

24th August 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Heather House & Reed Hall

I am writing to inform you of the future of Heather House and Reed Hall. The building requires significant investment to repair key parts of its external and internal infrastructure, an investment that might only extend the useful life of the building for around five years.

The refurbishment required is likely to cause significant disruption and it is unlikely that the building could be used during the refurbishment due to health and safety reasons and the significant nature of the works required.

Even if the building is refurbished, the Council considers that the structure remains dated and therefore limits its use and its ability to attract an increased number of users. Given the condition of the building it is only right that we give full consideration to how we best spend public money, taking into account the cost of the work needed, the age of the building, its current usage and the income generated that contributes towards the cost of the buildings upkeep.

There exists an alternative option to the significant investment required to give the property a limited life span, we are exploring whether a redevelopment of the site could be possible. Such a development could provide a new enhanced purpose built community facility and provide a much improved resource and multi-use facility offering a wider range of activities in addition to the sports and leisure offer.

The Council are working with architects and cost consultants to explore the technical and financial feasibility of such a proposal. I envisage that we should have clarity over what will be possible in terms of a potential redevelopment of the site by the end of September 2017.

In view of the urgency to have a firm proposal going forward, we are aiming to have a final decision made as to the future of the building by the end of October. The final decision will need to be dealt with by the relevant Committee as such a decision will undoubtedly have financial implications.

We will carry out a community consultation on any proposals for a replacement building to ensure that the views of the people who have previously or may in the future use the building are taken into account during the developed design of any such building.

With this in mind, I am therefore giving you notice that we intend to close the Hall. It will remain open until the end of October, unless circumstances deteriorate beyond our control.

As soon as a decision has been made as to the future of the building we will of course communicate this to you and other users of the hall at the earliest opportunity. I envisage that given the above intended timescales this would be during November.

I appreciate the uncertainty this situation causes but the Council finds itself in an unavoidable situation that it needs to tackle and does not want to make any commitments at this stage that it will not be able to honour.

We recognise the importance of Heather House as a community resource and what it provides to the groups who use it. Assistance will be provided in finding an alternative venue to any group who currently uses Heather House, whilst the facility remains unavailable. Enclosed is a list of other community centres and venues that may be able to offer space to your group, please contact us if your group has particular requirements that you feel need special consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Matt Roberts

Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager

t 01622 602404 **f** 01622 602972

e MattRoberts@Maidstone.gov.uk