

Property Improvements Plan: City Chambers & Chesser House

The City of Edinburgh Council

26 June 2003

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise on the progress of the property improvements to City Chambers and Chesser House.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The report gives a summary of the improvements planned for the City Chambers entrance and reception, Chesser House reception and the lift refurbishment at both sites.
- 2.2 Arrangements have been made to minimise the disruption to Council business as far as possible.
- 2.3 The works will provide improvements in access to the buildings, together with modern reception arrangements.

3 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 The Chief Executive reported in September 2001 on the intention to report on a phased programme of work to improve the existing buildings in the High Street and Chesser House which will continue to be occupied by the Council when the new Headquarters office is built.
- 3.2 Responsibility for the operation of the City Chambers and Chesser House transferred to the Director of City Development on 1 April 2002.
- 3.3 Council members will be aware of the increasing frequency of the failure of the lifts in both buildings and the limitations on access and facilities for people with disabilities. The Director of City Development carried out an appraisal of the building and a property improvement plan was produced.

New City Chambers Entrance, Reception Area and Lifts

- 3.4 Tender documents for the new City Chambers entrance and reception area have been returned. Historic Scotland has been consulted and should they wish to comment, a response is due by 1 July 2003. Work will commence on or near 14 July and will continue for a period of 14 weeks.
- 3.5 The works will change the existing narrow entrance hall and reception into a bright and spacious reception area with more room for visitors, better and more comfortable seating and additional informal and formal meeting areas. A new approach to the main lift will be created within the new reception and for the first time, the lift will stop at reception level providing improved access for people with disabilities at the building's main door.
- 3.6 During the works to reception, there will be some dust and considerable noise. Arrangements have been made to minimise this as far as possible and the contractor has been briefed regarding the nature of Council business. However, members' co-operation is sought to avoid requests to the contractor to stop work, which would incur additional cost to the project.
- 3.7 The design has been developed to include an additional set of automatic sliding doors at the main entrance, to avoid any heat loss from reception and the main stair and the upgrading of the fire resistance of the glazed doors and screens at the main entrance. The design of the reception desk and storage has been developed and disabled visitor requirements incorporated. Staff access at the new entrance will be controlled by a new proximity-card door access system.
- 3.8 A structural report identified weakness in the floor therefore, work will begin with the necessary strengthening of the new floor area by inserting steel beams underneath reception and will continue with the stripping out of services and down taking of partition walls. Unavoidably, the works will generate a moderate to high level of noise at times during the programme, particularly during the floor-strengthening works, the stripping out and at other times. To assist in minimising disruption due to noise, meetings booked into the Dunedin Room and the Old Council Chamber are being relocated into other rooms for the first 5 weeks of the works, as these weeks are expected to be the noisiest. The ongoing level of noise and disruption will be reviewed before the 5-week point and, if required, the period of closure of the Dunedin Room and Old Council Chamber will be extended to minimise disruption and allow the contract to proceed according to timetable and within budget.
- 3.9 Between July and October, generally the main door will not be available as an entrance or an exit and will not be available as a fire exit. The City Chambers has several alternative fire exits at High Street and other levels, including those leading to Cockburn Street. In preparation for its temporary closure, fire wardens and staff have practised using the alternative fire exits and the fire drill held on 14 May 2003 operated successfully without the use of the main entrance. Therefore, special arrangements have been made to allow wedding parties to enter the building by the main front door. Wedding receptions have been booked some time in advance of the reception plans being approved.

- 3.10 On completion of the refurbishment of the East Wing of the City Chambers, the newly refurbished entrance at 249 High Street will be used as the City Chambers' main front entrance and reception, during the period of the works. The entrance at 249 High Street was recently provided with a permanent ramp and has stair and lift access directly to the main Council Chamber and meeting room level and the Business Centre. The existing reception staff will re-locate to the temporary reception facilities at 249 High Street during business hours. Security staff will continue to monitor intruder alarms, which will remain at the quadrangle site, and to control the 249 entrance outside office hours.

City Chambers and Chesser House Lifts

- 3.11 The project to replace the lifts at both the City Chambers and Chesser House is now underway. An acceptance of the winning tender of £826,154 was issued following evaluation on quality and costs. The price includes all the features initially planned, which will require major alterations to improve access.
- 3.12 The programme for the lift replacement at the City Chambers and Chesser House is currently in draft form. A six month lead in time is required for the ordering and fabrication of materials off site.
- 3.13 In association with the main project a separate exercise will take place in the City Chambers to alter the existing Goods Lift to serve as a passenger lift to all floors between the Cockburn Street entrance and the chamber level. This will offer more flexibility to users and will reduce the impact towards the end of the main contract when the "Councillors' lift (D)" and the "Canteen Passenger Lift (G)" are being replaced. This work is programmed to start at the end of August 2003.

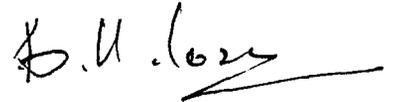
New Chesser House Entrance and Reception

- 3.14 Tender documents for the new entrance and reception at Chesser House are due for return on 27 June 2003.
- 3.15 The works at Chesser House will enlarge and improve the main reception area and will provide a single entrance serving the entire building. This will replace the existing, confusing situation where one of two doors serves the main building and the other door serves the Revenues and Benefits office only. The existing ramped entrance will be retained and enclosed within the new entrance layout. The main entrance floor will be raised to remove the difference in level between the new reception and the new Benefits Office.
- 3.16 During the period of the works, a temporary entrance will be set up which will give access to the existing reception area. The existing Benefits Office will be closed for the period.

4 Recommendations

The Council is recommended to:

- i) Note the progress made in the achievement of the Property Improvement Plan.
- ii) Note the arrangements in relation to the proposed works.



PP **Andrew Holmes**
Director of City Development

Appendices None

Contact/Tel Jackie Cowper, Acting Property Manager (FM/SD)
Tel: 0131 529 4296
Email: Jackie.cowper@edinburgh.gov.uk

Wards affected: City Wide

Background
Papers: Previous reports to Council