

Meeting Papers

Public Hall Committee

9 February 2026

Clerk's Report to the Public Hall Committee

Building Survey

The building survey is currently in progress and is expected to be completed in time for presentation to the Town Council meeting on 23 February 2026.

Roof

Works to address loose and missing roof tiles on the NC end of the building have now been completed by the contractor.

Maintenance

The Caretaker has completed approximately 75% of the works required to recondition and secure the hall floor, undertaking this alongside normal day-to-day duties.

In addition, repainting of the hall is underway to address general wear and tear to the walls.

New Business

Sidmouth Rugby Club has made use of the hall on several recent occasions due to waterlogged pitches. This opportunity has been promoted via the Public Hall Facebook page in an effort to attract further similar bookings from local organisations and clubs.

Changing Rooms

The issue discussed at Minute 25.259 remains unresolved. Bagwell's have re-assessed the space and a report is awaited.

Fire Risk Assessment

The following matters are under consideration:

- Fire retardant treatment of the stage curtaining
- Pricing for the installation of additional fire doors

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 ("Martyn's Law")

The *Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025* has been introduced to improve public safety at premises and events where large numbers of people gather, in response to the ongoing terrorist threat and lessons learned from previous attacks.

The Act will apply to premises where 200 or more people may be present at one time and to events with 800 or more attendees. Responsible persons will be required to have proportionate procedures in place to reduce harm should a terrorist incident occur, with additional duties applying to larger or higher-risk venues. Although the Act received Royal Assent in April 2025, it is not yet in force. A 24-month implementation period will allow time for statutory guidance to be issued and for organisations to prepare.

Councillors are asked to note the legislation, with further updates to be provided once guidance is published, particularly regarding any implications for Council premises or community venues.

Review of Public Hall Deposit and Cancellation Policy

Purpose of Report - To consider whether any change is required to the current booking deposit and cancellation process for the Public Hall, in order to reduce financial risk while remaining fair and transparent for hirers.

Background - At present, the Public Hall operates a booking system whereby a deposit of 50% of the total hire charge is payable at the time of booking. This deposit is fully refundable up to six weeks prior to the event date.

While this arrangement has generally worked for smaller bookings, concerns have been raised regarding its suitability for large events, where late cancellations can result in significant financial loss that cannot be recovered within the remaining time period.

Issue Identified - In November 2025, a cancellation was received for a large event scheduled for December 2025. Due to the short notice and the scale of the booking, the Hall was unable to re-let the space. This resulted in a financial loss of at least £800, which was not recouped under the existing deposit and refund policy.

This incident has highlighted that the current arrangements leave the Public Hall in a financially vulnerable position, particularly in relation to high-value bookings cancelled close to the event date.

Considerations - Councillors may wish to consider the following points:

- The balance between protecting the Hall's financial sustainability and remaining accessible and fair to hirers.
- Whether a single deposit and refund policy is appropriate for both small and large bookings.
- The increasing difficulty of re-letting the Hall at short notice for large events.
- The administrative clarity and enforceability of any revised policy.

Possible Options for Change - The following options are presented for consideration (either individually or in combination):

1. Introduce a tiered deposit structure, with higher or non-refundable deposits for large or high-risk events.
2. Amend the refund period, for example by reducing the full-refund window for large bookings.
3. Introduce staged refunds, where only part of the deposit is refundable as the event date approaches.
4. Retain the current policy, accepting the financial risk as part of operating the facility.