



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Adjourned Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	City Hall Major Works: Project Update
Date:	26 February 2008
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Improvement
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Relevant Background Information

A previous update was presented to the Committee on 16 November 2007, when it was agreed that subsequent update reports be presented on a quarterly basis, with additional exception reports as necessary.

The decant to Adelaide Exchange has been completed and the City Hall was cleared to enable the contractor to commence work on 19 November with a 90 week overall contract period, to be undertaken in two phases.

The formal challenge received from one of the contractors who were unsuccessful in their tender for the specialist Records Removal/Off-Site Storage contract proceeded to court and judgement was recently made in favour of the Council and the contractor who issued the challenge has stated that he will not appeal. Consequently, the contract will be awarded and implemented shortly.

Key Issues

Programme

An outline programme is attached for information.

Progress to date (week commencing 11 February) is as follows:

- Protection of marble areas in progress;
- Asbestos removal from the main roof is complete;
- Re-roofing of the West and South roofs has commenced and is 10% complete;
- All non-notifiable asbestos in the remainder of the building has been removed. An application has been made to the Health and Safety Executive for approval to remove notifiable asbestos. Encapsulation work has also commenced in the roof area of the Rotunda;
- Basement shelving has been removed;
- Removal of chandeliers & pendants for refurbishment is complete;
- Survey work of existing services installations is complete;
- Stripping out of radiators, pipework and electrical cable has commenced;
- Sprinkler system has been drained down and is being removed.

Progress is currently adhering generally to the programme.

Variations

The incorporation of a memorial to BCC employees to be situated in the courtyard at a cost of £22,800 was approved at SP&R December 2007;

Other potential variations being considered for incorporation into the project are:

- Emergency Room relocation – estimated cost £450,000;
- Control Room relocation to 2nd floor – cost will be dependent on brief which is currently being developed;
- PABX room upgrade – cost will be dependent on brief which is currently being developed;

The variations regarding the Emergency Room, Control Room and PABX Room are dependant upon proposals being finalised, together with costs, by Health & Environmental Services and Corporate Services respectively and presented to Committee for further consideration.

Depending on the nature of the works there could be a substantial impact on the overall cost and programme which will be alleviated by reaching early decisions on these matters. Final proposals on these variations really need to be signed off or rejected by committee by March 2008.

City Hall: Future Use

The future use of City Hall is a much more fundamental question which directly involves Members. To minimise any potential additional costs, variations and/or delay, Members are asked to engage with this further via the Cross Party accommodation groups as soon as possible.

In broad terms the issue may be stated as follows; *“What balance do members wish to strike between the various competing potential uses of the City Hall building?”* The main uses are:

1. as a **political base**, which would involve some/all of the following:-

- a) hosting monthly Council and Committee meetings;
- b) hosting political parties in conducting their internal business;
- c) hosting individual members in dealing with constituency matters; *and*
- d) facilitating attendance at meetings with other parties and/or council officers.

The recent members' survey produced a very clear finding that, in addition to hosting the main political meetings (Council, Committees, DPP etc) members feel that the City Hall is also the best place from which to conduct day-to-day party and constituency work. This has obvious implications for the future use of the City Hall in that it requires a fairly large footprint within the building, whether the parties move back into the areas previously used as party rooms or to a new area within the building specifically designed to reflect party size. (This decision will also presumably be affected by the outcome of the Review of Public Administration, which may increase the number of members who require accommodation).

2. as a **civic building**, which could involve some/all of the following:-

- a) maximising tourist potential through enhanced tours and increased public access;
- b) enhancing access to the prestige functions rooms and other areas of the building;
- c) celebration of the city by way of exhibitions, displays etc;
- d) providing an historical perspective on the development of the city, including public archives, art, artefacts and other library material;
- e) incorporating the Visitor & Convention Bureau following the expiry of its existing lease in 2010, which would significantly increase footfall in the building and, in turn, increase the viability of other potential activities including for example a catering franchise; *and*
- f) incorporating the Consumer Advice centre.

3. as an **administrative building**, which would involve:-

- a) providing office accommodation for essential BCC officers and support staff;
- b) providing an operational base for a range of citizen-facing services, most notably Births, Deaths, Marriages & Civil Ceremonies, the Cemeteries office, Building Control, Consumer Advice etc.

4. as a **source of revenue**, which would involve:-

- a) seeking appropriate external partners to lease areas of the building on a commercial basis, with a view to introducing retail, food & beverage and other private sector facilities.

It will therefore be necessary to engage with members in order to seek a cross-party consensus on the most appropriate split between the political, civic, administrative and economic uses of the building, following which officers can develop detailed alternative layouts and approaches for members' consideration.

As refurbishment work has commenced in the City Hall, it is important that decisions in respect of the future use of the building are taken promptly, in order that the layout of the building can be appropriately configured and incorporated into the programme for the works, minimise any additional costs and/or delays and to factor in any overall accommodation use which will no longer be catered for in the City Hall.

Site visit

Members may wish to consider visiting the site to view the progression of the works.

Adelaide Exchange

Members are asked to consider whether a Members Common Room to be formed on the third floor, by the amalgamation of two of the existing meeting rooms. Members are asked to note that there has been significant use of the meeting rooms by Members in Adelaide Exchange as shown in the table below.

Month	Working days	Bookings
	October	(13 days) 15
	November	(22 days) 32
	December	(18 days) 14
	January	(22 days) 41
	February	(10 days) 23
	Total	(85 days) 125

Resource Implications

The anticipated project expenditure for the Major Works contract, based on the accepted tender, is £11,875,000.

The anticipated final account is projected to be within the approved budget with the exception of the cost of any variations not yet approved.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee notes this report and determine:

1. whether a site visit to the City Hall should be arranged;
2. whether a Members Common Room should be provided in Adelaide Exchange.
3. whether Members want to consider alternate options as to use of City Hall, and if so, to agree to an options paper to be considered in April.

