

## CLAIR HALL SITE UPDATE

REPORT OF: Chief Officers  
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Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: Yes  
Report to: Cabinet  
14 February 2022

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update on progress made on the work to develop investment options for the Clair Hall site and recommends creating Clair Hall Members' Steering Group to oversee and steer this work going forward.

### Summary

2. Following the Cabinet decision in December, officers started progressing work to develop evidence-based, sustainable investment options. The report provides an outline timeline for this work, summarises progress made to date, and recommends setting up a member advisory group to help Cabinet oversee and steer this work.

### Recommendations

**3. Cabinet is recommended to:**

- (i) ***Agree to establish Clair Hall Members' Steering Group to oversee and steer work to develop investment options for the Clair Hall site;***
- (ii) ***Note the indicative timeline and progress of the work to date.***

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### Background

4. The Clair Hall site is located in Haywards Heath and includes Clair Hall, the Redwood Centre and car park. The hall is a multi-purpose venue comprising a large main hall, a function suite, studio, and bar area. Currently, it is being used by the NHS as a vaccination site.
5. In December 2021, Cabinet agreed a develop investment options for the site. The Cabinet agreed that more information and work was required to develop options that ensure the sustainable future of the community facilities on the site. Both refurbishment and redevelopment scenarios should be investigated. Cabinet established a special reserve to support this work.
6. Cabinet agreed that an update and indicative timeline would be presented to the following Cabinet meeting (this meeting).

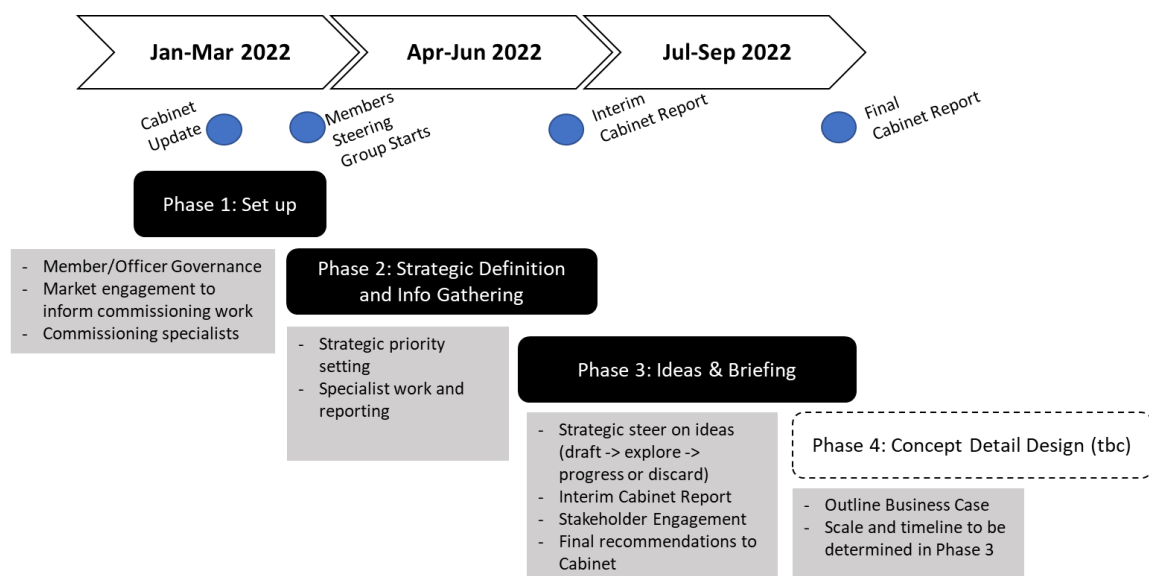
### Clair Hall Steering Group

7. The work required to develop options for sustainable community facilities on site is complex and requires careful consideration, steering and oversight from Cabinet members.

8. To help progress work on the Clair Hall site, the Council can draw on its experience to date as it has a strong record of managing complex work like this. The Council has been very successful at attracting inward investments, both public and private, at supporting the development of the district.
9. It is proposed that Cabinet adopts the good practice from Burgess Hill Growth Programme work and establishes a Member steering group to provide oversight of this work, similar to the Burgess Hill Members' Steering Group. This will provide an opportunity for the Haywards Heath Town Council members to support and influence this work.
10. The Clair Hall Member Steering Group would advise Cabinet on their decisions and provide oversight and guidance in relation to the delivery of the project in line with the District Plan 2014-2031, Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan, Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document) 2021.
11. The TOR and membership of the group are included at Appendix A.

### Indicative timeline and progress to date

12. Cabinet agreed that an evidence-driven approach would give the Council the best chance to ensure any proposals lead to the delivery of successful community facilities on site.
13. Economic recovery from the pandemic remains in a point of transition, with every sign of a positive measure being equally met by a challenge. The pandemic continues to be a significant risk and a factor in shaping residents' habits and business's decisions. The future, therefore, is unclear and hard to predict.
14. The arts/culture/leisure sector, in particular, has not recovered yet. Equally it is important to understand how people's habits and needs change (or are changing) as we recover from the pandemic. These are some of the factors the Council will need to consider when making decisions about investment in these types of facilities.
15. Officers have planned out key work stages to support this work. Below is a high-level plan of upcoming activities. The programme of work will be refined when specialists are on-boarded and evidence/requirements are more understood.



16. Subject to Cabinet agreement, the Clair Hall Member Steering Group would oversee this work and provide recommendations to Cabinet for their decisions. It is proposed that the first meeting be organised in March to establish priorities for this work and further discuss the work programme.
17. The group would meet as per agreed programme of work and report to Cabinet regularly. An interim Cabinet report would update the Cabinet on the progress of the work and would include interim recommendations linked to evidence gathered.
18. Officers identified specialist work areas that Council will want to commission to inform this work. This will help understand the site/building's issues and constraints; investigate opportunities, challenges of the local arts/culture/leisure; and gather evidence about the level of local need for community services (both from policy/community perspective and commercial opportunities and interest). Phases 2 and 3 are critical stages to gather and analyse all evidence available to develop and assess investment options.
19. The development of options work will be led by an external specialist advisor who will have experience of arts/culture/leisure sector. Using their expertise, they will lead on market research, engagement, and analysis of available information to develop ideas/option proposals for review by the Clair Hall Member Steering Group.
20. Following the Cabinet decision, officers mobilised other resources. This included beginning multiple site surveys work. A more intrusive structural survey will have to wait until access allows to progress this work.
21. A market engagement exercise is being planned to gather initial market intelligence to help focus and speed up this work (exploring both refurbishment and redevelopment scenarios and market appetite to support either of these).

### **Current use of the site**

22. Officers continue to remain in touch with the NHS regarding this use. Whilst national policy on the vaccination programme continues to develop in tandem with the course of the pandemic, the NHS has confirmed that it is likely to require Clair Hall into the new financial year. In accordance with the previously expressed desire of the Members, officers will continue to facilitate this use.
23. Should this use not be needed at any point in 2022 and the Clair Hall will become vacated, the Council will complete the surveying work to inform the development of the investment options as well as assess the level of work required after NHS vacates it. The Council's policies will guide the meanwhile use considerations.

### **Policy Context**

24. Planning applications are determined against the policies and guidance within the Development Plan. The following are of direct relevance to the Clair Hall site:
  - (a) District Plan 2014-2031, adopted in 2018
  - (b) Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in 2016
  - (c) Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document), adopted in 2021
25. The District Plan sets the vision and strategy for the district and includes policies against which planning applications are determined. In relation to the Clair Hall site, policy DP24: Leisure and Cultural Facilities and Activities provides support for new

and/or enhanced leisure and cultural activities and facilities. Proposals that involve a loss of cultural facilities will not be supported unless an assessment has been undertaken which shows the facility is surplus to requirements; or the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity/quality in a suitable location; or the development is for alternative provision where the needs clearly outweigh the loss.

26. In relation to the Clair Hall site, The Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan's Policy L1 states: "Development resulting in the loss of Clair Hall whilst the facility remains needed and valued by the local community will be resisted unless there is re-provision of an equivalent or better facility within the Town prior to the loss of the existing facilities."
27. The Masterplan identifies Clair Hall as an 'Opportunity Site' for redevelopment. For Clair Hall, the Masterplan requires any redevelopment of the site to be subject to results of an assessment to establish the need for such a facility and whether these could be re-provided elsewhere (in accordance with DP24 above).
28. Naturally, options for the refurbishment or redevelopment of the site will need to be developed, informed by the planning context.

### **Financial Implications**

29. In December 2021, Cabinet created a reserve to fund specialist work and advise to enable the Cabinet to consider options for the redevelopment or refurbishment of the site.

### **Risk Management Implications**

30. A better picture of the impacts of the pandemic on the economy, arts, and leisure sector in particular, and residents' habits and needs, are still emerging and clarifying. These increase risks and uncertainties around planning for future provision and will impact all options that may be developed as part of the feasibility work planned. An evidence-driven approach to this work will help manage these risks.
31. The financial position of the Council is under pressure and as presently set out is not sustainable. This will have to be monitored and will be a significant factor in the decision making about investment options on the site.
32. Further work to develop options around refurbishment and/or development of the site, will require access to the buildings to undertake structural surveys and facilitate more detailed planning and assessments. Currently, the NHS occupies Clair Hall, which will affect this work. Some work may not be completed until the NHS vacates or provides access to the hall.

### **Equality and Customer Service Implications**

33. Options developed as part of the feasibility work and presented to the Cabinet will include an equality impact assessment.

### **Sustainability Implications**

34. Government policy requires social as well as economic and environmental objectives to be an integral part of sustainability. Strong, vibrant, and healthy communities need sufficient provision for community facilities including cultural facilities which are easily accessible. Further work will include these considerations and develop option(s) for the most suitable facility on the site.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR CLAIR HALL MEMBERS' STEERING GROUP

### **The aim of the Clair Hall Members' Steering Group is:**

To provide political oversight and guidance in relation to the delivery of the Clair Hall project, in line District Plan 2014-2031, Haywards Heath Neighbourhood Plan, Haywards Heath Town Centre Masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document).

### **The Role of the Members' Steering Group is to:**

- Provide oversight for the project
- Act as the Task and Finish Group
- Provide political advice and guidance to Cabinet

### **Membership shall comprise:**

- Chair – Leader
- Cabinet:
  - Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth
  - Portfolio Holder for Community
  - Portfolio Holder for Estates and Facilities
- Haywards Heath Town Council:
  - Leader
- Supporting Officers (attending as required):
  - Interim Head of Organisational Development
  - Head of Corporate Resources
  - Head of Digital & Customer Services
  - BUL Estates and Facilities
  - Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy
  - Regeneration and Economy Programme Manager
  - Clerk of Haywards Heath Town Council

### **Meeting frequency:**

The Members' Steering Group will meet as required by the programme of work and within a timeframe that allows advice to be provided to Cabinet. Additional meetings held with the agreement of the Chair.