

# REPORT TO COUNCIL OFFICES SUB-COMMITTEE

## PHASED REFURBISHMENT



**Report Reference** COSC-23-01  
**Meeting Date** 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
**Agenda Item** 7  
**Prepared by** Town Clerk

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### 1.0 BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 HISTORY

A business case for the freehold transfer of the Council Offices and Library Gardens from Cheshire East Council to the Town Council was approved by this council in 2016. In 2018 the council commenced planning work on a renovation project. A project definition report was agreed in 2018; a user needs assessment along with member and officer workshops were undertaken to inform a brief for architects. In late 2018 Hayes and Partners were appointed as architects and draft plans for reconfiguration and extension to the Council Offices were prepared. In January 2019 the project was paused, and in November 2020 it was resolved to:

*approve recommencement of the work on the renovation of the council offices noting that the first stage would be a step 'backwards' to refresh the business case and determine whether a project to undertake improvements to the building is viable and that this stage would involve information gathering starting with a new structural survey of the building to identify all works required to bring the existing building to a 'modern office standard'.*

A new structural survey was undertaken in December 2020. The sub-committee previously agreed that the existing architect should be retained and that work to cost up the draft plans should not be undertaken without ensuring the specification is correct. In 2021 a member briefing was held to update/inform members of the current status of the project and brief them on the draft plans. Following this briefing the sub-committee agreed that the project should not resume, and no preparatory work should be undertaken, until the transfer took place. The transfer took place in April 2022. In June 2022 the sub-committee commissioned Hayes and Partners to amend the draft plans, and subsequently have these costed by a quantity surveyor. These were then considered by the sub-committee in April 2023.

#### 1.2 WORKS VALUATION

KOK Surveyors were commissioned to develop an indicative cost estimate for the works (see appendix A). The total estimate, inclusive of contingency and professional fees, is £1,447,181. This valuation is based on the latest drawings, includes an allowance for inflation to 2023Q4 and assumes single stage competitive tender. The estimate is to an accuracy of +/- 10% (range £1,302,463 to £1,591,899). It excludes replacement glazing and windows and provision of air conditioning. It assumes existing services are sufficient for alterations. The total costings include preliminaries of £146k, contingency (10%) and inflation of 156k and professional fees (15%) of £191k.

The sub-committee noted that due to inflation and the increase in borrowing costs, the project was

unaffordable. Borrowing £1.5m over a 50-year period would cost c. £90k per year at 5.64%, compared to just £48.6k per year at 2.1% in 2021. The plans for the building would provide four commercial lettings raising approximately £23k per year income (the four first floor offices). There is limited opportunity for securing major grant funding to cover the costs of the project.

### 1.3 CURRENT POSITION

The sub-committee considered this information at its meeting in April 2023, where it was resolved that:

*The sub-committee believes a phased approach to improving the building should be undertaken, considering carefully what needs to be done and what could be done to maximise its use and accessibility whilst remembering the building is Grade II listed.*

## 2.0 DEVELOPING A PHASED PROJECT

### 2.1 PRIORITIES AND SCOPE

The last forward maintenance schedule for the building was prepared by Fisher German in 2020 and identified approximately £120,000 of works to be undertaken over the next 10 years, excluding redecoration/desirable improvements (see appended schedule). To date, the council has only undertaken responsive maintenance and only allocated a small budget for building repairs. Consideration will need to be given to programming works to address the issues identified.

The sub-committee should determine priorities for works and improvement to the building and what is essential vs desirable. The following questions are put for consideration:

Question	Points to consider
Should the goal be a hybrid use building comprising council offices and chamber, community space and commercially let offices?	To date this has been the model, with a balance of providing community space and generating income from lettable offices.
Should the upper chamber be reinstated as the council's primary meeting space?	To date this has been a key aspect of the project as the current meeting space is cramped when all members are in attendance and with limited space for public. This will require the installation of a lift, upstairs accessible toilet and reconfiguration of the council's offices.
If restoring the chamber to meeting use, should the old tables and chairs be used?	The chamber is the largest room in the building, but its flexibility is significantly reduced by the old tables/chairs. Retention of the dais and top table, but replacing the curved tables with more flexible tables would enable the room to be used for a greater range of uses and therefore increase its income potential.
How much of the building must be wheelchair accessible?	The sub-committee should consider if it is acceptable to have areas which are not fully accessible e.g. commercially let offices.
What degree of improvement to the energy efficiency of the building is desired?	It is noted that due to its age the building is not very energy efficient. A decarbonisation assessment will be undertaken within the next few months (see note below).
What priority is placed on	The extension provides significant scope for improved

extending the building and circulation and room layouts and maximises available space, incorporating the Talking it also enables provision of a downstairs toilet and larger Newspaper area into the main kitchen. building.

## **2.2 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS**

Cheshire East Council has advised it has received funding under the Low Carbon Skills fund to undertake decarbonisation building assessments for Town Council buildings (offices/town halls). The commencement of this has been delayed but consultants have recently been appointed and the end product will be an assessment of what measures could be implemented (and indicative costs) to improve the energy efficiency of the building and reduce its carbon footprint. The report would provide opportunity to then seek funds from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to undertake recommended works. The report should be delivered by the end of the calendar year, though it will likely be too late to apply for funds in the phase 3c of the PSDS which opens in October and will likely close in November for 2024/25 funding.

The Town Clerk and Planning and Facilities Officer have reviewed the current draft plans, appraising the council's office accommodation requirements. It is noted that since the plans were originally developed in 2018, the council's headcount has increased. It is considered that if the chamber is restored to use as a chamber, the council's offices would likely need to occupy the present Moor Room, Lower Chamber, Heath Room and Committee Room, leaving two rooms downstairs for community use alongside the chamber and, potentially dependent on need, the existing Town Clerk's office. This would leave three rooms to be let (subject to conversion of existing ladies toilets to an office).

An expression of interest was submitted to the government's Community Ownership Fund. The EOI resulted in the council being invited to submit an application. An application was prioritised for the Market Hall, but there may be opportunity to apply to the fund for a grant towards works. This will require an updated business case and stronger evidence of the community need. The aforementioned decarbonisation report will also support this. An application for a lower value is more likely to be supported than a high-value application.

## **2.3 MOVING FORWARD**

The desired output of this meeting is to determine the priorities for a phased project and identify potential phases. This will help identify what further work is needed to develop a business case for a first phase for Full Council approval and the identification of funding.

## **3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED**

The sub-committee should consider priorities for improvement and works to the building and potential phasing of building works.

## APPENDIX A: COST BREAKDOWN OF CURRENT PLANS

### GROUND/FIRST FLOOR

Item	Cost
Strip out all existing floor finishes	4,750
Floor repairs to level floors	10,000
Strip out all FF&E	5,000
Strip off existing woodchip paper to walls	10,000
Allowance for localised damproofing / repairs	15,000
Strip out existing WC's kitchen and the like	5,000
Block up and insulate existing window	1,300
Block up existing door and insulate	750
Existing door head raised and step provided	1,200
Demolish rear ramp and provide new	7,500
Enclosed shaft to rooflight	1,000
Widen existing doorway to first floor	3,000
Reposition existing door opening to first floor	1,900
Remove secondary glazing screen to ceiling	500
Take down door and frame and make good to first floor landing	300
Widen existing doorway to ground floor	12,000
Raise level of floor to Council office 2	225
Existing door fixed closed	100
Modify door for automatic opening to Reception	5,000
Block up opening to ground floor	750
Alterations to existing window to form door opening	2,000
Demolish internal walls to suit new layout	3,040
Form opening in first floor and second floor ceiling for lift	5,000
	<b>95,315</b>

### FRAME

Item	Cost
Allowance for minor structural repairs	10,000
	10,000

### ROOF

Item	Cost
Allow for repairs to existing roof to lightwells, internal gutters and the like	10,000
Allow for new loft insulation to roof voids	4,470
Allow for sundry repairs to flashings and the like	7,500

Allow for sundry slate replacement	5,000
Upgrade roof to outbuilding	9,000
	<b>35,970</b>

#### STAIRS

Item	Cost
Allow for refurbishment of staircase balustrading	5,000
	<b>5,000</b>

#### EXTERNAL WALLS

Item	Cost
Allow for sundry repairs , repointing and the like	10,000
Walls to outbuilding to be insulated	1,815
	<b>11,815</b>

#### WINDOWS AND DOORS

Item	Cost
Refurbish existing windows	21,750
Secondary glazing	11,600
New window to outbuilding	3,200
New automatic door to rear	15,000
New Window to ground floor	4,800
New external door to side elevation	1,800
Refurbish existing internal doors	4,950
New internal doors to match existing	37,500
Allow for fire rating existing internal doors as necessary	350
	<b>100,950</b>

NB: Uncertainty as to whether existing windows could support weight of double glazing.  
Replacement of windows estimated at £90k inc scaffolding.

#### INTERNAL WALLS AND PARTITIONS

Item	Cost
Allow for plaster repairs and the like	20,000
Allow for repairs to cornices, dado's and the like	20,000
New internal partitions ground floor	8,960
New internal partitions first floor	7,840
New sliding folding partition	15,000

Decoration generally ground floor	12,880
Decoration generally first floor	8,160
Decoration to doors etc	2,376
Insulation to outbuilding floor	1,500
	<b>96,716</b>

NB: Does not include insulation to main building. Internal insulation estimated at £55k inc new skirting. Note this would reduce room widths.

#### **FLOOR FINISHES**

Item	Cost
New contract carpet throughout	15,800
Higher grade carpet to Council Chamber First Floor	4,800
Vinyl floor to WC's and the like	2,200
Insulation to outbuilding floor	1,500
	<b>24,300</b>

#### **CEILING FINISHES**

Item	Cost
Decoration to existing ceilings	7,425
Allowance for repairs to existing ceilings	7,500
	<b>14,925</b>

#### **FITTINGS**

Item	Cost
Notice boards and the like	5,000
Toilet cubicles	9,000
Main Kitchen domestic standard	15,000
Benching to Sound Room	5,000
Extra insulation to Recording Studio	15,000
Kitchen to Staff Room - domestic standard	10,000
Kitchenette to First Floor	5,000
WC's	1,000
Washbasins	900
Doc M packs	5,000
Shower Room / WC	5,000
	<b>75,900</b>

**OTHER**

Item	Cost
Allowance for alterations to soil and vent pipework	5,000
Allowance for space heating and air treatment	173,250
Allowance for electrical and gas installations	173,250
Internal Lift	30,000
External Lift	15,000
General Builders Work Allowance	10,000
Allowance for new drainage connections	7,500
New Extension building	75,000
	<b>489,000</b>