

The Town Hall focus group is one of many that will be bidding for Tent 1 money some time in 2018.

The first question that has to be answered is: why does the Town Hall require any funding at all, as the annual precept pays for rates and general maintenance?

The answer is a simple one.

1. Repair the fabric of the building and internal heating, lighting, etc.
2. Improve the internal layout so that more community services can be provided.

First a bit of history. The hall was built around 1790-1792 and today it is now a listed building (full history can be found on <https://www.mytenterden.co.uk/directory/tenterden-town-hall-history-article-147.aspx#.WgwHaTNI-Uk> ). The hall was later extended around 1936 at the rear of the building (which is not listed).

Over that period of time, the fabric has deteriorated which requires extensive and expensive repairs. In addition, the internal heating and wiring is antiquated and requires a full replacement. The aim is to ensure the fabric of the building lasts into the next century.

A quote was obtained some years ago and the figure was in the region of £650k which could only ever be paid by bidding for Tent 1 money.

It is important to understand the current functions of the Town Hall.

It is the central focal point of the town and has an open-door policy by the town clerk and his team for discussing day to day issues with the general public and the management of local council services to the community. The assembly room and the mayor's parlour are used continuously for council committees. In addition, special sub-committees and focus groups, where residents are also members, meet to come up with collaborative solutions.

Besides the functioning of the council, the Town Hall provides critical services to residents that require help from organisations such as citizens advice bureau and specialist health advice. It is also rented out to groups and such as Tenterden Operatic and Dramatic Society, health, civic events and wellbeing classes as well as weddings and parties.

Unfortunately, due to the internal layout designed hundreds of years ago, the existing space is poorly utilised and is not fit for 21st century purpose. It is considered crucial to improve the internal layout and adopt 21st century technology so that it is used more effectively and in the long run provide a wide range of essential services to the community.

The above two topics are actively being discussed by the focus group. Also the group will take into account other practical and deliverable ideas as requested by the full council.

In September this year, the full council gave approval to hire an architect who is experienced with listed buildings. The objective to provide repair options and improved internal layout options.

Once the options have been fully debated and understood, the focus group will present its conclusions during 2018 with deliverable options to the wider community. Once feedback has been considered, the final decision will be made by the full council.

Any resident that has experience or interest in this subject, can approach the town clerk to become a member of the focus group.

The public can also monitor the progress of the focus group by reading the minutes of the meeting on the council website.