

Chief Executive's Office

Chief Executive: N.M. Pringle

**To: All Members of Cabinet:
R.J. Phillips (Leader)
G.V. Hyde (Deputy Leader)
Mrs. L.O. Barnett
P.J. Edwards
Mrs. J.P. French
J.C. Mayson
D.W. Rule MBE
R.V. Stockton
R.M. Wilson
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Your Ref:

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28th August, 2003

Dear Councillor,

**MEETING OF CABINET
THURSDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2003 AT 2.00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBER, BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD**

AGENDA (03/13A)

8. ACCESS TO SERVICES IN KINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREAS: WESLEYAN CHAPEL

To receive a report of progress on the possible refurbishment and conversion of the Wesleyan Chapel, Kington and to recommend further action. *(Pages 1 - 8)*

Yours sincerely,



**N.M. PRINGLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Copies to: Chairman of the Council
Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee
Vice-Chairman of Strategic Monitoring Committee
Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees
Group Leaders
Directors
Herefordshire Commercial Services Manager
County Secretary and Solicitor
County Treasurer

ACCESS TO SERVICES IN KINGTON AND SURROUNDING AREAS: WESLEYAN CHAPEL

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

CABINET

4TH SEPTEMBER, 2003

Wards Affected

Bircher; Castle; Golden Cross with Weobley; Kington Town; Mortimer; Pembridge and Lyonshall with Titley.

Purpose

To receive a report of progress on the possible refurbishment and conversion of the Wesleyan Chapel, Kington and to recommend further action.

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in Herefordshire in an area comprising of one or more wards and it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure above agreed budgets for the service or function (as shown as line in the Budget Book) to which the decision relates but allowing for virements between budget heads and savings within budget heads of up to £500,000. It was included in the Forward Plan.

Recommendation

THAT, subject to the previous recommendations, Cabinet agrees that further development work is undertaken by establishing a partnership based project team to establish funding, develop and implement the scheme.

Considerations

1. At its meeting on 27th March, 2003 Cabinet agreed that:
 - (a) subject to a viable Business Case being reported to Cabinet, the Wesleyan Chapel be adopted as the preferred location to develop a new Library, INFO shop, and associated community and business services;
 - b) the issue of ownership of the Wesleyan Chapel be considered as part of the business case;
 - c) community consultation with Kington Regeneration Partnership be undertaken on the proposal.
2. Following consideration by Cabinet the decision was called in for consideration at a Special Meeting of the Social and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee on

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Mark Warren, Head of Customer Services & Libraries 01432 260617/Geoff Hughes Head of Community &
Economic Development 01432 260695

9th April, 2003. The call in of the Cabinet Report brought particular emphasis on the Business Case and consultation within the catchment area. This report does not intend to deal with these aspects in detail but to seek guidance in principle of the next steps.

3. Advantage West Midlands on behalf of Herefordshire Council and Kington Regeneration Partnership commissioned work that has now produced an outline design and costings for the Wesleyan Chapel scheme.
4. This draft scheme provides for a plan over 4 floors (potentially incorporating a new Library, INFO shop, TIC, Registrars Office, Citizens Advice Bureau and commercial office space.)
5. At this time the capital cost of the building works for the scheme has a provisional estimate to cover capital and fitting out costs in the region of £1.61 million. It must be emphasised that these are only provisional estimated costs and previous experience with large capital schemes suggests these costs could grow significantly. Previous costs were estimated at £1.1 million on a reduced floor space.
6. Initial discussions with AWM indicate that they may be prepared to consider a capital contribution in the order of 25% of the total capital cost through the Rural Regeneration Zone. There are also other external funding opportunities, which could be explored including Objective 2 and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Initial indications suggest that if applications for all these sources of funding were successful approximately £1.1 million of the capital costs could be sourced externally leaving approximately £0.5 million to be found by the Council. There is of course no guarantee that any of these applications for funding will be successful. These figures do not allow for capital receipts that may be realised as part of the package.
7. The Revenue budget to support a project of this nature is not insignificant and again it should be emphasised that a project of this nature will seek to increase the public uptake of services, and where possible extend the available hours of access. Modernised buildings can reduce running costs, and a commercial element can provide income. However the majority of services for the building are publicly funded and free at point of access. The initial projections represent an increase of £28,000 pa above current available Revenue budgets.
8. With reference to the Library service the professional view of the Libraries Operations Manager (County Librarian) is that a significantly larger shared facility with much improved physical access and parking will give major benefits to the local community. The current library will not meet the minimum requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act; and due to the small size (140m² - less than 20% of Ross and Leominster) and poor design can only offer a limited range of services (e.g. no study facilities; no activity/display areas). The Kington library currently occupies 85m².
9. AWM wrote to the Council on 11th June 2003 indicating that they would be prepared to become involved in the project as part of a funding package involving local partners including Herefordshire Council. AWM also suggest the establishment of a tight and realistic partnership to implement, fund and manage the project.
10. The potential to bring a significant redundant building into beneficial use clearly exists, and will represent a significant milestone for the re-development of Kington and services for the hinterland.
11. A Leader's briefing was held on 21st August on the proposals. This was followed by a consultation meeting with representatives of the local community including the

Kington Town Council, representatives of neighbouring parishes, local Councillors and Kington Regeneration Partnership. There was broad agreement that the scheme as presented represented a means of resolving many of the issues related to access to services in Kington. There was a strong sense that the Council should progress the scheme as quickly as possible.

Risk Management

The progression of the scheme to redevelop the Wesleyan Chapel will require successful achievement of funding from other sources. In particular the Kington regeneration partnership funding profile for the area and this scheme in particular has already earmarked considerable funds for this project. Not progressing to the next stage will trigger financial issues for the Kington regeneration partnership on this particular aspect.

The Council has a responsibility to maintain a Grade II listed building and will continue to incur costs to maintain the building as it currently stands.

The Council will be faced at some stage with achieving compliance with the Disability Discrimination act for the Kington Library building. This will involve considerable sums.

Consultees

- Advantage West Midlands
- Kington Regeneration Partnership
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Citizen Advice Bureau (County Manager)
- Registrars Service

Background Papers

None identified

Cabinet Report Access to Services etc 27/03/03

Considerations in this report were as follows

1. Kington and its catchment area serves a population of approx 15,075. It is an important market town which is currently in receipt of regeneration monies and has established a Local Regeneration Partnership. The Partnership covers some but not all the parishes in the ward affected.
2. The Council is committed to improving resident and visitor access to its services and regards Kington as needing to improve its Library services, provision of a One Stop Service (Info in Herefordshire), enhance Tourist Information Services, support better access to Voluntary Services. The Council has also set itself a Local Public Service Agreement target of every resident not being more than 15 minutes drive from a public information access point by 2005.
3. The Council's property portfolio of owned premises related to these services as follows:

<u>Site</u>	Owned	Area m2	DDA
Kington Library Building	Yes	264.4m2	No
Area Office/Tourist Information Office	Yes	124.4m2	No
Wesleyan Chapel	Yes	719.13m2*	No

* Proposed design

4. The key aims of the Kington Town Regeneration Partnership are:
 - Redefine the Market Town by building a strong and competitive local economy that harnesses the best of the past and embraces the future by investing in local people, businesses and innovation;
 - Enhance the local environment to reflect the pride of local people in the place where they live and promote it as an attractive and accessible environment for people to visit;
 - Promote a sustainable, active and inclusive community to enable everyone who lives and works in the area equal access to services and opportunities.
5. Its current priorities are –
 - Improving and developing support services for the community and local businesses.
 - Harnessing the opportunities that technology can bring to market the commercial and tourist potential of the town in new and innovative ways.
 - Tackling social exclusion through developing access to advice and information services, health initiatives and developing employment opportunities.

- Bringing back into use redundant buildings.
 - Investment in the built environment to attract inward investment, promote tourism and local 'spend' and enhance community pride.
 - Revive the market town to become, once again, the economic generator for the surrounding rural area.
6. Services currently delivered from Kington Library have been enhanced in the last 12 months by increase in opening hours, provision of free internet access and some improvements in stock. The service will be widened under a strategic framework for Libraries, due to be completed by early 2004. The existing Library site does not meet standards required by Disability Discrimination Act, and does not benefit from co-location with other services.
 7. The Area Office building which provides an INFO Help Point, volunteer TIC service, and base for Kington Town Council is not suitable for modern service delivery, but occupies a prime site. Temporary work is being undertaken to improve staff safety and enhance working conditions and customer reception.
 8. The Wesleyan Chapel is a Grade II listed building which the Council owns and has obligation in respect of the designated grading. A statement of the significance of the building is attached at Appendix 1.
 9. Discussion has taken place on 4th March, 2003 amongst a number of bodies including AWM, English Heritage, Kington Regeneration Partnership and representatives from Council Services.
 10. AWM has expressed a view that it is prepared to support a development proposal, which will draw together a range of feasibility studies, and fund the next stages of development work for the Wesleyan Chapel.
 11. English Heritage through the Conservation Service of the Council will be exploring the scope for Kington to benefit from a conservation scheme.
 12. For any proposal to be successful in attracting funding AWM are concerned to what services will be going into a building.
 13. The Kington Regeneration Partnership with its Market Town Initiative funding is concerned to ensure it has projects which can be delivered and draw down funding until 2005.
 14. The Kington Regeneration Partnership currently has charitable status, but is not legally constituted to hold assets. If the Wesleyan Chapel scheme is progressed one option would be to transfer tenure of the building to such a body, in the community interest, whilst the Council retains ownership of the building. This could afford greater opportunity for attracting external sources of funding in the long term.
 15. There remains a need for the Regeneration Partnership to establish a clear preference in the future use of the community buildings.
 16. No community consultation has taken place to date on the proposal for the Wesleyan Chapel. This would be considered on the next step, subject to Cabinet views. The services affected would need to be represented at such consultations.

OPTION 1

Join up service delivery of Library and INFO, TIC service on one site

Via:

- (a) Use of existing Kington Library to provide enhanced Library and INFO service. This work was assessed in late 2002

Comment - Not possible space requirements and Disability Discrimination compliance make site unsuitable.

- (b) Demolition of existing area office site, and provision New Build that would require provision for Town Council, Library, INFO, TIC.

Comment - Would need further work commitment with community use of buildings. Previous single storey scheme was not progressed and accommodating a Library in this location would necessitate large new build. The cost has not been identified for full scheme. Single storey scheme for INFO & TIC/Town Council Chamber was in excess of £300K

- (c) Wesleyan Chapel – bringing the Grade II listed building back into use. An outline design commissioned to assess possible space. Initial designs indicate scope for provision of 600m² over 4 floors including lift to all levels.

Comment - Provides sufficient capacity for Public Services. Capital costs likely to be well in excess of £1.1m. The space utilisation required by the Library/INFO services represents 75% of available space.

Discussion with Advantage West Midlands, English Heritage Council's Conservation Team and The Kington Regeneration Partnership has favoured bringing building back into use.

- (d) New build on new site - No sites identifiable within town centre location to date.

OPTION 2

Remove physical Library and area office (INFO) points and replace them with mobile services, and electronic access points.

Comment - This is likely to be very unpopular. Also would be viewed as a reduction in access to services. Would leave redundant buildings in key location of town. Would potentially meet LPSA target. Would not be in keeping with aspirations of Kington Partnership.

OPTION 3

Status Quo – Do nothing

Comment - The Town Centre is likely to see improvements to its streetscape and benefit from Market Towns Initiative. Use of key buildings will have a particular impact on the regeneration of the town and its catchment.

Historical note regarding Wesleyan Chapel

In 1997, Herefordshire Council spent in the region of £39,000 on structural repairs to the Chapel. As owners of a listed building, the Council has a duty to keep the Chapel in reasonable repair. Community use for this building would obviously be beneficial in this respect. However, any proposals for reuse would involve the Secretary of State, via English Heritage, because the Chapel is Council owned, and the Council is the applicant.

The Wesleyan Chapel is in the terms of its listing important architecturally in its own right. An important building in the townscape of Kington, as well as a point of local social history. The Chapel is listed grade II. It is a large imposing rubble stone building, of formal and restrained elevations, currently consisting of two storeys and a basement, under a hipped roof.

The ground floor was originally galleried, with the pulpit providing the focus against the rear wall. As was typical of these Methodist meeting houses. This gallery has been filled in, in the past, to form the continuous first floor. These two floors are undivided.

The Chapel is situated in the centre of the Conservation Area, located off an alleyway leading from the High Street to the main retail/parking center. It also forms one side of Harp Yard leading off the High Street. Although built at the rear of the High Street, it is prominent in views from the busy retail centre and main carparks. The attached garden with its high stone walls is a attractive feature in an otherwise untidy scene of development at the rear of the High Street.

The building has a strong link with the Wesley Family. John Wesley preached at a chapel in Kington on 15th August, 1746. Regular Methodist services were established in the town in 1798 and after using various premises, in 1801 the Kington lawyer Edmund Cheese gave the congregation a small house to be converted into a chapel. This was enlarged in 1813 but in 1828 it was taken down and the much larger, grander chapel of today was built. The current building was designed by architect Benjamin Wislake in 1829. Charles Wesley is reported to have preached from a balcony of a small building in Harp Yard.

