

## Appendix 2c - Fulham Town Hall



### Summary of H&F Buildings Consultation responses regarding Fulham Town Hall

#### Emerging themes:

**Financial / property issues**  
**Consultation document and process**  
**Relocation / alternative services**  
**Impact on local residents**

From consultation responses	LBHF comments
<b>Financial / property issues</b>	
<p>1. Does the council not agree that it is their responsibility to safe guard the assets of the community for future benefit? If so how can the council defend selling Fulham Town Hall as a policy without extensively exploring options? If you feel the council has extensively explored options please describe them?</p>	<p>It is the council's responsibility to exercise its statutory functions and discharge its duties in the best interests of residents and council tax payers. In this particularly difficult economic environment (we currently owe £133 million which costs us £5 million a year in interest payments alone) we have decided that the interests of local people are best served by disposing of buildings that are surplus to council requirements, and focusing our resources on investing in front line services.</p> <p>In conjunction with the disposal of certain assets that are considered surplus to council requirements, the council is developing community space in the north of the borough and in partnership with North Fulham NDC in the South of the borough. LBHF 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Strategy clearly outlines the commitment of the council to ensuring there is affordable, cost effective, accessible and high quality premises available to the community where the need is greatest.</p>
<p>2. It does not seem sensible to sell property in the current economic climate as its true value could not be reached.</p>	<p>The council is bound by Section 123 of the Local Government Act to achieve best consideration reasonably obtainable when disposing of its properties unless consent is obtained from the SoS to disposal at an undervalue. The Council has taken property advice from the Council's external property consultants on the sale of all these properties and believe that we can achieve the best consideration reasonably obtainable on each property within a reasonable time of commencing marketing of these properties.</p>
<p>3. It seems unrealistic to believe the town hall site could trigger further regeneration of this area without further site acquisitions which may not be possible.</p>	<p>We cannot comment at this stage as to whether further acquisitions will be required.</p>

From consultation responses	LBHF comments
<p>4. This is hypocritical when the council is to spend millions on the new town hall extension. The council should update and use current quality assets rather than building new ones.</p>	<p>The properties under review suffer from a range of deficiencies when viewed within the context of establishing a cohesive office campus clustered around the administrative hub, Hammersmith Town Hall, and of providing efficient and economic space that is conducive to current working and service delivery practices. For example: some are leased by the council, inevitably involving annual rent and service charge payments; some are relatively small in size and are unable to accommodate many staff; some comprise mainly of small rooms which preclude modern work practices; some listed buildings, with significant constraints on making physical changes; most are dispersed geographically and would not support efficient working; and some will require substantial investment in future years.</p> <p>Regarding the proposed new offices to be provided as a part of the King Street Regeneration Project, the council will not have 'to spend millions', other than the council owned sites being contributed to enable the project to be delivered, the office building will in fact be provided at no cost to the council. In this scenario, the Town Hall Extension building will be demolished at no cost to the council and the imminent circa £18 million refurbishment of this building will be avoided. The King Street Regeneration Project represents exceptional value for money for the council.</p> <p>The council undertake continuous property reviews to ensure that the property portfolio best supports the council's objective of facilitating the delivery of high quality services at the lowest possible cost to tax payers.</p> <p>It will be appreciated that this entails regular and rigorous reviews of all the premises used by the council.</p>
<p>5. Does the council actually have the legal right to sell the town hall?</p>	<p>Yes. The council owns the freehold interest in this property and there are no impediments on a sale.</p>
<p>6. Even if short-term financial gain is achieved through the sale, does the council not anticipate that it will have to build another one at some point in the future so it is probably better to find an alternative solution to the debt issues.</p>	<p>No, it is not anticipated that the council will have to build another Town Hall in the future.</p>
<p>7. Shouldn't the council at least keep freeholds to such property?</p>	<p>We have not yet determined what property interest will be sold either freehold or long leasehold if a decision to sell is made.</p>
<p>8. The town hall could be fully utilised but nobody can afford the rent so it remains empty. There should be a strategy put in place to generate users who can generate revenue to cover the urgent repairs and cover costs. Why sell it off hastily and in an underpriced environment?</p>	<p>It would require significant levels of revenue to be generated to cover the costs and repairs of the building. The Town Hall has limited access and is in close proximity to residents which limits the types of use it can be used for.</p>

From consultation responses	LBHF comments
<p>9. Fulham Town Hall used to have a cashiers office, Street Parking office and information centre. The council has removed these services and now says the building is "under used". The people of Fulham should have these services reinstated. It is the deliberate act by the council to try to justify selling it at what will be a knockdown price. The total sale of ALL the buildings listed is expected to raise "£22 million". Fulham Town Hall must be worth well over £30 million alone, even in the depressed property market.</p>	<p>Services previously located at Fulham Town Hall have been reviewed and relocated in order to minimise costs whilst continuing to deliver a good level of service. More and more council services such as cashiers and street parking are delivered on-line, resulting in lower demand for face to face service points.</p> <p>The council is bound by Section 123 of the Local Government Act to achieve best consideration reasonably obtainable when disposing of its properties unless consent of the Secretary of State is obtained to dispose at an undervalue.</p> <p>The disposal of assets will assist the council towards achieving the necessary savings, by allowing it to reduce debt and therefore the interest costs of servicing that debt. It is not appropriate to declare values for individual buildings but the total disposal could generate in the region of £14m.</p>
<p>10. 2010 Total debt £133 Million. Please explain how on earth we ended up in this situation. Because of this debt the council is panic selling FTH as a short term strategy. The council is supposed to protect and to service the public. Does the council agree that it has failed in its responsibility to do so?</p>	<p>Local government borrowing is a normal part of managing a council's financial affairs. For example a council may borrow to finance the purchase of a building. However, all borrowing comes at the cost of interest that must be paid on it. Now we are in a period of austerity the council must reduce its expenditure. One way of doing that is to sell surplus assets to pay off some of the debt, and saving on interest payments as a result. The council saves approximately £100,000 a year for every £1m of debt that we manage to reduce. Since 2006 debt has been reduced by £36million.</p>
<p>11. FTH is a Grade 2 listed building which the council has stated "cannot be altered even if it is sold". Would the council therefore agree that the market value of this building will be much less due to these restrictions. Therefore the sale value in proportion to the intrinsic value of the asset to the community is much reduced which make selling the building nonsensical?</p>	<p>If FTH is marketed for sale, the council and it's advisers would fully explore with Conservation/Environment and Planning any potential ways of adapting the Listed Building to enhance it's market value. Whilst a listing can add to the cost and obligations of a building, it can also add value and status.</p>
<p>12. Has the council applied for Lottery Funding to save the town hall and convert it into an arts centre and usable facility for the public. If not why not?</p>	<p>The council is committed to supporting the arts in the borough. This can be seen through the support the council provides, both financial and through the provision of premises (for example, The Bush Theatre has recently been given a new long lease on the former Shepherds Bush library because the building could not be disposed of. This very successful arts organisation will form part of a vision to create a new cultural quarter). But as stated in the buildings consultation, in order for front line services to be preserved for residents in Hammersmith and Fulham, whilst the council tries to make the savings required of it, premises which are deemed surplus to council requirements will be disposed of.</p>

From consultation responses	LBHF comments
	<p>The council does not consider it feasible for Fulham Town Hall to be used as a dedicated arts centre as there is no additional funding for the arts from the council. There are a number of sources of funding available for arts organisations to deliver arts projects including Arts Council England and the National Lottery. The council acts as an advocate for the arts and provides advice and information to the H&amp;F Arts Forum. Local authority funding of the arts is discretionary: we are able to support the arts but it is not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>The council was able to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding (part of Big Lottery funding), but this would be a capital bid and the council would still be required to fund the running costs of the building via revenue.</p>
<p>13. Hounslow have a number of halls. They have just refurbished Ealing Town Hall and introduced a rate structure that has increased income to the council. They are not taking a short term view. Why is LBHF?</p>	<p>It is highly unlikely that the huge increases necessary in hall hire bookings and charges could be achieved to assist in supporting the revenue required to manage Fulham Town Hall, particularly in the current climate when this is not a reliable source of income. Long term view is new civic accommodation strategy?</p>
<b>Consultation document and process</b>	
<p>14. It is underused because council has not maintained it, not because it is not needed. On what basis are the assumptions about under use and surpluses being made?</p>	<p>It is the main responsibility of the council to ensure that residents of the borough receive the services they require. Services previously located at Fulham Town Hall have been reviewed, restructured and relocated in order to minimise costs whilst continuing to deliver a good level of service. More and more council services are delivered on-line, resulting in lower demand for face to face service points.</p>
<p>15. The council uses the fact that Fulham Town Hall requires 'Major Refurbishment' as an excuse for selling off this asset for short term gain. Is it not the council's responsibility to maintain these buildings and is it not hypocritical to use the poor state of the building as a reason to sell it off?</p>	<p>As a listed grade 2I building Fulham Town hall is protected and the council has been under obligation to ensure it has been correctly maintained and has done so. However precisely because it is an old listed building there are a greater number of ongoing maintenance and repairs which are now declared uneconomic to retain.</p> <p>The cost of modernising Fulham Town Hall and addressing the poor physical access issues of the building is also cost-prohibitive.</p>
<p>16. Has the council carried out a referendum with the residents of Fulham (which is part of "one of the smallest boroughs in the country") to ask what they think about you selling off their Town Hall? If not why not?</p>	<p>The need for two town halls in such a small borough has been considered when analysing the consultation responses. Holding a referendum for individual sites is not considered to be a cost effective or appropriate approach and the consultation (as detailed above) provided residents with considerable opportunity to provide detailed feedback.</p>
<p>17. Why have there been no public meetings to discuss these proposals? Why is this consultation day only running till 6pm when most people work 9 - 5 so can't physically make it here?</p>	<p>In order to ensure as many residents as possible had the opportunity to respond to the H&amp;F Buildings Consultation, the consultation period lasted for over three months (17<sup>th</sup> June to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010). Residents could respond to the consultation either through completing a questionnaire, or by attending one of two open days. The consultation was</p>

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	<p>promoted in H&amp;F News, local newspapers and local community groups were also informed of the consultation. The council considers the actions above to have provided ample opportunity for residents who were unable to attend the open days to respond.</p>
<p>18. With the recent exposure in the National Press about the percentage of the working population employed in the Public service, has this made the council re-examine the thinking behind this strategy to sell off the Boroughs assets? The number of employees and the cost of some must dwarf the potential short term gains of selling off Fulham Town Hall which will not achieve maximum value due to listing restrictions.</p>	<p>The financial position facing the council (as well as all other local authorities in the country) is a challenging one – and will likely result in reductions to council staffing numbers over time. However, this would be a further driver to dispose of property – as less staffing means we need less office accommodation. Reducing the council's £133m debt is a vital part of the council's plan to address its financial challenges.</p>
<p>19. The council must provide a breakdown of the costs of maintaining the hall over the next five years.</p>	<p>The cost of maintaining Fulham Town Hall is not the key consideration in the council's decision to propose the building for disposal. The reduced demand for council office accommodation and the council's level of debt are the key reasons why this building is considered suitable for disposal.</p>
<p>20. Please explain in detail how this process will work. If and when the properties will be put on the market. How they will be valued. If potential purchasers will be verified. If conditions or use will be conditional to sale. Any other relevant details to make this process open and transparent.</p>	<p>Should the decision be made to sell the building, in-house chartered surveyors (with detailed experience of disposals, marketing, valuation &amp; Planning) would manage the appointment of an external firm of chartered surveyors/agents (or joint agents) to advise on valuation and marketing terms, the preparation of information packs (legal and Planning content, and surveys) and the likely negotiation of a subject to Planning sale in order to maximise sale proceeds. The process of selecting a preferred bidder would include detailed analysis of the viability, funding and nature of the bidder's scheme. The process would be completely transparent.</p>
<b>Relocation / alternative services</b>	
<p>21. Can this not be converted into apartments for rental and reduce the Housing List whilst giving residents quality rented housing?</p>	<p>This is a matter for consideration by Planning in accordance with Strategic Planning Policy.</p>
<p>22. This proposal suggests the council sees its future with K&amp;C and therefore there is not real need to have a town hall in Fulham. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been spent on refurbishing the town hall and more basic services should be relocated to Fulham Town Hall with better advertising about how the building can be hired out.</p>	<p>Work is currently ongoing with Royal Borough of Kensington &amp; Chelsea and the City of Westminster to explore how services could be shared and jointly managed. No discussions have yet taken place regarding sharing civic buildings. The council no longer needs Fulham Town Hall to deliver council services, as those previously located at Fulham Town Hall have been reviewed, restructured and relocated in order to minimise costs whilst continuing to deliver a good level of service. More and more council services are delivered on-line, resulting in lower demand for face to face service points. The reduced demand for council office accommodation and the council's level of debt are the key reasons why this building is considered suitable for disposal.</p>

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23. Has the council considered moving the smaller charities/groups - that will no doubt discontinue when the buildings they are currently in close - to the town hall?	The council will provide details of other halls and venues available for hire – including those which are better in terms of disabled access.
24. Around the corner from Fulham Town Hall is the Dance Attic. A dance studio in an old corporation building (old swimming baths) this facility is constantly busy indicating the need for this amenity in the area. Fulham Town Hall is closer to the tube and better located. Has the council considered change of use to incorporate such a service to the community?	The council has not considered change of use to a dance studio for the building. Local authority funding of the arts is discretionary: we are able to support the arts but it is not a statutory requirement. The council would not be able to subsidise the cost of converting the building into a dance studio and maintaining it.
25. Presently LBHF does not have an arts centre. The Government are encouraging and funding dance in the community. What plans do LBHF have for the development of dance and arts in the borough? Is it not feasible to use Fulham Town Hall as a dedicated arts centre in the borough? What sources of funding has LBHF considered for the Arts?	<p>The council does not consider it feasible for Fulham Town Hall to be used as a dedicated arts centre as there is no additional funding for the arts from the council. There are a number of sources of funding available for arts organisations to deliver arts projects including Arts Council England and the National Lottery. The council acts as an advocate for the arts and provides advice and information to the H&amp;F Arts Forum. Local authority funding of the arts is discretionary: we are able to support the arts but it is not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>The council is committed to supporting the arts in the borough. This can be seen through the support the council provides, both financial and through the provision of premises (for example, The Bush Theatre has recently been given a new 125 year lease at peppercorn rent. The building could not be disposed of and instead was leased to this very successful arts organisation). But as stated in the buildings consultation, in order for front line services to be preserved for residents in Hammersmith and Fulham, whilst the Council tries to makes the savings required of it, premises which are deemed surplus to council requirements will be disposed of.</p>
26. The council must identify a variety of accessible and affordable meeting venues of comparable size in Fulham close to bus stops and Fulham Broadway tube station. We would not consider the community hub in Dawes Road as an acceptable alternative.	The council will provide details of other halls and venues for hire in the borough.
27. Has the council considered moving the Sands End library here and create a lending resource library. The Fulham library could then be changed to the Reference and archives service, perhaps even incorporating a local museum and the Archives service, thereby releasing the Lilla Husset building. This would then reflect the situation you hope to achieve in the North of	The council has not considered this as an alternative as it is keen to keep library provision in the Sands End Ward.

From consultation responses	LBHF comments
the Borough.	
<b>Impact on local residents</b>	
28. The Town Hall is an important feature of the borough's identity, which once sold cannot be reclaimed.	Whilst the council does acknowledge the role that Fulham Town Hall is a prominent building in this borough – we do not agree that it needs to be retained as a Town Hall. The building is listed, therefore any developments undertaken will need to preserve the appearance of the building – retaining the architectural heritage that the building offers.
29. The council should have a well-used and accessible representative building in the south of the borough and must not continue to relocate all its services to Hammersmith.	The council does acknowledge that different areas of the borough have distinct identities and communities – however, this in itself is not considered a strong enough argument to provide duplicate services in different parts of the borough – neither is this an affordable option. Hammersmith & Fulham
30. The council states that the borough does not need 2 Town Halls. Does the council not agree that Hammersmith and Fulham are very different areas, with different public needs, different demographics and that people who would use Fulham Town Hall (if it was properly managed as a facility) would not travel to Hammersmith Town Hall?	is a single borough – with excellent transport links that enable residents to move easily to different parts of the borough.