

# ***London Borough of Bexley***

## ***News Release***

**For Immediate Release**

**31 October 2016 / PR 8395**

### **HALL PLACE & GARDENS**

The London Borough of Bexley says it will aim for 'business as usual' for Hall Place & Gardens, after a joint announcement that Bexley Heritage Trust will be handing the historic property back to the Council next year.

At their Board meeting in September, Bexley Heritage Trust Trustees unanimously agreed that, with regret, they are unable to continue to operate as a going concern from 1 April 2017, due to the phased reduction in its Council grant and the prospect of having to become self-sufficient from April 2018. The reduction in the Council's grant has been driven by the need for the Council to be self-sufficient from 2020 – due to the ending of its funding from central government.

The Council is reassuring all those with an interest in Hall Place – including customers, brides, sub-contractors, staff, volunteers, exhibitors, schools – that it is working with Bexley Heritage Trust to plan for Hall Place & Gardens to continue to operate as a going concern.

Cllr Peter Craske, Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure said: "We have had to make some very difficult decisions due to the current financial climate, as a result of the gradual removal of our government grant. The phased removal of Bexley Heritage Trust's grant is one such decision. We have worked with BHT to find ways to overcome this loss of funding, with changes including the removal of their management responsibilities at Danson House in April. However, despite such changes, BHT have indicated that they cannot continue to operate after March 2017, so we have agreed that the business will be transferred back to the Council as a going concern.

"The Council recognises the significance of Hall Place and Gardens - an important and well-loved heritage site – which is not only an impressive historic destination for residents and tourists, but also provides a premiere wedding and event venue. In recognition of its value, I would like to make it absolutely clear that it will be 'business as normal' for Hall Place House and Gardens – both as a visitor attraction and also

as a wedding/event venue.”

Bill Roots, who has chaired the Trust for the past nine years, said: "The Trust has increased earned income and made many economies in recent years as the Council's core funding has declined. However, we cannot run Hall Place and Gardens after that core funding ends in April 2018. It is a sad end to the Trust after 15 years. My thanks go to the staff and our business partners for their support. I hope that visitors will continue to enjoy Hall Place & Gardens.”

Anyone with any queries should contact Caroline Worthington, Chief Executive, Bexley Heritage Trust at [caroline.worthington@bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk](mailto:caroline.worthington@bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk). Queries about specific bookings including weddings should be directed to Lynda Weaver at [lynda.weaver@bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk](mailto:lynda.weaver@bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk).

General questions should be directed to Toni Ainge, the Council's Deputy Director (Communities, Leisure, Libraries and Parks) at [toni.ainge@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:toni.ainge@bexley.gov.uk)

**'ENDS'**

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