

**Executive Member for Corporate Services
and Advisory Panel**

25th July 2006

Report of the Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

The Guildhall – Future Investment

Summary

1. This report seeks to update Members on recent observations made in respect of facilities at the Guildhall and the possibility of a case for future investment

Background

2. The Guildhall is central to the City Council's accommodation and offers an impressive venue for up to two hundred people.
3. The building is available for hire by internal city council departments as well as external hirers and is used for a diverse range of community activities from awards ceremonies, to concerts and a number of antique fairs.
4. Due to its city centre location and the reasonable rate of hire the Guildhall is a very popular venue and demand for hire far surpasses availability. It is also important to point out to Members that in the conditions of hire the Council holds the right to cancel any event if the Council requires use of the venue for an important City Council event. For example a number of external hires have recently been cancelled due to use of the Guildhall for public inquiries.
5. The Guildhall annual income target for 2006/07 is £16K and if this target has been over achieved in the past then this has been re-invested in the hall to purchase essential items of equipment. New chairs were supplied in 2004/05 and a new laptop and panel partitions purchased in 2005/06. It is anticipated that new trestle tables will be purchased in the current financial year.
6. Without doubt the Guildhall has a number of shortfalls but it also should be recognised that this is a Grade 1 Listed Building and therefore refurbishment may be difficult. Briefly these shortfalls are as follows:
 - Toilet facilities inadequate in that there are only two toilets for this part of the Guildhall and one of these being on the first floor
 - A poor heating system which in winter is totally inadequate for a hall of this size
 - The maximum power that can be supplied from the Guildhall is only 4kw in total

- There is no permanent hearing loop only a temporary loop is available which does not work well with the acoustics of the hall
 - No public address system
 - There are no facilities for catering. The basement area is unsuitable for food preparation as it frequently floods and the hygiene levels are unsatisfactory
7. The Food and Drink Festival used the Guildhall for a number of events in September 2005 and as a result of this the Director of the festival on behalf of First Stop York has written to the Chief Executive making a number of observations regarding the facilities at the hall and putting forward a case for investment. These observations can be found at Annexe A.
 8. The Council is in the process of implementing an administrative accommodation strategy to rationalise it's current property portfolio from 16 buildings down to just 4. The strategy includes the retention of the Guildhall as the historical centre of the authority and in the short to medium term it is envisaged that the majority of member facilities will continue to be located here
 9. As part of the overall strategy the future layout and use of the Guildhall will form part of a study to determine the future accommodation needs of the council. The outcome of the study will inform the overall design brief for the council's future accommodation which will include a new headquarters building at Hungate.
 10. The study is scheduled to be completed at the end of 2006 when the future use of the Guildhall and any associated works will be identified and included as part of the entire accommodation project.

Options

- 11 **Option One** - Members may decide that no future investment in the Guildhall is appropriate
- 12 **Option Two** – Members may ask the Corporate Landlord to consider investment options for the Guildhall in response to this report as part of the administrative accommodation review.

Consultation

- 13 No further consultation has taken place other than with specialist Officers as mentioned later in the report

Analysis

- 14 Future investment at this stage may prove to be inappropriate until the accommodation review is completed

15 A full study of the Guildhall and associated uses will provide a sound way forward for future investment

Corporate Priorities

16 The proposals relate to the following Corporate Priority - Improve the actual and perceived condition and appearance of city's streets, housing estates and publicly accessible spaces

17 **Financial Implications** – Any acceptable proposals for the Guildhall as a result of a future feasibility study would require a bid to be made by the Corporate Landlord through the Capital Resource Allocation Model (CRAM) process.

18 **Human Resources Implications** – there are no human resource implications linked to this report

19 **Equalities** – A full disability access audit of the Guildhall would be desirable to address the major issues:

- Installation of a suitable hearing loop/infra red hearing system
- Improving access for people with mobility impairments to the first floor, toilets and around the hall
- Improving lighting and clarity of signage

20 **Legal** – there are no legal implications linked to this report

21 **Crime and Disorder** – there are no crime and disorder implications linked to the report

22 **Information Technology** – there are no IT implications

23 **Property** – The cost model for the implementation of the administrative accommodation review has included within it a relatively small sum of money to be spent on repair, maintenance and general upgrade of the Guildhall complex to support future use of these buildings as part of the wider accommodation solution. If more significant investment is required in the Guildhall to extend its use and cater for a wider and more demanding audience, this would require a rigorous feasibility study and option appraisal. Any proposal would be constrained by its Grade 1 listing and referral to English heritage. Should an acceptable proposal be found a bid would need to be made by the Corporate Landlord through the Capital Resource Allocation Model (CRAM) process alongside all other demands for limited capital resources.

24 **Risk Management** – In compliance with the Councils risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendation

25 That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to approve Option Two and ask the Corporate Landlord to consider investment options for the Guildhall in response to the report as part of the administrative accommodation review.

26 **Reason** – To ensure future development is sound and good value

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Yes

Date 7th July 2006

Specialist Implications Officers:

Julian Horsler – Equalities Officer

Neil Hindhaugh – Head of Property Services

Patrick Looker – Finance Manager

Wards Affected: None

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annexe A – York Hospitality Association Observations