

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Finance, Governance & Asset Management Committee
Meeting date	5 March 2024
Report author	Victoria Moore
Agenda item	9

REPORT OF THE PROPERTIES OFFICER

1. **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update members on the current works in the Guildhall Robing Room.
- 1.2 Energy consumption report

2 **Summary**

- 2.1 Robing Room progress to date.
- 2.2 Guildhall energy consumption review

3 **Action required.**

- 3.1 Members are requested to note this report.

4. **Link to strategic plan and objectives**

- 4.1 Maintenance and improvement programme year 4
- 4.2 Primary linked objective:
KO2: To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- 4.3 Other objectives addressed:
KO1: To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
KO3: To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.

5. **Background**

5.1 Robing Room Refurbishment

Abingdon Town Council took on ownership of the Historic Guildhall in 2011 but did not acquire the use of the Old Magistrates' Court including the Robing Room until the Abingdon Music Centre relocated to Larkmead in 2018. In 2018, the Old Magistrates Court including the Robing Room became part of the Historic Guildhall demise. The Old Magistrates' Court was used for meetings and the Robing Room a base for Abingdon Town Parking Wardens. In 2021, Abingdon Town parking wardens were transferred back to Oxfordshire County Council, leaving the Robing Room redundant, in a very poor state and unfit for any purpose.

At the meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGP) in January 2021 it was reported by the Town Clerk that the Robing Room would be a good location for the town's Visitor Information Centre. It was later proposed and agreed that the Visitor Information Centre be merged with Abingdon Town Council reception on the Ground Floor of Roysse Court Office. It was proposed and agreed the Robing Room instead be used as a civic wing or meeting room as currently it was a wasted space. Whilst researching alternate uses of the Robing Room, investigations highlighted severe damp, mould, and the generally poor state of the room. A new function for this space would require a complete refurbishment. Members agreed to delegate the Properties Officer to create plans for the refurbishment of the room, which can be found under F133 in the minutes of the FGP Committee 13.01.2021.

5.2 Guildhall Energy Audit

In March 2021, the Town Mayor and the Chair of Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee requested an independent energy audit throughout the Guildhall complex by a company called SGS Energy Solutions. The energy audit report highlighted initiatives in how energy could be saved throughout the property with the installation of secondary glazing (where possible), upgrades to insulation and heating and the switching to LED or energy efficient lighting.

6. **Key information and options**

- 6.1 The condition of the Robing Room due to damp, mould and general decay risk further damage to the fabric of this historic building. To ensure the longevity of this room and the adjoining Old Magistrates' Court, refurbishment was necessary to utilise the Robing Room for internal use or external hire. There will many uses for the Robing Room on completion of works, a second Mayor's parlour, civic meeting room or private hire to external groups. The Robing Room has the additional benefit of its own private entrance, removing the requirement to interrupt the rest of the Historic Guildhall when in use. Refurbishment works include a new kitchenette, allowing users to make refreshments, thus providing a more versatile space and valued addition to the current Historic Guildhall rooms.

The Robing Room refurbishment works are on schedule and are progressing well. The store (behind the original gateway), WC and kitchenette area have

all been stripped out and had the first fix of electrical wiring. New waterproof tanking has been installed in the ceiling above the kitchen, WC and store which is directed via a sump to the external storm drain. Floors have been screeded ready for new vinyl flooring and the kitchen and WC extract redirected to a higher ventilation point. Timber frame stud walling is now being fixed to the walls in readiness for plastering.

- 6.2 Since the Energy Survey in 2021 roofing installation has been replaced or installed in all of the Historic Guildhall roof spaces and where possible LED or energy saving lighting has replaced old conventional lighting. Upgrades to heating through the Guildhall historic rooms has been investigated but is not possible due to pipework being buried under floors and within walls. To upgrade the heating would require a full strip out of all flooring and walls, which at this present time is not possible. Quotations are in process for new double and secondary glazing for windows in the Council Chamber and Abbey Room. Secondary glazing has been installed in the ground floor registration office, ceremony rooms and first floor office and the window on the Guildhall Historic staircase. Until all works are complete, I do not feel a second energy survey will bring any advantage into how to improve the property's current energy consumption. On completion of energy saving works it may be viable to conduct a second survey to evaluate the benefits of energy saving improvements implemented throughout the Guildhall. Following the survey, the assessor may give advice or recommendations on how we can continue to improve our consumption.

7. **Financial/budget implications**

- 7.1 All monies for the forementioned works have been approved by Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee and the town council.

8. **HR implications**

- 8.1 Items detailed in the above report will have no additional implications to staff.

9. **Supporting papers and appendices**

- 9.1 No supporting documents attached to this report.

Victoria Moore
Properties Officer
February 2024