

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL NEWTOWNARDS CITIZEN HUB

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

- Redevelopment of Queens Hall
- Town Hall internal remodelling
- West Street / Regent Street future use determination
- Creation of Citizen Hub (customer facing services) including Planning, Building Control, Registration births, deaths, marriages plus a range of other services
- Redeveloped and enlarged Library Services by LNI
- Heritage display space
- Arts service delivery
- Modern fit for purpose Visitor Information Centre
- Billiards club

A specific Heritage space should also be included in this scheme. There is potential to utilize, for example, part of the Town Hall (or other space) for a display celebrating the history and heritage of Newtownards.

Several Government departments have indicated that they would be interested in some of their customer facing services co-existing alongside Council services in a Citizen Hub and these potential joined up public service approach will be further investigated as the project progresses.

In April 2021, Council agreed to commissioning an Outline Business Case for this project, which will include a wider and inclusive review of all the interlinking elements outlined above.

BENEFITS

- Delivery of Council's front facing services (citizen hub)
- Increase in scheduled Arts events
- Increase in Arts services users
- Increase in performance hall usage
- Increased access to Visitor Information Services

VISION

- Transformation of the model for delivery of citizen services
- Creation of a sustainable, flexible building(s) designed to meet the needs of current and future users
- Optimisation of the location of services of public services for residents and visitors to the Borough from across NI and out of state
- Revitalisation of the Town Hall, Conway Square, as a significant town centre asset
- Redevelopment of Queen's Hall to optimise its use and ensure it can support a fit for purpose modern Library Service
- Provision of resident services and visitor information services in a prime town centre location for ease of access to customers
- Relocation of the Arts Service in a fit for purpose space, with increased accessibility.

PROJECT VALUE

This project represents a potential investment of £4m by council and £4m by LNI in enhanced service provision for residents and visitors.

PROJECT STATUS

Development of an Outline Business Case.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project was stimulated by the desire of Libraries NI to develop a new larger and upgraded Library Service at its current location in the Queens Hall, Newtownards.

This led Council to consider, firstly, the impact of a larger library on the other uses of the Queens Hall and the need to refurbish the hall and ensure that its design and layout is fit for purpose for many more years to come.

Secondly, Council decided in 2019 to work towards relocating its Visitor Information Service from its current location in Regent Street to the Town Hall in Conway Square. The Town Hall is currently occupied by the Arts Service and includes rooms that are bookable for meetings and small events. This decision necessitates a review of how both services could share the building and if it might be more appropriate to use an alternative or second location for Arts.

NUMBER OF CURRENT USERS

Facility	No of 2019-2020	
Queens Hall	Bookings	100
Arts Centre	Bookings	862
VIC	Footfall	28,354
Billiards Club	Members	100