

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 10 JANUARY 2017
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND
CULTURAL SERVICES)

CAMPUS WEST TOWER – URGENT REPAIRS

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In August this year, a large piece of concrete separated and then fell from the around a window on the fourth floor of the Campus West Tower. This highlighted there could be a problem with the window reveals and other isolated areas on the tower.
- 1.2 Officers immediately fenced off the area and scaffolding was erected to allow for the tower to be inspected. Ashton Consulting were instructed to carry out that inspection and to produce a report to ascertain if the incident was likely to be a one-off or if there was a more widespread risk.
- 1.3 This report advised that the risk did affect more of the building and also recommended that testing should be carried out for chlorides in the concrete.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is now to advise Members that urgent repairs are required to the tower to restore the external finishes to a safe state. Because these works are repairs, the cost cannot be treated as a capital expenditure and so the estimated requirement is for a one off revenue budget of £60,000 including fees

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Cabinet recommend to Council that it agrees that the urgent repairs outlined in this report are required and recommends to Council to agree a budget of £60,000 in this financial year 2016-17 to cover the estimated cost of the repairs required to the building.
- 2.2 That initially the cost is funded from the Emergency reserve using the Urgent Incident Procedure.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 During the refurbishment of the library by Hertfordshire County Council about 4 years ago, they encountered a problem with the finishes to a number of the window reveals where facing bricks (brick slips) were separating from the window lintels. This was happening because moisture had been able to penetrate the concrete behind the slips which had led to surface “spalling”.
- 3.2 Spalling is the process where water penetrates a building material. This then may freeze due to the time of year. Ice occupies a larger volume than water which has the effect of pushing the material’s surface away allowing sections to fall. This regularly affects bricks at the foot of walls but can affect any hard material where moisture penetration can or has occurred.

- 3.3 The tower is subject to high temperature fluctuations and wind all of which, it now appears, has, over time, allowed moisture to penetrate the construction material. This has led to spalling occurring.
- 3.4 Areas of the finishes to the tower have now shown signs of deterioration culminating in a section separating and falling.
- 3.5 It is now essential that repairs are carried out to make the tower safer.
- 3.6 These works are for remediation purposes only. They will not enhance the building nor extend its life.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 The forecourt area beneath the tower forms part of the fire and other evacuation routes for the Campus West complex. This route has to be as safe as reasonably possible. Now the Council is aware that this issue exists, it cannot not take action.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 The Council does have responsive and planned maintenance budgets but these budgets are already under significant pressure and cannot carry an additional level of expenditure of this nature.
- 5.2 The Council is still incurring on-going costs for the scaffold hire. This was originally sourced through the minor works contract as the quickest way to ensure the area around the building was protected.
- 5.3 The budget allocated to maintenance, both responsive and planned has been reduced over the last 6 years having fallen from a figure around £1.2M in 2010 to around £880,000 (including the garages allocation now managed separately) for 2016/17. Up to 2015/6, Corporate Property has managed to keep its total spend within the global figure but this has become more and more difficult with the passage of time and given the effects of price inflation.
- 5.4 The cost of the projected repairs including the scaffold hire to date is just under £44,000. It will not be possible to carry out the repairs until the New Year due to the construction break at Christmas.
- 5.5 The scaffolding costs the authority a little under £500 per week.
- 5.6 Officers are also exploring the erection of a 'capture net' to go around the base of the building to provide additional future protection in case this occurs again. That is expected to cost between £3-5,000.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The risks related to this proposal are:
- 6.2 Not doing the work could result in building materials falling from the tower causing catastrophic or even fatal injury to users of the Campus West complex. In addition, the building will continue to deteriorate which will result in a greater level of expenditure in the future. Likelihood high, impact high.

- 6.3 The proposed works are aimed at remedying the problems identified. The work cannot guarantee that further deterioration may occur in the future nor that as yet unidentified issues will not surface. The only way that that could be prevented would be to strip all of the external finishes from the tower and to fully replace them and the windows. This would need a formal capital bid as the work would significantly enhance the building.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 None

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 The cost of the works is within the minor works contract. The scaffolding has been treated as a separate order at this stage.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 None

10 Link to Corporate Priorities

The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority to maintain a safe and healthy community and more specifically to work with partners to keep people safe.

- 10.1 It is also linked to the Council's statutory obligations contained within sections 1-4 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

11 Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in connection with the proposals that are set out in this report.

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