

251210 – Administration Amendment - Werneth Park Music Rooms – Community-Led Regeneration and Asset Transfer

Moved by Cllr Peter Dean
Seconded by Cllr Fida Hussain

Delete

Insert

This Council Notes:

Historical Significance

The Grade II listed Werneth Park Music Rooms is one of Oldham's most significant historic buildings.

Located in Werneth Park – Oldham's second most eminent Victorian park – it has served local communities since the 1930s, when it was gifted to the Borough under covenants requiring continued community use.

Long-Term Closure and Decline

The Music Rooms were closed in 2001 due to budget cuts.

Since closure, the building has remained derelict, suffering extensive vandalism and deterioration, driving up potential refurbishment costs.

Responsibility for the building currently sits **the Council's Estates team**. ~~within Environmental Services, and the Council continues to incur annual costs of approximately £125,025 for a building that remains closed and unused.~~

Evidence of Community Need and Previous Work

- A 2002 SRB6-funded study identified a shortage of community facilities in Werneth and Freehold and found strong resident support for restoring the Music Rooms.
- A feasibility study in 2007 estimated renovation costs in the region of £2.85m–£4.1m, and a steering group was subsequently formed to progress a Heritage Lottery Fund bid.
- ~~There has been no updated feasibility or options appraisal work for nearly a decade, despite continuing community interest.~~
- **Feasibility and due diligence has been undertaken when options have been brought forward, to date no viable option has been identified.**

~~**Current Position and Financial Context**~~

~~Continuing to pay to hold a derelict listed asset represents poor value for money for Oldham residents, especially in the context of severe financial pressures on the Council.~~

Funding Opportunities

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) currently offers grant routes from £100,000 to £5 million, which are well suited to the restoration and reuse of derelict historic buildings.

The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) provides development funding and support for community-led heritage schemes, including business planning and governance development.

Taken together, these funds provide a realistic route to securing the capital required for restoration, provided there is strong community involvement and a clear, sustainable business model.

Vision for the Music Rooms

The music rooms could benefit the local community by offering:

- A permanent curated exhibition space for Oldham's cultural heritage;
- A community tea room and social space; and
- A flexible events and performance venue for music, arts, learning and community activity.
- Regeneration would create employment and apprenticeship opportunities, support local suppliers, and enable partnerships with major cultural institutions.

This Council Believes:

Werneth Park Music Rooms is an iconic historic building and a symbol of Oldham's cultural heritage; its continued dereliction sends a damaging message about Oldham's commitment to its history and its parks.

This Council Resolves To:

1. ~~Support in Principle any suitable~~ **Welcome any viable** Community-Led Regeneration of Werneth Park Music Rooms
2. **Continue to Explore** all options ~~that could be applicable for this building~~ to bring **it Werneth Park Music Rooms** back into use for the community,
3. Work proactively with interested community organisations and Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust to explore viable options for the future of Werneth Park Music Rooms ~~and to support in any way possible.~~
4. ~~Request that relevant officers prepare a progress report back to Council Within 6–12 months setting out any progress that can be reported upon to Full Council regarding this building:~~

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