

HELENSBURGH COMMUNITY CENTRE – PROPOSED WORKS

This report seeks Executive endorsement for the proposed remediation of mould contamination at Helensburgh Community Centre (HCC). The HCC Community Hall has been closed since November 2020 and the entire centre closed since December 2021 due to the spread of mould to all areas of the facility. While planning for a new, integrated Community Centre and Library (CC&L) for the community of Helensburgh and surrounding suburbs is in train, the time between closure of HCC in 2021 and the scheduled opening of the new CC&L in 2027 presents a significant gap in Council's provision of service to the community. This report recommends remediation of the site and considers restricted use as an interim measure whilst planning continues for a new facility.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Develop a list of hireable community spaces within Planning Area 1, to support continuation of local service provision during the closure of HCC
2. Remove mould from HCC, including Youth Centre and hall, as per the Clearsafe hygiene report, prior to the end of March 2022
3. Make good HCC Youth Centre meeting rooms, kitchenette and toilet facilities by April 2022, to reinstate community access to these areas as per estimates
4. Scope, cost and assess the option of making good HCC meeting rooms and toilet facilities, excluding the HCC Hall, by July 2022
5. Scope, cost and assess demolition of HCC and hall, including a proposed timeframe and a proposal for future use of the HCC site, prior to the end of 2022
6. Continue with a regular program of mould monitoring by hygienist if / as required for safety reasons
7. Communicate the proposed program of works to make HCC safe and support community access, to Councillors and community

ATTACHMENTS

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| Attachment 1 | Options for mould rectification |
| Attachment 2 | Options for service provision |
| Attachment 3 | April 2021 correspondence re options |
| Attachment 4 | Hygienist reports |

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Jenny Thompson, Manager Library & Community Services
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services

BACKGROUND

Helensburgh Community Centre has experienced moisture issues within the Community Hall over an extended period. Problems with ventilation in the Hall have been reported and efforts to rectify them undertaken in 2011, 2012 and again in 2015. However, the underlying issue of water flowing through the sub-floor area was not addressed in these works.

Following further issues with moisture being identified within the Community Hall in 2019, building inspections revealed the need for further works and at that point new options for repairs to the floor were considered. However, in exploring these options a significant accretion of mould in the sub-floor area became evident. This led to the Community Hall being closed from 30 November 2020 on the grounds of safety and to enable further investigation of the problem. At this point the HCC meeting rooms (former Youth Centre) and toilet facilities, as well as a small kitchenette remained open for restricted community use.

In April 2021 the Infrastructure Strategy and Planning (ISP) Division provided a report that canvassed several options for rectification of the Community Hall and included an estimation of costs for each option.

Works were undertaken during 2021 to improve drainage and install a sub-floor ventilation system. Replacement timber flooring for the Hall was purchased and stored onsite in preparation for installation. Information was provided to the community in July 2021, during consultation re the new Helensburgh Community Centre and Library (CC&L), that the Hall would be reopened in summer 2021/22.

Public Health Order restrictions to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic meant that HCC was closed to the public for much of this period and, with the Hall still offline, meeting rooms and associated facilities reopened in late October 2021. While community access to HCC was reinstated a hygiene consultant, Clearsafe, was at the same time testing for mould contamination in the sub-floor area of HCC Hall. The Clearsafe microbial assessment report, tendered on 8 November 2021, stated that “sampled locations returned detectable microbial concentrations at levels that suggest significant viable mould and/or bacteria”. The Clearsafe report also noted the presence of asbestos scattered sporadically on the ground throughout the sub-floor.

As a result of this report ISP advised that floor removal and replacement works could not proceed until mould and asbestos contamination were remediated. Clearsafe was engaged to investigate the presence of mould in other areas of the centre, which closed for 2 weeks pending the results of the investigation.

Clearsafe provided a report on the outcomes of their inspections and sampling, on 20 December 2021 (see Attachment 4). This report indicated that mould had also grown in the Youth Centre and that it was not safe to allow community access to meeting rooms and other parts of the facility, as well as to the Hall, pending further investigations and rectification.

The timing of this report made it impossible to inform Councillors and (thus) community of the findings and the implications of those findings, prior to the 2021 end of year holiday period. Regular hirers of HCC were advised at that point that meeting rooms would be unavailable, with an update to be provided in early 2022. In January 2022 centre users were advised that all areas of HCC would be unavailable for community hire until further notice. This has prompted angry responses from some hirers and questions from Neighbourhood Forum 1, who are among the group of regular hirers of HCC.

Initial investigations indicate that there are limited, alternative venues available in Helensburgh, that are affordable, accessible and suitable for community use. Council’s closest community facilities are located at Darkes Forest, Stanwell Park and Otford, which does not meet the requirement for a local, neighbourhood-level facility. The Community Facilities and Properties teams are working together on identifying other alternatives, noting the issues of affordability and access for those that are commercial venues (eg: the Helensburgh Tradies Club), associated with a religious denomination (eg: the Bush Chapel) or licensed to a sports club where broader community use will require negotiation (eg: the Helensburgh Thistle soccer club room). Discussion has also commenced with the Department of Education’s School Infrastructure Division regarding access to Helensburgh Public School hall.

A review of library programs has been conducted and alternative facilities have been identified to enable library programs to recommence in accordance with Wollongong City Libraries’ Covid Risk Assessment and to continue while HCC remains closed.

Options to address the urgent issue of closure of the centre and to support the reinstatement of community access to HCC are outlined in the following section of this report.

PROPOSAL

Options to address the issues of mould and maintenance of service levels to the Helensburgh community are considered at Attachment 1 and Attachment 2. Based on the assessment of options, it is proposed that the following course of action is adopted:

1. Develop a listing of hireable community spaces within Planning Area 1, in consultation with owners and licensees, to support continuation of local service provision until the new CC&L is opened in 2027, with a target for the listing to be finalised by mid-February 2022
2. Remove mould from Youth Centre area of Helensburgh Community Centre, as per the Clearsafe hygiene report, to make the Youth Centre safe, with a target for these works to be completed prior to the end of March 2022
3. Make good HCC Youth Centre meeting rooms, kitchenette and toilet facilities, to reinstate community access to these areas of HCC, with a target for these works to be completed by April 2022

4. Remove mould from Helensburgh Community Centre Hall, as per the Clearsafe hygiene report, to make the building safe, with a target for these works to be completed prior to the end of June 2022
5. Scope, cost and assess options to make good HCC meeting rooms and toilet facilities attached to the Hall (while excluding the Hall) to determine whether, within the context of the new CC&L project, the benefit outweighs the cost of pursuing these works, by the end of July 2022
6. Scope, cost and assess demolition of HCC – that includes a proposed timeframe and a proposal for future use of the HCC site, prior to the end of 2022
7. If HCC is not demolished, continue with a regular program of mould monitoring by hygienist if / as required for safety reasons
8. Communicate the proposed program of works to make HCC safe and support community access, to Councillors and community

The option of not addressing the mould and leaving HCC closed until the new CC&L opens in 2027 has been considered. However, the hygienist has indicated that this will increase the risk of continued spread and growth in the level of contamination. The level of mould is such that, whichever option is pursued, it must be removed prior to demolition of the HCC.

PROPOSED COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Councillors
 - Provide verbal update to Ward 1 Councillors immediately following approval of the recommendations of this report
 - Prepare a Councillor Information Note outlining actions to be taken and arrangements for maintenance of service
- NF1
 - Provide verbal update to the NF1 convenor, following Councillor notifications
 - Attend NF1 meeting on 9 February 2022, to provide further update
- Hirers
 - Provide update regarding approved way forward and timeframes
 - Pass on information regarding alternative venues, contact details for hiring organisations, etc
- Community
 - Update information on Council's website with actions being undertaken
 - Prepare information for media release or response to issues raised.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The following Council teams were consulted in the preparation of this report:

- Library and Community Services Division
- Infrastructure Strategy and Planning Division
- Helensburgh Community Centre and Library PSC

RISK ASSESSMENT

HCC cannot be occupied or inspected until it is made safe. If mould removal works are not undertaken, there is a risk of continued spread, degradation of the facility and escalation of current issues.

There is strong community engagement and frustration with the centre being closed for an extended period of time. Delays in undertaking work and communicating planned actions have potential to increase angst, particularly given the centre's location adjacent to a childcare centre and in the main street of Helensburgh.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Estimates for the proposed works have been prepared by ISP Division.

A summary of estimated costs for each recommendation is provided in the table below.

Recommendation	Estimated Cost	Notes
1. Investigate hireable spaces	N/A	No commitment to provide financial subsidisation of alternate venues for hirers.
2. Remove mould from Youth Centre	\$10,000	The cost to 'make good' the meeting room, toilet and kitchenette (floor coverings, painting, window coverings, etc) has been estimated at less than \$40,000 (see Attachment 1 and Attachment 2) although this figure is subject to further refinement once the scope of these works is defined.
3. Make good Youth Centre	\$30,000	
4. Remove mould from HCC Hall and associated rooms	\$250,000	ISP has budgeted for these works within the Capital Program for 2021/22.
5. Assess reinstating HCC Hall meeting rooms	TBC	Assessment of works required to reinstate meeting spaces and amenities attached to Hall cannot take place until mould has been removed from the Hall and it is safe to enter.
6. Assess demolition of HCC	\$250,000+ (TBC)	Mould removal part of demolition, full cost to be determined. ISP has budgeted within the Capital Program for 2022/23, for works to assess demolition or remediation of the Hall.
7. Ongoing monitoring by hygienist	\$2,400 per report	Monitoring of spaces reopened to users
8. Communication strategy	N/A	

New flooring for the HCC Hall was purchased from the Capital Budget during 2021 and is currently 'seasoning' while in storage in the building. Costs for removal of the timber have not been estimated as part of the options outlined above.

CONCLUSION

Helensburgh Community Centre is a valued asset for the northern suburbs community. Undertaking works to remove mould from the building will stop further deterioration of the asset. Completion of works to 'make good' the meeting rooms, kitchenette and toilets within part of the centre will enable continued community service provision pending commissioning of the new CC&L in 2027.

ATTACHMENT 1

\$250K currently budgeted for works in 21/22.

Mould rectification options

Option	Details	Estimated Cost	Timing	Notes
a) Remove mould from Youth Rooms immediately.	Removal of all mould and affected materials (carpet, plaster) in Youth Rooms.	\$10,000	Complete ASAP	- Will enable meeting rooms in former youth area to be reopened - Can be undertaken independently to hall work
b) Option (a) plus Remove mould from all areas of HCC as soon as practicable.	Removal of all mould and asbestos scattered throughout the subfloor ground. Includes demolition of affected Hall floor and removal of carpet etc throughout all areas of former Youth Centre.	\$250,000	Completed prior to end June 2022. Jan-Mar = Scoping, procurement and engagement of suitable contractor. Apr-June = Removal works.	- Building made safe as soon as practicable - Meeting rooms located in hall building could be reinstated following removal
c) Demolish entire HCC building.	Removal of all mould and asbestos. Demolition of entire centre.	\$250,000+	TBC	- Some minor cost savings in demolishing the entire building when removing mould - Longer timeframe to make building safe while demolition is planned and approvals in place - Mould will continue to grow until removed. Cost of removal will increase over time - Community perception of an unsafe building in main street and beside childcare centre - Community perception of Council removal of community space
d) Demolish Hall.	Removal of all mould and asbestos. Demolish Hall. Former Youth Centre component of HCC remains.	\$250,000+	TBC	- Assess former Youth Centre and Hall buildings to determine if Hall can be demolished independently - Youth meeting rooms could be reinstated for community use
e) Do nothing	Centre remains closed until demolition prior to	Nil	NA	Longer timeframe to make building safe while demolition

	/ following construction of new CC&L			is planned and approvals in place • Mould will continue to grow until removed. Cost of removal will increase over time until undertaken • Community perception of an unsafe building in main street and beside childcare centre
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ATTACHMENT 2

Service provision options

The following options have been identified to provide the local community access to community rooms until the new centre is opened in 2027.

\$250K currently budgeted for remediation works in 2022/2023.

Option	Details	Estimated Capital Cost (additional to costs for mould rectification outlined in Attachment 1)	Timing	Notes
1. Remove mould and reinstate Youth Centre rooms	Remove mould Install solar powered ventilation to prevent future mould growth Reinstate plaster, carpet etc and reopen meeting spaces	<\$30,000	ASAP, as part of project to undertake removal option (a) Potential to have meeting space available by April	- Lowest cost option to provide community space - Reduction in previous service level (no Hall space). - Addresses community need and expectations for community space - While previously advised timeframe of Summer 2021/22 has been missed, reinstating meeting rooms offers quickest reactivation of service provision
2. Remove mould from all areas of HCC and reinstate meeting rooms off hall	Remove all mould from centre Refurbish meeting rooms post-removal to allow for community use Hall remains closed	TBC	Mould removal completed June 22 1. Preparation of cost estimates by DTS 2. Procurement 3. Construction Community rooms could be reopened in Spring 2022	- Reduction in previous service level (no Hall space). - Addresses community need and expectations for community space
2. Remove mould from all areas of HCC and reinstate former Youth Centre and HCC Hall	Remove all mould from centre Refurbish Youth Centre area and Hall post removal to allow for community use	TBC	Mould removal completed June 22 1. Review of options by DTS, including preparation of cost estimates. 2. HOLD POINT to select reinstatement option. 3. Procurement. 4. Construction. Community rooms could reopen in Spring 2022. Hall to reopen in 2023.	- Hall reinstatement timing contingent on availability of DTS, selection of preferred hall option (mitigating potential moisture issues reoccurring), endorsement and budget - Potentially creates an expectation to maintain the community centre long term - Cost of options for reinstating hall likely to be in excess of \$250K and won't be known until DTS review completed - Timber purchased in 2021 for replacement hall floor currently being stored in hall (wrapped in plastic to prevent mould)

3. Temporary building located adjacent to library	Procure a temporary building to be located on 53-55 Walker St until the new CC&L opens in 2027	TBC	Independent of mould rectification options. Potential for service provision from 2023.	- Community Centre could be demolished while maintaining some level of service provision - Requires DA - Cost not yet known - No funding allocated - Bush fire constraints - Floor space would be significantly smaller than the Community Centre. Limited number of rooms would be available.
4. Adding covered outdoor space to library	Provide covered outdoor space for library programs, e.g. deck, paving with awning	TBC	Independent of other options.	- Low-cost option to provide Covid safe space for library activities. - Ability to provide programs while work is undertaken on existing / new centre - May require DA - Cost not yet known - No funding allocated - Bush fire constraints - Floor space would be significantly smaller than HCC – open to the elements
5. Alternative spaces for service provision	Seek opportunities to work with local service providers and /or identify opportunities to provide community access at Council and non-Council facilities	TBC	Independent of mould rectification options.	- No commitment to provide financial subsidisation of alternate venues for hirers. - SIPF has identified limited provision of Council and supporting community space in Helensburgh and surrounding suburbs (other than the Community Centre). - Options include commercial rental, sporting clubs, Tradies etc. - Would require negotiation with owners / licensees re costs, hire arrangements, cleaning, etc - No funding currently identified for subsidisation - Would show Council's commitment to supporting community life
6. Do not provide community space until new CC&L comes online	Demolish Helensburgh Community Centre	TBC	N/A	- Costs for site remediation and potential repurposing to be assessed - Darkes Forest, Stanwell Park, Coalcliff and Coledale nearest Council-owned Community Facilities. - Limited accessible, affordable, suitable

				community space in Helensburgh.
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