – To fully refurbish the existing facility to a modern standard would cost in the region of £1,000 per square metre, so £700k plus fees (of around 5%). Any uplift in bookings and income that this investment could generate would not come close to justifying this quantum of investment from a commercial perspective, and ultimately a refurbishment would be unlikely to address all the current design limitations that presently act as a barrier to commercial return on the existing facility.
- 4.9 On this basis, at the present time, there is no commercially viable business case to bring about a significant improvement of the current Heather House facility. This could change as a result of any future decisions made by the RBL and the CCG, and officers will of course continue to engage with them both, and should the situation change, Members would of course be made aware, and then options A & B could be revisited.

## **5 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 That Heather House remains open, unless there is significant deterioration to the fabric of the building or the roof, and for any repairs and maintenance necessary to be undertaken.
- 5.2 Given the situation as described in section four above the current options for a replacement facility have reached an impasse. Until circumstances change it is proposed that plans for a replacement facility are suspended for the time being.

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## **6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 6.1 The repairs are complete and bookings are being taken for the hall. No additional work is required at this time.

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## **7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>		
<b>Risk Management</b>		
<b>Financial</b>	When the Committee decided in November 2017 to re-open Heather House, it was recognised that it would not be able to manage within its original budget owing to the loss of income. It was therefore agreed as part of the budget-setting process for 2018/19 to add £25,000 per annum to the budget for Heather House, to be offset by savings elsewhere in the	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team

	Committee's portfolio. The ongoing provision of community facilities at Heather House needs to remain within the amended budget.	
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Community Partnerships and Resilience Manager
<b>Legal</b>	All necessary legal documentation in respect of the permitted occupation of Heather House should be approved by Legal Services before completion. The Local Government Act 1972, section 123(2) requires that the disposal by way of a lease exceeding seven years or more must not be for a consideration or value which is less than the best that can reasonably be obtained. Valuation advice should be obtained to ensure that the Council complies with its obligation under section 123(2).	Head of Legal Partnership
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with the Data Protection legislation.	Head of Legal Partnership
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service and will not therefore require an equalities impact assessment	Community Partnerships and Resilience Manager
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The recommendation will have no impact on Crime and Disorder providing the Hall is managed within existing parameters.	Community Partnerships and Resilience Manager
<b>Procurement</b>		

## 8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None provided.