

Linlithgow Burgh Halls review delayed

The future of a West Lothian council-owned wedding venue remains in doubt after a delay to a report on plans for its future.

Linlithgow SNP councillor Pauline Orr said the financial plight of the Burgh Halls was “a concern”, as she and others await a report that had been expected in January.

There’s no word yet on when it will be.

As highlighted in this year’s budget the venue losses are predicted to be £100,000 by the end of this month. Officials have already conceded that the losses are in fact unmet income targets.

A blueprint for the future was expected early in the New Year.

At the budget debate, on February 25, council officers reiterated that it would be published after consultations between the education department which runs the venue and other council departments including finance.

At a meeting of the full council, councillor Orr asked how big the rates increase had been for the building in the last year.

Answering her question this week Council Leader Lawrence Fitzpatrick said the rates bill had risen £5,000, from £67,596 to £72,111.

Councillor Orr told the Local Democracy Reporting Service:

“With that confirmed as only around £5,000 it is now as important as ever to try and understand where the shortfalls really are, what actions are being taken to alleviate them and what time-scales are being considered.

“Linlithgow Burgh Halls is a unique venue in the heart of the town and close to the Palace and Birthplace of Mary Queen of Scots.”

She added: “The financial position of the Burgh Halls is concerning. It should be providing a significant income stream to West Lothian Council, and it is not.

“The Burgh Halls is capable of producing a comfortable and even significant profit, income that can help to negate some of the devastating cuts being made to services.”

A council spokesperson told the LDRS: “Officers are continuing their review, exploring potential operating models for the Burgh Halls. Details of the review will be brought to committee in due course.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter