

**KNUTSFORD TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL OFFICES REFURBISHMENT
PROJECT DEFINITION REPORT**

Version 1.3

Council Offices Renovation | Project Definition Report | v1.3

Date of Issue	Version	Made by	Reason for issue	Summary of changes	Circulation list
23/03/2018	v0.1	AKG	Draft Issue	New document	NF, AKG
28/03/2018	v1.0	AKG	First Issue	Formatting changes. Change control process and executive summary added.	COSC
04/04/2018	v1.1	AKG/NF/CG	COSC amendments	Updated Risk Assessment to split health and safety risks, amendment of likelihood of post-election change, expanded risks in executive summary.	COSC
09/04/2018	V1.2	COSC	COSC amendments	Adding additional detail to Risk Assessment risks around Health and Safety. Adding additional fire safety risk.	COSC
<u>31/05/2022</u>	<u>V1.3</u>	<u>AKG</u>	<u>Restart of Project</u>	<u>Updated status of centennial war memorial project, updated name of DLUHC, updated status of capital receipts reserve (dependency) confirmed transfer has taken place (assumption) and updated risk re challenge to use.</u>	<u>COSC</u>

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Executive Summary

This project definition report was the output of a workshop held in March 2018. It sets out the council's resolved position to take freehold ownership through an asset transfer of the Knutsford Council Offices (including its grounds) and the adjoining library gardens. It sets out that the goal of the project is to do this within budget and with minimum business interruption.

This report identifies the project dependencies as being sufficient funding, continued support of full council and the permissions and ability to undertake any necessary changes to the building.

The project assumes the building transfers and that in addition to sufficient finances and qualified external support to undertake required works it assumes that the disruption can be tolerated and that there is demand for the spaces created. It is assumed that Full Council continues to support the project.

A number of project risks have been identified and appraised and that they are the following:

- a) that repairs cost more than anticipated
- b) we fail to attract tenants
- c) we fail to attract community users
- d) the council increases staffing reducing lettable spaces
- e) works take too long
- f) health and safety risks for onsite personnel
- g) the project workload is too much or personnel are lost
- h) we are unable to get sufficient skills/professional input.

A series of project management systems are detailed including the change control procedures which will require that any decision which will change an element of the project which has been signed off by the sub-committee or which may materially affect the project budget or timescales must be sanctioned by the sub-committee.

Introduction

In November 2016 Knutsford Town Council resolved to pursue the freehold transfer of the Town Council Offices from Cheshire East Council for the consideration of £1. In July 2017 this was expanded to include the grounds to the adjacent library owing to both assets being registered under one title.

The Council Offices is a Grade II listed building comprising a basement, ground and first floors. It is sub-divided into various offices and meeting areas along with a more formally furnished area which used to be the Council Chamber. Included as part of the Council Offices is the externally accessed 'Talking Newspaper Shed', originally a joiner's workshop which has been repurposed as the recording studio for the Knutsford Talking Newspaper.

The grounds of the Council Offices include a tarmacked drive to the front and rear, a garden area to the side of the building and small grassed/planted area to the front. The Library Gardens is the main access to the Library and is separated from the Council Offices by iron railings. It comprises two lawned area, benches, a gazebo and planting areas. It will be the site of the new Centennial War Memorial from August/September 2018.

The resolved position of the Town Council is to undertake a programme of repair works to address a backlog of repairs not undertaken by the current owners. It includes to install a lift to make the first floor chamber accessible. The business case for transfer is on a mixed model comprising use as the council's office, meeting place, providing community meeting/activity spaces and commercially let offices.

Goal and Objective

To take ownership of the Knutsford Council Office buildings and grounds and transform them in line with the business case with the minimum of business interruption possible.

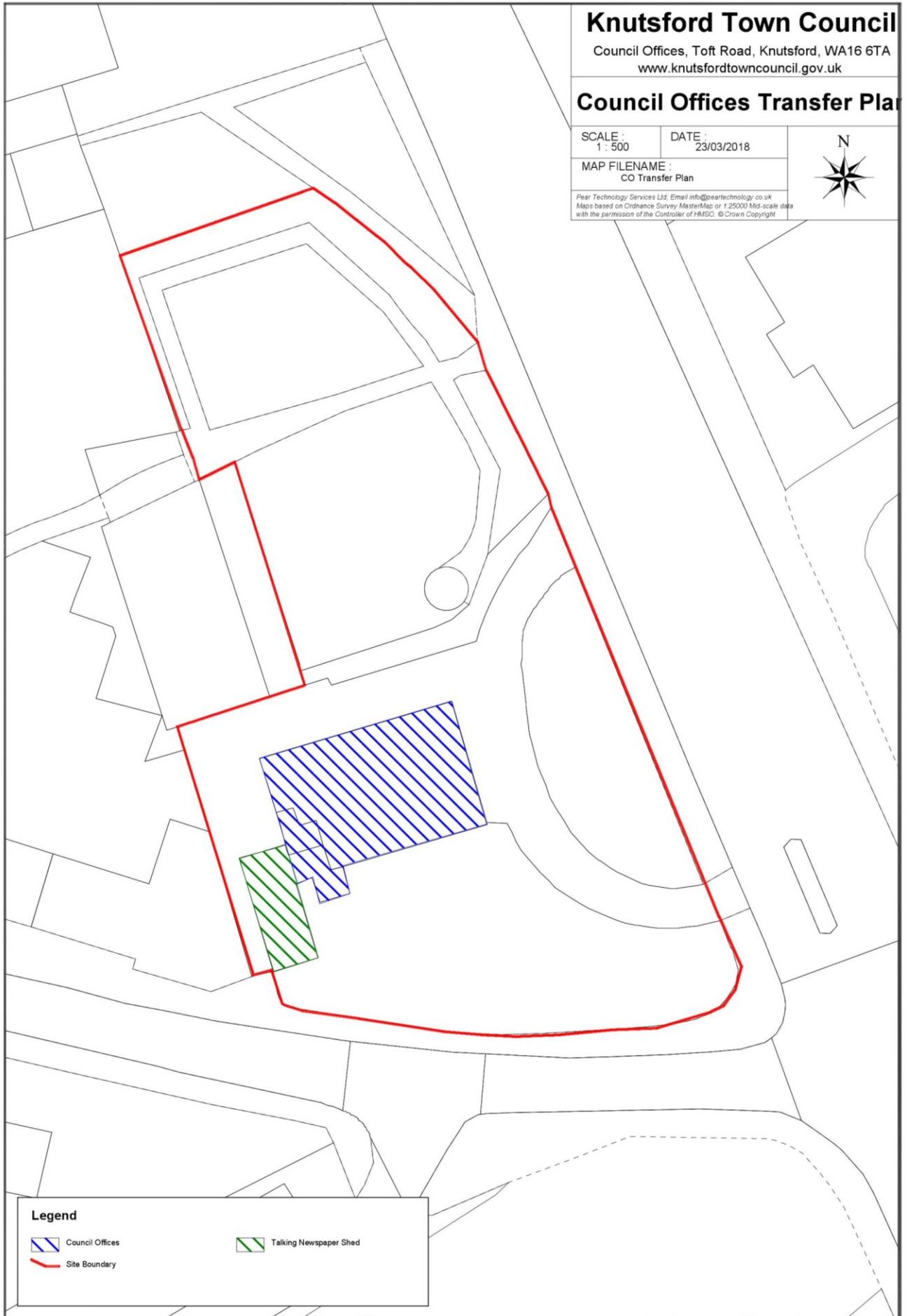
To do this with sufficient funds and within budget and return as a going concern to the 'business as usual' custodianship of the Assets and Operations Committee as speedily as possible.

Scope

The project will oversee the transfer of the Council Offices and grounds.

The following are in the scope of this project:

- Council Office building
- Talking newspaper shed (NB: The Talking Newspaper is a current tenant of the site)
- Council Office grounds (including the hardstanding)
- Library Gardens



The site plan contained on the previous page shows the extent of the transfer in red. It identifies the council office building and talking newspaper shed.

The following are not in scope of this project:

- Installation or dedication of the Centennial War Memorial which is overseen by the Environment Committee and dedicated working group. [This project was completed in 2018.](#)
- The library
- Any part of the carpark to the rear of the library
- Libris House

Dependencies

The project requires that there are sufficient capital receipts or loans to fund the necessary works. The Council anticipates selling the Cemetery Lodge in 2018 generating a capital receipt of in the region of £250,000 to £350,000. £50,000 of this amount has been allocated to the Cemetery Chapel works and the allocation of the remainder will be determined by Council. The Council is also able to borrow funds at low interest rates from the Public Works Loan Board, subject to approval from the ~~Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government~~ [Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.](#)

UPDATE

[The lodge was sold for £395k. Proceeds were used for the Cemetery Chapel works and for the creation of commercial spaces within public toilets. Balance of the Capital Receipts Reserve as at June 2022 is £163k.](#)

A key part of the business case for taking on the council offices is to enable to use of the historic first floor council chamber. It is currently unusable for meetings due to its inaccessibility and the installation of a lift to make this room accessible is considered critical. Initial discussions with a local lift installer and the Cheshire East Council Conservation Officer indicates this is possible.

The project relies on achieving any necessary listed building, planning permission and building regulations approvals for the works required to the building.

The continued support of Council is required, it is noted the transfer is one of the biggest projects the council has undertaken to date.

Summary of dependencies:

- Sufficient capital receipts/loans
- Able to install a lift
- Listed Building Consent for any changes to the building
- Planning Permission for any changes to the building

- Building Regulations approval for any changes to the building
- Support of Full Council

Assumptions

It is naturally assumed that the asset will transfer to the council; without the transfer there is no project.

UPDATE

The Council Offices transferred to the council in April 2022.

It is assumed that sufficient reserves are held to fund the works or that there is access to sufficient financing.

Previous discussions with a local land agent has indicated the demand for small office space such as can be provided within the Council Offices; the continued demand for this space is assumed and forms part of the overall operation budgeting.

The Council Offices are currently used by a number of third sector organisations for the delivery of services or for meeting/activities. The continued demand for use of the spaces within the Offices forms part of the moral business case for operating the building.

A to be determined level of building work is required to maximise the efficient use of the Council Offices and it is assumed that the council officers and existing third sector users can tolerate a degree of disruption whilst this takes place.

The project will be reliant on externally provided professionals for certain elements of the project; it is assumed that such professionals will have necessary expertise, qualifications and insurances.

Summary of assumptions:

- The asset transfers
- Sufficient reserves / financing
- Demand for commercially let spaces
- Demand for community spaces
- Staff/users can tolerate disruption
- External professionals suitably qualified

Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Repair works more than anticipated	M	H	Building survey undertaken to identify major repair works. Fixed priced contract for lift, installation and all related works. Allow 10% contingency for rest.
Fail to attract tenants	L	M	Work with local agent to maximise desirability of commercial lettings. Have introductory reduced rent period.
Works take too long, impacting on staff and community users	M	H	Timescale to be key consideration at point of tendering. Impact on staff / users to be assessed at point of tender analysis and appropriate mitigation costs built into budgets
Challenge from Cheshire East Council on future uses	L	M	Solicitor to review all transfer documentation and overage clauses. Negotiation with Cheshire East Council to ensure flexibility of building use is allowed for. <u>Negotiations with Cheshire East Council prior to transfer ensured the legal paperwork allowed for a broad range of uses within the building.</u>
Potential harm/injury to individuals from building works	M	M	Contractors to be responsible for Health and Safety on site during any works and to be overseen by council instructed surveyor. Regular briefings to staff/building users on activity on site and, when appropriate, appropriate site access control introduced.

Increased risk of fire during building works	L	H	Contractors to be responsible for Health and Safety on site during any works to be overseen by council instructed surveyor in accordance with current CDM regulations. Regular briefings to staff/building users on activity on site and, when appropriate, appropriate site access control introduced.
Failure to abide by Health and Safety legislation	L	H	Contractors to be responsible for Health and Safety on site during any works and to be overseen by council instructed surveyor in accordance with current CDM regulations.
Increase of council staffing reduces lettable space	L	L	Flexibility of future use of spaces within the building to be considered at the design stage
Archaeologically significant finds discovered during works / survey	L	H	Assessment undertaken early in planning stage if likely to be required
Loss of community interest in using the building	L	M	Needs of existing users to be considered as part of design stage
Unsustainable workload impacts on other council work	M	M	Town Clerk, Chairman of Sub-Committee and Town Mayor to assess workload throughout the project
Council changes direction following election	M	H	Effective change control
Insufficient skill / professional input	L	H	Assessment of professional input required to be considered early in project
Loss of key personnel	L	M	Suitable records kept to enable new personnel to step into the project

Management Systems

The Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations set out a series of stipulations pertaining to the running of the project. Other adopted policies of the council will also apply to the project.

All project documents will feature document control to ensure that the latest version is being used by all members of the project team and external professionals.

The project will be managed by the Council Offices Sub-Committee which has a terms of reference approved by its parent committee.

Suitable access control will be in operation for documents, ensuring that they are suitably restricted whilst ensuring that documents are available to key personnel.

The following change control procedures will be in place. Change control is not intended to stop changes (a change freeze) but is intended to ensure that the effect on the project of any changes are understood before a change is instigated. Any decision which will change an element of the project which has been signed off by the sub-committee or which may materially affect the project budget or timescales must be sanctioned by the Change Control Board (the sub-committee)

Cllr Forbes will oversee the project management of the project.