

Dover Society Special Meeting Town Hall Update

Terry Sutton

Members of The Dover Society were treated in May to an early preview of the ambition proposals to upgrade our ancient Town Hall. Our chairman Derek is a member of the planning team that also includes representatives of Dover District Council (owners of the Town Hall) and Dover Town Council.

We were told widespread consultations were to be carried out to decide the future of the iconic building, the history of which dates back to 1203, if the Heritage Lottery Fund can be persuaded to spend towards the estimated upgrade cost of up to £13 million.

Consultants described in detail the ideas over future use of the Town Hall which is costing district ratepayers £200,000 a year to maintain. District council officials say it is likely to cost up to £1.7 million to maintain the property over the next 10 years unless greater public use can be worked out.

Ideas under consideration include converting the mayor's parlour block (overlooking Ladywell) to self-catering accommodation, the parking services office to an interpretation centre, creating a cafe in the block (next to Biggin Hall) that until recently was the tourist information centre.

No great changes, except for improvements, are suggested for the Connaught Hall section, the magnificent and ancient Stone Hall or the colourful council chamber and court room block. A "Green Room" could be provided to make life easier for drama societies and groups when putting on plays.

Consultants have discovered there are more



Dover Town Hall 1904

than 150 rooms in the Town Hall, most not used or underused. The consultants were informed by one Dover Society member that a family once lived in the flag tower that overlooks the war memorial area.

Beneath the Connaught Hall, built around 1882 as a concert hall, it is proposed to reconfigure the kitchens to greatly improve catering facilities.

There have already been calls to bring back and restore the Town Hall organ, the cost of which has been estimated at between £250,000 and £1 million. That cost would be in addition to the estimated overall cost of £13 million.

The Stone Hall section of the Town Hall was built in 1253, the adjoining Connaught Hall built by the Victorians between 1881-1883 while the basement to the complex (with

about 50 rooms) is mainly used as kitchens, the Old Town Gaol (once open as a tourist attraction) is now used for storage with the former information centre vacant.

A series of public consultation meetings will take place before a final decision is made. If anybody is interested in attending any of them please contact kate@inghampinnock.com

All meetings at Town Hall

7th July 1-3pm Activity plan meeting for local stakeholders

Design workshops: 7th July 10am -12noon re Stone and Connaught Hall areas

18th July 10am-12noon re former VIC/prison cells, Council Chamber, Court Room and Welcome Centre

25th or 26th or 27th July Mayor's Parlour block re holiday lets proposal

General public consultations in July and August – dates not fixed yet.

Refurbishment Committee Jeremy Cope

Litter and dog fouling manage to get the committee wound up – a feeling that I am sure is shared by our members and the bulk of the population. We had a presentation by Andrzej Kluczynski, "AJ", who is in charge of DDC's litter enforcement team whose responsibilities include prosecuting offenders. In discussion we were aware of the problems of prosecution; how many of us see people offending let alone capture of the evidence that can lead to a successful result? Hence the team's main work is in reaction to complaints which tends to predominate where there is the most footfall. There is an 'Instant Report' scheme which is a black book that details an incident, (say rubbish being thrown out of a car), to which an officer will quickly respond. This would include foreign lorries, if seen. Prosecutions have also taken place of careless householders whose waste leads to litter. We were very pleased to hear that AJ puts emphasis on education of attitudes to litter with talks to local groups. It was disappointing to hear that schools can often be reluctant to allow presentations to pupils.

Litter on highways was one of those areas that DDC has real problems in dealing with. Highways England look after motorways, local authorities other roads. Local authorities

are charged for coneing off nearside lanes to ensure safety for litter pickers. Alan Sencicle is lobbying to secure more practical ways of clearing the highway verges including changing responsibility to Highways England, appropriate with the evidence of litter resulting from port using lorries. He is also putting forward ideas on safe and effective alternatives for roadside litter collection.

Jenny Olpin and John Cotton continue to represent the Society at regular meetings with the Police expressing our concerns. They attended meetings concerned with the recent demonstrations and what was pleasing was the way in which the police managed, once they had learned the lessons of the first event. People should be allowed to demonstrate but not in the riotous fashion that first occurred. Do remember if you have any concerns on law and order matters please contact Jenny on tel: 01304 825011 or jenny.olpin@uwclub.net

Among other matters we continue our work on street lighting – how to keep the traditional form of lamp post where appropriate but with modern LED lighting. Jenny and Mike Weston are working on signposting of the pathway to Langdon Cliffs via Bleriot memorial.