

Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 01 September 2025

Question from: Malcolm Walker

Question to: Councillor Durrans, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Services and Communities

QUESTION

What were the underlying reasons for Calderdale Council prioritising the disposal of the Shay Stadium over alternative approaches, such as investing in operational improvements, implementing efficiency measures, or exploring a community-led management or ownership model? Were financial, strategic, or political considerations the primary drivers of this decision, and to what extent were the potential benefits of non-disposal options evaluated before concluding that disposal was the preferred course of action?

Response

The Shay is a significant financial liability for the Council. Rationale for the proposed disposal of the Shay are detailed in the budget consultation papers for 2024/25 and the subsequent report to Cabinet on 17th March 2025.

Council agreed the budget on 26th February 2024. One of the proposals included the disposal of The Shay by 1st April 2025 in order to realise a budget saving of £161,000. It is anticipated that the saving will be much greater as, based on current expenditure, a subsidy of between £350,000 and £500,000 is made each year in order to ensure the stadium meets strict health and safety requirements.

In line with Cabinet's wish both sporting clubs, FC Halifax Town and Halifax Panthers RFLC were asked to consider whether they wished to express an interest in taking over the operation of the stadium, including all liabilities, either in partnership or separately. They did not wish to do so.

Expressions of interest were received from Ken Davy and from Shay Stadium Working Group which were submitted to Cabinet for consideration at their meeting on 17th March 2025.

Cabinet resolved:

- (a) subject to confirmation from relevant leagues that the three professional clubs can play at the same stadium, the proposal submitted by Mr Ken Davy/Huddersfield Giants for the acquisition of the Shay stadium site to include the capital investment in the pitch and stadium facilities, subject to any representations received through the designation of an asset of community value process, be supported.
- (b) the Director, Resources & Transformation be requested to consider the financial consequences of the preferred proposal, making the associated financial adjustments to either the capital programme or revenue budget;

(c) subject to the outcome of the asset of community value process that the development of detailed business cases and negotiation and acceptance of terms and conditions for the disposal of The Shay be delegated to the Director, Regeneration and Strategy and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Cabinet Member for Public Services and Communities;

(d) a restrictive covenant be added to the Sale Agreement that restricts the use of the Shay Stadium to a Sporting Stadium.

On 14th May 2025 an intention to submit a bid under the Asset of Community Value process was received from the Shay Stadium Development Company. We were notified that this interest had been withdrawn on 4th August 2025.

It is worth restating that the Cabinet decision of 17th March instructed that a restrictive covenant should be included within the sale restricting the use of the Shay as a sporting stadium. The exact wording of the restriction in the transfer is to be finalised in consultation with legal services. So whilst the Council proposes to dispose of the Shay to remove the financial liability it represents, it will continue to provide a venue for professional sport in the future.