
Subject:	ESSENTIAL REPAIRS AT DOVER TOWN HALL
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 3 October 2016
Report of:	Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Public Protection
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To support the preparation of the HLF bid for Maison Dieu, Dover (Dover Town Hall); and carry out essential repairs to avoid further deterioration of the building fabric.

- Recommendation:**
- To approve a further £30,000 from the Special Revenue Reserve to support the preparation of the HLF bid for Maison Dieu, Dover (Dover Town Hall);
 - To approve £150,000 from the current provision within the Capital Programme to carry out essential repairs to avoid further deterioration of the building fabric.
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1. Summary

- 1.1 Dover Town Hall is a substantial DDC-owned asset which is not currently being used to its full potential and the condition of the building is progressively deteriorating. As a consequence Cabinet agreed in November 2015 to allocate funds to support the development of a bid for funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- 1.2 This report seeks agreement to draw down further funds from the Special Revenue Reserve to support the preparation of the HLF bid for Maison Dieu, Dover (Dover Town Hall); and also to undertake essential repairs to avoid further deterioration of the building fabric financed from the £150,000 provision within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, Dover Maison Dieu (Dover Town Hall) is situated within the Dover Town Centre Conservation Area and is a Grade II Listed Building and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It has a long history dating back to 1203, originating as a mediaeval hospital (Maison Dieu). The building is an extensive and complex property that has been extended several times throughout its life encompassing many architectural periods.
- 2.2 Following Cabinet agreement in July 2014, consultants Ingham Pinnock Associates were commissioned to prepare a sustainable business plan for the future refurbishment and redevelopment of Dover Town Hall.
- 2.3 On completion of this work, a detailed report was presented to Cabinet at the meeting held on 3 November 2015 and Cabinet agreed to allocate funds from the Regeneration Reserve within the Earmarked General Reserves to enable the project

to move forward to the next stage and to support the development of a bid for grant support to HLF.

- 2.4 The report to the November meeting of Cabinet also noted that, to support the development of the project, a detailed condition survey needs to be undertaken together with a complete dimension survey of the interior and exterior of the building. The cost of this work was estimated at £39k and a grant application for this work had been made to the Coastal Revival Fund, with the results of that application awaited.
- 2.5 It was also recognised that the condition survey was likely to highlight the need for urgent repairs to certain parts of the fabric and recommended that funds be set aside in the Capital Programme for 2016/17 to enable urgent repair works identified during the study to be undertaken.

3. **Survey Work**

- 3.1 The Council was successful in its application for funding to the Coastal Revival Fund and the Downland Partnership and Purcell were appointed to undertake the dimension survey and condition survey respectively. The cost of the work was slightly higher than anticipated and so exceeded the grant received. The condition survey also revealed that areas of the property are suffering from dry rot and specialist advice was sought to determine the severity of this and advise on the action required.
- 3.2 This work was essential to ensure that repair costs are properly identified as part of the preparation of the HLF bid. In this context, we have also commissioned specialist consultants to undertake detailed analysis of the feasibility of restoring part of the original William Burges decorations and appointed Historic England to review the Grade 2 listing of the property.
- 3.3 This additional survey work will ensure that the HLF bid is based on a detailed understanding of the condition of the building and the associated repair costs. Noting the additional costs incurred in preparing the bid, Cabinet agreement is being sought to draw down a further £30,000 from the Special Revenue Reserve to cover the costs.

4. **Repairs**

- 4.1 The condition survey was undertaken by Purcell earlier this year and their report includes a detailed survey recording the condition of the property which has identified structural faults in various locations, including splits within load bearing timbers and cracks within some ancient masonry walls and barrel vault ceilings. There are also several areas throughout the building where water ingress is causing dampness and mildew within rooms resulting in damage to plaster, timber decay and staining to finishes. There are two outbreaks of dry rot attacking structural timbers and joinery; one within the lower ground floor of the Mayors Parlour and the other within the former Parking Services offices.
- 4.2 Some of the defects require further investigation to resolve and will require work to carefully opening up the fabric of the building to uncover the fault, so as to determine the cause and appropriate remedial action. In many locations access equipment will be required to provide safe working platforms where repairs are at high levels. All repairs will need to take into account the grade II listing and thus remedial work will need to incorporate materials and construction methods appropriate to the buildings listing. It is likely that some repairs will need to be carried out by specialist contractors and/or historic Building Conservation Contractors who are skilled and

experienced in building conservation work. In all instances officers will be taking advice from Purcell.

- 4.3 Whilst the work on the HLF bid, which is to be submitted later this autumn, is continuing, some of these defects need to be addressed now, as there is a clear risk that delaying repairs could cause extensive damage leading to loss of historic fabric and important architectural details and increase the costs of the work. As noted above, the sum of £150,000 has been set aside in the Medium Term Financial Plan to cover the costs of these works.

5. **Identification of Options**

- 5.1 Option 1: To do nothing and to await the outcome of the HLF bid:

Should the proposed urgent repairs not go ahead now the property will continue to deteriorate resulting in significant damage to the building. Structural faults, water ingress and dry rot if not dealt with could result in areas and rooms within the town hall being closed which could have a significant impact upon the current usage. A delay carrying out these repairs would considerably escalate costs of any remedial works which will inevitably have to be carried out anyway.

- 5.2 Option 2: For the essential repairs to go ahead now:

Carrying out the repairs now would halt the damage currently being caused to the building. This will safeguard the historic fabric and important architectural details of the town hall as well as ensure its continued safe operation. Prompt action now arresting structural faults, water ingress and dry rot is in the longer term more cost effective. This is the preferred option.

6. **Resource Implications**

An additional contribution was made to the Special Projects Reserve in 2015/16 so the £30k requirement can be funded whilst maintaining the reserve balance above the MTFP forecast. The £150k capital requirement is included within the MTFP capital programme. There are no revenue implications.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comment to add. (KW)
- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Head of Legal Services has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make (LM)
- 7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications however, in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>. (KM)

8. **Appendices**

None.

9. **Background Papers**

Reports to Cabinet - July 2014 and November 2015

Condition Survey Report by Purcell

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