

THE LISKEARD GUILDHALL

Built in 1859 originally to house the Borough Council and later the local Magistrates & County Court, which then departed in 1987 for the new Courts at Trevecca. The Grade II* listed building has since been looking for a new role to play in the civic and economic life of Liskeard.

Currently various spaces in the Guildhall are let to Liskeard businesses and generate income to set against the expenses of running the building.

Only basic maintenance and safety works have been carried out for most of this century, but we are now entering a decade where more substantial expenditure will be required to both modernise the building and make it safe for future generations of users.

Revenue and Expenses

There are 4 shop units let to tenants on 3-year leases, currently due to determine in 2022, 1 lease for the main hall, for martial arts school and an office suite let to a local architect. Together these lettings bring in revenues of around £26,000 (2020/21) pa.

Business rates and utilities are mostly paid by the tenants either direct or in re-charges to the council, however there is a portion which must be covered by the Council for common areas and areas which are not lettable. The Council is also responsible for all external and most internal repairs and safety upgrades.

INCOME	£pa Budget 2020/21	£pa 2019/20 Budget
Rents & Utility Recovery	26,000	23,000
Other Income		
TOTAL INCOME	26,000	23,000
EXPENSES		
Business Rates	230	218
Utilities [^]	1,400	1050
Maintenance	500	500
Council Staff Time*	5,200	5,250
Compliance & Servicing	800	800
Water	350	100
Total Operating Expenses	8,480	7,888
Repairs & Improvements		
Repairs & Maintenance	25,000	21,000
Net Cost to Council	7,480	5,888

*Min Estimate not itemised in budget

[^] Majority recovered from tenants in rents above

From the above table it is evident that the Town Council subsidises in cash terms the operation of the Guildhall after taking into consideration repairs and upgrades. In practice some of these costs are met from accumulated reserves and are not all direct costs to the annual precept, but nevertheless there is a net cost

to Liskeard residents. If not let it would be costing Liskeard Council Taxpayers £30K pa plus business rates liability.

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

The Guildhall occupies a prominent position at the east end of Fore street, Liskeard's principle shopping street. It also dominates the street scene looking down Pike street from the Parade. It is a substantial building and an icon of Liskeard. Structurally it is in generally sound condition, as evidenced by a recent structural survey, though has not benefited from re-decoration externally or internally for many years. It has some damp concerns especially at roof level in the main hall. Recently considerable expenses has been incurred in upgrading the fire alarm system and fitting new fire-resistant doors throughout following a fire risk survey. Further expense will be incurred in the next budget year on external redecoration and some structural repairs, necessitating the erection of external scaffolding.

Currently its internal arrangements do not make for flexible letting, and it would require substantial investment to re-configure for an alternative use, such as offices, or a large store.

It has no parking provision, relying entirely on either local limited waiting street parking or Liskeard's Car Parks, Westbourne – the other side of Barras Street, Sungirt – at the other end of Fore street, or a considerable distance – the Cattle Market car park.

ALTERNATIVE USES

No obvious alternative use jumps out and the author of this paper has previously prepared a list of all the possible future uses he could think of which are listed in Appendix 1, none of which stand out as an obvious flagship future use – either in economic terms or civic benefits.

Over the last year the Facilities Committee has renegotiated leases to determine in 2 years' time to give the Council a period in which to consider future uses, a disposal, or just decide to re-let the building for another fixed period. Many other Councils have faced a similar conundrum in finding new and alternative uses for old buildings now no longer suited to their original uses. Their solutions could provide inspiration to us and it is recommended that a certain amount of research is undertaken to investigate the solutions adopted by other Councils.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this paper is to ensure that the future of the Guildhall is firmly placed on the Facilities Committee agenda for 2020, it represents a substantial asset of the Town Council and thus the people of Liskeard and it is the duty of Councillors and this Committee to make best use of this and all its assets. This paper recommends:

1. Research is undertaken into other councils re-purposing of similar property assets
2. Consider a progress report at each Future Facilities meeting
3. Hold a series of single discussion meetings to consider various stages of the development of alternative uses – not a working party
4. Appoint a member of the committee as Guildhall Future Uses Co-ordinator
5. Request Communications & Engagement Committee to assist with a public consultation into future uses for the Guildhall

APPENDIX 1

Possible Future Uses

Continue as is – shops, office and Dojo

Develop shops and offices into new spaces

Open community space with small food related businesses and internet facilities

Combine with other adjacent buildings

Housing - flats/ apartments

Affordable housing

Retirement housing

Activities centre

Tourism attraction

Storage facility/ rental storage

Hotel/Casino

Educational facility Children/Young person's centre

Shopping centre development extending down Fore street

Heritage Centre

Car Park

Cinema

Museum

Demolish & rebuild

Sports Gym, Exercise centre

Library