

KIRKBYMOORSIDE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY POSITION ON MANAGEMENT OF THE MOORSIDE ROOM

ADOPTED 20.04.2015

Background

- Following return of the building to Council use the building was essentially derelict but many residents indicated a preference for it remaining in public ownership.
* Standing idle, cost to ratepayer was within 10% of the present budget, plus a requirement for occasional repairs – but unusable.
- Council had to decide whether to sell it, patch it up or comprehensively renovate it. After considerable investigation, discussion and debate the council decided to choose renovation - not unanimously but by a proper majority (i.e. not a casting vote) with councillors bearing in mind the many considerations that had been raised.
- The work has been done economically and effectively, at almost zero additional cost to the ratepayer.
- The cost was mitigated by a £20,000 grant - money that could have been lost to Kirkbymoorside if not used.
- The improved building is an enhancement to Kirkbymoorside, whatever the ultimate outcome.

Current Position

- Once the decision was made, there was an expectation that there would be fitting out costs, which it was not possible to estimate in great detail. What was known is that these costs would be within the capacity of our reserves to cover. It was also expected that acoustic enhancements would be needed, but the council had no means of estimating the cost given the necessity to undertake the works in advance of making the enhancements. However, council remains committed to completing the fitting out using the council's perfectly adequate reserves, subject to purchases receiving council approval. Only if some exceptionally large expense were to arise would this policy come into question.
- The council has always had a reasonably accurate awareness of running costs, within 5-10%, and **given the policy commitment to renovation**, there is council support for the costs that arise, provided they are not radically different from the budget. If costs were to exceed the budget by a moderate amount, the council would expect to revisit the budget.
The budget, like all our budgets, is a net budget. That is, it is the net value of costs less income. Given that we can be confident that there will be some income, there is currently little risk of being over budget next year (2015/16).
- The majority view in the community led plan that the project should be self-sufficient was deliberately sought in order to qualify the previous impression that citizens wanted the building to remain in public ownership regardless of cost. However, the view is not binding and is especially not a consideration for the short term.
- The council is satisfied that the current accounting and budgetary policies are adequate for the management of the Moorside Room.

The Future

- The clerk seeks opportunities for practical uses for the Moorside Room, as do councillors. These efforts will continue, and the council expects usage to grow as awareness increases.
- The clerk has discretion to spend money on promotion opportunities that offer value for money.

- That residents would prefer the project to be self-sustaining will certainly be taken into account at a time when a full review is felt to be appropriate. It provides justification for including the option to sell the building.
- When the time comes, the council will make a decision on the value of the Moorside Room to the community. Even if it is self-sufficient, the council could decide that:
 - a) its administration is an excessive burden
 - b) that it is in the public interest to run it at a loss;
 - c) to decide some other conclusion.
- The council's current view is that the earliest it would make sense to carry out a major review would be early in 2016, although this will be a matter for the new council after the May 2015 election.