

# COMMITTEE REPORT

<b>Subject:</b>	<i>Future Options for Devizes Road Chapel, Salisbury</i>
<b>Committee:</b>	<i>The Environment Committee</i>
<b>Item Number:</b>	<i>12</i>
<b>Date:</b>	<i>13 April 2026</i>
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<b>Report status:</b>	<i>Decision</i>
<b>Confidential / Exempt:</b>	<i>No</i>

## 1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views and approval to progress further feasibility work on the future of the former Devizes Road Chapel.
- 1.2 The report outlines background information, future use options, financial and legal considerations, risks, and the recommended way forward to ensure sound asset management.
- 1.3 The building is vacant, costing money, and beginning to deteriorate. The Council needs to decide whether to sell it or reuse it for a purpose that generates income or community benefit.
- 1.4 The report is being brought forward due to increasing maintenance liabilities and the need to prevent deterioration that could lead to higher future costs.
- 1.5 The recommended course of action is to undertake further feasibility work into either:
  - disposal of the building; or
  - retention and conversion for small-scale commercial use.

This will ensure the Council can make a well-informed decision on the most cost-effective and sustainable option.

## 2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

### 2.1 Support further investigation into either:

2.1.1 Disposal of the building on the open market; or

2.1.2 Retention of the building for retail use, subject to a viable management and funding proposal.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Devizes Road Chapel is a former place of worship located within Devizes Road Cemetery. The building is structurally sound but unused. It currently generates no income, while ongoing costs continue for insurance, security, and basic maintenance.
- 3.2 Good asset management practice requires periodic reviews of under-utilised or vacant buildings. The Council must consider options that provide value for money, reduce liabilities, and support local priorities.

### **4. Proposal**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council commissions feasibility work covering both disposal and reuse options, including indicative costings, planning viability, market testing, and condition assessments.
- 4.2 This proposal is driven by the need to:
- reduce unnecessary expenditure on a vacant asset;
  - prevent deterioration;
- 4.3 Expected benefits from determining a future use include:
- generating either capital receipts (sale) or ongoing revenue (commercial lease);
  - reducing maintenance and liability costs;
  - enabling the building to make a positive contribution to the local environment.
- 4.4 Action is needed now as further delays may result in declining building condition, reduced market value, and greater costs for the Council.

### **5. Options Considered**

#### **Option 1 – Commercial Use**

- 5.1 The building could be retained and refurbished for small-scale commercial or retail purposes, potentially supporting local independent businesses.

##### **Advantages:**

- Provides a long-term income stream.
- Retains ownership of the asset.
- Brings a vacant building back into productive use.

##### **Considerations:**

- Requires upfront capital investment.
- Planning permissions may be needed.
- Market interest needs to be tested.

#### **Option 2 – Community or Community-Led Use**

- 5.2 The building could be leased to a community organisation.

##### **Advantages:**

- Provides social value and community benefit.

- Retains the asset for public use.

**Considerations:**

- Likely limited or no financial return.
- Maintenance costs may remain with the Council.  
Community groups may not have the funds for refurbishment.

### **Option 3 – Sale of the Property**

5.3 The Council disposes of the building on the open market.

**Advantages:**

- Provides an immediate capital receipt.
- Removes future liabilities and maintenance costs.
- No further management responsibilities.

**Considerations:**

- Loss of long-term control of the asset.
- Final sale price dependent on market and planning conditions.

### **Option 4 – Do Nothing**

5.4 The Council retains the building without further action.

**Advantages:**

- Retains flexibility for a future decision.

**Considerations:**

- Ongoing costs continue.
- Increased risk of deterioration.
- No revenue generation and reputational impact.

### **Preferred Option**

5.5 Further investigation of **Option 1 (Commercial Use)** and **Option 3 (Sale)** is recommended because they:

- offer the strongest value for money;
- reduce long-term liabilities;
- align with asset management policies;
- are deliverable within a reasonable timeframe.

## **6. Financial Position**

6.1 Feasibility work is estimated to cost between £5,000 and £10,000, depending on surveys and professional assessments required.

6.2 This work can be funded from the existing Estates budget.

6.3 **If sold:** the Council receives a capital receipt and all future costs cease. **If retained commercially:** capital investment will be required for conversion, with potential long-term income generation.

6.4 Both shortlisted options offer potential for value for money, but full analysis is needed once feasibility results are available.

## 7. Legal and Governance Considerations

- 7.1 Any change of use will require planning permission, and building regulations approval will apply for any refurbishment or conversion.
- 7.2 Disposal would need to follow the Council's asset disposal procedures, including formal valuation.
- 7.3 The Committee has delegated authority to explore options. However, any decision to sell the asset must be referred to Full Council, in line with constitutional requirements.

## 8. Strategic and Policy Alignment

- 9.1 The proposal supports Council priorities relating to:
- responsible asset management;
  - financial resilience;
  - enhancing local environments;
  - supporting economic activity.

## 10. Implications

<b>Implication Area</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Comments / Mitigation</b>
<b>Financial</b>	Medium	Vacancy costs continue; sale provides capital; commercial use requires investment but offers revenue.
<b>Legal</b>	High	Planning and building regulations apply. Disposal must follow asset procedures.
<b>Risk</b>	Medium	Risks include low commercial viability or low sale value. Feasibility work mitigates this.
<b>Personnel</b>	Low	Requires officer time but no additional staffing.
<b>Environmental Impact</b>	Low / Medium	Refurbishment could improve energy efficiency. Impacts assessed at design stage.
<b>Equalities Impact Statement</b>	Low	No significant equalities impacts at this stage; later uses may require an EIA.
<b>Community / Public Impact</b>	Medium	Reuse improves appearance; continued vacancy is negative for the area.
<b>Procurement / Contractual</b>	Low	Feasibility work may require quotations.
<b>Property / Asset</b>	High	Vacancy risks deterioration; reuse aligns with asset management principles.
<b>Data Protection</b>	None	No personal data is involved and a DPIA is not required.