

LONDON BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE DULWICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL 17 APRIL 2012

THE FUTURE OF KINGSWOOD HOUSE

1. Background Information

Kingswood House is a Grade 2 listed building owned and managed by Southwark Council. The interior comprises a small community library and space for a range of cultural and social events and activities. Rooms are hired for conferences, public meetings, weddings and receptions and as office space for community groups.

2. Key Issues

Kingswood House is in need of substantial investment to bring it up to an appropriate standard as a public building and its listed status limits the range of options for its improvement.

Deep cuts in central government funding combined with the high level of investment the property needs means the council has to come up with new ways of funding the House in the current tough economic climate.

The council does not have sufficient money to cover the cost of the building repairs and improvements programme and it has many urgent demands upon its capital funds. The estimated cost of essential maintenance work is in the range of £1.5 to £2 million and the cost of a larger renovation programme would probably be around £5 million. It is difficult for the council to generate income through the use of the House without first making improvements to the building and many of these are not affordable. The Council is committed to preserving its facilities for local people to use but the House has to be financially viable

3. Work undertaken to date to seek external funding

The council has been and will continue to explore a number of options on whether it can secure external funding for the House.

4. Next Steps

The Council wishes to undertake a feasibility study to identify options for the sustainable refurbishment of Kingswood House and these may include some additional or alternative uses for the building. We are seeking to ensure a high quality investment which will enhance the House and grounds whilst maximising the investment into council and community facilities.

It is proposed to send invitations to tender for this feasibility study to see if this is architecturally possible, to up to ten firms of suitably qualified and experienced architects who are based in Southwark or have experience of working on historic buildings. The appointment of the architects who will undertake the feasibility work should be completed by the end of June 2012.

The Council wishes to see if it is possible that the building could be converted for mixed use hence bringing investment in from the potential new users. This would need to be achieved whilst retaining the key public areas on the ground floor for community use and giving full regard to the Grade 2 listed status. The mixed use option could potentially include some of the upper floors of the House being considered for housing in order to provide funding towards the much needed works in the building. This would be the next stage after the architects brief.

5. Community Consultation

The Council has begun to consult key stakeholders about its plans for Kingswood House and a consultation meeting took place on 27 March 2012. A list of “must have” items emerged from this discussion as follows:

- Continuing ground floor uses should include the library, community meeting rooms and spaces for events.
- Enhanced public toilets and kitchen facilities, equipment storage, vehicle access / drop off, for community and private events are required.
- Investment in the fabric of the building with a long-term conservation plan that recognises listed building requirements.
- Refurbishment of the Golden / Jacobean rooms.
- Retain the access to, and improve the rear green space.

6. Further consultation

When responses have been received there will be a further series of one to one and open public meetings scheduled for July 2012 to engage as many people as possible in the process and to seek their ideas on making Kingswood House sustainable in the future.

Members of the public who wish to be involved in the process are invited to send their contact details to adrian.whittle@southwark.gov.uk

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