

Comprehensive Report: Ōpoutere Hall Community Consultation Summary

1 Background

The site

In 1965 the Crown set the land located at 1 Ōpoutere Rd apart (from the Tairua state forest) as a reserve for a public hall subject to the Land Act 1948. The Crown then appointed the Thames County Council to control and manage the reserve as a site for a public hall subject to the Reserves and Domains Act 1953. The Hall was originally built in 1965 by the Te Rangimarie Sunday School and Social Committee for the Ōpoutere community.

The lease

On 1 June 2006, Council entered into a lease agreement with the Opoutere Community Hall Incorporated to maintain and manage the Ōpoutere Hall building, with the Council managing and maintaining the reserve and grounds. The Ōpoutere Community Hall Incorporated dissolved in March 2019 and was deregistered as an incorporated society. The lease was terminated on deregistration of the Society.

On inspection by the TCDC Property team on 20 February 2020, it was found that there was little to no maintenance completed on the hall with wall holes present, broken bathroom amenities (smashed vanity) and unhygienic/unsafe standards for a hireable space. Most notably, there was a considerable amount of black mould present on the hall ceiling. Due to the mould and the poor condition of sanitary facilities an Insanitary Building Notice was issued on 24 February 2020 and the locks changed on the hall to ensure no one could enter the building.

Decision to consult

Staff took a report to the Community Board seeking direction on the future of the hall. The Board at its meeting on 16 February 2021, requested that the Chief Executive delegates to staff to undertake consultation with Ōpoutere residents on the future of the Ōpoutere Hall and the land it is located on, to be reported back to the Community Board. The Board's resolution is in the main report.

Council staff have completed targeted consultation with the Ōpoutere Community referred to in the second resolution from the Community Board. This report provides a summary of the outcome of this consultation. In the same report presented to the Community Board, staff confirmed that there was currently \$45,000 budgeted to undertake the following work:

Work	Year	Estimated Cost
New roof and ceiling	21/22	\$29,000
Wall linings	21/22	\$11,000
Bathrooms	21/22	\$5,000
		\$45,000

2 Discussion

2.1 Problem definition

The core problem which all parties are seeking to address can be defined as the following:

The Ōpoutere Committee Hall has not been well managed or utilised.

The table below summarises some of the roots and effects of this core problem.

Roots of the problem	Effects of the problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of understanding of Council's role and Community's role	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fractured communication between TCDC, Hall Committee, and DOC• Poor working relationship between Committee and Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resourcing restrictions on staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of Council oversight and enforcement of the lease
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of cohesiveness in the Community, managing the hall is a divisive issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakdown of community kaitiaki of the hall• Loss of community pride in the hall
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not sharing roles of hall management within the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Burden of hall management falls on a limited number of passionate people• Apparent lack of understanding and knowledge of how to run a hall using appropriate tools, technology, and the like (have not been utilised in past committee)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty of community organisations to raise funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of committee skill to raise funding• Lack of community funding• Lack of external funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of understanding that the incorporated society is responsible for all structural repair and maintenance of the hall within the Community and the hall committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hall unusable and requires significant upgrades to make it safe and fit for purpose• Hall has been historically underutilised and has been economically unsustainable

2.2 Consultation method

Email communications were sent to all known stakeholders who had previously expressed a desire to be included in any consultation and those on existing Council mailing lists. The rating database was utilised to send emails to all those who have a property in Ōpoutere.

In addition to the above, people were encouraged to spread the word around the Community, including forwarding the email to their existing community networks. Therefore, while Council staff sent communications to over 90 email addresses, the total number of people reached is likely to be much more.

Members of the Ōpoutere Community were invited to a consultation event to discuss the future of the hall and the site of the hall. It was held early evening on 20 July 2021 to take advantage of the July school holidays in the Ōpoutere School Hall. Nineteen people recorded their attendance on the sign-in sheet at this event. People who were unable to attend and attendees to the event were invited to email further thoughts to staff with an additional month-long time frame for this feedback to be sent. The deadline for this feedback was 20 August 2021 to ensure reporting deadlines could be met.

The following discussion prompts were circulated via email and were available at the meeting to help prompt feedback from attendees and other interested people.

- How might we best utilise the site the hall is on?
- How might we understand the demand for a hall on the current site?
- How might we ensure the hall is well managed and maintained, long term?
- How might we create a strong working relationship between a hall committee, the Ōpoutere community, and the Council?
- How might we access alternative streams of funding to make the hall safe and fit for purpose?
- How might we use the site the hall is on, thinking about uses other than/as well as a community hall?

After the consultation event, confirmation of next steps, confirmation of the date when feedback was due, and the most recent lease agreement between the hall committee and Council were circulated for information to all those who had previously received communications.

2.3 Summary of feedback

Feedback was received predominately via email, the community consultation event held on 20 July 2021, and telephone conversations.

A summary of what each of the community members and other interested parties communicated throughout this consultation period is included below. **There was overwhelming support for the hall to be retained as a community asset**, with several people providing examples of how the management of the hall could be approached differently to ensure the hall operated well in the future. Feedback as follows:

- I support preserving the hall as it's essential for the Community. I have attended many events at the hall, and often hire it myself. I want to be kept updated on any development on the hall's future.
- I want to be kept updated on any development of the hall's future. Locals use this hall a lot. It's vital to the Community.
- I want to be kept updated on any community consultation, and any developments regarding the hall. I believe the hall is needed.
- I support the hall being repaired and brought back into use, as this will benefit all residents and visitors. Ōpoutere Hall is a historic building and makes a great community gathering

point. Action is needed to refurbish the hall, which needs to be led by TCDC. I want to be kept updated on any community consultation and any developments regarding the hall.

- I support the hall being kept operational. I want to be updated on any consultation regarding the hall.
- We want to be consulted with regarding the future of the hall. We want to be kept updated on any developments regarding the hall's future.
- I support the hall being repaired and am sure it's not that difficult. I've attended many events at the hall and have many fond memories there. I want to be kept updated on any developments regarding the hall.
- I support restoring the hall to an operational level. I want to be kept updated on any developments regarding the hall.
- I want to be kept updated on any developments regarding the hall. We have often hired the hall for various uses. We consider the hall a valuable community asset.
- I support retaining the hall for future use and keeping it in public ownership.
 - I suggest running the hall in a similar way to a comparable hall in my area in Wellington:
 - It is maintained by locals with council support.
 - it is constantly used by various community groups and is at the heart of the Community.
 - its history is displayed on the interior walls.
 - I believe there are local skills to repair the hall adequately. It can become a community project that will bring people together, which has many benefits.
- I support retaining the hall and investing in its upgrade and continued use.
 - The hall is currently used as a multi-purpose community facility, and averages use of 5.5 days a month.
 - There is an urupa on Liddell Road, and this hall is often used for tangi and unveilings.
 - There is a hangi pit on the hall reserve which is well-used and registered with the Onemana Fire Brigade. It has been there since 1965 and has been recently used an average of 4 times a year. There is a process in place for using it.
 - The walking track from the reserve to Redwoods and Tawatawa Stream is an amenity associated with the hall. It is used by groups and general public for many uses. There are no records of average use, but wedding venue enquiries are handled by Tairua forest manager.
 - A past problem of hall committee was maintaining active members. I suggest solving this by a possible hall incorporation, reinstating the committee rules/constitution, and specifying dates for AGMs. A past problem has been requirements for signing authority to access Inc bank account. I suggest revising how the bank signatories work on the account, and general revision of income and expenditure.
 - It is essential to keep the hall connected with Whangamatā Community Board and TCDC, and the Community Board liaison must be reinstated.
- The chairs of Ōhui Owners, Ōpoutere Ratepayer and Resident Association, and Wharekawa Catchment Care Group, believe the hall is a valuable community asset. The hall must be run with better systems and more transparency.
- I have spoken with many residents, and summarise their feedback as follows:
 - The Community values the hall as a historic site
 - There is little interest in a new committee because people don't think the hall is used enough to cover its running costs. Plus, there is little confidence in the previous committee
 - There is interest in having further discussions with TCDC as to options
 - It is practical to move overnight freedom camping away from the beach and to the land adjoining the hall.
- I, and my organisation, strongly support the repair/renovation of the hall so it can be continued to be used. We have used the hall regularly for approximately 20 years for our education programmes. The hall is a vital resource in being able to deliver these

programmes and supports our objective of place-based learning. The hall is a valuable resource. I want to be kept informed regarding future public consultation on this matter.

- I am interested in the future of the hall.
- I have no magic plan to offer. Community halls around the western world experience a similar problem to Ōpoutere. The main difficulty is deciding what is the purpose of a community hall, and the main question to consider is how the site can be better used.
- I support the hall to be repaired and used for the Community. I am concerned that members of the previous hall committee should not lead the conversation for a new way forward, to make sure mistakes of the past are not repeated. This is important to make sure there is a good relationship between the committee, the Community, and TCDC, as the previous hall committee does not have a good relationship with the Community or the Council.
- We support repairing the hall through obtaining funding. We support the hall being kept in community ownership and run by a committee. We want to be kept informed regarding public consultation on the hall's future.
- I have used the hall several times and believe it's a great asset to the Community. It is the only centre for the local Community to gather and thrive. Discontinuing the hall will disband and isolate the Community.
- I believe the community meeting only captured a narrow cross section, and not the full Community's views. If another committee is elected, I suggest there be a council representative on the committee to ensure good and proper management, Members also need to participate effectively.
- We want the hall used for many types of community events. We support a committee, with help from Council.
- The hall is used for many events. I believe it can be used for many more. The hall is a very important community gathering place. I support retaining the hall and appointing a caretaker to manage it. I suggest marketing the hall more effectively.
- We have used this hall for many years and want to continue to use it. It has great benefit to the Community. The hall is a place of history, and a community landmark.
- I believe this consultation needs to be grassroots driven and involve all the Community.
- I support restoring the hall to be used by the Community.
- The hall is very important to the Māori community who live nearby and need to be consulted with. The hall is used by Māori whānau for important events as there is no alternative marae nearby. I suggest alternative means of engagement to ensure Maori feedback is heard.
- I believe the hall is important community infrastructure, and everyone benefits from being able to use it.

The following notes summarise the discussion at the July 2021 community consultation event:

- Maintain it as a community hall
 - Tangis, weddings, family events
 - Was used approximately 6 ½ days a month
- Traditionally a place of shelter – important to iwi
 - important for tangi, gathering, it is a taonga, mana of land – mana whenua need equity
 - the hall is a representation of whānau/community
- Heart of the Community
 - Community acknowledges hard work of previous committee
- Re-establish the Incorporated Society
 - 6 people to be committee members

- People need to put their hand up to incorporate a society
- Utilise local expertise i.e. architects, tradespeople
- Have a fund-raising committee
 - Raise funds required for repair and ongoing maintenance
 - \$1,000 in the dissolved committee's bank
 - One previous member holds \$1,000 cash belonging to the old committee
- Use Council Funding
 - Council has \$5,000 available for repairs & maintenance
 - Prepare now for Long Term Plan
 - Investigate alternative funding streams
- Define the vision – what we want to use it for?
 - Upgrade facilities people want to hire
 - New roof and ceiling
 - Hall – make it into a multifunctional space able to be split up into different sized areas for a variety of purposes
 - Kitchen – current one doesn't work
 - Toilets
 - Covered deck
 - Fencing
 - Parking
 - Re-do lean-to
 - Water tank
 - Storage for mattresses (whare nui)
 - Large map to show our area inside – emphasise history of area
 - Multifunctional usage
 - Get the hall back up to standard – transform it into something people want to be in / use
 - A design plan for the future
 - A kohangareo – links to historic use
 - Approach the Ministry
 - An affordable, accessible option
 - Needs to be affordable for locals to use, plus pay for itself (idea is to make it cheaper for community members)
 - See best practice models, learn from other community halls and how they are successful despite challenges
- Challenges
 - Rural
 - State highway location – safety issue, potential difficulties dealing with NZTA
 - Hall must fund its own expenditure – needs to be financially sustainable
 - Small Community
 - A multifunctional, operational hall that can be rented out at market rent
 - Fix the roof
 - The Hall Community must be operational
 - Partner with Council
 - A strong relationship/connection with Council needed - build trust
 - Have a Community Board representative

RESIDENTS
 OPERATIONAL
 LOCAL
 GRASS-ROOTS
 ESSENTIAL
 COMMITTEE
 REPAIR
 WHĀNAU
 COMMUNITY
 SUPPORT
 GATHERING WELL-USED
 MĀORI
 HISTORY
 PUBLIC
 MULTIPURPOSE
 MEMORIES
 MAINTAINED
 FUTURE PLACE-BASED
 ŌPOUTERE
 CONSULTATION
 HALL
 OWNERSHIP

3 Issues for Community Board consideration

Considering the feedback received so far, Council staff suggest that the following are issues which the Community Board could turn their minds to when considering the future of the hall and the site the hall is on.

1. Community aspirations for the hall and the site

There was overwhelming support for the hall's retention and repair. References were made to the hall being the heart of the Community, and a physical embodiment of the history of the Community. A desire to be solutions-focused was communicated, and a long conversation at the consultation event focused on the ins and outs of running an incorporated society. There are clear aspirations for the hall to become a multi-purpose venue, fit for purpose for a range of different uses, to assist with it being financially self-sufficient.

The Community requested more consultation and conversations between the Community and TCDC on this issue before any final decisions are made.

2. Relationship between mana whenua and the site

In their feedback, several community members noted that before making any further decisions regarding the future of the site, a dedicated conversation must be had between mana whenua and Council – especially if any changes to the status quo is to be made. One community member noted that there was a hangi pit on the site, which was established in 1965. While there are no formal records of the use of the hall available, feedback from the Community indicates that the hall was used regularly for tangihanga, celebrations and hui by local Maori.

3. Relationship between Community Board and Hall Committee

The working relationship between the Community Board and the Community is a cause for concern within the Community especially if there is to be another Hall Committee. A major causal factor to the halls current state of disrepair can be linked to the breakdown of this relationship.

The previous hall committee had a Community Board member as a formal liaison between the committee and the board, defined by a terms of reference document. When the liaison person was no longer an elected member on the board, this relationship was not continued. This relationship is pointed to as a critical link to ensure an effective relationship between the community board and the hall committee.

There was a concern raised in feedback regarding an appropriate liaison person between the Community and the Council. While there is no formally appointed community liaison, there are people within the Community who can summarise information passed on to them through their various connections and networks from other members of the Community. If the Community Board wishes to formally appoint a community liaison, indications from the Community suggest that an appropriate process would need to be followed.

4. Willingness from the Community to form a Hall Committee

There was unanimous support for the hall to be retained as a community asset. Still, there was a concern raised regarding the operation of the previous hall committee and a concern that there was a reluctance from the Community in general to reform a new committee. The Community Board will need to be satisfied that any new hall committee would operate more transparently and collaboratively than the previous hall committee before entering into a lease agreement. The operation of the previous lease indicates a lack of understanding of the responsibilities of the hall committee.

Therefore, there is a risk that the Community may form a committee that the Community Board will not want to enter into a lease agreement with to avoid repeating past patterns and mitigate risk to the Council. The factors or criteria any new hall committee should comply with to be successful in obtaining a lease must be articulated in advance, so the Community can take this into consideration when putting together a new hall committee.

4. Next steps

Based on the feedback received, there is community support for the retention of the hall and acknowledgement that any incorporated society put in place to manage it needs clarity on its responsibilities and needs competent people on the committee.

The first step for the Board is to decide if it wishes to retain the hall. Once that decision is made, attention can focus on how it will be managed and by whom. That process would involve further community input. In terms of the Council's Leases and Licences Policy, there are certain criteria any group wishing to manage a Council facility must meet such as being an incorporated society or registered charitable trust.

With a decision made to retain, staff can commence the roof and sanitary repairs noted in the report.

If the Board does not wish to retain the hall, then its practical options include demolition, sale for removal or gifting. More detail on these options would be the subject of a further report if required.

3 Significance and engagement

The significance of this issue can be assessed as somewhat significant, given the specific community interest in the Ōpoutere hall. Targeted consultation to this interested Community has occurred and will need to be ongoing concerning future decisions regarding the hall.