

Committee: Resources

Date: 5 July 2022

Title: Magistrates Court Move

Purpose of Report

Members to be consider plans for moving council administration into the Old Magistrates Court

Recommendation:

- a) Members to note the report and agree the following resolutions.
- b) Members resolve to Recommend to Full Council that £25,000 be vired from General Reserves to budget 361 to cover removal and setup costs for the Old Magistrates Court building.
- c) Officers to be given delegated responsibility to engage a removal company to handle the transfer of items between old and new premises.
- d) Members resolve to appoint Dan's Window Cleaning Services to clean the Old Magistrates Court windows for three years or until such time as officers feel it appropriate to reassess the contract.
- e) Members to delegate to officers, authority to acquire a new photocopier in accordance with Financial Regulations on the understanding members will ratify the decision at the first possible Full Council meeting after a decision is made.
- f) Members resolve to delegate authority to officers to dispose of the Town Council's old photocopiers, with details of their disposal reported to a subsequent meeting for noting.

Report:

1. The Old Magistrates Court was Purchased by Ilminster Town Council as an alternative office at the meeting on the 22 June 2021 (minute 959).
2. Since this date preparations have been made to make the building ready to move into. It was planned that this would have happened by now however due to issues with obtaining quotes and securing dates for remedial works to be carried out this has meant the move has slipped behind schedule.

3. We are now looking to move staff and council administration into the Offices during August when there are just two council meetings scheduled for the beginning of the Month.
4. It is expected that from the **1 September 2022, Iminster Town Council's** official address will change to the Old Magistrates Court. Because we have yet to surrender the tenancy on the North Streets offices, we will continue to hold ITC meetings in the Chamber at the North Street Offices until a more suitable location has been agreed upon.
5. As members are aware the Old Magistrates Court does not have sufficient room for a council chamber. Options that are up for consideration are the Arts Centre, the youth centre building and Greenfyld School. There are however limitations on the use of these buildings that will need to be checked out as well as agreeing terms for the use.
6. It was reported at the June Full Council meeting that there would be a need to vire from General reserves into a dedicated Old Magistrates budget heading funds to cover the move and re-equipping of the offices.
7. As members will see in the report below there are a number of items that we believe are going to need funding and it is anticipated that a sum of £25,000 should be vired across. Members are being asked to recommend to Full Council that this amount be allocated to the budget heading 361.
8. Financial Regulation 3.9 states that:

Changes in earmarked reserves shall be approved by Council as part of the budgetary control process.

Remedial Building work:

9. Over the course of the past few months a number of actions have been taken in order to prepare the building ready for use. This has included ensuring that the damp issue that was identified during the survey stage of purchase, has been treated and the walls replastered and along with the rest of the internal walls and doorways painted. The electrics and fire alarms have been checked and made fit for purpose. The heating and plumbing have also been checked and serviced with action taken where needed.
10. Before moving into the building it will need to be thoroughly cleaned and the carpets will be cleaned to check whether or not they should be kept or will need replacing upstairs. On an initial inspection it was felt that they only required a good steam cleaning and the clerk will look to do this shortly.

11. We have also agreed with Dan's Window Cleaning Services a local window cleaner to come and clean the windows both inside and out once every three for £40-00. This follows trialling them in June. We would ask members to agree to the proposal that Dan's Window Cleaning Services be appointed to clean the Old Magistrate Courts Windows every three months for the next three years or until a revised price comes in and we need to look and reassess.
12. We have obtained three quotations for taking all the desks and furniture from North Street and moving it to the new building. Due to the weight of the main safe it may require a separate company to carry out this task. These quotations are available to members in the council offices should they wish to see them.
13. Likewise we are looking for three quotes to ensure that connectivity to the internet and the computer systems is ready for the move. Currently we are on a monthly rolling contract with our current communications provider in line with the resolution agreed by members at the 30 November 2021 meeting (Minute 1092).
14. Members are being asked to delegate authority to officers to engage a communications company to provide internet and telephones at the old Magistrates Court. Any engagement will be carried out in accordance with Financial Regulations and Standing orders. The details will be brought to Full Council at the following meeting for ratification. Quotes are being sought from the same three companies that provided quotes in November 2021. Others may be considered. These quotations are available to members in the council offices should they wish to see them and copies will be brought to the meeting.

Photocopier

15. Members have at various meetings been updated about the photocopier in the current offices. The council purchased this outright approximately eight years ago and is now starting to have an increasing number of problems.
16. At the meeting on the 17 May members approved in line with the 2022-2023 budget an earmarked reserve of £2000 for Office Maintenance and Purchases. This included an element towards the replacement of the photocopier.
17. We have been informed that these issues will almost certainly result in an increase in the servicing and "click charges" that we pay for the equipment.

Councillor Burton has suggested that we should look at replacing the current photocopier when we move to the new building.

18. By doing this it may be possible to sell the old machine to assist with the purchase of a new one and also prevent a charge to move the copier into the new building.
19. New photocopiers bring a cheaper click rate and lower maintenance costs should be applicable for any new machine over an old machine. There is of course a question of whether to purchase the machine outright or to lease it.
20. There are benefits for leasing the however the copier will not necessarily be owned by the council at the end of the contract. It would thus then not benefit from a longer period of ownership. The town council is not a heavy user of photocopying and in the future it is likely to use it a lower amount as more and more work is stored and sent electronically.
21. It should be noted that a range of manufacturers will be looked at along with a number of different suppliers of photocopiers and that no one company will be preferred over another in accordance with Financial regulations.
22. The likely cost to purchase a photocopier will be around £4,000 to £5,000. With a lifespan based upon the current machine of around 8 years, this will be a capital cost equivalent to around £625 per year plus running costs. Currently there is a budget allocated of £2080 (£175 approx. per month) for printing and photocopying. We would expect to see this cost fall with new equipment.
23. Elsewhere in the report a sum of £25,000 has been suggested to be vired across into a budget to cover moving and I would expect this to cover any additional costs involved in the purchase of a copier.
24. Costs will be obtained for both leasing and purchasing the copier. Members are being asked to delegate authority to officers so that they can make a decision on the best way to acquire a new photocopier for the town council. This would be done in consultation with the Chair of Resources and Cllr Burton in order to benefit from his knowledge and experience in the industry.
25. Section 3.1 of the Financial regulations state:

Expenditure on revenue items may be authorised up to the amounts included for that class of expenditure in the approved budget. This authority is to be determined by:

- *the Council for all items over £5,000;*
- *a duly delegated committee of the Council for items over £1,000; or*
- *the Clerk for any items below £1,000.*

Such authority is to be evidenced by a minute or by an authorisation slip duly signed by the Clerk, and where necessary also by the appropriate Chairman.

26. Section 3.6 of the Financial Regulations state:

No expenditure shall be authorised in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available

27. Officers are also requesting authority to dispose of the old photocopiers so that they can be removed from the Asset Register.

**Mark Tredwin
Town Clerk
July 2022**