



17.3 Management of Community Halls

Report Number	17.004/25
Strategic Plan	1. An empowered, healthy and connected community 4. Vibrant towns and villages
File Reference	22/215
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Reporting Brief	Director Infrastructure and Assets presenting a report on future management of community halls
Conflict of Interest	No officer declared an interest under the <i>Local Government Act</i> 1993 (LGA 1993) in the preparation of this report.
Attachments	1. SGS short report Halls of the Huon (1) [17.004/25.1 - 16 pages] 2. Risk matrix halls [17.004/25.2 - 6 pages]

Background

1. The Huon Valley has 15 local halls owned and operated by Huon Valley Council for the community's benefit.
2. The following halls have been proudly managed by volunteer members of Hall Committees formed as Special Committees of Council:
 - a. Baden Powell Scout and Guide Hall
 - b. Cradoc Park
 - c. Geeveston Community Hall
 - d. Glen Huon Hall
 - e. Jim Casey Oval and Clubrooms
 - f. Judbury Community Centre
 - g. Mountain River Hall
 - h. Palais Theatre
 - i. Peverata Memorial Hall
 - j. Ranelagh Soldiers Memorial Hall
 - k. Southport Community Centre
 - l. Surges Bay Hall.
3. Huon Valley Council recognises the deep connection to the halls and the extraordinary effort shown by all Hall Committees over many years.

4. We thank current and former volunteers for their contributions, and we regret that the Hall Review process, as outlined in this report, has been challenging to digest and distressing for many.
5. Council acknowledges that it is the Council's responsibility to establish and provide oversight to Hall Management Committees. Council has given insufficient consideration to hall operations, including volunteer support for many years, and accordingly bears the primary responsibility for the risks we now seek to mitigate.
6. Having identified risks in the current operating structure and without any evidence of past reviews occurring, Council commenced the 'Hall Review' process in 2023 with the following aims:
 - a. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the current hall management model
 - b. If the risks of the current hall management model are unbearable, explore alternative management approaches that can best meet current needs, improve customer experience for all hall users, are scalable and flexible to each hall, and reduce operational risks
 - c. Develop a hall management model that aligns with the Council's Strategic Plan.
7. Hall Management Committees currently provide three key services essential to managing halls. These are hall bookings, hall maintenance and event management.
8. Community Halls' primary purpose is to provide places for our community to come together, share experiences and form and maintain relationships. Halls are a public asset and are provided as a service to the Huon Valley Community. Accordingly, they are not expected to perform as a profit centre. However, like all services paid for by the average ratepayers, their value (financial and social) must be justified.
9. Whilst the recommendations of this report are necessitated by managing risk, there are real benefits that will be realised by the changed operating model. Key benefits include:
 - a. Reduced risk and liability to Council and volunteers
 - b. Provide consistent, equitable and safe access to halls for the entire community
 - c. Support the formation of groups or individuals focused on activating halls for community benefit
 - d. Improve hall maintenance and make improvements based on user feedback
 - e. Enhance operational efficiency and increase transparency in hall operations, including financial performance.
10. Given the effort and dedication of volunteers, the change from volunteer to Council managed hall operations is not expected to be perfect. Council is, however, committed to maximising the benefits, minimising negative consequences and continuously reviewing the way we manage the halls.



11. The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendations of the Hall Review and resolve to adopt an operating model that emphasises volunteering on event management and makes Council directly responsible for booking and maintenance activities.

Council Policy

12. The Council does not have any specific policy relating to hall management. However, hall assets are managed in accordance with the Council's *Asset Management Policy (GOV-ASSET-003)*.
13. Halls are classified as building assets, and the Council is required to ensure they meet community needs and are managed by an integrated asset management approach.

Legislative Requirements

14. Hall management committees have been established as Special Committees pursuant to section 24 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.
15. Under section 24, Council may establish special committees on such terms and for such purposes as it sees fit, with members appointed by Council as it deems appropriate.
16. Council may abolish any Special Committees established by it as considered necessary.

Risk Implications

17. Risks identified within this report were considered in accordance with the *Council's Risk Management Policy (GOV-CORP 005)*.
18. A risk matrix is attached to the report documenting risks and treatment options under a Hall Committee model and the alternative proposed model. The summary table below demonstrates that risks under the current model are intolerably high.
19. While there are treatments available that will reduce risks within the current hall committee model, they are costly and still do not adequately reduce the risks.
20. The proposed model substantially moderates risk at a relatively lower cost.

	Description of Risk	Current model risk rating	Current model treated risk rating	Proposed model treated risk rating
1	Personal security of Hall Committee volunteers, including a lack of oversight of isolated workers.	Extreme	High	NIL
2	Interpersonal conflict between volunteers. Conflict may escalate without Council awareness.	Extreme	High	NIL
3	Unsafe/unsupervised work methods (eg working at heights)	Extreme	Extreme	High

4	Inappropriate/unsafe fixtures, fittings or equipment installed by volunteers (eg electrical equipment without test and tag).	Extreme	High	High
5	Lack of contractor management and performance	Extreme	High	High
6	Community under-utilisation of halls	Extreme	Moderate	Moderate
7	Use of personal vehicles in support of hall activities. No risk assessment was undertaken of the condition and capability of vehicles.	Extreme	High	NIL
8	Misuse of community funds	Moderate	Low	Low
9	Misreporting or underreporting of asset utilisation and bookings	Moderate	Low	Low
10	Unapproved asset investment, removal or disposal	Moderate	Low	Low
11	Lack of records management of business records and archiving of such.	High	Low	Low
12	Failure to strategically respond to change	High	Low	High
13	Failure to comply with legislation	Extreme	High	High
14	COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED RISK Loss of local culture and community engagement due to the centralised model.	Risk not assessed under the current model		Moderate
15	COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED RISK Loss of hall feature awareness due to centralised management	Risk not assessed under the current model		Low
16	COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED RISK Loss of personalised booking experience due to centralised management	Risk not assessed under the current model		Low
17	COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED RISK Increased cost of the centralised management model compared to the volunteer model.	Risk not assessed under the current model		Low
18	COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED RISK Insufficient maintenance and inability to manage bond arrangements (noted especially on back-to-back weekend bookings).	Risk not assessed under the current model		Moderate

Financial and Budgetary Risks

21. Hall income is derived from a combination of booking fees and fundraising undertaken by Hall Committees.
22. Hall income, while restricted to be used for 'maintenance and development of the facilities for which the committee is responsible', does not currently cover the expenses required to maintain and operate the halls and is not expected to do so under the proposed model.

23. The majority of hall expenses are attributed to the capital investment required for the renewal and enhancement of the hall assets, in addition to their ongoing maintenance and operational costs.
24. The costs associated with renewal and upgrades are captured in the Council's annual Capital Works Program and are projected within the Long-term Financial Plan.
25. Council remains committed to maintaining and investing in these community assets in accordance with the *Asset Management Policy 2025 (GOV-ASSET-003)*.
26. Historically, Council has provided inadequate corporate oversight of Hall Management Committees and accordingly has not accounted for the related human resources expense. Instead, this has and will continue to resolve as significant unmanaged risks, many of which cause financial exposure related to claims and compensation, especially those claims that may not be entirely covered by the Council's insurance due to inadequate supervision, inappropriate governance structure or the lack of risk mitigation actions.
27. Financial and budgetary risk varies under each operating scenario, with management approaches and costs varying significantly depending on the risk treatment actions.
28. The existing Hall Committee structure cannot be tolerated as the operational risks are too high. While the operational cost of human resources has been artificially low, Council's financial exposure to claims and compensation is high.
29. Treating the risks while retaining Hall Committee volunteers is the most expensive option, with the cost of corporate overheads (explained at paragraphs 29-31), estimated from current actuals to be \$630,000 per annum, which is equivalent to a 4% rate increase.
30. Actions available to reduce risk while retaining Hall Committees involve providing appropriate position descriptions, recruitment, induction, training, compliance and ongoing oversight and performance management as is provided to paid staff.
31. At any one time, there are approximately 130 Hall Management Committee volunteers who are defined as workers under section 7(1)(h) of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*. Implementing adequate corporate oversight for 130 additional workers would effectively double Council's human resources and ongoing corporate training needs.
32. Councils proposed direct management of halls by staff, which reduces risks to a tolerable level in line with the operation of other publicly accessible buildings. It is expected to increase hall management overheads by up to \$150,000 per year for paid property management positions. These costs are incorporated in relevant plans approved by Council with hall booking fees contributing directly to hall management costs.
33. The online booking system is a key risk management and user experience need required under each scenario and is a cost-neutral item for comparison purposes.

34. Council anticipates improved visibility and accuracy of hall utilisation, income and expenditure based on the results of the current halls using the SpacetoCo booking system. This data will provide a transparent evidence base to make decisions and manage financial risks into the future.

Environmental Risks

35. There are no Environmental Risks identified for this report.

Engagement

36. Community feedback has been received regarding the inadequacy and insincerity of engagement on this project. Council commenced the review and engagement in good faith; however, the scale of issues encountered was not anticipated. With the benefit of hindsight, a better approach would have been to conduct risk management workshops with Hall Committees. Whilst this would not have changed the review outcome, it would have provided better and earlier understanding amongst Committee members and may have reduced the anger and sadness now experienced.
37. Engagement associated with this decision was undertaken at Involve Level in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Framework.
38. The engagement process included:
- a. Online and hard copy surveys for the community
 - b. Thirteen community meetings, including Cygnet Town Hall, which does not have a Hall Committee, but has significant community interest in access. Community meetings were open to the community, but attended mainly by Hall Committee members
 - c. Halls community information session
 - d. Individual hall and community discussion sessions.
39. During initial engagement we heard that:
- a. Community members add tremendous value to hall activities
 - b. Committees prefer to focus on local community activation and events
 - c. Committees prefer Council to manage bookings administration and maintenance
 - d. Improved systems for bookings, maintenance and volunteer management are needed
 - e. Local community members have strong connections to halls
 - f. There are diverse preferences for management models, but a universal desire for community involvement in how halls are used.

40. Council staff representing community services/social resilience, human resources, legal and governance, property services and the CEO utilised the engagement results to inform the preferred operating model.
41. Initial engagement results are detailed in the SGS Engagement Summary Report included as an Attachment to this Report.
42. Engagement following this decision will be undertaken at Inform Level by inclusion within Council Meeting minutes that will be available to the public on Councils website and at the Customer Service Centre. Key details will also be included in a news article and Council officers are already planning or have agreed to ongoing transition meetings with Hall Committees.

Human Resource and Financial Implications

43. Human resource and financial implications are contained within Council's annual budget with additional caretaker salary to be augmented by hall income.
44. Expressions of interest will be called to recruit local hall caretakers and are expected to be paid casual positions. The position description for these staff roles will be informed by feedback received through consultation regarding issues like attention to special hall features and weekend post-event inspections.
45. Operation of the new model will be monitored over the first 12 months and subject to a 12-month review. It is expected that improved utilisation, income and expenditure and maintenance records will inform future resourcing and financial decisions.

Discussion

46. The 'Hall Review' process identified:
 - a. A range of risks in the current processes of booking management and hall maintenance that Council believe cannot be managed without significant expense unless the role is removed from volunteers
 - b. Once bookings and maintenance activities become the responsibility of Council staff, the remaining volunteer activity of running events no longer requires the administration of Hall Management Committees
 - c. Volunteers freed of council administration and the terms of their committee guidelines have greater scope to support their community with fundraising and events
 - d. Change will not be without issues; however, the benefits outweigh the negatives.
47. During the consultation period, a range of questions were formally and informally raised with the Council. The attached frequently asked questions response was provided following the community information session, and additional clarifications and confirmations are provided below.

48. (1) Council's assertion of changing legislation has been challenged by community members. Three examples are provided as follows:
- a. From April 2023, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* required employers to ensure a psychologically safe environment, as it has always required them to provide for physical safety. This introduced new duties on managers and 'workers' (including volunteers) to manage issues like workplace bullying
 - b. From October 2024, changes to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* came into effect that make industrial manslaughter a criminal offence in Tasmania. This new offence carries significant penalties for those who negligently or recklessly cause a workplace death
 - c. *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023* was introduced to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people in organisations. The framework mandates that organisations working with children and young people take specific steps to ensure their safety and respond effectively to incidents of harm.
49. Each of these positive legislative changes increases organisational risk that can only be addressed through systems and processes that ensure workers (including volunteers) are adequately inducted, trained and crucially have their performance and behaviours monitored and managed.
50. (2) Council has no plans to sell Community Halls. Further, Community Halls are owned as public land and are zoned for 'community use'. Any attempted sale would be severely constrained by the rules and limitations attached to this ownership and zoning, and cannot be undertaken by Council management.
51. (3) Council has commenced discussions with and will continue to work with each Hall Management Committee regarding the use of existing hall funds. By agreement, these funds will be expended on priority building works or transferred for the purpose of supporting local community events and initiatives. Council can also hold in trust residual balances to distribute over time, and transparency will be assured through public reporting of finances.
52. (4) Moving forward, and as informed by reliable booking and income information, Council intends to incentivise utilisation by making funds available for community events.
53. (5) Council commits to providing quarterly summaries of hall booking numbers, income and expenses. Further, Council will establish a stakeholder mailing list allowing anyone to lodge their interest in the operations of any or all halls. Mailing list users will receive quarterly statements, maintenance information and be able to provide input on suggested hall improvements.



Conclusion and Recommendation

54. The 'Hall Review' process identified:

- a. A range of risks in the current processes of booking management and hall maintenance that Council believe cannot be managed without significant expense unless the role is removed from volunteers
- b. Once bookings and maintenance activities become the responsibility of Council staff, the remaining volunteer activity of running events no longer requires the administration of Hall Management Committees
- c. Volunteers, who are freed of council administration and the terms of their committee guidelines, have greater scope to support their community with fundraising and events
- d. Change will not be without issues; however, the benefits outweigh the negatives.

17.004/25**RESOLVED****MOVED: Cr Mark Jessop****SECONDED: Cr Toby Thorpe****That:**

- a) **The Report on future management of community halls be received and noted.**
- b) **The following Special Committees of Council established pursuant to section 24 of the *Local Government Act 1993* are abolished as and from the date of holding final Annual General Meetings in accordance with their relevant Terms of Reference, save for the appointment of Committee Members and Officers:**
- **Baden Powell Scout and Guide Hall Management Committee**
 - **Cradoc Park Management Committee**
 - **Geeveston Community Hall Management Committee**
 - **Glen Huon Hall Management Committee**
 - **Jim Casey Oval and Clubrooms Management Committee**
 - **Judbury Community Centre Management Committee**
 - **Mountain River Hall Management Committee**
 - **Palais Theatre Management Committee**
 - **Pelverata Memorial Hall Management Committee**
 - **Ranelagh Soldiers Memorial Hall Management Committee**
 - **Southport Community Centre Management Committee**
 - **Surges Bay Hall Management Committee**
- c) **Council applies the following principles to the new hall management approach:**
- **to encourage and support community groups to activate the halls and build stronger local communities;**
 - **to recognise the diverse needs of each community and engage with people on the basis of the broad needs of all locations;**
 - **equitable recognition of diversity within communities and an open invitation to all community members to participate;**
 - **to pay attention to the requests of regular and higher needs bookers of the halls;**
 - **to keep costs for use of the halls for community benefit to a minimum;**
 - **to maintain a high level of communication with past committee members and community volunteers during the transition.**



- d) Council allocates resources to assist any interested community groups to develop their articles, vision and strategic plans, decide on the preferred type of organisation (eg unincorporated or not-for-profit) and complete the necessary establishment processes including opening a bank account.**
- e) Council, through the Liveability Framework, develops criteria and principles (observing item (c)) that define the relationship and engagement approach with any community group as a specific type of stakeholder.**
- f) Council, through our hall management responsibilities, commits to:**
 - quarterly public reporting of hall income and expense, bookings and maintenance activities and hall account balances;**
 - joint marketing of hall activities;**
 - establishing clear process for maintenance reporting to Council Property Services and service level standards for working with community groups and Council resources to rectify issues;**
 - adopting an annual planning activity with the community to evaluate maintenance and capital needs for each hall and identify internal and external sources to achieve required works.**
- g) A report on progress of these matters be provided to the October 2025 meeting.**

Cr Sally Doyle, Cr Toby Thorpe, Cr Paul Gibson, Cr Debbie Armstrong, Cr David O'Neill, Cr Mark Jessop, Cr Andrew Burgess, Cr Amy Robertson and Cr Lukas Mrosek voted for the motion and Nil voted against the motion.

9 / 0 CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY