

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014

<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 &amp; 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 seek authority to dispose of Alexander Hall, Rocky Lane, Heswall.

### 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. This background has previously been reported to the Portfolio Holder for Central and Support Services and the property was declared a surplus asset with the resolution to dispose of the property by auction. Subsequently the Council has appointed consultants, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), to undertake the marketing for the sale of a number of other significant Council assets. In order to ensure that any receipt for the sale of Alexander Hall is maximised it is considered more appropriate for LSH to undertake a full marketing exercise which would enable purchasers to fully explore the potential of the property, which is preferred in this instance over a disposal by auction. Accordingly LSH have been instructed to commence a marketing exercise with a view to securing a disposal. Their suggestion is to initially seek offers in excess of £300,000 and then assess the response. A disposal at this level requires a Cabinet approval and Members are therefore asked to authorise the disposal of Alexander Hall on terms which LSH, as the Council's consultant, confirm to be the best achievable.

### **3.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 3.1 There is a risk that the property will not sell, however, given its location it is felt this method is the best way of identifying a purchaser.

### **4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to a sale by auction, which would be a quick method of disposal, but a marketing exercise by LSH is considered to be the best method of maximising any potential receipt.

### **5.0 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The consultants are undertaking a full marketing exercise to advertise the availability of the property.

### **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 submit offers to the consultants.

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

- 7.1 Should the property sell, it will generate a receipt and will also remove any liability for the maintenance/security of the building and the cost of services.
- 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.

## **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 make funds available from the capital receipt in order for the Trust to apply for it to fund an approved scheme.

## **9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

The EIA can be viewed by following the link:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/law-hr-asset-management>

## **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 for conformity with the National Planning Framework and 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 authority be given to a disposal of Alexander Hall 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 disposing of this surplus asset.

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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)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet - Transforming Wirral - Strategic Asset Review</b>	<b>15 January 2009</b>
<b>Cabinet - Community Asset Transfer - Heswall and Alexander Hall, Heswall</b>	<b>14 October 2010</b>
<b>Delegated Decision - Alexander Hall, Rocky Lane, Heswall</b>	<b>23 July 2013</b>