

HELENSBURGH COMMUNITY CENTRE – DEMOLITION

This report proposes revision of Executive Management Committee resolutions of 3 February 2022 regarding future works for Helensburgh Community Centre (HCC) and endorsement of recommendations for its demolition.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Remove mould from HCC, including Youth Centre and Hall, as per the Clearsafe hygiene report, prior to the end of June 2022.
2. Demolish HCC and remediate the site, pending further consideration regarding the future of the site.
3. Programming of demolition and remediation to be planned within the context of the program for Helensburgh Town Centre works and the UCI Road World Championships.
4. A communications strategy to inform stakeholders of the demolition is implemented, as outlined in this report.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

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

BACKGROUND

The subfloor area of the Helensburgh Community Centre (HCC) Hall has been subject to ongoing damp for several years. Problems with ventilation to the Hall have been reported and rectification works undertaken in 2011, 2012 and again in 2015, including the installation of fans, vents to create and increase subfloor airflow circulation and 'whirly birds' to improve ventilation. However, the underlying issue of water flowing through the subfloor area of the Hall continues to impact the facility and has not been rectified through these works.

In 2019, new issues emerged in relation to deterioration of the HCC Hall floor due to subfloor moisture, indicating the need for further investigation. In assessing options for rectification works, a significant accretion of mould in the subfloor area became evident. This led to the Hall being closed from 30 November 2020 on the grounds of safety and to enable further assessment of the problem and potential solutions. Further remedial works to the Hall floor were undertaken during 2021 to improve ventilation, however, a hygienist assessment in October 2021 indicated that mould contamination of the subfloor had increased.

The Helensburgh Youth Centre (HYC), which is co-located with HCC, does not experience the same problem of subfloor damp. However, the Centre closed for much of 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions and during this period a lack of airflow throughout the precinct caused mould to spread to this area. The extent and spread of mould within the facilities led to the closure of both HCC and HYC in December 2021.

The HCC is located partly on Council-owned land and partly on Crown Land. The Council-owned land is classified as Operational Land.

CURRENT SITUATION

As at mid-February 2022, both HCC and HYC remain closed. Hirers and community who had initially been advised that the facility would re-open for summer 2021-2022 have been informed that it is closed until further notice. This has led to expressions of concern from some of these groups, including representatives of Neighbourhood Forum 1.

A report was submitted to Executive on 3 February 2022, and the following recommendations endorsed:

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.

A workshop with Ward 1 Councillors was held on 7 February 2022 to discuss closure, mould contamination and proposed remediation works for HCC. The proposed program and timelines for the new Helensburgh CC&L were also outlined. Ward 1 Councillors expressed concerns that the potential costs for remediation works and the history of failed solutions to the problem of underfloor moisture, when considered within the context of the 5-year timeframe for the new CC&L to be complete, indicated that remediation did not represent the best use of community money. They recommended demolition of the HCC, following the removal of the hazard of mould contamination from the facility, in compliance with the hygienist report.

Council officers from Library and Community Services and Infrastructure Strategy and Planning Divisions attended the Neighbourhood Forum 1 (NF1) meeting on 9 February 2022 to advise the community of this recommendation. Community members in attendance at the meeting agreed that investing ratepayer funds in further remediation works to the HCC would not deliver public value. There was strong disappointment expressed that the Helensburgh Community would be without access to a community hall and meeting rooms for an extended period of time, while acknowledging the proposal that Council would facilitate community access to alternative, non-Council spaces. The convenor of NF1 indicating that he will include information on demolition of the HCC in next issue of the local, '2508' magazine.

Council's Community Facilities Team is working with regular and casual hirers to facilitate access to alternative venues within the Community Facilities portfolio. The team has also put together a list of suitable commercial and not-for-profit venues within the northern suburbs to assist prospective hirers in finding alternative locations for their activities.

The Helensburgh Town Centre implementation plan is rolling out, with works planned in the coming months for the western side of Walker Street and the roundabout at the Lilyvale and Walker Street intersection. Consideration and timing of demolition works within the context of these works is important to manage program logistics and community impacts.

The UCI Road World Championships will be held in Wollongong LGA between 18 and 25 September 2022. The Women's and Men's elite races will commence in Helensburgh on 24 and 25 September respectively and it is anticipated that there will be significant visitation and activation of the town centre on those two days. The timing of demolition works to HCC will therefore need to be programmed to accommodate this important event for the city.

PROPOSAL

Based on the assessment of options, feedback from Councillors and Neighbourhood Forum 1, it is proposed that the following course of action is adopted:

1. Remove mould from HCC, including Youth Centre and Hall, as per the Clearsafe hygiene report prior to the end of June 2022.
2. Demolish HCC and remediate the site, pending further consideration re the future of the site.
3. Programming of demolition and remediation to be planned within the context of the program for Helensburgh Town Centre works and the UCI Road World Championships.
4. A communications strategy to inform stakeholders of the demolition is implemented, as outlined in this report.

PROPOSED COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- Councillors
 - Prepare a Councillor Information Note outlining actions to be taken and arrangements for demolition
- Hirers
 - Provide update regarding approved demolition and timeframes once established

- Pass on information regarding alternative venues, contact details for hiring organisations, etc
- Community
 - Update information on Council's website with actions being undertaken for demolition
 - Prepare information for media release or response to issues raised.
- Crown Lands
 - Advice regarding proposed demolition

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 inspected or demolished 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.

To alleviate potential conflict with the UCI it is proposed to program demolition within the context of the event, with demolition and site remediation completed prior to end August 2022 or split demolition considering the UCI event in September.

Communicating planned actions and managing community sentiment.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Estimates for the proposed works have been prepared by ISP and DTS.

Mould remediation and demolition of the HCC, including Youth Centre, is estimated to cost \$400K. This estimate includes remediation to an open lawn space.

A budget of \$250K has been allocated for mould remediation works within the Capital Program 2021-2022, with a target for completion by 30 June 2022. Advice from the consultant hygienist is that mould must be removed from the site regardless of whether buildings are to remain closed, be maintained or demolished.

CONCLUSION

This report outlines the history and current state of play in relation to mould rectification of HCC. It proposes revision of Executive Management Committee resolutions of 3 February 2022 regarding future works for HCC and endorsement of recommendations for its demolition.