

David Moore: Don't let's lose the Capitol for a second time



the idea of a new cinema is suggested, Horsham District Council is looking at its assets as part of a different strategy to determine how best it can reduce its costs whilst at the same time increase its revenue.

All councils own a range of assets, which have been acquired over the years for a variety of reasons.

These will range from buildings to open green spaces, which may have been purchased by the council or been gifted to the council for the benefit of and use by future generations.

It's for this reason that, when a council is considering disposing of any asset, it needs to consider why it owns it and, most importantly, whether it still provides a useful benefit

to the community.

This approach must be applied to buildings, which are within a council's ownership.

In principle, their sale is an obvious way to generate revenue but, before embarking on any such strategy, a council is obliged to ask one simple question; is the building of value to the community?

The Capitol is a prime example of what one would describe as a building of community value.

Unfortunately, it also has a high potential monetary value and the land has an even greater value if the adjacent building, the council offices, was also available for sale.

It would be fair to say that the sale of the council offices would not create any furore.

If its sale generated some

revenue for the council and the running costs of the council in a new location were reduced, who's going to complain?

However, the Capitol is a different matter. It provides us with a very high quality theatre as well as useful cinema facilities, both of which run in tandem with each other.

Until now it has also been acclaimed as a key element in the council's arts strategy with parking to attract visitors to the town.

The thought of creating a multiplex cinema in Bishopric fills one with a sense of doom. Without a clear plan, there seems no doubt that it would spell the end of the Capitol and lead to the loss of Horsham's theatre and an important part

of our cultural heritage.

We must expect some lateral thinking from the council.

On the one hand it wants to attract all these new businesses into the area and extend the shopping experience in the town.

All well and good, you may say, as this will create jobs.

On the other hand, the current proposal is to increase the size of Horsham both geographically and in population terms by building more and more houses.

This doesn't make any sense if at the same time there's a plan to remove essential leisure facilities.

It's time for a rethink before it's too late and terminal damage is done to our town.

Don't let's asset strip our

town; there's no going back.

Let's have a council-led plan with the aim of retaining the Capitol as a theatre and protecting the town's character whilst at the same time improving it for the future.

Let's stop being developer-led!

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns.

For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 261640.

What's wrong with Horsham having a multiplex cinema? The answer is nothing with one proviso, namely that it and any other development should be part of a clearly defined council-led plan for the town.

At the same time as