

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)**

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Subject:** Civic Offices Sustainability

**Report by:** Natasha Edmunds, Director of Corporate Services  
Tristan Samuels, Director of Regeneration  
James Hill, Director of Building Services

On behalf of Civic Office Member Working Group

**Report author:** Megan Carter, Head of Major Projects  
Meredydd Hughes, Assistant Director of Building Services  
Tom Southall, Assistant Director of Property and Investment

**Wards affected:** Charles Dickens

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**1. Requested by**

1.1. The report has been requested by Full Council following the Notice of Motion entitled "Civic Offices Sustainability", being passed on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**2. Purpose of report**

- 2.1. This report provides a response to Full Council on the work of the Civic Office Member Working Group (COMWG), carried out to date.
- 2.2. The report notes the information made available to the COMWG, including running costs, space used and anticipated future costs to bring the civic office in line with modern standards and compliance with statutory safety measures.
- 2.3. The report sets out some parameters and principles agreed by the COMWG as a means to provide structure to consideration of future options.
- 2.4. The report proposes next steps for consideration to ensure that Council can get into a position to define the service need and therefore answer the Notice of Motion fully.

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### **3. Information Requested**

- 3.1. Full Council debated a notice of motion (NOM) on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022 which was passed and asked the administration to bring a report to the October Full Council meeting that considers the future of the Civic Offices.

The report was to include:

- 3.1.1. Running costs prior to the pandemic and current data for the council as a whole in addition to a breakdown per Department, including working from home overheads;
  - 3.1.2. Costed proposals for alternative working solutions for the Civic Offices functions, including travel expenses and parking;
  - 3.1.3. Possible alternative income generation utilisation of the asset;
  - 3.1.4. Valuable financial analysis of the current market value of the civic offices;
  - 3.1.5. Preliminary findings from the working from home working group, including all meeting dates and agenda items since it commenced
  - 3.1.6. Leaving the Civic Offices which are too large for the City Council and have high energy use, for the site to be redeveloped and the re-provision of council offices on a much smaller site in the city centre.
- 3.2. The notice of motion notes that the Civic Offices are not functioning effectively and there has been a need for businesses, including local authorities, to develop new ways of working in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.3. A Civic Office Members Working Group (COMWG) was formed, chaired by Cllr Chris Attwell, and with the following representation: Cllr Lee Mason (Conservative), Cllr Lewis Gosling (Conservative), Cllr Judith Smyth (Labour), Cllr George Madgwick (Portsmouth Independents). The Member working group has been supported by officers representing Corporate Services, Building Services and Regeneration (Property & Investment) with attendees including Natasha Edmunds, James Hill and Tristan Samuels. The group has met four times between July and September. All meetings have had a summary of discussions and actions noted and minutes shared both with the COMWG and with all group leaders.
- 3.4. It is clear from these first meetings that the questions posed by the NOM (3.1.1. to 3.1.6.) cannot all be answered until there is clear agreement on the role of the civic office, the services it provides, the community it serves and how the staff needed to

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provide these services will work in the future. Members require the civic space to be within walking distance of the Guildhall and council chambers.

### **4. Civic Office Member Working Group Progress Update**

- 4.1 The COMWG have considered background reports on the Civic office; in the meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> July the group received a presentation highlighting the findings of a detailed building condition survey. The condition survey was undertaken by Faithful & Gould during November/December 2020 and was commissioned to enable better strategic planning for the long-term maintenance of the building. A summary of the survey report that was presented to the COMWG is attached at Appendix A. The full report runs into approx..400 pages and is available on request, contact [Meredydd.Hughes@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:Meredydd.Hughes@portsmouthcc.gov.uk).
- 4.2 The COMWG have considered the pre-pandemic accommodation review undertaken by Baker Stuart in January/February 2020. The accommodation review highlighted the civic office space was underutilised and that there were poor environmental conditions present within the office.
- 4.3 Following the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council has implemented a range of changes to working practices including hybrid working for employees aimed at creating a covid safe work environment and in line with the recommendations from the accommodation review. The space remains underutilised and this presents the opportunity to explore new uses for the building, which could be more or differently utilised and provide an extensive offer for the city centre.
- 4.4 In light of the building condition survey, the findings of the accommodation review and the changes to working practice arising from the pandemic it has been acknowledged that opportunities need to be explored for the future of the civic offices/civic space.
- 4.5 The COMWG have identified that the civic building itself provides a broad range of functions including:
- Front facing customer services, for example Housing Needs and Advice Service, Cashiers service
  - Main office location for Children's Social Care/Adult Social Care
  - Range of co-located services, for example Police and community based NHS services
  - Range of corporate services, for example Finance, Information Technology
  - Executive and Political Group rooms
  - CCTV and Traffic Management Centre Hub
  - Commercial letting arrangements (Mountbatten Wing)

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- 4.6 Local planning considerations were also discussed and the group were advised of the National Planning Policy (in the National Planning Policy Framework) which states that councils should work to 'promote the long-term vitality and viability' of city centres by 'allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses'.
- 4.7 In respect of community facilities councils are required to 'plan positively for the provision and use of community facilities' and must 'guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs.
- 4.8 In light of the broad range of functions and policy requirements set out above the COMWG have recognised the need to create a clear set of parameters and principles to provide structure to help inform the options appraisal work that will be necessary as a next step.
- 4.9 A set of parameters have been identified at a high/thematic level. Council are asked to note these parameter and the further work needed to develop these into meaningful definitions:
- The space required - dependent on the service delivery model adopted and community offer
  - Policy compliance - various policies against which compliance is required
  - Value for money
  - The services provided for customers both external and internal
  - Guildhall proximity
- 4.10 There is also a set of principles which the COMWG agreed that can be grouped under the themes of:
- Local economy
  - Accessibility
  - Public Health
  - Environment
  - Policy

The specific principles and aims are set out in table A below:

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**Civic Office – 5 pillars of criteria**

In the Civic Office Member Working Group on 28/07/22, a set of criteria and aims was agreed (the list of aims is not exhaustive) as a means of evaluating options as follows:

Policy	Local economy	Accessibility	Public Health	Environmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent with the aims of the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan</li> <li>The cost of change must deliver a return on investment no longer than 20 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create footfall in the City Centre supporting local economy, employment and businesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be accessible to most (residents, customers, visitors, staff)</li> <li>The civic office must be within walking distance of the Guildhall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance and contribute to improving services to residents, visitors and communities</li> <li>Contribute to improving outcomes for residents</li> <li>Create a healthy and safe workplace for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly reduced carbon emissions</li> <li>Able to deliver climate targets for building management and maintenance</li> <li>Facilitate green transport methods for staff and service delivery, including the increase in the number of EV charging points</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aims</b></p>	<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The civic office should create and provide community spaces for community use and benefit</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should be accessible to all</li> <li>The Guildhall Council Chamber will remain the venue for official council decision making</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aims</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The civic centre should be welcoming to the public</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aims</b></p>

**5. Options**

5.1 The background material and discussion on the function of the civic building have helped the COMWG to identify high level options to be considered.

3 options have been identified which are outlined in further detail in Appendix B:

- Option 1 - Maintain/refurbish the existing civic offices
- Option 2 - Repurpose the existing civic offices
- Option 3 - Relocation of the civic offices (including on the same site)

5.2 In order to progress further and develop the options additional information and data is needing to be gathered for example the actual square footage of space required for service delivery, the different policies against which compliance is needed, financial impact etc.

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5.3 The COMWG is also in the process of gathering examples of other public sector organisations that have undertaken similar projects. Much can be learned from the experience of others both what has worked well and what has not worked so well. Greater efficiencies can be achieved by learning from others' experience.

**6. Next Steps**

6.1 The COMWG request Full Council commit to supporting the continuation of the working group to progress work as outlined in 5.2 above and supported by relevant officers as appropriate.

6.2 Full Council are requested to note that although there is a working group in place the group will review its membership, in consultation with Group Leaders, to ensure political proportionality. A level of project management governance will also be introduced to ensure good practice principles are followed and ensure appropriate decision making in line with the council's constitution for example, gateway review points leading to updates to Cabinet and Full Council.

6.3 The COMWG will bring back to Cabinet (and Full Council) a final report with the high level options appraisal, financial appraisal and recommendations by no later than March 2023.

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Signed by:

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A** Civic Office Condition Survey Summary document

**Appendix B** Civic Office Relocation Presentation

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Draft Minutes and Agenda Full Council Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> July 2022, Portsmouth City	<a href="#">Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022, 2.10 pm Portsmouth City Council</a>

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Council (Agenda Item 12i - Notice of Motion)	
Amendment C (carried) to Notice of Motion 12i	<a href="http://portsmouth.gov.uk">Amendment to Notice of Motion C (portsmouth.gov.uk)</a>