

Proposals for the future use of the Desborough Suite, Maidenhead

Prepared for Cabinet by:

Cllr Claire Stretton, Champion of Culture for Maidenhead,
Vice-chair, Leisure Culture and Libraries Overview & Scrutiny Panel

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Executive Summary

The Desborough Suite is a valuable but underused resource sited adjacent to the York Road Opportunity Area. Last year, the theatre was completely unused on 174 days, almost half the year, including 29 Friday and 29 Saturday nights. This paper explores the potential future use of the facility taking into account the anticipated need of residents as the town centre population increases. The adopted Area Action Plan (AAP) *"places Community, Culture and Leisure at the centre of rejuvenation plans, to benefit both existing and future residents"* and calls for facilities to be provided to meet future need. The Council also has a Big Society manifesto commitment to *"allow greater community use of under-used council facilities"*.

Modern thinking, on providing a sustainable future for town centres and high streets, is based on offering a complete visitor experience, rather than relying on them being purely shopping destinations. The Desborough Suite is ideally placed, near the High Street, to add considerably to the town centre offer and would encourage residents to either, make a visit not currently planned, or to spend more time in the town when they do visit.

It is proposed that the Suite is separated from the Town Hall and given an independent identity as a Community Entertainment Centre. This would be achieved by expanding the premises to provide:

1. A Main Theatre – An enhanced theatre, with addition of a balcony, enabling an increase from 283 to approximately 475 seats. Seating in the stalls would still be retractable, allowing for receptions, dinners, large meetings or 'standing' theatre events
2. A Theatre Bar – Open every evening and weekends providing a valuable source of revenue, with the 'courtyard' car park being used for outside events at weekends and bank holidays
3. A Foyer, Box Office and Coffee Shop – Open full-time every day, serving food and bottled alcohol, also a valuable source of revenue, with gallery and exhibition space for local artists
4. A Club Room – This function room would be available for regular weekly/fortnightly 'clubs' which are open to attendance by the general public. e.g. Folk Club, Jazz Club etc. it would also be available to be hired ad-hoc for other events
5. A Little Theatre – With a lower seating capacity (c100), this would be used for smaller presentations, comedy, cabaret, etc. and a particularly useful resource for the local drama community.

The separating of the Centre from the Town Hall would necessitate relocating the current requirement by RBWM to use the Desborough meeting rooms. This is explored, with alternative solutions suggested. Larger meetings, such as Annual Council or large Development Control and Licensing meetings would still be accommodated in the Main or Little Theatre, although clearly more advance planning would be needed to book the space. Other impacts, such as to the Register Office, shared toilet facilities and Town Hall coffee bar (Rendezvous) are also scrutinised and addressed.

Consideration has been given to any potential conflict with Norden Farm Centre for the Arts (NF), and dismissed, because the increased seating capacity of the Main Theatre would enable professional work to be centred on mass entertainment (c475 seats compared to 225 at NF) and the smaller spaces would be focused on supporting regular community activities such as jazz and folk clubs, and local groups (NF charges and lack of adequate dressing room space exclude many of these activities). It is also envisaged that the two venues would collaborate to ensure there are not programming conflicts and with this, as opposed to a totally independent, town centre venue, the Council will be able to have some control over this issue. Also, with its town centre location, late night comedy, or louder events such as rock bands, are possible, whereas NF's location within a residential area makes these activities unsuitable. It is also clear that with a proposed increase of c800 homes within the town centre, an additional facility within the town is required.

Various Business Models for running the Centre are possible and it would be for the Council to decide which model to adopt. A Charitable Trust, for instance, would reduce the costs relating to NNDR (Business Rates) and VAT. The Centre will need a small permanent staff of management and technicians augmented by volunteers. It is clear, however, from the experience of the Firestation Arts Centre in Windsor, that a permanent Coffee Shop and Bar in a town centre location, is imperative to provide much needed revenue to support the Centre's activities.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- 1) Approve the proposal in principle; and**
- 2) Make suitable funding available to:**
 - a) undertake the capital works identified in Section 7. "Immediate implementation"; and**
 - b) fully investigate, and accurately estimate, both the capital and revenue implications of delivering the proposal.**

1. Current Position

The Desborough Suite currently comprises:

- a Town Hall style theatre, with basic technical equipment, small orchestra pit, associated dressing rooms for c60 performers and retractable raked seating providing 220 seats with an additional 63 seats provided on the floor, a total seating capacity of 283
- the Astor Bar, with a retractable wall to the theatre, converted in fairly recent times to accommodate flexible meeting spaces, whilst still providing for an occasional private bar for use to support functions and theatrical presentations
- a kitchen, which is used by external staff to support RBWM catering for meetings, as well as being available to caterers providing services to hirers of the Desborough Hall
- a coffee bar which has access to the kitchen
- a foyer area, with seating
- toilet facilities, shared with the Town Hall and the Registry Office

Between June 2012 and 31st May 2013, the usage of the Suite was as follows:

The theatre was completely unused on 174 days, almost half the year, including 29 Friday nights and 29 Saturday nights. However if you exclude RBWM internal meetings (other than those which specifically 'need' the space, for instance Annual Council), then the theatre would be available for an additional c80 days, making a total of 254 days out of 364.

External bookings are, in the main, local not-for-profit performing groups and local dance schools for their annual shows. The dressing rooms were only used on 81 days of the year. The retractable wall between the bar and the theatre was only removed on very few occasions. The RBWM regularly uses the Desborough meeting rooms during the working week for internal daytime and evening meetings, some of which are attended by the public.

There is an existing lease agreement with Age Concern, for the use of the coffee bar and foyer to provide the 'Rendezvous café' to serve staff and visitors to the Town Hall, whose profits are re-invested into the local community. The café is open between 8am and 3pm Monday to Friday, and the facilities are therefore in use between 7am and 3.30pm (equating to 42.5 hours a week). They currently have 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff, as well as 3-6 volunteers daily (sourced from the Ways into Work scheme). The agreement runs for 5 years from 1 August 2011 and has a Break Clause with a start date of 1 August 2014, provided 6 months prior notice is given.

Current Income and expenditure

Income 2012/13

External Hires	£18,557
Rendezvous Café Service Charge	(£ 4,000 is in the contract but was not charged in 2012/13)
TOTAL	£22,557

Expenditure 2012/13

Building and Plant maintenance	£ 9,861
Service Contracts	£ 2,035
Gas	£ 2,887
Council Tax & Business Rates	£22,808
Cleaning	£ 9,358
Premises & other Insurance	£ 3,671
Laundry	£ 347
Licenses	£ 1,637
TOTAL	£ 52,604

It is accepted that next year investment needs to be made on redecoration, the sound system is at the end of its life and other technical equipment is considered to be basic and needs augmenting.

2. Regeneration and the AAP

The Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) “places Community, Culture and Leisure at the centre of rejuvenation plans, to benefit both existing and future residents”. (p43) The following paragraphs are particularly relevant:

5.8 Community, cultural and leisure facilities are important to help create a thriving and vibrant town centre. Cultural and leisure activities attract not only local residents but also people from further a field, including people who may not otherwise choose to visit a town centre.

5.9 As population increases within Maidenhead, including the planned delivery of some 800 additional homes within the town centre, there will be a need to ensure that facilities are provided to meet the community, cultural and leisure needs of residents. The council will work in partnership with relevant community service providers to ensure health, education and other community needs arising from development are met.

5.10 There is strong public support for the promotion of cultural and leisure opportunities within the town centre, in particular the activity of local groups such as those associated with the Maidenhead and District Arts Council.(8) **In recognition, our strategy aims to place community, cultural and leisure activities at the centre of the rejuvenation plans.**

5.12 Consultation has also shown demand for improved cultural facilities covering a wide range of activities. **The council’s facilities study further suggests that existing facilities do not meet local needs or aspirations.** The identified needs and aspirations are of a varied nature. **In order to provide for the majority of activities, the council supports the provision of dedicated multi-use facilities.**

5.13 **The York Road Opportunity Area is designated for major development** (see Policy OA 3 'York Road Opportunity Area'). **The presence of community and cultural uses, for example the Maidenhead**

Heritage Centre, Maidenhead Library and the waterway, provides an opportunity to complement and enhance the existing range of activities including the provision of multi-use facilities. Smaller scale facilities will also be permitted elsewhere across the town centre, particularly in larger developments, which are strongly encouraged to incorporate space for public art and displays.

These recommendations could be interpreted in two ways:

1. A brand-new multi-purpose facility, at an estimated cost of c£8m-£12m, should be incorporated into the York Road Opportunity Area, or
2. The existing Desborough Suite, sited on the northern edge of the York Road Opportunity Area, should be enhanced, at a fraction of the cost of a new build, to deliver a dedicated multi-use facility.

This paper examines the second option to identify the potential of the existing 'Desborough Suite' and how it might be able to deliver on some of the aspirations of the AAP.

3. Impact on The RBWM

A major part of this proposal is that the Desborough Suite should be separated from the Town Hall. This would clearly impact on the day-to-day operations of the Council, as the meeting rooms known as Desborough 1-4 are used on a daily basis Monday to Friday. These meetings would need to be accommodated elsewhere. As Smarter Working continues to gather pace, various small meeting spaces are becoming available within the Town Hall, and these will be able to accommodate many of the smaller daily internal meetings.

For larger meetings that currently use Desborough 2-3 or Desborough 4, more use could be made of the Bray and Ascot Rooms on the ground floor. It is also proposed that a new meeting space could be created, utilising the largely unused area at the top of the main staircase opposite the Council Chamber, it already has daylight 'lanterns' inserted in the roof and is of similar size to Desborough 2 and 3 combined (see plan on page 10). At fairly minimal cost, a wall could be inserted behind the existing barrier, perhaps with the ability to sub divide it into two smaller areas. This room, in the public area of the Town Hall, would be more convenient to the general public attending meetings and would also provide a handy 'breakout room' to supplement the Council Chamber. For those larger meetings, Annual Council, controversial DC Panels etc., where a larger public gallery is required than can be accommodated in the Chamber, the Council could still book the Main or Little Theatre, although clearly more advance planning would be needed to book the space.

Also, the Town Hall reception area and the Register Office currently use the toilet facilities that are accessed via the Desborough Suite and Age Concern run a small Café from the coffee bar there. The location of the wall to close off the Desborough Suite from the Town Hall could be positioned to make the two spaces either side of the main staircase available to provide additional toilets by the current disabled facility and a small coffee bar on the other side (see plan on page 10). The Cloakroom, currently only used by Age Concern as a changing room for staff of the Rendezvous, could be easily fitted out to provide a basic kitchen for the coffee bar as the necessary services are already sited in that area.

The Register Office entrance would need to be moved to the door on the opposite side of the building facing the gardens, or, with the repositioning of the fire escape, via the more impressive entrance on the end of the building. Brides could be dropped off via the drive through that goes past the main entrance to the Town Hall. This would provide a far more pleasant entrance for weddings by the gardens and newly-weds often make their way into the gardens for photographs now in any case. This area could be further developed to offer a more useable Public Open Space.

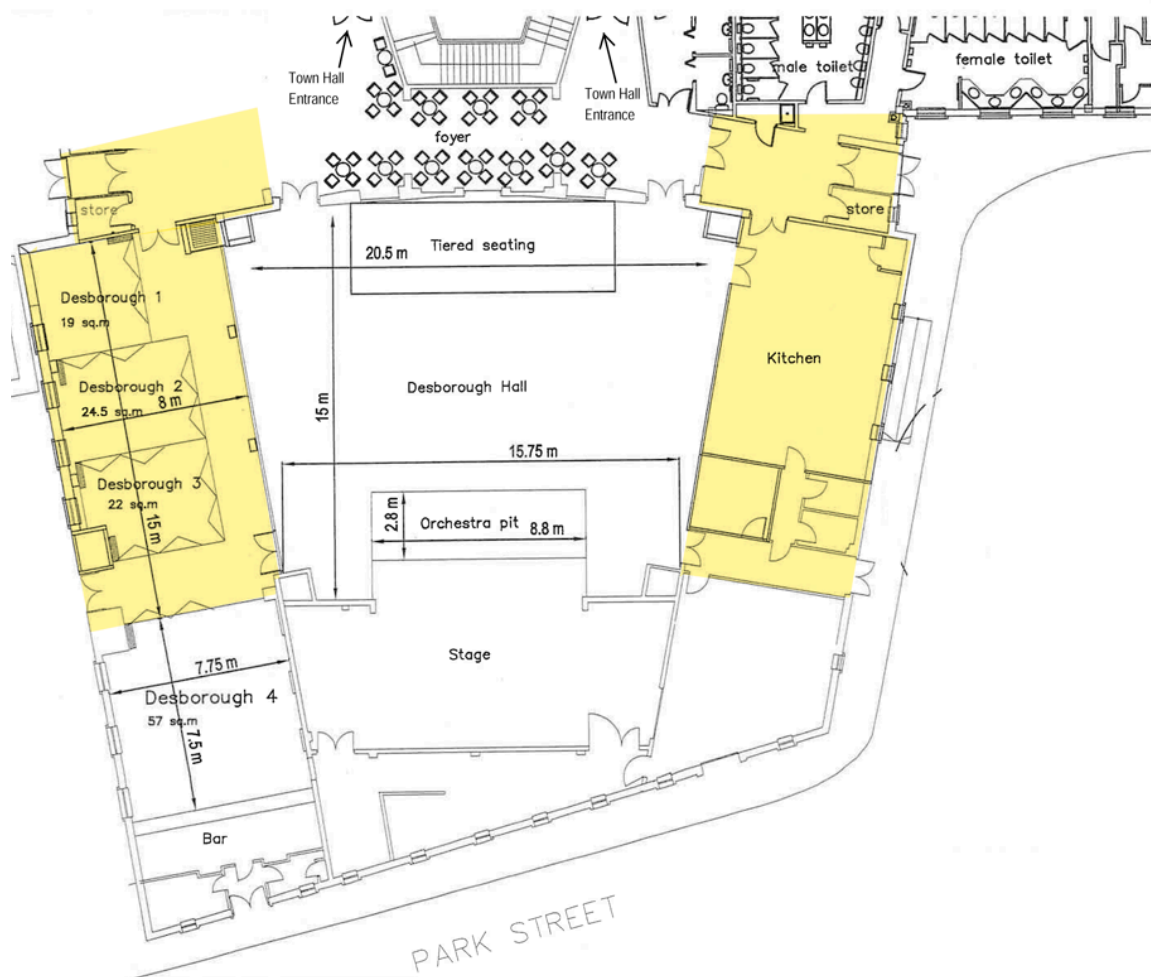
4. The Detailed Proposal

The proposal is to separate the 'Desborough Suite' from the Town Hall and give it its own identity as a Community Entertainment Centre. It is envisaged that there is the opportunity to provide:

1. A Main Theatre – An enhanced theatre, with addition of a balcony, enabling an increase from 283 to approximately 475 seats. Seating in the stalls would still be retractable, allowing for receptions, dinners, large meetings or 'standing' theatre events
2. A Theatre Bar – Open every evening and weekends providing a valuable source of revenue, with the 'courtyard' car park being used for outside events at weekends and bank holidays
3. A Foyer, Box Office and Coffee Shop – Open full-time every day, serving food and bottled alcohol, also a valuable source of revenue, with gallery and exhibition space for local artists
4. A Club Room – This function room would be available for regular weekly/fortnightly 'clubs' which are open to attendance by the general public. e.g. Folk Club, Jazz Club etc. It would also be available to be hired ad-hoc for other events
5. A Little Theatre – With a lower seating capacity (c100), this would be used for smaller presentations, comedy, cabaret, etc. and a particularly useful resource for the local drama community.

The Current Layout

The areas marked in yellow are single storey.



The Proposed Layout

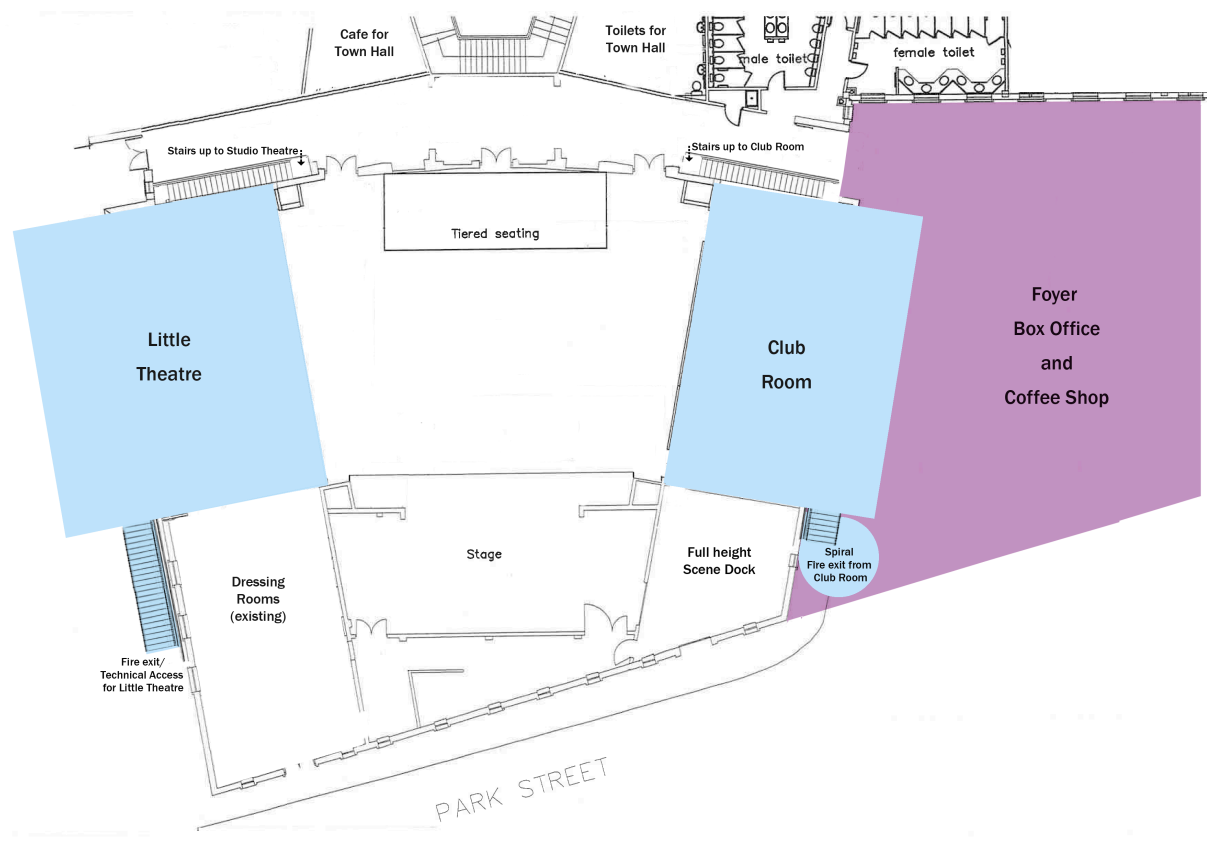
Ground Floor



The changes to the ground floor area would be:

- Build a new foyer, coffee shop and box office within in the area currently in front of the Register Office and move the Register Office entrance to one of the existing doors on the other sides of the building. This will give visibility down the Broadway, where many evening patrons would park, and give a significant presence to the Centre.
- Permanently close the internal access to the town hall, creating a straight corridor and use the two spaces either side of the main staircase, along with the unused cloakroom, to provide a café kitchen and toilet facilities for the Town Hall reception and Register Office.
- Replace the removable wall between the theatre and the theatre bar, with a permanent soundproof wall and open the bar to the outside through the existing fire escape doors, currently to the small car park, some of which could be converted into an internal courtyard with seating and a smoking area. The entire area could be used at weekends and bank holidays for outdoor music and other events. This would give the Theatre Bar a street presence, close to the High Street.
- The area now known as Desborough 4 to provide additional Bar space, new toilet facilities to accommodate the patrons of the Theatre Bar, and a dressing room suitable for disabled access to the stage (not currently provided).
- Remove the dressing room above the scenery dock to create full height, stage level access to the stage, from stage right, making the theatre more suitable for professional productions.
- Build a balcony in the Main Theatre to increase seating capacity.

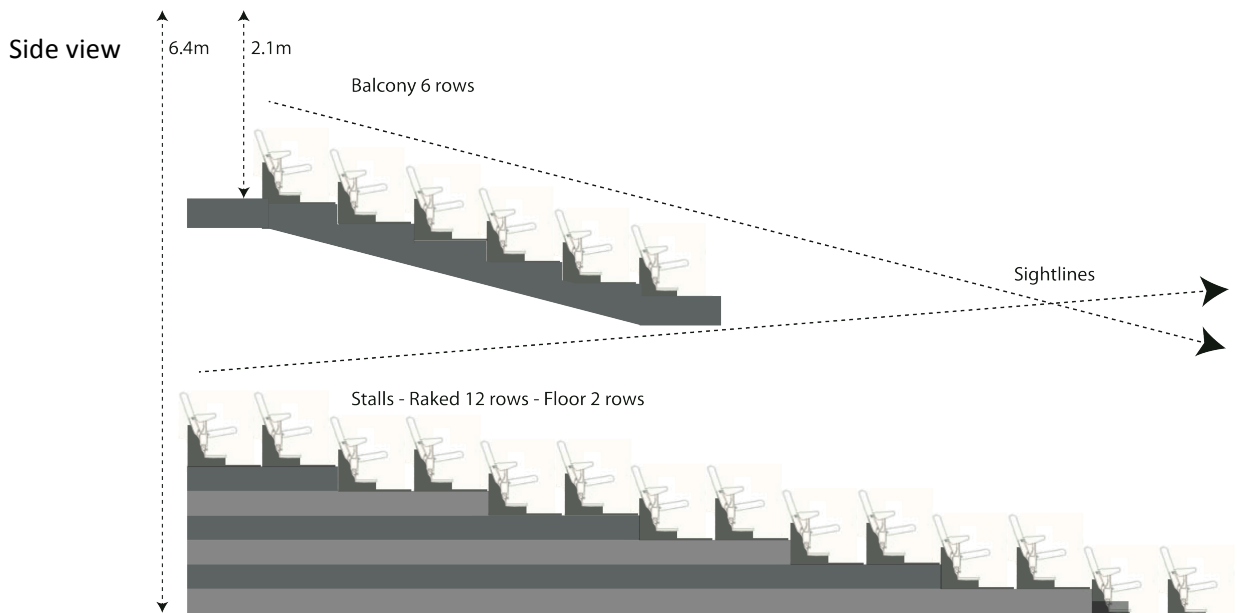
First Floor



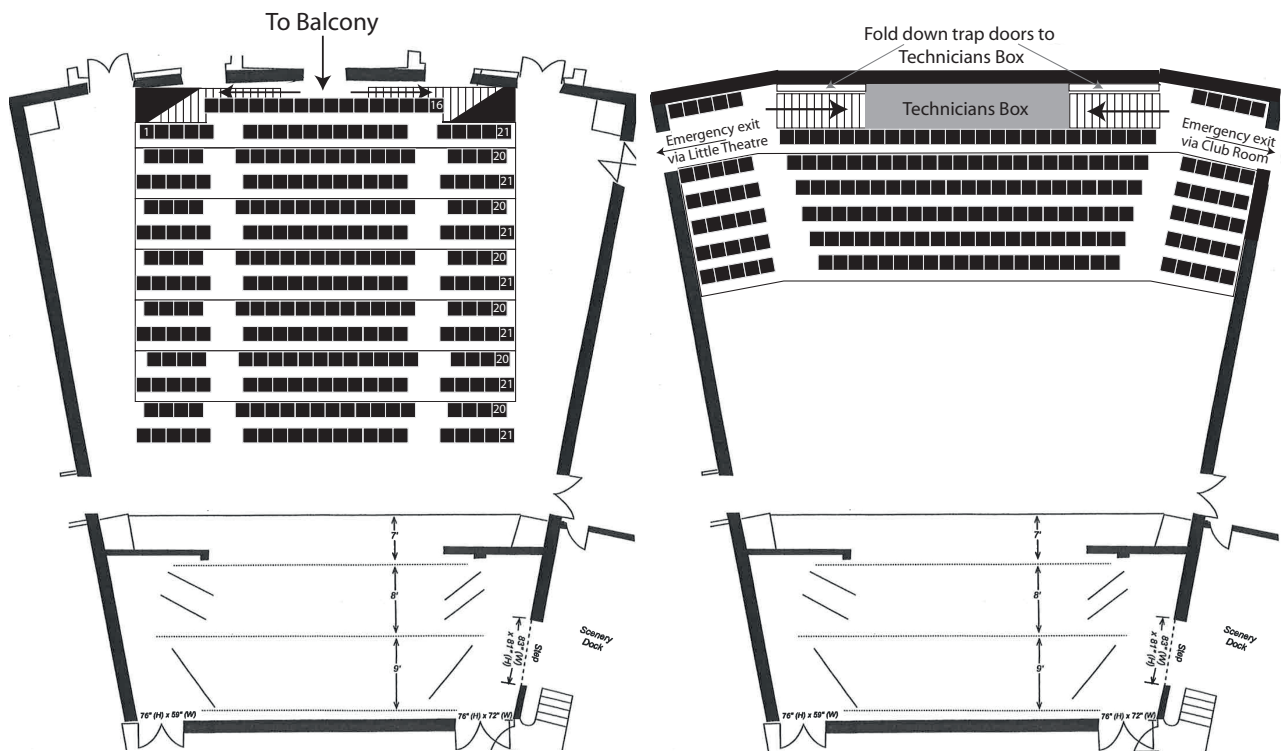
The changes to the first floor area would be:

- First floor soundproofed extensions would be built in the areas marked in blue, accessed via staircases from the. Stair lifts, such as that at the Guildhall, would be fitted to allow access for the disabled.
- The Little Theatre would be a simple 'black box' and it's 'flown' extension would provide a covered area underneath, either for additional outside seating and an area for smokers, or it could be enclosed to increase the size of the Bar. It would be fitted out with permanent theatre-style raked seating (c100) and some basic sound and lighting.
- The Club Room would be a carpeted room, suitable for setting out in a variety of styles, with windows potentially looking out over the Coffee Shop below and its 'flown' extension would provide a roof to the Coffee Shop service area.
- Converting the first floor corridor behind the stage to a dressing room would amply compensate the loss of the dressing room above the Scenery Dock, although additional toilets may be required to serve the dressing rooms.
- It has been suggested that a 'fly-tower' could be incorporated above the stage. The author suggests that a feasibility study should be undertaken to ensure that the facility would be used on a regular enough basis to make the investment worthwhile.

The Proposed Seating Layout for the Main Theatre



Because the stalls would be based on a low-profile retractable unit, with two rows on each level, the seating will need to be set out in a staggered layout, as shown below, to ensure a clear view.

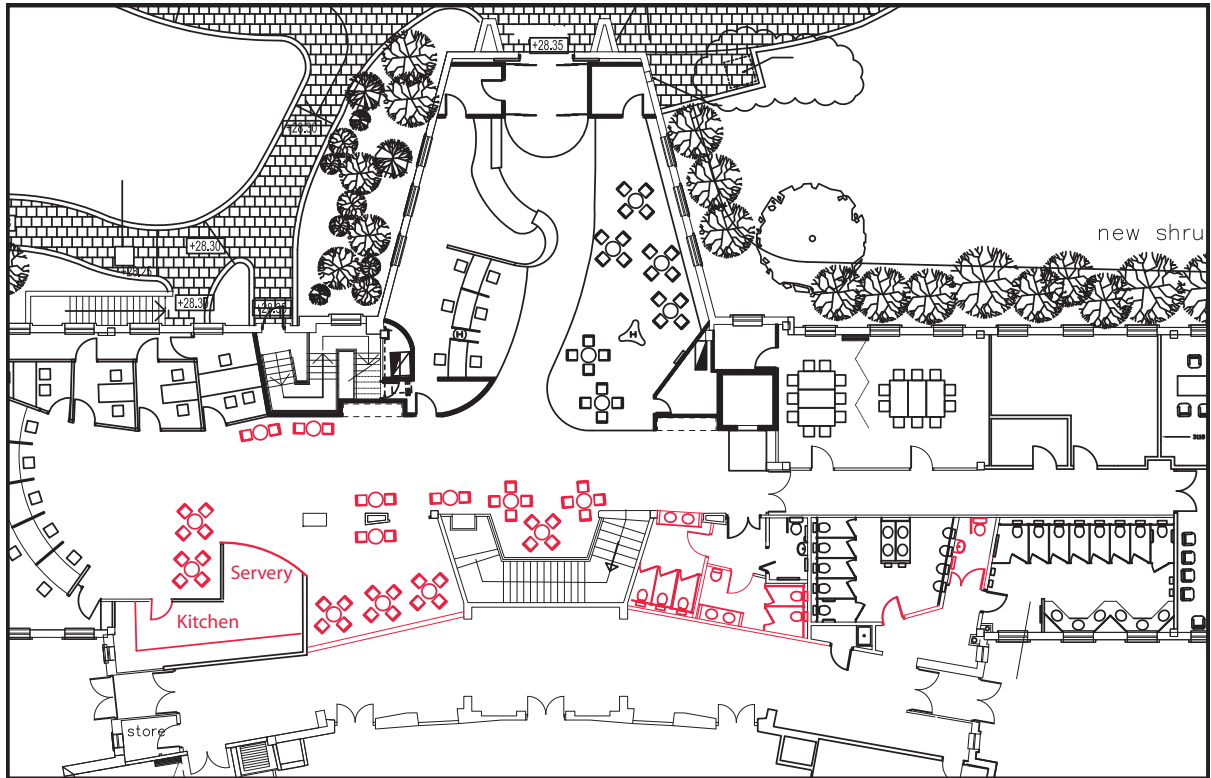


This layout, which has been approved by Audience Systems, the providers of the current seating, would provide a total of 478 seats, 283 in stalls (the same as existing), plus an additional 195 in the Balcony. Access to the balcony would be through the centre doors (currently used as a storage cupboard) and reversing the orientation of the stairs that currently access the raked seating. Emergency exits could be provided each side, via the Little Theatre and Club Room, to the fire escapes beyond. Access to the stalls would only be from the front.

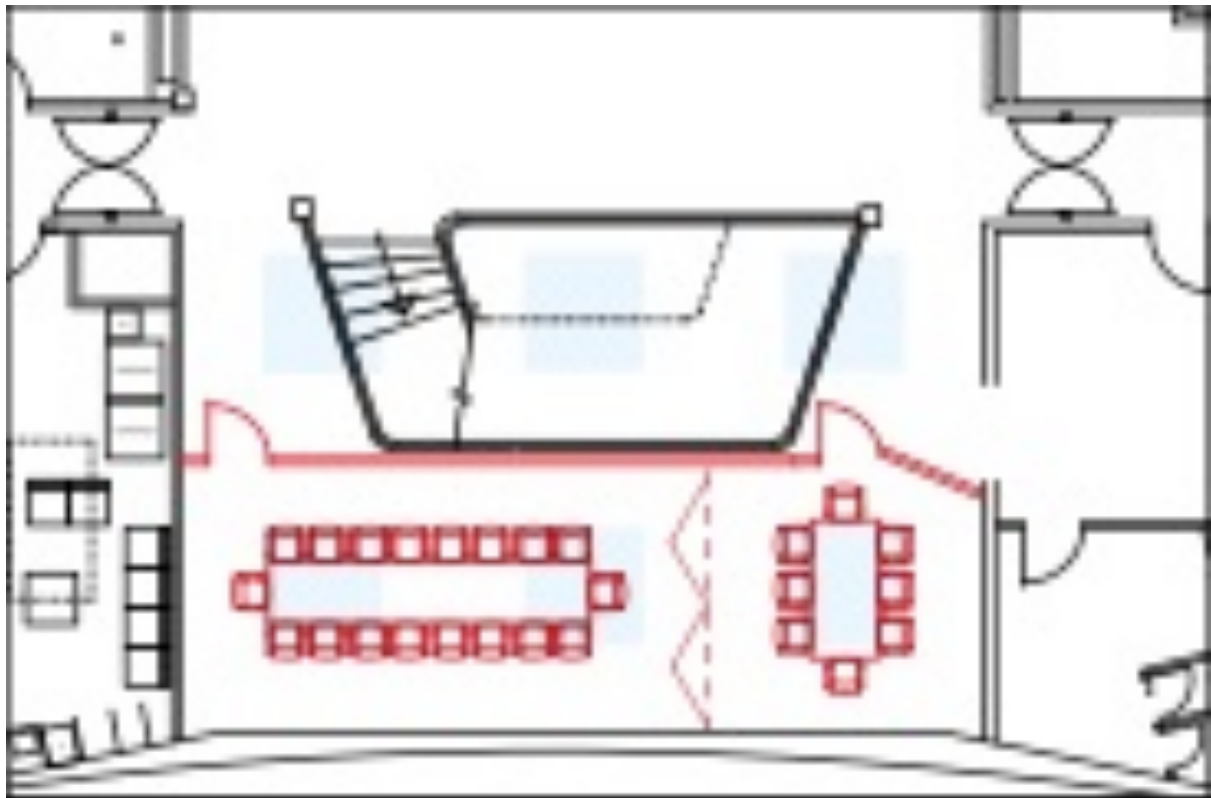
There would be the additional benefit of moving the Technicians Box, currently set to one side, to the favoured central position, accessed by fold down hatches over the stair voids.

The Proposed Layout for the Town Hall

Ground Floor – showing repositioned Coffee Shop and Toilets



First Floor – Showing meeting rooms opposite the Chamber



5. Benefits

The realisable benefits of this proposal are:

An under-used but valuable resource would be brought into daily use, honouring the Council's Big Society manifesto commitment to "*allow greater community use of under-used council facilities*".

The aspirations of the AAP to put "*Community, Culture and Leisure at the centre of rejuvenation plans*", will be recognised and acted upon.

This redesigned multi-purpose centre would be both the hub for community-based creative activity and provide a suitable venue for mainstream entertainment for the residents of Maidenhead.

Increasing the theatre seating capacity to the Main Theatre, by the addition of a balcony, will enable access to popular professional touring companies, and other entertainers, which require a larger audience to be viable. Retaining retractable seating in the stalls, set at a lower profile to fit under the balcony, would enable receptions and dinners to continue to be accommodated, as well as enabling access to even larger audiences for events such as live bands, where some patrons would always prefer to stand.

A permanent town centre Theatre Bar and separate Coffee Shop will both provide regular income and be venues where the local creative community can meet, collaborate and share ideas, an activity that Maidenhead and District Arts Council is currently promoting. These two venues would be distinctly different environments, the Bar being a noisy place, probably with 'Sky Arts' piped to screens, much as a Sports Bar shows sport, with an outdoor screen for the more popular weekend programmes. The Coffee Shop and Foyer however would be a more serene experience, giving the opportunity to work, chat or relax, with purpose-built Gallery Walls and Display Cases for local visual art and craft exhibitions. This mix will maximise the opportunity for revenue as the offer will suit all tastes.

The Box Office would be available to promote sales of all local cultural and arts activity, wherever it is presented.

6. Potential timetable for staged implementation

Immediate implementation

Implementation could proceed immediately with the following actions:

1. Form a new meeting room opposite the Chamber and move RBWM meetings into the Town Hall to enable the Astor Bar area to be hired for Club and Community events.
2. Upgrade the technical equipment in Main Theatre that is required urgently.
3. Open a Box Office in the Library (already under discussion with Library staff).
4. Encourage volunteers to sign up to assist to run the Box Office, act as stewards for events and to offer technical support.

Short Term Benefits

- The venue's identity as a Town Centre Community Entertainment Centre would start.
- Income from events would start and community hires would increase.
- Wider community would have access to regular events.

Stage One Build (target Winter 2013)

1. Move the entrance to the Register Office to another side of the building.
2. Build the Foyer, commercial Coffee Shop, Box Office and Club Room above the kitchen.

Benefits by Spring 2014

- Foyer, commercial Coffee Shop and Club Room are opened.
- Box Office moved from the library.
- Entrance via the Town Hall closed.
- Local Community have a creative hub, meeting place and sense of 'ownership'.

Stage Two (target Summer 2014)

1. Separate the town hall permanently from the Centre by fitting out toilets and coffee bar. (Rendezvous moved into the Town Hall reception area in line with their Break Clause.)
2. Little Theatre is built in the Summer months, fitting out continues into the Autumn/Winter.
3. Theatre Bar is fitted out including building a soundproof wall between it and the Theatre.
4. Additional toilets for Theatre Bar installed.

Benefits by Spring 2015

- Little Theatre and permanent Theatre Bar opened.
- Contracts signed for Main Theatre works to ensure completion

Stage Three (target Summer 2015)

Main Theatre is closed for:

- Balcony and Seating alterations, Technical Box relocation and Auditorium Refurbishment.
- Scenery Dock remodelling and Dressing rooms rearranged.

During this process the Foyer, Coffee Shop, Theatre Bar, Club Room and Little Theatre will continue to trade. As this is timed to take place over the summer months, when theatres are generally quieter, large events could continue at the Magnet Leisure Centre or outside in our parks.

Target Autumn 2015

Main Theatre re-opened in time for the Autumn and Christmas season.

7. Business Vision and Staffing

Company Structure

The Council will need to consider and decide on a suitable company structure for the Centre, for example a Charitable Trust, provided sufficient controls are put in place to ensure the continuance of delivering the aims of the Council .

The Unique Selling Proposition

It is very important that the Centre provides a different offer from Norden Farm Centre for the Arts (NF) establishing a strong identity, which serves as a valuable selling point, without compromising the latter's position. There are clear audience segments, for which NF are unable to make suitable provision and also the size of the proposed Centre gives opportunity for a broader range of activity. The unique proposition should be that of a holistic experience, a great day/night out within a town centre location, offering a central point for the areas' entertainment. The Centre should also provide affordable hire for local clubs and shows, the attractive offer of quality, affordable food and refreshments, and professional support for local community groups.

Vision

The vision is to create an entertainment centre where a broad range of the local community feels comfortable to be. Reflecting the needs and voices of the local community, the Centre will aspire to provide the best of popular theatre, music and comedy. The unique approach to the audience experience, community arts development and events, all form part of a holistic approach to creating an entertainment centre for everybody, encouraging people to get together, meet new people and enjoy living in Maidenhead.

Mission

The mission is to provide a great night out! Whether the wish is to view, or participate in, great performances or simply drop in for a drink in comfortable and welcoming surroundings, this is the place to be in Maidenhead. The balanced programme will offer popular entertainment alongside affordable hire for local performers, professional, semi-professional and amateur; all supported by excellent customer service from a team of professional staff and trained volunteers. 'Meet up' events will offer opportunity to find out how to get involved, or simply mix with those with the same interests.

Programme

The programme should focus on providing popular entertainment for the residents of Maidenhead as well as providing opportunities for home-grown talent. Presentations will range from professional tours to 'in house' presentations and community hires. Examples include:

- High quality community theatre
- Open 'mic' nights
- 'Meet up' events
- Musical Theatre and Accessible Drama
- Popular Music: Performers, Choirs, Bands , Small Orchestras, etc.
- Comedy
- Cabaret and Burlesque
- Dance evenings: Salsa, Ballroom, Line Dancing etc.
- Music Clubs: Folk, Jazz Blues, Rap etc.
- Literary Clubs: Books, Poetry, Play reading etc.
 - Local events: Maidenhead's got Talent, Festivals, Concerts, School shows etc.
- Cinema: Popular 'silver –screen' showings of classic films etc.

Staffing Structure

It is suggested that the staffing structure could be as follows:

Immediate implementation

Employ a freelance Venue Manager and Marketing expertise on an ad-hoc or part-time basis, (as we currently do for Technical support, which would continue) to curate events and start marketing the Centre for commercially viable popular events.

By Stage One

Centre Director/Manager (*one full-time post*) The post will be focused on business development, marketing and operations, and will commission programmers as required to deliver an achievable programme. The post will have overall responsibility for managing and supporting all other staff and volunteers. The post holder will be on the duty manager rota for performances and other public events. At the present time, there are individuals who would regard a basic salary augmented by *ad hoc* and one-off bonus payments (i.e. performance-related payments) or a box office split as earned income to the Centre is increased. The Centre Manager will be set specific targets, especially in respect of increased income (including Fundraising).

Buildings and Technical Manager (*one full-time post*) The post will be focused on building operations and on maintenance and repairs. It will include the preparation of spaces for users, along with responsibility for licenses and general health and safety compliance. The post-holder will train and/or support volunteers, casuals and visitors in providing technical support for shows and events. The role will oversee the management of cleaning, cleanliness and the appearance of the premises in general as well as being responsible for equipment security, use and maintenance. The post-holder will be available to provide technical support for shows and events (as leader and/or as part of a casuals team for technical support). (NB any time spent on shows or events will be charged on to the event organiser or hirer).

Café/Bar Manager (*one year fixed term contract with a view to a permanent full-time post*) The post will be focused on providing an attractive provision within its own right, enhancing the customer service/experience provided by the Centre, developing a valuable income stream via a fulltime café/bar facility that is attractive to regular Centre users and the wider community. In addition, catering provision for larger scale events should be managed. The role will oversee the management of casual staff and be responsible for compliance in all aspects of bar and catering. The post will report to the Centre Manager.

Casual Staff and Volunteers (*As required ad-hoc*) Wherever possible, the full-time staff will be supported by Volunteers in the areas of Box Office, Marketing, Front of House and Technical. The Café/Bar should be staffed with casual paid labour, except in areas where money does not change hands for direct service, ie taking interval drink orders, clearing tables etc. Local businesses will be encouraged to offer pro bono support on a short-term basis.

Further stages

The permanent staff will clearly need to be expanded as the Centre's activities increase, potentially to become:

Full time Staff

Centre Director

Buildings and Technical Manager

Marketing/PR Manager

Box Office Manager/Volunteers Co-ordinator

Café/ Bar Manager

Part-time/Freelance/Casual Staff

Programmers

Technical

Chef & Catering assistants

Cleaners

Volunteers to support all the above

Technical

Marketing/Promotion

Box Office/Front of House

Bar/Café Restaurant

Cleaners

8. Indicative costs

The recommendation in this report is to obtain suitable funding and expertise to fully investigate, and accurately estimate, both the capital and revenue costs of delivering this proposal.

Capital

Some work has been done to enable a ballpark total capital estimate of the proposal at approximately c£1.5M - £2M, however for convenience, a list (not exhaustive) of those items to be considered at each stage has been set out below to give an idea of the likely commitment at each stage. Where figures are shown, they are based on the assumed sq m of the spaces as described.

The Foyer area would be, in effect, an extension to the current building between the side of the kitchen and the existing façade of the Town Hall, so the figure shown below may be significantly reduced. Firm figures cannot be calculated until the spaces are designed, the existing building is surveyed and the project has been priced in detail by quantity surveyors.

Architect and Design costs	£TBA
Immediate implementation	
1. Form a new meeting room opposite the Chamber	£TBA
2. Upgrade technical equipment in Main Theatre	£TBA
Stage One Build (Autumn/Winter 2013)	
1. Move Register Office entrance	£TBA
3. Build the Foyer, Coffee Shop (c400sq m) and Club Room (c135sq m)	£504,500-£527,000 ¹
Stage Two Build (Summer 2014)	
1. Fit out toilets and coffee bar for Town Hall	£TBA
2. Build and Fit Out Little Theatre (c180sq m)	£279,900-£373,140 ²
3. Fit out Theatre Bar including soundproof wall construction	£TBA
4. Install additional toilets for Theatre Bar	£TBA
Stage Three Build (Summer 2015)	
1. Construct Balcony	£TBA
2. Install new seating (Estimate from Audience Systems Ltd)	£128,250.00
3. Remodel Scenery Dock and Dressing Rooms	£TBA

Notes

The new build and fitting out prices above are based on Average Costs in the South East as identified by Public Architecture www.publicarchitecture.co.uk

1. Foyer/Club Room build based on 'Community Centres' £943-986 per sq m, although two walls already exist so this may be significantly less.
2. Little Theatre build and fit-out based on 'Small Theatres – (incl seating & fitting out)' £1555-2073 per sq m. This figure includes an estimate for the cost of the raked seating for this area at £28,000, there could be a 50% saving if 100 of the current Desborough seats were recycled and re-used.

Revenue

The spaces have been designed to provide as much opportunity for revenue generation via a Theatre Bar and separate Coffee Shop and these, together with the larger seating capacity in the Main Theatre to enable revenue-generating popular activities, should allow the Centre to ultimately pay its way. The staged implementation should allow also income to build as expenditure increases.

A full detailed business plan will need to be developed.

This new enterprise will clearly need financial support in its initial stages, as well as close monitoring and professional business expertise, such as accountancy and marketing, until the Centre is able to employ suitable permanent staff and build enough revenue to become self-sufficient.

Local businesses should be encouraged to offer sponsorship or support to some of the professional and business expertise services required on a pro bono/sponsorship basis.

Appendix 1 – Examples of other Authority experiences

A number of Local Government Authorities have devolved the authority of their Town Halls over to Community or Charitable Trusts.

Four examples of these are listed below.

1.1 Dumfries and Galloway Council

Facility: Moffat Town Hall

Date of Devolution to a Trust: November 2012

Facility Website: www.moffattownhalltrust.co.uk

LA Website: www.dumgal.gov.uk

Context:

- In August 2009, Dumfries & Galloway Council agreed a £1 (one pound) deal to transfer Moffat Town Hall to a Community Trust, in order to allow it to be redeveloped.
- The transfer was subject to the Trust being able to raise the necessary funds for the redevelopment and ratification of the decision by the Scottish Government.
- A £1m plan to redevelop Moffat Town Hall secured national backing in June 2010. It became one of eight demonstration projects for a new Scottish Government funded initiative.
- The Trust aimed to create a “flexible multi-use facility” which would remain “the beating heart of Moffat” for the town and surrounding district.
- The Town Hall continues to be the largest public building in Moffat, with a large hall with stage and seating for up to 120 people, and a smaller room for small meetings and civil wedding services.
- In November 2012, Moffat Town Hall Redevelopment Trust signed a 21-year lease handing over the management and control of Moffat Town Hall to the Trust.
- As part of the agreement, the Dumfries & Galloway Council will continue to operate customer services and library provision from the premises.

Consequences:

- As of May 2013, work has got under way on a £600k scheme to repair and refurbish Moffat Town Hall. Due to be completed in October 2013.
- Refurbishment is being financed by grants received from Dumfries and Galloway Council and Historic Scotland.
- Repairs will include a complete renewal of the roof, a restoration of the stonework and windows, the repairing of a beam above the stage inside the hall, and a landscaping of the front of the property.
- The Trust has taken over responsibility for the hiring out of the venue.
- Local organisations are able to hire the main hall, a reception/meeting room and kitchen facilities on an hourly or sessional basis for community or commercial events.
- These events include concerts, plays, shows, coffee mornings and community gatherings.
- There is also a commercial market that operates on Fridays and a producers’ market once a month on a Sunday. This mixture of use provides the Trust with a projected net income of approx. £12k per annum.
- There is a commitment on the Trust to save £5k per annum to cover the maintenance of the exterior of the building.
- Dumfries & Galloway Council continues to occupy part of the building in order to provide customer services and library facilities.

- In the longer term, both the Council and the Trust would like to re-organise some of the space within the building to create a one stop shop delivering an integrated range of services to the wider community.

1.2 **Clackmannanshire Council**

Facility: Clackmannan Town Hall

Date of Devolution to a Trust: February 2006

Facility Website: www.clackmannantownhalltrust.co.uk

LA Website: www.clacksweb.org.uk

Context:

- In May 2004, Clackmannanshire Council announced that Clackmannan Town Hall would be closing due to budget cuts.
- The Clackmannan community decided at a public meeting to take on the running of the Hall themselves.
- After a steering group confirmed the feasibility of the project, a constitution was drafted and a committee duly elected in October 2004.
- In April 2005, the Committee formed a Company Limited by Guarantee under the name of 'The Clackmannan Town Hall Trust'.
- The Company attained charitable status from the Inland Revenue in May 2005.
- Following negotiations with Clackmannanshire Council, a 25-year lease was granted in favour of the Clackmannan Town Hall Trust, and it came into effect on the 1st February 2006.

Consequences:

- The Town Hall has remained open and available for community-use.
- It now provides educational, social welfare and recreational facilities for the local community.
- The Trust offers the Town Hall for hire. Facilities include 4 large meeting rooms catering for groups ranging from 10-100 people, a snooker room, a kitchen, and a theatre space with in-built dressing rooms, stage lighting and a P.A. system.
- In April 2013, the Trust received a Big Lottery Fund Grant of £6,800 to refurbish the Town Hall's flooring and purchase new equipment for the kitchen.

1.3 **Hertfordshire County Council**

Facility: Berkhamsted Town Hall

Date of Devolution to a Trust: 1979

Facility Website: www.berkhamstedtownhall.co.uk

LA Website: www.hertsdirect.org

Context:

- After failing to comply with fire regulations, Berkhamsted Town Hall was closed in the early 1970s. It quickly became derelict and a target for local vandalism.
- Hertfordshire County Council attempted to sell the premises, but the Charity Commission refused permission because of a loud local opposition.
- In response, a Trust was established, and the Council ceded responsibility for the Hall over to the Berkhamsted Town Hall Trust in 1979.
- Between 1982 and 1999, the Hall was restored to full use by the new Trust.

Consequences:

- Numerous organisations now make use of the Town Hall's facilities.
- It hosts a range of activities; a Community Market, a Bridge Club, an Arts and Crafts Club, Italian Lessons, Egyptian Dance Classes, Kumon Maths and English Lessons, Pilates, Tai Chi, Tae Kwon-Do, Yoga Sessions, Playgroups, a Mother & Toddler Group, and Retirement Clubs.

- The Town Hall is now an approved ceremony venue and is licensed for Weddings and Civil Partnerships.
- The Great Hall has the capacity for up to 200 people, the venue can be hired for private parties, meetings, lectures, dance classes, concerts, wedding receptions, keep fit, bridge, mothers & toddler groups, civic meetings, exhibitions, sales and markets. The Clock Room has a capacity of 100 people.
- The Trust has installed catering facilities in the Town Hall, these included contract caterers, a small kitchenette for tea-making and a fully equipped bar.
- For the financial year 2007/8, the Trust recorded an operating surplus. The two main sources of income were from the hiring of the halls and bar sales.

1.4 London Borough of Haringey

Facility: Hornsey Town Hall

Date of Devolution to a Trust: 2007

Facility Website: www.hornsey-town-hall.org.uk

LA Website: www.haringey.gov.uk

Context:

- Commissioned through a design competition won by Reginald Uren in 1934, Hornsey Town Hall is a prime example of pre-war civic architecture.
- In 2003, Hornsey Town Hall was identified as surplus to the needs of Haringey Council and has remained largely vacant since 2005.
- In 2007, a Community Partnership Board worked with Haringey Council to look at a range of re-development options for the Town Hall.
- The Hornsey Town Hall Creative Trust was set up in 2007 to oversee the regeneration of Hornsey Town Hall.
- The Trust's vision was to create a "world class model of civic renaissance, an arena for all that harnesses the spirit of progress, community, creativity and enterprise for future generations in Haringey, London and beyond".
- After re-development, the Town Hall will become a centre for arts and learning.
- In 2011, it was agreed that Hornsey Town Hall become the new home of Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, with a new theatre, studio, workshop and social spaces being put into place.
- Mountview hope to bring the Town Hall "back to life as a sustainable and thriving hub for creative arts in Haringey: a lively and accessible cultural facility in a landmark building".
- The Trust intends to work in conjunction with the London Borough of Haringey to ensure public benefit and community access to the Town Hall.

Consequences:

- The re-development is planned to be completed in 2016/17.
- Once finished, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts plans to take responsibility (working closely with the Council) for the refurbishment and day-to-day running of the Town Hall.
- Mountview has been awarded £482,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help progress their plans to restore and refurbish the Town Hall's interiors, including the Council Chamber, Mayor's Parlour, Committee Rooms and Assembly Hall.