

Policy Committee – 21st July 2015

SKIPTON TOWN HALL: FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE CONCERT HALL



Report of the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

1. Purpose of Report –

To seek Members agreement for the preparation of a feasibility study for the restoration of the Concert Hall and ancillary rooms within Skipton Town Hall.

2. Recommendations –

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree to make available up to £20,000 from the Council's New Homes Bonus Localism Reserve to fund the costs of preparing a feasibility study for the restoration of the Concert Hall and ancillary rooms within Skipton Town Hall.

3. Introduction –

- 3.1 As at Minute POL.556(1)/13-14, the Business Plan for the refurbishment and redevelopment of Skipton Town Hall was approved. The key aims of the Business Plan are:
 - To provide a venue that is a focal point for events and community use;
 - To restore and retain the historical characteristics and upgrade the overall fabric of the building;
 - To provide high quality commercial and leasing opportunities.
- 3.2 A key part of the vision for the redevelopment of the Town Hall is the restoration of the 1860s Concert Hall to create a multifunctional community events space that will benefit the visitor and evening economies of Skipton and the Southern Dales.
- 3.3 In order to progress this element of the Business Plan, it is proposed that the Council commissions the services of a multi-disciplined team, with experience and technical expertise of developing and operating multifunctional performance venues, to prepare a feasibility study into the restoration of the Concert Hall, including the backstage and ancillary rooms. An outline of the work that the team will be required to undertake is attached at Appendix A.

3.4 In addition to testing whether the restoration of the Concert Hall is likely to fulfil the key principles set out in the Business Plan for the redevelopment of the Town Hall, the feasibility study will provide the information needed to support any future bid for capital investment from external funders, such as the Arts Council. The feasibility study will examine how the restoration of the Concert Hall can best comply with the key principles by:

- Ensuring that the space leads towards the Town Hall becoming a financially sustainable building;
- Establishing a benchmark margin for commercial events;
- Showing how the space can be structured to maximise income from commercial events.

4. **Bidding for External Funding** -

4.1 It is proposed that an approach to external funders, such as the Arts Council is made to see whether they would be interested in providing financial assistance to help fund the costs of restoring the Concert Hall.

4.2 The Arts Council administers a capital investment programme for the improvement of infrastructure that will enhance access to and enjoyment of arts and culture for everyone. Although a competitive application process, applicants must first obtain written permission to apply from the Arts Council. Permission to apply will be based on the applicant's ability to demonstrate:

- That the future capital and revenue needs of the project have been taken into account
- That the project is financially viable
- There is evidence that the project will make a significant contribution to the aims of the funding programme - enabling great art and culture for everyone
- The number of people who will benefit, such as artists, audiences and users and how the project will affect the quality and quantity of art activity
- The project is sufficiently developed and that capital expenditure will take place within a specified timeframe
- That the necessary permissions have been obtained

The proposed feasibility study will provide the information needed by the Arts Council for a decision as to whether they will give permission to the Council to apply for capital funding. Grants are available between £100,000 and £499,999.

4.3 Grants are awarded on an annual basis. It is expected that the timescales for this year (2015) will be published in July, with applications to be submitted by October/November. It is therefore important that preparation of the feasibility study commences as soon as possible to ensure that the information needed is available and will enable the Council to meet the timeframe for submission of applications. This will be the final year that the capital grant funding will operate in its present form.

5. **New Homes Bonus Localism Reserve** -

- 5.1 As at Minute POL.384/11-12, it was agreed that the Council's New Homes Bonus receipts should contribute to the provision of agreed infrastructure to support the communities and economy of Craven. The proposal was for the monies to be split between three priority actions – the Localism Reserve, the Infrastructure Reserve and the Empty Homes Reserve.
- 5.2 The purpose of the Localism Reserve is to support the development of community and business groups and third sector organisations to enable them to increase their ability to provide activities and services to the communities of Craven. It was agreed at Minute POL.409/11-12, that the monies should be used to support activity that contributed to the aims of the Council; would improve service efficiency, outputs and innovation; and deliver tangible results. As the focus of the feasibility study contributes to the purpose of the Localism Reserve, it is proposed that the cost of the work is funded from this funding pot.

6. **Implications**

4.1 **Financial Implications** –

As at Minute POL.384/11-12, it was resolved that 15% of the Council's New Homes Bonus receipts will be allocated to the Localism Reserve. As the level of investment available to commit through the Localism Reserve is directly related to income received from Government, it was agreed that decisions will only be presented to Members once sufficient funding has been confirmed.

The services of the multi-disciplined team needed to prepare the feasibility study will be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.2 **Legal Implications** –

There are no legal implications as a result of approving the recommendation in this report.

4.3 **Contribution to Corporate Priorities** –

The proposal in this report directly contributes to the delivery of the Council Plan (2015 – 2018) through the Financial Resilience priority, in particular the action to implement the Business Plan to restore Skipton Town Hall as a sustainable and vibrant community venue.

4.4 **Risk Management** -

If the recommendation is not approved, it will put the Council at risk of missing out on the opportunity to (a) ensure that the Concert Hall is used effectively to maximise its potential to generate income and (b) secure significant capital funding from the Arts Council.

5. **Consultations with Others** –

Legal Service
Financial Service
Asset and Property Management
Museum Service

6. **Access to Information : Background Documents** –

No

7. **Author of the Report** –

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Note : Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

8. **Appendices** –

Appendix A – Specification for the preparation of a Feasibility Study into the restoration of the Concert Hall within Skipton Town Hall

SKIPTON TOWN HALL: PREPARATION OF A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE CONCERT HALL

QUOTATION SPECIFICATION

1. Background to the Project:

1.1 Craven District Council is undertaking a long-term project to restore and improve Skipton Town Hall as a sustainable, vibrant community venue to educate, inspire and entertain. The key aims of the project are:

- To provide a venue that is a focal point for events and community use;
- To restore and retain the historical characteristics and upgrade the overall fabric of the building;
- To provide high quality commercial and leasing opportunities.

2. Purpose:

2.1 The Council requires an appropriately qualified and experienced consultant to undertake a feasibility study into the restoration of the Concert Hall as a multifunctional space that will:

- Enable Skipton residents and groups to hold events and activities that support their communities, and
- Provide a high quality venue for music, theatre and event

2.2 A key element of the consultation undertaken by the Council when preparing the initial Business Plan for the restoration of Skipton Town Hall was an increase in the diversity and quality of professional events programmed in the building. The Council would like to ensure that the Town Hall has a strong identity and reputation for performances and events; that it will be a major cultural venue with regional appeal attracting audiences from outside the District.

2.3 The study will be used to inform all future discussions with potential funders, so it is important that the report and supporting evidence is appropriate for these requirements.

3. Work Required:

3.1 To successfully achieve the purpose of the brief the appointed contractor will be required to deliver the following tasks:

- An assessment of the demographics of existing and potential new audiences, including an evaluation of how well the existing space performs with regard to meeting their needs and expectations.
- A review of existing and potential uses/activities including an evaluation of the likely impact on the attractiveness and viability of the space overall.

- Assessment of the space, furniture and equipment requirements for the different uses/activities, including consideration of whether new space is required, or whether the existing space is sufficient to deliver the vision.
- An appraisal of the physical environment, with recommendations of how the space can be designed to ensure that it is accessible to all; that audiences, visitors and equipment can move through and around the space effortlessly.
- Investigate what changes are likely to happen within the creative, arts and culture sectors over the next few years and how the space can be designed to ensure that these changes are able to be accommodated easily and cost-effectively, including the opportunities for new media or new performance styles.
- Identify how the proposals for the future use of the Concert Hall compares with other spaces/buildings used for similar purposes.
- Identify any specialist requirements such as heating/cooling, acoustic and lighting, including an assessment of the likely implications for the design and viability of the space.
- An assessment of the impact that the project will have on the community, artistic and cultural provision within Skipton and the Southern Dales area, including projected benefits to the economy. The assessment should also consider the project's contribution to the region's artistic and cultural offer.
- Advise and provide recommendations on the priority order of the various elements and spaces and what would be the minimum provision needed to deliver the vision.
- A comprehensive financial appraisal to include capital fund raising and subsequent operational revenue cost implications. The appraisal should consider the likely overall project requirements and what are the realistic possible funding sources; what are the realistic estimates of revenues, including expectations in order of sales and audience/user spending and which assumptions most expose the project to financial problems.

3.2 The study should be informed through engagement with Council officers, the users and wider community including the Skipton Town Partnership, the Skipton Chamber of Trade and Commerce and Skipton Town Council.