

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## DELEGATED DECISION

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ALEXANDER HALL, ROCKY LANE, HESWALL</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>HESWALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>HEAD OF UNIVERSAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to declare Alexander Hall, Rocky Lane, Heswall a surplus asset and seek authority to dispose of it at auction.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on 15th January 2009, identified a number of facilities, including Alexander Hall, which should be transferred to community management, where the community expressed an interest.
- 2.2 Alexander Hall is a timber, pre-fabricated building, as shown edged red on the attached plan, which was constructed in the 1960's and has been used as a community hall until recently. The type of construction means it has a limited life which was endorsed by an independent survey.
- 2.3 Alexander Hall, along with the nearby Heswall Hall, was advertised as available for community management in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer policy. A selection process identified a group representing the existing users of the Halls, who organised themselves to form the Heswall Halls Steering Group, who developed a proposal involving both halls, which was approved by Cabinet on 14 October 2010. The steering group then became the Heswall Hall Community Trust (HHCT). Its proposal aimed to take over facilities which, at that time, generated significant losses and to operate them in such a way as to generate a profit. On this basis, the group's proposal revolved around developing Heswall Hall as the main focus of community activities and to gradually relocate users of Alexander Hall to Heswall Hall. This proposal only required the Group's use of Alexander Hall for a short time and was transferred to them on a three year lease, which could be terminated by the group as and when the facility was no longer required. The group successfully relocated activities to Heswall Hall in a much shorter time and handed Alexander Hall back to the Council in December 2011.
- 2.4 As part of the process of transferring Heswall and Alexander Halls, the Heswall Hall Community Trust made it clear that it viewed Alexander Hall as an important community facility and that any receipt from a future sale should, in some way, be made available to fund community activities in the locality. Members therefore agreed that the transfer of Heswall Hall should include provision for the Trust to be able to apply for a portion of a receipt generated by a future sale of Alexander Hall, to fund future community based projects at Heswall Hall. A legal agreement sets out the basis of determining the money available to the Trust, which in essence reflects a share of the proceeds of sale,

less monies spent by the Council from its repair and maintenance budget on the refurbishment of Heswall Hall. The amount available to the Trust is capped and the maximum figure which it could apply for is in the region of £25,100.

- 2.5 Alexander Hall is now vacant and unused and, due to its construction and condition, is unsuitable for any long term uses. It is therefore proposed that the property be offered for sale at auction. A separate report outlining the reserve price will be produced based on the auctioneer's recommendation, once the interest in the property has been assessed.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 There is a risk that the property will not sell at auction, however, the Council will only be charged a fee if the sale is successful.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 As the property is not required by the Council, a sale by auction is considered to be the most appropriate manner of disposing of the property. Consideration has been given to a joint sale with 1 Rocky Lane, but the owner is unwilling to consider this at this time.

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 No consultation has been undertaken at this stage. If approved and sold by auction, the auctioneer will undertake a promotional exercise to advertise the availability of the property at its auction, which will include promotion through its website and auction catalogue.

### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 6.1 The property has previously been used by the community as a community hall. As outlined in the report, the activities have been relocated to Heswall Hall, along with other community facilities in the area. Consequently it is considered that Alexander Hall, as a community facility, is no longer required. However, any voluntary, community or faith groups interested in the building will be able to bid at the auction.

### **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 7.1 Should the property sell at auction, it will generate a receipt in excess of the reserve price detailed in a separate exempt report.
- 7.2 The Council will need to set aside a share of the sale proceeds, up to £25,100, to enable the HHCT to submit a scheme as set out in the report.
- 7.3 A sale will remove the financial liabilities relating to this property, albeit low as it is currently empty.

### **8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The disposal will require the preparation of appropriate legal documentation.
- 8.2 In accordance with the terms of the agreement with the Heswall Hall Community Trust, the Council will need to take in to account the terms of the legal agreement with the Trust and make funds available from the capital receipt, in order for the Trust to apply for funding of approved schemes.

## 9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

No because there is no relevance to equality.

## 10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The sale will result in a reduction in the Council's CO2 emissions.

## 11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The site is designated as part of the Primarily Residential Area in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), where new housing would be subject to compliance with UDP Policies HS4 'Criteria for New Housing Development' and HS10 'Backland Development'. Other uses would be considered against the criteria in UDP Policy HS15 'Non-Residential Uses in Primarily Residential Areas. Planning applications would also be currently assessed under Development Management Policies in the emerging Core Strategy, which has been approved by the Council as material consideration in planning decisions.

## 12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 That the property be declared surplus and authority be given to its disposal by auction on the terms described.

## 13.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 To make the best use of the council's property assets by declaring the property surplus and to seek authority to a disposal by auction.

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## APPENDICES

Location plan.

## REFERENCE MATERIAL

No reference material has been used in the preparation of this report.

## SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review	15 January 2009 14 October 2010
Cabinet – Community Asset Transfer – Heswall and Alexander Hall, Heswall	