

**Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny
Committee**

28 February 2012

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & IT

Report on the Future Use & Options for the Guildhall

Summary

1. This report provides Members with an update on the current plans for the future use of the Guildhall in light of recent changes to the Administrative Accommodation Strategy, and asks Members to consider whether or not they wish to proceed with their proposed scrutiny review of this topic.

Background to Review

2. At a scrutiny work planning event held in July 2011, Members of this committee discussed a range of possible topics for scrutiny review this municipal year. The issue of the future use and options for the Guildhall was raised as a matter of concern in relation to the ongoing work for space planning for the move to the new Council headquarters at West Offices. As a result it was agreed to proceed with this review.

Consultation

3. No consultation has taken place as part of preparing this report. However, this report is based on a recent Cabinet report (referred to in paragraph 9 below) which considered the options for the Guildhall, and was written in consultation with Council Management Team.

Options

4. Having considered the information provided in this report and provided at the meeting, Members may choose whether or not to proceed with a review.
5. If a decision is taken not proceed, Members may wish to:
 - a) receive further updates of the ongoing work being undertaken by officers in relation to the future use of the Guildhall, and/or;

- b) be consulted on any future recommendations to be made to the Cabinet in this regard, so that the Committee's views can be taken into consideration when the Cabinet meet.

Current Plans for the Guildhall

6. In December 2005, the Administrative Accommodation Strategy envisaged that the Guildhall would continue to be the centre of democratic activity. The council chamber would continue to be used and the new building design would not include provision of a new chamber. It was also expected that other formal member meetings (Cabinet Member Decision Sessions, Advisory Panels, Scrutiny and Planning) would continue to take place within the existing committee rooms within the Guildhall complex. Political group rooms would also remain on the Guildhall complex. At that time it was considered that Democratic Services might have to remain at the Guildhall to support these functions. The issue of staff moving to and from the new central office to and from the Guildhall was however acknowledged as a disadvantage.
7. However, the ongoing development of the new Council Headquarters at West Offices means that this building will now offer a range and quantity of secure and accessible meeting rooms able to be used in a flexible way, to a high standard, that would readily support a major part of those political meeting needs outlined above. It is also now clear that the introduction of new ways of working could provide the space required to house all of the democracy staff and political group rooms. This development away from the original thinking for the Guildhall would provide significant benefits of close working between members and officers, and additionally with the public through the customer contact centre.
8. The outcome of the initial space planning work for West Offices has indicated that the new HQ together with the Eco Depot would provide sufficient administrative accommodation to meet the needs of the Council and potentially a number of partners.
9. Recent Decisions Affecting the Future Use of the Guildhall
In January 2012 following the completion of space planning work for locating staff in West Offices, the Cabinet received a report reviewing the future of the Guildhall complex and St Anthony's House.
10. As part of that report, the Council Management Team recommended limiting the utilisation of the Guildhall by the Council as much as possible

and reviewing the approved administrative accommodation strategy in order that member and democratic activity was based at West Offices, thereby making the most effective use of available space whilst offering the best opportunity for member engagement with Council staff and customers.

11. In doing so, they recommended the Council retained the use of the Council Chamber in the Guildhall for holding Council meetings - the largest meeting room at West Offices has the capacity to hold Council meetings but not in the current format of a debating chamber. It was also acknowledged that the Guildhall should continue to be used for a number of civic and democratic functions defined throughout the year. E.g. Annual Meeting. As part of the space planning work for West Offices it was also proposed to undertake further work with the political parties to determine their space requirements for the new HQ.
12. As that would not require full utilisation of the building, the report suggested discussing with other organisations the future custodianship of the Guildhall in order to ensure its future use and long term viability and maintenance. In doing so, it recognised there was a need to assure the people of York that the council is committed to preserving and conserving its historic buildings.
13. The January 2012 Cabinet report was the subject of a pre-decision call-in so the Cabinet only made in principle decisions on the future of the Guildhall complex and St Anthony's House pending further consideration by the SMC (Calling In) Committee.
14. Cabinet agreed in principle to revise the status of the Guildhall and St Anthony's House in line with the recommendations in the report, and instructed that further work be progressed to develop future use and development options in relation to the Guildhall site in line with the finalised Conservation and Heritage Plan for the site, bearing in mind the requirement for continued use of the Council Chamber and to some extent, the Guildhall itself.
15. They also instructed officers to assess the requirements of the political groups in relation to space and accommodation needs in West Offices, and authorised the Director of City Strategy to commence initial discussions with third parties regarding possible property options to support the long term use, custodianship or ownership, viability and maintenance of both the Guildhall and St Anthony's House.

16. On 30 January 2012 SMC (Calling In) Committee met to consider the provisional decisions taken by the Cabinet and agreed to uphold them.

Issues Affecting Future Use of Guildhall

17. There are many issues that will influence decisions on the future use and development of the Guildhall complex, including:
 - a. The historic and civic nature of the buildings and those constraints imposed by listed status. The preparation of a Heritage and Conservation plan will provide guidance and understanding on the future potential uses of the building. There are exciting possibilities for its re-use, if it is not substantially required by the Council. In addition, there is the opportunity to examine the Guildhall complex as part of a wider regeneration which would impact on enhancing the vitality and viability of the City Centre as well as improving the river frontage.
 - b. The wish to retain a civic presence at the Guildhall. In addition, the Guildhall is part of the offer in association with the use of the Mansion House for weddings, being required on an occasional basis as a catering venue.
 - c. Understanding the potential of the Guildhall complex for future use and development and its place within the City. The Guildhall currently forms a venue for a range of community based activities.
 - d. The financial commitment that the council would need to make to conserve, maintain and improve the complex, in an environment where financial resources are at a premium.
18. The report to Cabinet informed Members that there is a need to spend circa £800k on repairs (not including refurbishment) over the next 3-5 years on the Guildhall complex, and similar amounts every five years beyond. This summary is based upon a full survey undertaken in 2007 and covers outstanding planned maintenance works and works necessary to facilitate DDA and operational improvements (the costs reflect 2010 prices). It is important to determine the degree to which the building should be accessible depends upon its future use. If it, and particularly the Council Chamber, remain as the focus of democracy within which open public meetings occur, investment in modern forms of access will be needed. To implement such work within an historic building will be challenging and expensive. A further £200k of work has been undertaken since the report was written in 2007. There is no

specific budget for any improvement, alterations or refurbishment to the Guildhall. This needs to be considered alongside other priorities for maintenance and repairs.

Update on the Ongoing Work Implemented by the Cabinet in January 2012

19. The Director of City Strategy and Assistant Director will attend the meeting to give a verbal update on work ongoing further to the recent Cabinet decision to develop future use and development options in relation to the Guildhall site in line with the finalised Conservation and Heritage Plan for the site.

Council Plan 2011-15

20. Decisions in regard to the appropriate use of Council owned buildings and its future admin accommodation will contribute to a number of the Council's priorities, particularly regarding jobs and growth and the protection of the environment. It will also contribute to developing the Council as a confident, collaborative organisation, focused on its priorities.

Implications

21. **Financial** - There would be savings arising from the council moving out of the Guildhall. The direct running costs at the Guildhall (National Non-Domestic Rates, energy etc) total approximately £100k. Further work regarding use and custodianship of the building needs to be undertaken to finalise the level of operational savings that could be made from relocating services to the new Headquarters.
22. **Property** - All implications known at this stage are included in this report.
23. There are no known Legal, HR or other implications associated with this report.

Risk Management

24. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation below.

Recommendations

25. Members are asked to consider whether or not they wish to proceed with a scrutiny review on the future use and options for the Guildhall in light of

the ongoing work being undertaken by the Council in response to the recent Cabinet decision .

Reason: To progress the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in line with their workplan

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Wards Affected: Guildhall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annexes:

None