

Cabinet – 26 April 2017

Leasing of Darlaston Town Hall

Portfolio: Councillor Julie Fitzpatrick – Community Leisure and Culture

Related Portfolio: Councillor Lee Jeavons – Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Service: Asset Management

Wards: Bentley and Darlaston North / Darlaston South

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 Darlaston Town Hall is an under-utilised asset at the heart of the Darlaston community. The council, through this Community Asset Transfer, is seeking to deliver both an improvement in local services and the increased use of a key community facility.
- 1.2 This is a key decision as it is significant in terms of its direct effects on communities in an area comprising two or more wards in the borough.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the grant of a 25-year lease of Darlaston Town Hall to Murray Hall Community Trust at a peppercorn rent of £1. A market rent for the building is estimated to be in the region of £20,000 per annum.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Murray Hall Community Trust to ensure that the building will be used to support the council's corporate priorities.
- 2.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Economy and Environment, in consultation with the portfolio-holder for Regeneration, to enter into an agreement as set out in recommendation 2.1, including an agreed start date, and to subsequently authorise the sealing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.
- 2.4 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director Change and Governance, in consultation with the portfolio-holder for Community, Leisure and Culture to enter into an agreement as set out in recommendation 2.2 and to subsequently authorise the sealing of any deeds, contracts or other related documents for such services.

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The council recognises that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations are best placed to manage facilities in their local communities and make extensive use of volunteers, and their local knowledge and hands-on management of the asset is likely to result in lower overheads and better value for money, as well as a more intensive use of the asset. VCS organisations can also offer innovation in service delivery. Better use of its asset can also help the council achieve improved outcomes and efficiencies.
- 3.2 Officers were instructed to pursue the potential for a Community Asset Transfer of Darlaston Town Hall to a VCS organisation.
- 3.3 Asset Strategy Group emphasised that any proposed community transfer of the asset would need to meet the following characteristics:
- Community-led to meet community demand
 - Supports the council's aims and priorities
 - Sustainable in the long term
 - Has positive financial implications for the council
- 3.4 Accordingly, in July 2016, the property was marketed to the VCS on the basis of a lease of 25 years, subject to a satisfactory business plan, under the Community Asset Transfer process. The marketing exercise was a two-stage process which initially sought expressions of interest from community groups followed by an assessment of detailed business cases prepared by the bidders.
- 3.5 The process envisaged the consideration of a concessionary rent from organisations which met the following eligibility criteria:
- Must have a charitable status and be a registered company, or hold an appropriate legal status i.e. Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Community Interest Company, Co-operative or Community Benefit Industrial & Provident Society.
 - Non-profit-making and exist for community, social, environmental and economic benefit. The council recognises that community organisations may have a business element to how they operate, such as a community cafe.
 - Open to and demonstrate an inclusive approach to members of the wider community.
 - Have robust systems, governance and policies, as evidenced by meeting all the basic requirements listed in the 'pre-VISIBLE' quality standard developed by Community Matters, or an equivalent, nationally-recognised standard of quality mark.
- 3.6 In addition to the lease, the successful party would be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which will set out the social, economic or environmental benefits that will be generated by the use of the property. This Memorandum of Understanding with the lease will create a legally binding mechanism to ensure that the building is used for purposes that support the council's corporate plan priorities.

- 3.7 Expressions of interest were received from three parties: Gazebo, Murray Hall Community Trust and Darlaston All Active. Gazebo withdrew their interest. Following the evaluation of the expressions of interest, Murray Hall Community Trust and Darlaston All Active were invited to prepare and submit a business plan in order to demonstrate that the initial proposals submitted are viable, sustainable and have been thoroughly and competently developed. These business plans were evaluated against agreed criteria designed by specialist officers and the evaluation panel recommended that the proposal submitted by Murray Hall Community Trust provided the best fit with the council's requirements and scored highest in the evaluation. The evaluation document is enclosed at **Appendix A**.
- 3.8 Murray Hall Community Trust is a Sandwell-based charity serving the Black Country and Birmingham areas. The charity was set up in 1994 by local people in Sandwell to promote health and wellbeing.
- 3.9 The trust aims to make optimum use of the facilities to enrich the lives of local residents, to foster social inclusion and to encourage participation in the life of the local community.
- 3.10 The proposal includes plans for the development of a community hub which will improve the quality of life for the local residents by seeking to promote the principles of personal development, healthy lifestyle, wellbeing, community engagement and empowerment and social inclusion. The trust will actively seek strategic partnerships and opportunities for joint working with other stakeholders and interested parties. The trust's desire is to work closely with the 'third sector' and will directly involve the wider community in the running of the town hall by creating Darlaston Community Hub and determining its overall direction.
- 3.11 Murray Hall Community Trust will invest £250,000 aimed at improving the facilities and development of a wide range of activities for the benefit of the local community.
- 3.12 The trust proposes the following outline lease terms:
- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Term | 25 years (the term of the lease will allow the trust to secure external grant funding) |
| Rent | Peppercorn |
| Repairing obligations | Full repairing obligations with respect to the building and property with the exception of the memorials to be identified as part of an inventory |
| User | The primary use of the building will be community use, however the trust will be permitted to generate income to help to sustain the community activities and cover overheads |
- 3.13 Given that the proposed lease term is in excess of 21 years and also at a peppercorn rent, so less than best consideration, Cabinet approval is required. It is recommended that the lease be contracted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1925 so the tenant does not acquire security of tenure.
- 3.14 The council's external valuer has undertaken a rental valuation of the property and has confirmed that the market rent based on all reasonable alternative uses of the property is £20,000 per annum.

- 3.15 Arrangements will be put in place for the protection, upkeep and community access to key facilities such as the organ, memorials and art-work.

4. Council priorities

- 4.1 Pursue inclusive economic growth, Make a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people, Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best, Safe, resilient and prospering communities – the granting of a lease of Darlaston Town Hall to Murray Hall Community Trust will ensure that the town hall facilities will be maintained, improved and made fully available to the community.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 In order to ensure that Darlaston Town Hall remains a community facility, the lease will restrict the primary use of the building to community use. A tenant for this important building will help support the centre of Darlaston as a strong regional centre.
- 5.2 As part of the Community Asset Transfer process, Murray Hall Community Trust produced a business plan to show how they will provide the services to the community and that they will, on a financially independent basis, be able to fund and fully maintain the facility. The business plan has been appraised by the council and it is accepted that the business plan provides the necessary assurances.
- 5.3 In addition to the lease, Murray Hall Community Trust will be required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the council which will provide the council with the ability to terminate the lease in the event that the trust does not deliver the community benefits detailed in the business plan.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 If a tenant is not found for the town hall the obligations for the ongoing repair and maintenance of this locally listed building will remain with the council.
- 6.2 In the event that Murray Hall Community Trust is not able to meet its financial liabilities after the grant of the lease, this will be managed through Landlord and Tenant legislation.
- 6.3 The council's external valuer has undertaken a rental valuation of the property and has certified the market rent for all reasonable alternative uses to be £20,000. As it is proposed that the lease will be granted at a peppercorn rent, the council is foregoing a potential rental income of £20,000 per annum for the term of the lease being 25 years.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The lease and memorandum of understanding will be prepared by Legal Services on the basis of a fully repairing lease for a period of 25 years (contracted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1925). The lease and memorandum of understanding will limit the use of the building to activities for the purpose of community use, however

the trust will be permitted to generate income to help sustain community activities and cover overheads subject to obtaining all necessary consents.

- 7.2 The General Consent (2003) allows for the grant of a lease, otherwise than by way of a short tenancy, by a Local Authority at an undervalue if the Local Authority considers that the purpose of the disposal achieves the promotion or improvement of economic wellbeing, social wellbeing, or environmental wellbeing and the difference between the unrestricted value and the consideration does not exceed £2 million.

8. Procurement implications

- 8.1 This is not strictly a procurement process therefore usual a procurement consideration does not apply. To ensure a transparent, fair and equal process, the council's e-procurement portal (intend) was used to administer the process. The bids were evaluated in accordance with the published criteria, the outcome of which is set out in appendix (a).

9. Property implications

- 9.1 The leasing of this building will impose full repairing obligations on the tenant and therefore will transfer the obligations for the repair and maintenance of the building to the tenant, save for the repair and maintenance of memorials.
- 9.2 It is intended that the grant of the lease will help to maximise the use of the asset.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 10.1 Darlaston Town Hall in recent times has been used less and less for community activities. The involvement of a new partner in the area will kick-start a broader health and wellbeing push which will be aligned to the priorities as set out in the Marmot principles and the council's corporate plan.
- 10.2 During the negotiation phase of this arrangement we would expect focus on the needs of the area and on how we can work together to ensure the maximum impact of this initiative.

11. Staffing implications

- 11.1 Officers in Asset Management and Legal Services will be involved in the negotiation of the lease agreement and service agreement.
- 11.2 There are no staffing implications.

12. Equality implications

- 12.1 There are no equality implications. The opportunity was marketed openly and all groups were given the opportunity to express an interest.

13. Consultation

13.1 Consultation has been undertaken with ward councillors, Legal Services, Finance, Human Resources and Development, Planning and Building Control, Housing, Strategic Regeneration and Development and Delivery.

13.2 Legal Services have provided information on the council's freehold title.

Background papers

Business Plan Evaluation

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Julie Alderson
Executive Director , Change & Governance

18 April 2017



Councillor J Fitzpatrick
Portfolio Holder – Community, Leisure and Culture

18 April 2017

Darlaston Town Hall

The council recognises that voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations are best placed to manage facilities in their local communities, make extensive use of volunteers and their local knowledge and hands-on management of the asset is likely to result in lower overheads and better value for money, as well as a more intensive use of the asset. VCS organisations can also offer innovation in service delivery. Better use of its asset can also help the council achieve improved outcomes and efficiencies.

Asset Strategy Group (ASG) requested council officers to pursue the potential for a Community Asset Transfer of Darlaston Town Hall to a VCS organisation.

ASG emphasised that any proposed community transfer of the asset would need to meet the following characteristics:

- Community-led to meet community demand
- Supports the council's aims and priorities
- Sustainable in the long term
- Has positive financial implications for the council

Definition of Community Asset Transfer

The transfer of land or buildings from the council to a voluntary and community sector organisation.

Community Asset Transfer has the potential to achieve a number of objectives:

- form long-term partnerships with VCS organisations
- provide assets for wider voluntary and community sector use
- maximise community benefit - minimising financial liability for the council in the future
- support the building of social capital

Community Asset Transfer can take place in different forms including through:

- a management agreement
- a licence to occupy
- a short lease
- a long lease
- freehold

Community Asset Transfer usually involves a transfer at less-than-market value, at a reduced cost, peppercorn rent or free of charge. The level of subsidy applied to the asset transfer, will be determined by the social, economic or environmental benefits generated by the transfer and the value of the asset.

Community Asset Transfer can apply to community buildings, community facilities and also other community venues owned by the council.

Legal Obligations

Council officers noted that any Community Asset Transfer will need be considered against the council's legal obligations in respect of property disposal:

- **S123 of the Local Government Act 1972**

A local authority may not dispose of land otherwise than by way of a short tenancy, for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained unless the local authority has the prior consent of the Secretary of State.

Under a general consent by the Secretary of State, a disposal at less-than-best consideration is permitted where the undervalue is less than £2 million provided it meets any one or more of the following objects:

- (i) the promotion or improvement of economic well-being;
- (ii) the promotion or improvement of social well-being;
- (iii) the promotion or improvement of environmental well-being.

Council officers will need to consider whether the terms of the proposed transfer to the community organisation can be justified under these conditions.

- **State Aid**

State Aid refers to forms of assistance from a public body given to certain organisations which has the potential to distort competition and affect trade between member states of the European Union.

The European Commission monitors and controls State Aid in the EU. Member states are obliged to notify and seek approval from the Commission before granting State Aid. This gives the Commission the opportunity to approve or refuse to approve the proposed measure. The council will need to consider whether the terms of the transfer proposed by the community organisation could amount to State Aid and if so, whether exemptions exist that might allow the transfer to proceed legally.

The Process

The remainder of this report focuses on the process and procedure adopted by council officers to identify a suitable VCS organisation for the Community Asset Transfer.

Advertisement

For fairness and transparency it was agreed to advertise the availability of the community asset for a transfer through the Procurement Intend portal. The council also advertised the availability of the community asset through various information networks available to the council and One Walsall's mailing list.

Expression of Interest – Stage 1

The expression of interest briefing note which accompanied the Stage 1 application process identified the below eligibility criteria that VCS would need to meet:

- The organisation must have a charitable status and be a registered company, or hold a legal status i.e. Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Company Interest Company, Co-operative or Community Benefit Industrial & Provident Society.
- The organisation must be non-profit-making and exist for community, social, environmental and economic benefit.
- VCS organisations may have a business element to how they operate, such as a community cafe, and it will take this into consideration when reviewing proposals.
- The organisation must be open and able to demonstrate an inclusive approach to members of the wider community.
- The organisation must have robust financial management systems, governance and policies.

Interested organisations were requested to attach the below mentioned documents in conjunction with their expression of interest form:

- Governance documents
- Equal opportunities policy/statement
- Vulnerable adult policy
- Child protection policy
- Health & safety policy
- Three years' annual accounts (audited, inspected accounts or current statement of accounts). If the organisation was less than a year old they were requested to submit a recent bank statement dated within the last three months.

Expression of Interest Application Form

VCS organisations were requested details of their organisation, including their structure, purpose, and the organisations experience in project development, ability to manage the asset, their governance/formal management arrangements and evidence of their financial position.

A narrative of the group's plans for the property, including why they wish to take it on, anticipated sources of finance, and how they will ensure it remains available for, and of benefit to, the local community.

Criteria		Question	Criteria Weighting (%)
2. Governance	2.3	Please state what the key aims and objectives of your organisation are.	20%
	2.4	What relevant skills does your committee/board have?	
	2.5	What policy, plans and procedures does your organisation have in place?	

	2.6	Provide details of the quality standards held by your organisation along with dates they are valid up to.	
3. Managing the asset	3.2	Why you are interested in the asset and what are your plans for it?	25%
	3.3	Your capacity to manage the asset on a day-to-day basis?	
	3.4	Repairs, maintenance and health and safety – Explain how you have managed these issues.	
4. Financial viability	4.2	How do you manage your finances including the decision-making process for allocating funds?	25%
	4.3	How often do you report to your Board/ Committee in relation to your finances?	
	4.4	What resources does your organisation have to support this project? Capital, revenue grants etc. Have you identified any external funding to deliver your project?	
	4.5	How will you ensure your project is financially sustainable in the longer term?	
5. Community benefits	5.1	Community involvement and increasing use - Please explain how you have researched the needs of the local or wider community.	30%
	5.2	How will users and the community have a voice in what is delivered at the asset?	
	5.3	How will you develop activities and bring fresh ideas to the project?	
	5.4	Who are your Competitors? How have you managed Competitors previously?	
	5.5	Inclusion, diversity and social cohesion – Explain how you have delivered inclusion, diversity and social cohesion. What evidence have you collected to support this?	

	5.6	Will your proposal bring additional financial investment into the area (e.g. through grants and funding unavailable to the council)?	
	5.7	Describe how your proposed plan for the asset will meet the council's Corporate priorities and local neighbourhood priorities?	

Evaluation Panel

The panel consisted of four council officers from the council's Change & Governance and Environment and Economy directorates. The evaluation process was overseen by a procurement officer.

The three suppliers listed below submitted expressions of interest for stage 1:

- Gazebo
- Murray Hall Community Trust
- Darlaston All Active

Assessment criteria

Panel members assessed each applicant against the set criteria and considered the degree to which each applicant demonstrated their ability, experience and knowledge.

	Expressions of Interest Stage 1		Applicant Score		
	Criteria	Weighting	Darlaston All Active	Gazebo	Murray Hall Community Trust
Q1	Governance	20%	10%	15%	15%
Q2	Managing the asset	25%	12%	16%	12%
Q3	Financial viability	25%	8%	12%	12%
Q4	Community benefit	30%	7%	13%	10%
	Total Score	100	37%	56%	49%

Business Plan - Stage 2

In order to demonstrate that the applicant organisations' initial proposal submitted at Stage 1 is viable and sustainable, and has been thoroughly and competently developed, there was a requirement for a business plan. The plan helped applicants to demonstrate that their proposal has merit and is consistent with the council's own aspirations.

Applicants were evaluated in accordance with the following published criteria.

Executive Summary	
<p>Provide a brief (up to 1½ pages of A4) summarising your proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you clearly cover the below points within your summary • Background to your organisation • Your proposals aims and objectives you are seeking to deliver and how it will be funded initially and ongoing • The type of transfer sought and why • The legal structure of the organisation that will take forward your proposal if your organisation is successful i.e. will your organisation setup a new legal entity etc. <p>Note: Each section below will be scored using the specified weighting</p>	
Your Organisation	Criteria Weightings (%)
Provide a statement of the objectives and outcomes your organisation intends to accomplish	10%
Explain how your organisation will meet the objectives/outcomes and your reasons why they are attainable	
Describe how your organisation will measure your performance against the objectives/outcomes expected by the council	
Provide details of how your organisation will improve services to the local community	
If your organisation is requesting a transfer at less than market value, please ensure that your proposal justifies this requirement and quantifies the benefits to the local community and the council.	
The Market – (Please provide a copy of your full community needs assessment)	
Summarise your results from your community needs assessment, market research, and the consultation exercises you have undertaken (including the methodology used, the results and the conclusions you have drawn from this).	15%
Provide evidence that there is a need and demand for this proposal. Explain how your organisation will meet this demand. Who will be your target market? Who will be your key beneficiaries?	
Explain how your organisation will ensure inclusion, diversity and social cohesion is delivered through the use of the asset. Describe how barriers to participation will be addressed?	
Provide details of your understanding of the voluntary and community sector in Darlaston and explain how your proposed plans for the asset will complement existing activities and services provided by local community organisations. Have you identified any opportunities to build partnership and collaborative working with other organisations?	

Explain how your organisations proposal will benefit the local community and the economy, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employment opportunities – temporary, permanent, voluntary and how many• Income generation• Health and wellbeing• Environmental• Quality of life benefits• Community safety• Social value	
Business Growth and Development	
Provide a SWOT analysis for your organisation	20%
What is your organisation’s future strategy for the asset? Is your organisation planning to develop a trading arm? Explain your plans and provide details.	
Provide a 5-year plan detailing the key activities and times scales and action owners for all phases. For example, Phase 1 may include the project design stage. Phase 2 may involve your organisations on-going strategy for maintaining the asset (service delivery). Phase 3 may relate to service expansion.	
Darlaston Town Hall's Management & Operations	
Outline your management structure for this proposal including their roles and responsibilities	10%
Provide details of your proposed operational staffing structure for the running of the asset and any training plans that will be in place	
Describe how volunteers and existing users of the asset will be involved in influencing decisions regarding your future plans for the asset	
Describe how your staff, volunteers, collaborative partners will be managed. Who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the asset and the project’s finances?	
Explain how you will use the asset. If the asset is to be used by the general public please provide details of the letting policies and opening and closing times.	
Explain how you will manage repairs and maintenance to the building and equipment and address health and safety issues, and ensure that deadlines for annual statutory compliance checks are completed on time.	
What processes and procedures will be in place to record, monitor and address customer complaints, incidents and emergencies on a day-to-day basis? Provide details of your proposed complaints resolution process for this project.	
Darlaston Town Hall's future Development	
What plans do you have for refurbishment and expansion? Describe these modifications (please attach any supporting drawings and include any discussion you have had with council departments, e.g. Planning, Building Control, etc).	5%
Marketing Plan	
Provide details of how you are proposing to advertise and generate community interest in the asset and the services provided.	5%

Financial Plan		
Provide an overview of the 5-year income and expenditure (cash flow projection).	20%	
How will you generate income whilst ensuring overheads are covered and what level of profit are you expecting to make over the five years? Provide expected profit details for each year.		
Provide details of any assumptions you have made in your financial projections and your reasoning behind them e.g. pricing structure, capital expenditure, grants funding, income applied for/secured.		
Provide details of any start-up funding you would require and the potential sources of this funding.		
Provide details of any grants that are relevant to this business plan and an overview of any conditions associated with them.		
What will be your strategy to fund-raise?		
Monitoring and Evaluation		
Provide information of how the proposed use of the asset in relation to the delivery of activities and services will monitored and evaluated. What mechanisms and systems will you put in place?	5%	
Provide details of fall-back arrangements that your organisation will put in place should the transfer prove to be not sustainable.		
Risk Analysis		
Provide details of the risks associated with your plan and how you intend to manage them - i.e. the key risks, their likelihood (of occurrence i.e. high, medium, low). How will you manage any liabilities and how they will be managed)?	10%	

Assessment criteria

Panel members assessed each applicant against the set criteria and considered the degree to which each applicant demonstrated their ability, experience and knowledge.

Business Plan Stage 2			Applicant Score	
	Criteria	Weighting	Darlaston All Active	Murray Hall Community Trust
Q1	Your Organisation	10%	7.5	10
Q2	The Market	15%	11.25	15
Q3	Business Growth & Development	20%	10	20
Q4	Darlaston Town Hall's Management & Operations	10%	5	10
Q5	Darlaston Town Hall's Future Development	5%	3.75	3.75
Q6	Marketing Plan	5%	3.75	5
Q7	Financial Plan	20%	10	20
Q8	Monitoring and Evaluation	5%	3.75	3.75
Q9	Risk Analysis	10%	7.5	7.5
	Total Score	100%	62.5	95

Panel's Conclusion

The business plan detailed the proposed use of the building, the organisation's skills and capacity to manage the asset, financial viability and also demonstrated how the asset transfer would enhance the existing services and activities within the area.

Murray Hall Trust provided an in-depth community needs assessment which demonstrated the demand for the proposed use of the asset, which was underpinned by consultation with existing building users, community groups and other stakeholders from within the community which clearly demonstrated a community/social demand for the transfer.

Community Benefits

Murray Hall Trust clearly demonstrated that the transfer of the asset would deliver community benefits resulting in demonstrable outcomes ranging from:

- Developing a community hub which will improve the quality of life for the whole local community by seeking to promote the principles of personal development, healthy lifestyle, wellbeing, community engagement and empowerment and social inclusion
- Encouraging and supporting local community clubs, groups and individuals to provide activities, services and learning opportunities
- Developing social enterprise locally
- Offering employment opportunities
- Offering a diverse physical activity programme
- Providing opportunities to volunteer
- Generate income necessary for the running of the community hub
- Protect the listed building and embrace its heritage
- Offer an open-door policy to the community

The development of activities which are aimed at tackling and supporting:

- Those adults on low levels of income who are economically challenged in the area
- Working to support those on high-level work benefit dependency
- Offering access to develop basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ITC
- Tackling the lack of work opportunities in the area
- Working with partners to develop pathways for young people to reduce youth offending and developing opportunities
- Improve access to health support and advice to improve health inequalities that include childhood obesity and teenage pregnancy

The organisation clearly outlined the future opportunities for enhancing the use of the asset as a community facility that the transfer would bring. Murray Hall Trust identified opportunities for using the asset to develop and provide new and innovative services, which can be clearly linked to the council priorities.

Financial viability

Murray Hall Trust demonstrated how the project will cover all its costs with income over a five-year period. The business plan clearly sets out how the asset will be managed to a high standard, covering insurance, statutory compliance, security, health and safety. The panel concluded that the organisation has the financial ability, skills, capacity, experience and knowledge to manage the town hall on a day-to-day basis and maintain, repair and enhance the town hall for future use.

The organisation demonstrated clear plans for managing and improving the current condition of Darlaston Town Hall. For example the organisation identified grant funding for capital works which was cross-referenced against recent and previous examples of successful applications, demonstrating how the organisation has managed to secure funding for two community buildings that the organisation manages.

Governance

Murray Hall Trust has 26 years' experience in working in and for the community by delivering successful community-based activity.

Murray Hall Trust provides broadly three portfolios of services:

- Health service - this supports people living with palliative conditions
- Children & Family Services - young peoples counselling, therapeutic & group work sessions, family support services, sure start children's centres, youth services
- Education & Access Services - provide information points, targeted work in deprived areas

The charity is run by a Trustee Board where a number of powers are delegated by six sub-committees including an Executive Officer group consisting of three executives overseen by the Chief Executive. The panel concluded that Murray Hall Trust has significant knowledge and expertise at board level to delivery good service provision.

The Trustees are:

John Blewitt - Chair
Kerry Whitehouse – Vice Chair
Ronald Moles
Vicky Powell

Executive officers are:

Malcolm Bailey – Chief Executive
Carol Thompson – Children and Families
Manjula Patel – Health and Social Care
Lisa Jane Garfield – Corporate Services

Management of the town hall aligns with Murray Hall's strategic aim to promote the wellbeing and quality of life of the community and is also fully in line with its strategic objectives of Walsall Council (WC) "to improve the lives and life chances of everyone

who lives and works in the local area” promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of the borough.

Recommendation

The panel recommended that the transfer of the asset via a 25-year lease will have a positive impact by:

- Empowering local communities in Darlaston by putting local organisations in control of a loved local asset.
- Stimulating the involvement of local people in shaping and regenerating Darlaston, becoming a catalyst for local volunteering and increasing community cohesion.
- Building confidence and capacity in Darlaston that can support the creation of community leaders and inspire others to improve themselves and the Darlaston area.
- Creating stronger, more sustainable voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations which can create a wide range of benefits for the communities they serve such as employment and resources.
- Offering opportunities to extend the use of the asset, increasing its value to the community by looking at social enterprise as a prime example.