

## Public Report to Civic Pride, Arts and Leisure Committee Meeting 20 November 2017

### Agenda Item 21

#### Town Hall - Damp

**To approve** the expenditure necessary to address the damp problems along the Mansion House Street side of the Town Hall.

#### Background

Officers have discovered that during heavy and prolonged periods of rainfall the internal walls of offices and reception along Mansion House Street become very damp up to a height of 1 metre. Officers invited three specialists to inspect the premises and provide a fully costed solution. There may be some minor Works that will need additional work, but difficult to assess until the plaster is removed, therefore a contingency of £2,000 has been included in the costing.

Subsequent discussions with the WBDC Conservation Officer resulted in the Town Council bringing in a consultant to ascertain which solution would be the best approach to resolve the problem, understanding that the building is listed and any Works must comply with Listed Building Consent Regulations.

The consultant provided a repair solution which was submitted to the Conservation Officer at West Berkshire District Council for review and approval. The proposed scheme was accepted on the understanding that the finish plastering must be lime mortar. Any further decoration cannot be carried out for a minimum of 6 weeks.

The proposed Works would be undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 CEO and Community Services Offices. Phase 2 reception, Corporate Services Office and safe room. To accommodate these Works we will need to use Suite 2 as a temporary office which will ensure continuity of the Council's services.

During the period when Suite 2 is not available for day-time meetings, West Berkshire District Council have offered us alternative facilities in the library and/or museum.

The cost of the repairs will not exceed £25,000. This will accommodate:

- removal of all IT cabling and replacement with new
- removal of electrical cabling and hardware and reinstate
- disconnection and relocation of IT and BT equipment
- removal of all wall mounted heaters and procure free standing replacements
- sealing of gap between pavement and wall
- stripping plaster back to brickwork
- inserting damp proof membrane to walls and fillet to floor plate
- re-attaching electrical cabling and hardware and testing
- re-plastering with lime mortar and re-fix skirting
- re-paint walls after 6 weeks

#### Options

The Council has little option if staff are to continue using these offices. At least 3 staff members have asthmatic issues and could refuse to work in offices which may worsen their conditions. These repairs are also necessary to protect the fabric of the building and ensure its continued long-term use.

We looked at the possibility of re-locating all of the Town Hall staff to alternative accommodation for the duration of these works and West Berkshire District Council kindly offered premises for us to consider. This would have saved a little in costs and the work would have been carried out quicker but the logistics proved too onerous and it would have involved too much disruption to the Town Councils' services and the general public.

We are all aware that the Town Hall is an iconic working environment, but these buildings also carry associated costs with maintenance and upkeep and if they are to remain fit for purpose. It is estimated that the works will commence on 24/11/2017 and take approximately 3 weeks to complete.

### **Resolution**

**To approve** the release of funds, up to £25,000, from reserves, to cover the cost of the essential Town Hall damp proofing Works.

Granville Taylor  
Community Services Manager

Hugh Peacocke  
Chief Executive Officer

16 November 2017