



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 21 JUNE 2023
Subject	COUNCIL CHAMBER REFIT DESIGN AND PROCUREMENT OF CONTRACTORS
Wards affected	Witney North
Accountable member	CLlr Alaric Smith / Executive Member for Arts, Leisure and Culture Email: Alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin; Assistant Director, Business Services Tel: Email: Phil.Martin@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek agreement for the Chamber refit design and associated costs, and to proceed with the procurement of contractors via an open tender process.
Annexes	Annex A – Chamber Designs
Recommendation/s	That Executive resolves to: <i>a) Agree to the Chamber design as proposed by the Agile Steering Group</i> <i>b) Agree to proceed to the contractor procurement phase</i>
Corporate priorities	Working together for WODC
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Agile Project Steering Group Informal Executive

1. BACKGROUND

In July 2022, Executive (formerly Cabinet), and Full Council agreed to proceed with changes to Woodgreen and Elmfield Council offices to facilitate the implementation of the Agile Working Strategy, reduce costs and carbon impact of the Council's operations and increase public accessibility. This resulted in the implementation phase of the Agile Working project, which is currently underway.

A key deliverable of the Agile Working project is the 'Substantial modernisation of decor and lighting in the Council Chamber' and a budget of £457k was allocated (from a total Agile project budget of £1.6m), to cover the cost of the Chamber refit and new furniture. This is in addition to a 'Contain Outbreak Management Fund' (COMF) allocation of £250k, to upgrade the audio visual (AV) technology in the Committee rooms and the Council Chamber. The new AV equipment has been installed in the Committee rooms and will be installed in the Council Chamber upon completion of the refit.

A key driver for the Chamber refit is to provide a modern and attractive meeting space, with new folding desks and stacking chairs to enable the room to be reconfigured for weddings, community and business functions as well as meeting the formal requirements of the Council, Executive and formal Committees. A flexible, publicly accessible space is also a requirement of the COMF funding.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. In autumn 2022, the Agile Steering Group set out the broad principles for the design brief for the Chamber. The brief stated that designs should have an emphasis on the future use of the Chamber, that it be as light and easy to clean as possible and should reflect the importance and significance of the space.
- 2.2. To ensure value for money, three budget envelopes were specified for the refit (excluding furniture and mechanical & electrical costs) - £80k, £140k and £220k, and commercial interior designers, Gravity, were asked to produce separate designs that corresponded to each of these budgets.
- 2.1. In March 2023 Gravity presented designs to the Agile Steering Group and a preferred option was selected based upon fulfilment of the brief and value for money – See Annex A; this option falls within the £140k budget envelope. The design includes high quality, portable furniture that enables the Chamber to be utilised in a flexible way. The tables are easily moved into position and can be configured to suit the requirements of the meeting or function; the 'horseshoe' arrangement for formal Council meetings as set out in Annex A, is an indication of one particular layout. The tables are 'flip-top' and the chairs are stackable; the furniture may be stored in a relatively small space and adjacent meeting rooms have been identified for this purpose, enabling the Chamber to be totally or partially cleared to suit a multitude of uses.
- 2.2. In April 2023 a presentation was given to Informal Executive, setting out key features of each of the options and the main reasons for Option A being the preferred design. Informal Executive gave its backing to Option A and feedback from that meeting has been incorporated into the designs – namely to provide additional desk layout configurations, so that the flexibility of the space can be demonstrated, and to incorporate 'WODC green' into the seats.
- 2.3. In order to procure the contractors for the refit, an open tender exercise will be required. This will involve producing detailed technical specifications for the refit works. In addition, the specification will also set out detailed requirements for the desks and seating. Detailed research has been carried out, at the request of the Agile Steering Group, to inform the

specific requirements for the desk and seat specification; sample furniture will be requested prior to a final decision being taken. This will ensure the furniture is of the required quality, that the seats are comfortable and stackable, and the desks are portable and easily stored.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 A total budget of £457,260 was allocated to the Chamber refit project in July 2022. This comprised:

Item	Cost
Refit (this figure is based on the Quantity Surveyor assessment)	£242,350
Furniture (Portable, folding desks/stacking chairs - this figure is based upon suitable furniture being identified and costed)	£131,210
Mechanical & Electrical Adjustments (this figure is based on the Quantity Surveyor assessment)	£83,700
Total	£457,260

The total costs associated with Option A are set out in the table below. Due to current inflationary pressures within the construction sector, it is prudent to include a 10% contingency.

Based on this option, costs are potentially £66,859 below the original budget allocation.

Item	Cost
Refit	£140,000
Furniture (Portable, folding desks/stacking chairs - this figure is based upon suitable furniture being identified and costed)	£131,210
Mechanical & Electrical (this figure is based on the Quantity Surveyor assessment)	£83,700

Sub total	£354,910
Contingency (10%)	£35,491
Total	£390,401

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. No direct legal implications relating to this report, all commissioned work would need to comply with appropriate legislative frameworks e.g. Health and Safety, DDA etc.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. Construction/refit material costs are currently volatile as a result of on-going inflationary pressures within the construction sector. As a result the Chamber refit costs may be affected and a 10% contingency has been incorporated into costings to mitigate the risks.
- 5.2. The refit costs will be finalised as a result of the open tender process; this may result in final cost adjustments up or down. However, Gravity are commercial design and refit specialists, and advise that their designs should comfortably fit within the budget envelope.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1. An EIA was originally undertaken as part of the wider Agile Working project presented to Cabinet/Council in July 2022, this will be revisited and any required adjustments will be made.

7. ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 7.1. Gravity ensured that the designs incorporated products and materials that were both environmentally and ecologically friendly.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. During the early stages of the Agile project, a combined Committee/Council Chamber was considered on the ground floor. However, this option was not deemed feasible as the space wasn't large enough to accommodate full Council meetings, nor provide the flexibility to host other formal meetings. This is due to the WCs on the ground floor encroaching on the floor space.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None.

(END)