

Decision maker:	Cabinet member contracts and assets
Decision date:	Friday 15 December 2017
Title of report:	Town Hall terracotta and stone work repair, including canopy and building facade
Report by:	Operational buildings services manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

Central;

Purpose and summary

To approve a request to go out to develop the scheme and tender for the works to repair the Town Hall front facade and the front porch.

The works identified are required to keep the building operating effectively and protect the longer term future of the building both in terms of fabric/structure and also the future options to move the property out of Herefordshire Council portfolio or reuse.

There might be a loss of revenue to the registrars due to people deciding to have wedding ceremonies elsewhere because of the current back drop of scaffolding.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) remedial works to the porch area of the Town Hall Hereford be undertaken at a cost of not more than £260k; and**
- (b) the chief finance officer be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary**

to implement the above recommendations including award of a contract to undertake the works within the approved budget..

Alternative options

1. To do nothing: This has been discounted as the existing porch entrance is unsafe without the continued support of the scaffolding installed to protect the public, who use the building, Herefordshire Council continues to receive complaints from members of the public about the poor state of repair and the effect it is having on the building users services, such as Hereford City Council and the coroner.

Key considerations

2. The works to the front elevation of the Town Hall were identified and incorporated in the capital bids for the year 2017/18 as the front porch has settled by approximately 50mm and has had to be supported by scaffold to keep the front entrance open and safe. The scaffold and boarding is disfiguring the building (causing complaints from members of the public).
3. The property is a grade II listed building in a prominent position in the city of Hereford. It is also the venue for registration services such as marriages and citizenship ceremonies. Temporary scaffolding, which is being rented, has been supporting the porch since December 2015, giving an ongoing cost and an unsightly appearance whilst investigatory works were undertaken.
4. A report commissioned from CLD, a specialist stone repair company, identified the extent of the works that were visibly damaged. Another report is being carried out by Integral using a specialist conservation structural engineer looking at the non-visible areas of the structural support, the first on-site inspection has identified that the area of structural damage is localised to the porch and the remainder of the structure is sound, with some small localised cosmetic block repairs. A further intrusive inspection has been undertaken to identify the method the porch is supported from the main building structure. This further work will be completed and a specification developed from that work. The works are programmed to start on site March 2018 with a completion date eight weeks later, the planning consents have been obtained for these works already with the conservation officer.

Community impact

5. The proposals are consistent with the council's corporate plan priorities of 'supporting the growth of our economy' and 'securing better services, quality of life and value for money'.

In particular, the following objectives are being pursued:

- Supporting the improvement in quality of our natural and built environment;
- Ensuring our essential assets, including schools, other buildings, roads and ICT are in the right condition for the long term and cost effective delivery of services;
- Work in partnership to make better use of resources, including sharing premise costs through co-location of services and local solutions for community used facilities such as libraries.

6. The proposals are aligned to the corporate property strategy 2016-2020 and in particular the maintenance strategy.
7. The property is valuable in the following ways for the community:
 - Housing Hereford City Council
 - Housing the coroner's office
 - Weddings, civil ceremonies and citizenship ceremonies

Equality duty

8. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
9. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

Resource implications

10. A sum of £421k for stonework repairs at the town hall was approved by full council as part of the capital programme in December 2016, the costs of the repairs will not exceed the budget.

Legal implications

11. As the owner of the building the council has a duty to maintain the property in a condition so it is fit for purpose and safe to be used by both council staff and members of the public, given the buildings current useage. The council also has contractual obligations with its various tenants and licensees, including the Coroner, the Registrar, and Hereford City Council to maintain the property in good repair and condition.
12. As the local planning authority it has a statutory duty to enforce the protection of listed buildings and therefore as the owner it should set an example in this area. Listing building consent has been sought to undertake this work and has been granted.
13. Given the value of the remedial works the procurement and award must be carried out in accordance with the councils contract procure rules.

Risk management

14. The risk to the council if the works proceed is that the scope of the repairs is extended, this is managed through having a conservation structural engineer appraise the scope of the works and the works required, including opening up a small area.
15. If it is decided not to carry out these works, the supporting scaffolding will need to be left in place. The visual impact on a key municipal building will not only affect users of the building but also the reputation of the council as landlord. In addition the porch may deteriorate further thus closing off the front entrance to the property or potential injury to staff and members of the public, and a higher remedial cost in the longer term. The property is a listed building and there would be additional reputational damage to the council for failing to manage a listed building.

Consultees

16. Hereford City Council's clerk; the ward councillor, and the coroner were consulted and were supportive of the proposals

Appendices

17. Appendix 1 – The CLD Stone Ltd report

Background papers

None identified.