

CABINET 15 February 2023
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question from:	Sally Tote	
Subject:	Shirehall	
Portfolio Holder:	Dean Carroll	Approved

It was generally understood by council staff that the return of departments to Shirehall in 2014 was due to the failure and cost of the policy of dispersal to leased premises. In 2015 the new leader Malcolm Pate therefore considered on-going options for Shirehall which included basic refurbishment to acceptable current standards or else a total facelift.

The latter was put out to external architects but guidance on the former was sought internally from the council's Premises Services department who produced a report in January/February 2016 which was submitted to the cabinet. It is our understanding that this report and the associated cost estimates showed that Shirehall was fundamentally fit for purpose and could be upgraded to current standards of appearance and energy performance for a fraction of the facelift costs, making it attractive to potential tenants for areas not required by the council.

Will this report be found and published so that a balanced review of the options is available for Members of Shropshire Council to consider

Cabinet received a report in December 2017, which was the first more detailed appraisal of the potential to refurbish the Shirehall in recent times. Anything considered prior had focused on critical maintenance requirements and didn't address all of the areas required to bring the building up to modern standards, regulations and be fit for purpose for officers and members. The 2017 report set out within the background two investment options and associated costs. This was a Public report and is available to view.

Further work was progressed up until the point of the key decisions taken at the Council meeting of 16 July 2020. In the report it advised that in the Stage 2 financial business case was prepared by Rider Levett Bucknell (RLB) which identified an estimated cost of £24.1m, this was on the basis of refurbishing the Shirehall, which was presented to full Council in December 2018. Due to inflation and comparable scope of works (previous cost excluded some works such as fenestration, asbestos, etc.), likely to be in excess of £30-34m as reported at February 2022. Construction related inflation has increased significantly once again over the previous 12 months and this figure will have certainly increased further.

I should also add that the onset of the pandemic accelerated the hybrid nature of how many of our services operate and this is also now a deciding factor in the size, scale and nature of our future office accommodation requirements.