



REPORT TITLE: Accessibility Improvements to the Council Chamber

Cabinet Date	22 December 2021
Cabinet Member	Cllr Lynden Stowe, Finance and Change
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To seek approval for the refurbishment of the Council Chamber, Shire Hall, to improve accessibility and energy efficiency.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agrees to upgrade and refurbish the Council Chamber in Shire Hall in order to improve accessibility, to bring it into line with fire and other buildings related legislation and make it more energy efficient.2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Asset Management and Property Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Change:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. to conduct a competitive procurement process under the council's Major Partnering Framework in respect of a call-off contract for the supply of various new build and refurbishment works and services in relation to the Council Chamber.b. to award such call-off contract to the preferred tenderer.

<p>Reasons for recommendations</p>	<p>The Council Chamber has remained largely unchanged since its last major refurbishment in the 1960s, hence it is no longer fit for purpose. Not only is it tired and dated but much of the equipment used is obsolete and irreparable; access for people who have a disability is inadequate; and there is a general lack of comfort for all users of the space. A small number of options have been considered as the work is largely essential to deliver the accessibility required of a modern council chamber. The recommendations contained in this report ensure that works will be carried out in a timely manner, to ensure the chamber meets all statutory requirements, whilst also providing an opportunity to refurbish the chamber while such works are being carried out, thereby providing a cost-efficient means of addressing both objectives.</p>
<p>Resource Implications</p>	<p>The estimated value of this project is £987,192; works will be procured through the Council's Major Framework.</p> <p>Funding for the project is utilising existing capital programme budgets (see Finance Section below).</p> <p>The project will be managed by the Asset Management & Property Services (AMPS) team.</p>
<p>Background Documents</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Statutory Authority</p>	
<p>Divisional Councillor(s)</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Officer</p>	<p>Name: Rob Barnes, Head of Property Delivery, AMPS Tel. no: 01452 328804 Email: rob.barnes@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p>
<p>Timeline</p>	<p>Framework allocation in January 2022, works to start February, completion in May/June 2022.</p>

Background

1. The existing Council Chamber has the original seating, lighting, ventilation and heating from when it was last renovated in the 1960' s. As a result, it requires modernisation for a range of reasons, including
 - Access for people with disabilities, particularly wheelchair users is extremely poor, ins such that there are several points in the chamber which are inaccessible by wheelchair / disabled users. It would currently not compliant with the equalities act, if reassessed.
 - The current seating layout makes fire evacuation difficult to manage.
 - The poor ergonomics of the seating and desks are uncomfortable due to their age and the lack of adjustment.
 - The fixed seating is in poor condition.
 - Visitors' seating is limited to the periphery of the chamber and there is a lack of flexibility with fixed seating and terracing.
 - There is poor lighting, ventilation and heating.
 - There is a lack of modern technology, infrastructure, and cabling.
 - There is asbestos present throughout the chamber, which makes repairs, maintenance, and replacement of bespoke fittings difficult.
 - There are asbestos materials within the concrete slab and heating pipe work. Whilst this is perfectly safe whilst undisturbed, works on the heating systems and modifications to the concrete slab (floor) will require this asbestos to be removed by a licensed asbestos contractor.
 - Improvements are required to the lighting and heating to improve efficiency and control
2. Shire Hall has undergone a major refurbishment programme over recent years, part of which was to make sure we meet our statutory requirements under the Equalities Act. The chamber forms part of this on-going refurbishment programme. The current works within the chamber has seen the external windows replaced with new thermal efficient and solar refection specification. Also, the window frames are made from 100% recycled aluminium.
3. As part of the project, we have investigated and have had conservational consent for the works from an independent expert. Who has confirmed that the chamber does not have any significant historical value. However, the front three chairs, the

embroidered chair and the desking with the embossed opening date will be retained within the new scheme.

Options

4. The following options have been explored with a design architect:

Option 1 – £1,409,770

Includes all works listed:

- new electrical installation to provide power points to all seats
- upgrading of light fittings to LED
- improved natural ventilation,
- heating improved
- entrance wall (rear) corner concrete steps and asbestos removed
- floor made good
- entrance wall (rear) low level timber panelling removed and replaced with plasterboard
- new glazed entrance with existing acoustic panelling to remain above
- main front wall with timber & acoustic panelling to remain as existing
- existing desks & benches refurbished with new seating pads & arm rests
- new carpets
- new electrically operated blinds
- new lift lobby within Chamber
- Chairman's room reconfigured & refurbished
- existing platform lift outside chamber removed & replaced with new glazed platform lift
- 28 new stackable chairs to rear & sides.
- existing redundant mechanical plant & asbestos in ceiling void removed,
- new mechanical ventilation system installed in ceiling void & plant room,
- chamber mechanically & naturally ventilated,
- existing plant room modified & ceiling walkways added,
- existing ceiling removed & replaced with new acoustic ceiling incorporating Barrisol light feature, (barrisol is a canvased lighting feature)
- front, rear & lift lobby wall finishes upgraded to acoustic timber panelling.

Option 2 – £987,192

Option 2 is the recommended option which maximises flexibility whilst retaining the character of the council chamber; addressing essential improvement works; improves

accessibility significantly; improves energy efficiency and minimises additional costs, including:

- New electrical installation, light fitting replaced with new LED fitting,
- natural ventilation - increase to number of openable windows,
- heating improved,
- entrance wall (rear) corner concrete steps and asbestos removed,
- floor made good,
- entrance wall (rear) low level timber panelling removed and replaced with acoustic timber cladding
- glazed entrance with new acoustic timber cladding above
- main front wall timber panelling removed and replaced with acoustic timber cladding,
- new lift lobby within chamber,
- Chairman' s room reconfigured & refurbished,
- existing platform lift outside chamber removed & replaced with new glazed platform lift,
- concrete & asbestos to front corner platforms removed with new floor,
- tiering & glass balustrade design to improve efficiency/versatility of space,
- front desk/benches & seating removed,
- stairs & walls behind central chairman' s chairs removed to further increase space for efficiency/versatility,
- new floor tiers to accommodate new furniture layout & improve efficiency/versatility of space,
- new carpets,
- 28 new stackable chairs to rear & sides
- 18 new stackable seats to either side of central chairman' s chairs
- existing curved desk/benches & seating replaced with new.

Option 2 has been selected as it meets all our statutory needs and accessibility requirements, however we do not need to spend additional monies for barrisol lighting or air handling as we can meet all of this with natural ventilation not increasing energy consumption.

Visuals of the front wall view, back wall view and axonometric view of the proposed works are shown in appendix 1.

Risks

5. There is a risk of failure of any one of a number of components given existing bespoke fittings being worn out, poor lighting, poor ventilation, and poor heating and heating controls.

By replacing existing components with off the shelf standard items, this will remove the risk of them failing due to their age.

The lack of accessibility and general disabled access means that the space is at risk of no longer meeting all statutory requirements

6. There is a risk that cost exceeds budget due to materials availability and escalating material costs. Early engagement with principal contractor and the supply chain will mitigate the risk and make sure the project is kept within budget.
7. A risk that the project overruns causing disruption and cost of continuing to hold meetings remotely. Early engagement with the supply chain and working with the principal contractor will reduce the risk and keep the project in line with the programme.

Financial implications

8. The budget is estimated at £987,192 of which £500k is forecast to be spent in financial year 2021/22 and £487,192 in 2022/23.
9. In order to fund the scheme, it is proposed that £987,192 is set aside for the refurbishment of the chamber from within the existing area-based review budget in Asset Management & Property Services (AMPS) capital budgets. The scheme is to be profiled £500k 2021/22 and £487,192k in 2022/23. The area-based review will not be needed as plans are being revised after the impact of Covid 19 and return to the office

Climate change implications

10. Introduction of new light, heating and ventilation will help with energy reduction as well the installation of PV panels will help reduce energy consumption.
Early appointment of contractor will illuminate the risk of engage with supply with chain this will mitigate materials delays.

Option 2 makes use of natural ventilation through cross flow. Will present minimum energy consumption as it makes best use of natural conditions and thus lower carbon emissions. The extract fans electrical duty will be offset by the PV. LED lighting will also reduce CO2 impact. Heating will make use of the existing CT heating loop with new radiant panels for maximum efficiency, zoning introduced to best control heat delivery to the space.

We endeavour to find alternative use for old seating and look into recycling all materials in line with the Waste Regulations 2011.

Equality implications

11. Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes
12. Contractors/suppliers will be required to demonstrate they comply with the Equalities Act 2010.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

13. A DPIA is not required for this decision

Social value implications

14. As part of the Major Partnering Framework, contractors are required to supply their social value policy (Jobs, growth, social, environment), as part of the tendering process.

Consultation feedback

15. Consultation has taken place with Group Leaders.

Officer recommendations

16. The recommended option is 2, £987,192 for the proposed refurbishment, the option fully complies with the Equality Act 2010 and fire regulations. We have a duty of care to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and will provide a new lift lobby, movable seating and an improved fire evacuation procedure.

17. This option will achieve statutory compliance and legislative requirements whilst taking advantage of updating the chamber whilst other works commence, providing cost efficiency to meet the basic needs as well as an overall refurbishment.

Performance management/follow-up

18. As part of the major framework, performance is monitored throughout monthly progress meetings.