



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Cabinet

Committee date: 05/02/2025

Report title: Town Deal Funding Update (Blackfriars Hall Roof and Mechanical & Electrical Upgrade)

Portfolio: Councillor Kidman, Cabinet member for a prosperous Norwich

Report from: Head of property and economic development

Wards: Thorpe Hamlet

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

KEY DECISION

Purpose

This report is to update Cabinet on works required to Blackfriars Hall at The Halls, and request approval of the contract modification permissible under the Public Contract Regulations 2015

The funding for these works is included in the budget report being presented to cabinet on 5 February 2025, and Full Council on 12 February 2025.

Recommendation:

To delegate the award of a contract modification of £593,778 relating to the Halls to the Executive director of resources subject to the budget being approved by Full Council on 12 February 2025. This amendment will be to the existing JCT contract for the Halls and relates to essential repairs to Blackfriars Hall.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- A prosperous Norwich.
- A fairer Norwich.
- A climate responsive Norwich.
- A future-proof Norwich.
- An open and modern council.

This report meets the A prosperous Norwich and A fairer Norwich corporate priority

Report details

Update on Current Project at The Halls

1. The MHCLG Town Deal Funding for The Halls project, did not include any funding for maintenance or repair to the buildings. In July 2020 Cabinet endorsed the submission of the Town Investment Plan which set out a comprehensive package of the eight schemes for investment totalling £26.13m.
2. The Town Deal Funded project provides improvements that enable the transformation of the Halls as a multi-venue performance space and will enable the following improvements, which will allow it to attract wider audiences/ more visitors and a greater number of events and activities:
 - Access improvements (including a new, wheelchair access lift)
 - Audio/Visual (A/V) improvements
 - Improved visitor movement and flow through the building
 - Increased food and drink capacity
3. During the design preparations for the Town Deal Fund project, a Building Condition Survey was carried out in November 2022 this identified significant structural issues in St Andrews Hall which, if not remedied, could have led to accident and injury to users and pedestrians using the surrounding external areas, and significant deterioration and damage to the Grade I and Listed Ancient Monument that is in the care of NCC.
4. On the 21st February 2023 and 8th March 2023, Cabinet approved to increase the general fund capital programme by £2.85m to cover the costs of these urgent upgrade works.
5. At the time of the 2022 Condition Survey, it was highlighted that if scaffolding were to be installed around Blackfriars Hall during the project, it would be sensible to remove tiling at the eaves of the roof to check the condition of the structure, however nothing was highlighted as a particular concern at the time. The works did include the need for scaffolding to clear gutting around Blackfriars roof 6-8 months after the project began and at this point we checked the roof structure as recommended.
6. A mechanical and electrical condition survey was also carried out during the design phase of the Town Deal Project which identified further works that would be needed over the next 5-10 years. Some of these works have already been captured through the current projects.
7. Construction works for the Town Deal and Upgrade/Repair projects commenced on site in March 2024, and the current completion date is April 2025.

The Halls Blackfriars roof

8. As part of the Halls Upgrade/Repair project we included to inspect the condition of Blackfriars Hall roof. The planned upgrade works include the need to scaffold externally round Blackfriars Hall for improvements to rainwater goods, therefore we agreed it was sensible to remove approximately 1m of roof tiling to assess the condition of the timber structure at the eaves of Blackfriars roof.
9. This work was completed in November 2024 and a structural report issued by the project structural engineer. In summary the structural report identified that improvements to the roof carried out approximately 80-100 years ago had created an environment that trapped moisture within the timber structure. A specialist survey of the entire roof structure was required to establish a more detailed view of the decay. The current project team instructed this survey and further report, and the survey was carried out on 17th December 2024 with the project structural engineer in attendance to ensure the team were made aware of the findings within 24 hours of completion. Please see below section on the findings of the most recent survey.
10. The original Structural report made reference to moisture content being exacerbated by a non-breathable sheet which is laid over the timber structure throughout the roof during the improvements 80-100 years ago. We replaced this sheet throughout the 1m section that was opened up at eaves level with a breather membrane, which should assist the situation.

Detailed Roof Survey Outcome

11. The detailed specialist roof survey was completed by Hutton + Rostron's on 17th December 2024. A summary of the findings is set out below:
 - Currently only the external surface of the embedded timbers have been effected by the trapped moisture and the centre of the timbers are still sound.
 - The moisture is a build-up of condensation on the underside of the roof finishes due to the previously installed plastic sheeting, not a roof leak.
 - The timber used to construct the roof is oak and is of a good quality, thus reducing the extent of decay/beetle infestation present. There are a few isolated rafters that have decayed and left voids. These rafters will need to be supplemented/repared.
 - The timber cornice is a thinner timber section and thus, has higher moisture content. A few isolated repairs/replacements will be required to the cornice however the tenons which connect the cornice to the principal trusses have deteriorated to a point that requires additional steel bracketry to prevent the cornices falling into the Hall.
 - Extensive alterations have been made to the original roof structure in the past to create the current arrangement. It is evident that the bosses

(roses/angels) have previously been removed and refixed into position, these need to be securely fixed into place to ensure the safety of users.

12. In summary, the survey concluded that the issue had been caught early and although the survey has highlighted works required in the immediate case, these are only isolated upgrades/strengthening works that will then extend the roof's lifespan to an estimated 15-20 years.

Recommended Works

13. Isolated conservation based upgrades should be undertaken to the cornices, rafters and bosses. These works can be undertaken from within Blackfriars Hall, therefore not requiring an external scaffold but would need an internal birdcage scaffold. If these works were undertaken, the embedded structural elements should last another 15-20 years before more extensive repair works are required.
14. It is recommended that M&E upgrade works, identified in the previously mentioned condition survey, which require scaffolding access are carried out at the same time. These works will be required in the next 3-5 years and doing them now makes financial sense due to the cost of the scaffolding.
15. Following the upgrade works the roof structure it is to be surveyed on a 5 year cycle to give an early warning should the timbers begin to deteriorate faster than expected. This cost will be covered by existing repair and maintenance budget.
16. As explained above these works will increase the lifespan of the roof to approximately 15-20 years however, due to the remaining non-breathable sheet within the roof build-up, the deterioration of the structural members at eaves will only get worse over time and will still need extensive repairs in the future and re-roofing. High level costs have been obtained and are currently estimated to be £2,500,000 if the works were done today. This will of course increase over the next 15 – 20 years.

Implications

Financial and resources

17. All the costs noted in this paper assume the works will be included in the current contract. If this does not happen the costs will significantly increase due to a new procurement process, new mobilisation of a contractor and significantly increase contractor prelim costs. It will also delay the programme of these works by approximately 3-4 months.
18. The current consultant team and contractor have been asked to provide fees and high-level costs for the roof and electrical & mechanical works to Blackfriars roof. These costs are illustrated in the below tables.
19. The funding for these works is included in the budget report being presented to cabinet on 5th February 2025, and Full Council on 12th February 2025.

BLACKFRIARS HALL ROOF UPGRADE	
Main Contractor Building Works	£509,828
Project/Design and Professional Fees	£103,137
Artwork storage costs	£5,000
Internal staff costs	£20,000
Risk Allowance	£144,593
TOTAL	£782,558

BLACKFRIARS HALL ELECTRICAL & MECHANICAL UPGRADE	
Main Contractor Building Works	£83,950
Project/Design and Professional Fees	£26,152
Risk Allowance Contingency	£27,819
TOTAL	£137,921

ESTIMATED TOTAL COSTS	
Blackfriars Roof and M&E Upgrade	£920,479

20. Existing NCC staff will continue working on the project to ensure continuity and the staff costs have been accounted for in the project costs.
21. The £593,778 contract modification relates to the Main Contractor Building Works outlined in the table above. The total cost is £920,479. The difference between the two costs is the project design and professional fees, artwork storage, staff costs and contingency.

Legal and Procurement

22. The current construction contract award to ND Willan is a JCT Standard Form of Contract Without Quantities 2016.
23. NCC Procurement have confirmed that the additional urgent works recommended in this paper can be introduced to the existing contract via a contract instruction and that no further tender works are required. The Public contract regulation 2015 allows for this contract modification.
24. As the modification value is £593,778 including OH&P, we recommend that cabinet approve the contract modification.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	N/A
Health, social and economic impact	These proposals ensure the longevity of Blackfriars roof, and ensure the safety of staff and public using the building.
Crime and disorder	N/A

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Children and adults safeguarding	N/A
Environmental impact	N/A

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The programme for these works includes an initial 1 month for design and then consultation with HE and the Conservation Officer.	There will be a minimum 3 month period before works could start on site. If an instruction to proceed is not received in early February 2025, the current construction programme for the works will be delayed increasing costs.	<p>Early approval for the works.</p> <p>Early engagement with HE and Conservation Officer.</p> <p>Design and installation of scaffolding.</p> <p>Clear and detailed communication with design team and contractor.</p>
The current completion date is early Spring. Risk that construction works for Blackfriars roof are not instructed to enable the works to commence prior to the current contract completing and the contractor hands back the building and moves off site.,	<p>The impact of this will be a significant increase to the costs to allow for remobilisation of the contractor and compound etc. An extended programme for the works, will costs are estimated to be £60,000 per month in addition to the works costs identified.</p> <p>Additional costs for insurance and security estimated at approximately £60k per month</p> <p>Delay to opening and operator mobilisation.</p>	<p>Early approval for the works.</p>

Other options considered

25. Do Nothing

The issues identified in the urgent works are a H&S risk to users of Blackfriars Hall, therefore doing no works is not an option.

26. Full Re-roofing of Blackfriars Hall –

- This would include, removing the current roof tiling, replacing timbers and new breathable membrane, along with a structural solution that removes the current concrete wall plate.

- The works would require fully scaffolding internally and externally including a temporary scaffold roof to protect the area.
- The current high-level costs for these works were estimated to be in excess of £2,500,000
- The current construction programme would be extended by approximately 8 months.
- It was concluded that the mitigation works identified in this report, and the 5-year monitoring surveys were satisfactory at this time and extended the life of the roof significantly. Therefore the full re-roofing option was an unnecessary and unjustified cost to the council, and impact on the current construction programme.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

27. The recommendation for these works are given to ensure the safety of the staff and users of Blackfriars Hall, and to ensure the longevity of the Listed Building, Ancient Monument the NCC are custodians of.

Background papers:

Cabinet Reports

20th Jan 2021 Norwich Town Deal Implementation

8th Jan 2023 Adjustment to the general fund capital budget – The Halls

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