

# ***London Borough of Bexley***

## ***News Release***

**For Immediate Release**

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### **DANSON HOUSE SET TO RETURN TO COUNCIL CONTROL**

Danson House is set for a change of management next year, with the London Borough of Bexley committed to ensuring that the much-loved historic building remains open to the public.

The future use of the Georgian mansion is to be discussed at the next meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 17 November. It follows lengthy discussions over many months between the Council and the Bexley Heritage Trust, who have managed the Georgian mansion on the Council's behalf since 2004. As a result of the severe financial pressures it faces, the Council decided to withdraw its grant to the Trust over the next three years. This led the Trust to review their commitments, resulting in their decision to withdraw from the management of Danson House.

The Council is in discussion with Kent County Council to continue the use of the building for weddings by using it as the new location for the Borough's Register Office. This service is run for Bexley by Kent County Council and it is proposed that this will relocate to Danson House from the Borough's current Register Office at Sidcup Manor House. The future use of Sidcup Manor House will be reviewed and a new Conservation Management Plan developed, which will help inform final proposals for the property.

"We are saddened that BHT is unable to continue to manage Danson House but understand the reason for their decision," said Cabinet Member Cllr Peter Craske. "Reducing the Trust's grant is a decision forced on us by the need to balance our budget and save at least another £34 million over the next three years. We will ensure the building continues to be put to good use and remains

open to the public and we hope that the volunteers who help show visitors around the house will continue to provide this important service.

“I would like to place on record our thanks to the Trust for the part they played in fitting out the house and developing a new role for it following its renovation by English Heritage. We will continue to work closely with them in connection with Hall Place House & Gardens, which they also manage for us. I would also like to provide an assurance that the Council will continue to support the Trust’s work at Hall Place.”

The Council, Bexley Heritage Trust and Kent County Council are working closely together to agree new arrangements that would minimise the impact of the change in management on those who have booked weddings at Danson House and Sidcup Manor House after September 2016, when it is proposed that ceremonies will move from the Manor House to Danson House. The couples potentially affected have been contacted, informed of the proposals and given a range of options regarding their ceremonies.

Danson House has become a popular venue for weddings under Bexley Heritage Trust’s management and the Council and Kent County Council believe that it will continue to be in demand for weddings and other ceremonies.

The Council also plans to offer some Register Office services by appointment at Bexleyheath Central Library.

Danson House is a Palladian villa designed by Sir Robert Taylor, the architect of the Bank of England, and was built around 1766. It stands in more than 200 acres of its former grounds which form part of Danson Park, the largest public park in the London Borough of Bexley.

Danson House is a Grade I listed building and Sidcup Manor House is a Grade II listed building.

**'ENDS'**

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