



Report of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism

Cabinet – 20 July 2023

Tabernacle Morriston Community Resilience Hub

Purpose:	<p>To assist the Tabernacle Morriston Congregation Charitable Incorporated Organisation, in a capital scheme for the Grade 1 listed Tabernacle Chapel in Morriston.</p> <p>The building is a 3rd Sector asset and the scheme includes renovation & improvements, to widen community / business usage.</p> <p>The Council's role will be purely to manage the capital construction project and associated funding sources.</p>
Policy Framework:	Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
Recommendation(s):	<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Authorises the Council to enter into a Collaboration Agreement with Tabernacle Morriston Congregation Charitable Incorporated Organisation.2) Delegates authority to the Director of Place and the Chief Legal Officer to finalise the terms of the draft Collaboration Agreement attached at Appendix A and to enter into any relevant documentation to protect the Council's interests.3) Authorises the Council to receive grant monies on behalf of Tabernacle Morriston Congregation Charitable Incorporated Organisation, oversee payment of invoices and assist with grant claims.
Report Author:	Jacquelyn Box
Finance Officer:	Ben Smith
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nationally iconic in Welsh cultural life, at the heart of Morriston, Tabernacle is one of only three Swansea buildings with a Grade 1 listing. It was central to the hard-working community of the industrial lower Swansea Valley powerhouse. Known as the Cathedral of Non-Conformity, it is amongst the most important landmarks and community assets of the area.

It is viewed as a key driver in the wider heritage led Copperopolis regeneration of Morriston, Swansea and important for local people of all ages and backgrounds in providing a range of cultural, heritage, and recreational activities for over 150 years.

- 1.2 The Tabernacle Morriston Congregation Charitable Incorporated Organisation (TMC CIO) approached both Welsh Government and Swansea Council in 2016 with an urgent request for support with the ongoing sustainability of the building, due to falling numbers of the congregation and rising revenue costs. WG funded an initial options appraisal for the Chapel, conducted by Purcell Architects. A key recommendation emerged pertaining to the need for a developmental period, prior to determining the new model. A Collaboration Agreement was created, allowing the Council to carry out this work in partnership with the TMC CIO – this was funded by a National Lottery Heritage Fund, Resilient Heritage Grant.
- 1.3 Engaging with the existing users, organisations and community members in Morriston enabled consultation and the creation of a vision / business plan for Tabernacle, as a vibrant community led facility, providing a range of activities that address local needs (support, heritage, cultural, recreational) and bring a wider range of new people to the building. Alongside this a volunteering programme will be developed, supporting local people to gain skills to help with various aspects of the heritage and operation of the 150 year old building and environs. eg guided heritage tours, community and cultural archive collection.

2. Proposed Works

- 2.1 To support the new business model, a range of capital works need to be undertaken to improve facilities, allow accessibility for all and enable multiple spaces to be hired simultaneously. The creation of more hireable spaces is key to increasing the revenue generated, thereby improving the sustainability of the building.
- 2.2 The reconfiguration of the lower ground floor will result in 4 simultaneously hireable spaces, upgraded toilet (2 disabled toilets & 2 unisex toilets), new commercial kitchen facilities and accessibility measures, resulting in 421 sq. m. of new usable floorspace. The accessible adaptations will improve facilities for all users and expand the flexibility and viability of the building.

- 2.3 An officer in the Economic Regeneration Team is working on securing the Capital funds for the scheme, from a range of external sources. More detail below on the funding package. The grant bids are being made in the name of the TMC CIO (the proprietor) and they will be the initial recipients of the funding allocations. The TMC CIO does not have the capacity or knowledge to project manage a capital building project of this nature, or deal with the associated financial transactions. It is proposed therefore that a discrete cost centre is set up to allow all funds for the capital scheme to be assembled in one place. This will then be managed alongside the overall capital build project management by a Council officer.

3. Rational for Council Support

- 3.1 If this capital project doesn't move forward, it will likely lead to the closure of the building within the next two to three years. Therefore all current activity will come to an end and the development of new activities and services will not be able to be accommodated. This will happen because of the condition of some parts of the building and lack of accessibility – which will mean as time passes the facilities will become unfit for existing users and there will also be little chance of attracting new users. Without the ability to attract new users and a larger amount of hire income, the Tabernacle will not be sustainable – particularly in view of rising energy costs.
- 3.2 Closure would result in the demise of one of only three Grade 1 listed buildings in Swansea, which would become a prominent eyesore on the main shopping street in Morriston. If left to deteriorate further there would be a significant threat of the 160 foot spire collapsing on to the surrounding streets and buildings. Both Cadw Officers and the Council Conservation Officer, have recently noted that the Tabernacle is at risk, due to sustained water ingress in the tower area. This is resulting in loss of integrity in the structure and the threat of dry rot spreading to the main chapel, which would impact on the whole of the space, being largely wood (downward – swooping choir gallery and distinctive three case organ).
- 3.3 Morriston has been designated as a key Targeted Regeneration Investment area, for over 4 years, now and wider Regeneration plans for the town include Tabernacle as both a heritage asset, but perhaps more importantly a large-scale community asset. The loss of the facility would impact on local people who enjoy the social aspects of participating in the educational, recreational and cultural activities held; also on the people who attend various support related activities, such as the drop in sessions and support sessions for people with mental health problems. This project and the new vision for Tabernacle builds on the existing activities by developing and diversifying opportunities for local people – including support services, volunteering, entertainment and business development.

- 3.4 Tabernacle is viewed by Swansea Council as an important element of the Heritage story of The Lower Swansea Valley / Morriston, being described as 'the largest, grandest and most expensive chapel built in Wales'. Victorian industrialisation brought rapid population growth to the Lower Swansea Valley, close to the port of Swansea, as rural workers sought new employment opportunities in many tinsplate and copper works established in the area. As a result Welsh Non- Conformity enjoyed great popularity; a dozen chapels were built in the Morriston area alone in the latter half of the nineteenth century and Tabernacle planned as the ultimate evocation of a Welsh chapel, in terms of architecture, space and facilities, was completed in 1872 at a staggering cost of £18,000. The Council's efforts and projects to highlight and draw visitors to an enhanced heritage experience in this area e.g the Copperworks, include the Tabernacle Chapel as a key component.
- 3.5 All the above supports the rationale for why the Tabernacle project is viewed as an unique and special case for Council support.

4. Objective of Scheme

- Expanding the range of activities / opening times will attract new people to engage with the spaces and heritage of the building – partners include SCVS, NHS Social Prescribing, Swansea UNI, UWTSD, Caredig, Addoldai Cymru;
- People with mobility issues will be able to access all activities via new layout / ramping / accessible toilets;
- A volunteer programme will educate about the national level importance and local social heritage of Tabernacle/ Morriston – preparing volunteers for supporting the project through tours / new interpretation incl. social media and QR codes / community social archive;
- With greater provision in Morriston (IMD rank 154 Decile 1) focusing on education, heritage, social cohesion and community wellbeing, Tabernacle will contribute to social capital, making the locality a better place to live;
- Target audience is everyone, with emphasis on younger people / those that are socially isolated, through events / activities that support them and the local economy - including food outlets, micro businesses e.g. crafts;
- Reconfiguration will provide more hireable spaces (new zoning heating system per area) - will result in better income generating potential, providing long-term resilience for the upkeep of the building and its communities;
- This project will provide transferable case study for other heritage buildings and community inclusion programmes.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

5.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

5.2.1 In order to comply with the relevant equality regulations, an Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form has been completed, with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required.

5.2.2 There will be no impact on the council, as the proposal is to seek approval to assist in managing the financial transactions associated with the capital building project at Tabernacle Chapel. On completion of the physical works, the building will remain in Community ownership.

5.2.3 The capital project is required to help secure the future of the Grade 1 listed building, by creating a more favourable set of facilities for hire and thus increased revenue possibilities. With the support of the council we can ensure that the financial processes associated with the capital project are managed professionally and appropriately. Our assistance will ensure the success of the capital building project.

- 5.2.4 The cumulative impact of the enhanced facilities at the Tabernacle, as a result of the capital project, will be positive for the community of Morriston. The building will create a positive impact for the community at large, however the greatest benefits will be for people with disabilities and older people. It is envisaged that through maximising accessibility and increasing the number of activities available, the hub will contribute to alleviating social isolation for individuals in the community.
- 5.3 This project is fully compliant with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The project objectives align with the Council's obligation to act in a sustainable way and the examples of public and private sector investment demonstrate compliance with the 5 Ways of Working promoted by the Act and will make a significant contribution to the 7 well-being goals.
- 5.4 Welsh language is at the heart of the Tabernacle's physical structure and community. For this reason, we are confident that the national requirements to support Welsh Language will be exceeded in the delivery, in the promotional work, and future operation of this treasured asset. Additional to this, Welsh Culture will be present in all aspects of delivery, and engagement with wider society – the whole vision feeds directly into the WG Culture Strategy for Wales due 2023.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 As outlined above the proposal is to manage the funds for a capital scheme on behalf of a local charity, which does not have the capacity to project manage a capital building project. The funds for the scheme are from a range of external funders and there is no core council contribution required, therefore no financial implications, other than potential cashflow needs - dependent on various funders grant claim processes.
- 6.2 The total cost of the scheme amounts to circa £970,000 and will be funded by a range of external funding sources (Transforming Towns Placemaking Programme / Welsh Church Act Fund / Shared Prosperity Fund / Community Ownership Fund / People and Places Fund / Landfill Disposals Tax Fund). Details are set out in Appendix B.
- 6.3 Whilst this is a capital scheme and subject to VAT, it is not a Council scheme. All contractual arrangements to carry out the works will be directly with the TMC CIO. Additionally, all funding agreements entered into, will be directly with the charity itself. Invoices raised for works will be in the charity's name – therefore the council will not recover VAT on the invoices and would not account for VAT when reimbursed by the charity. The council may though charge VAT on fees for any management services supplied.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The TMC CIO will need to comply with the terms and conditions attached to the various sources of grant funding utilised for the scheme. This will include specified outputs as per the funding programmes requirements. The Council will assist in ensuring all transactions and claims are processed in compliance with grant funders' criteria.
- 7.2 All contracts for works, goods and services necessary to deliver the scheme will be managed by the conservation architect, with the client being the TMC CIO.
- 7.3 All statutory consents required – planning and listed building consents have been granted.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A Collaboration Agreement TMCRH Draft
- Appendix B TAB Financial Implications
- Appendix C Risk Tracker - Tabernacle Morriston Community Resilience Hub
- Appendix D TAB IIA Screening