

Committee: Operational Property and Projects Sub Committee– For decision	Dated: 23/11/2022
Subject: Future use of Irish Chambers	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	10. We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	Y
If so, how much?	£95k
What is the source of Funding?	CWP and Department Local Risk Budget
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Yes
Report of: The City Surveyor	For Decision
Report author: Dorian Price, Guildhall Manager	

Summary

During September/October 2022, the former Open Spaces Department that became the Natural Environment Division of the new Environment Department, have been relocating staff based at Irish Chambers. Open Spaces & City Gardens (OSCG) Committee approved the proposal that Irish Chambers be declared surplus to the Environment Department’s operational requirements.

The purpose of this report is to ask Members to consider the options proposed for future occupation of Irish Chambers.

1. To leave Irish Chambers vacant, pending the Operational Property Review.
2. To retain Irish Chambers for use by the Corporation - at present the City Surveyor is only aware of one corporate requirement which would be suitable from the Innovation & Growth (IG) department.
3. To consider seeking a third-party tenant for a short/medium/long-term letting of Irish Chambers and generation of income.

Funding for another corporate department to occupy Irish Chambers is yet to be finalised, but it is proposed that subject to the agreement of your committee, the Cyclical Work Programme (CWP) can fund the cyclical forward building maintenance and security works at Irish Chambers. The CWP Officer Peer Review Group have reviewed and prioritised a bid of £55k for security and maintenance refurbishment works to keep this operational property in a good standard and funded from the 2022/23 Guildhall balance.

The estimated cost of £40k to fund additional office furniture and IT/AV equipment will be funded from departmental local risk budgets.

My officers have considered the options and do not consider Irish Chambers suitable for third party letting/ investment purposes due to its proximity (see location map in Appendix 1) to the Great Hall and Guildhall Yard where high level security events take place, and any external occupation would bring into question the ability to maintain a security sterile Guildhall Yard.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Approve the option 2 for the future corporate use of Irish Chambers, and to endorse the space being offered for use by Innovation and Growth or, if not suitable, then another corporate use once identified.
- Approve that the required cyclical works for security and refurbishment of the building, estimated at £55k, be met from the approved 2022/23 Cyclical Works Programme funding source.
- Note that any extra cost estimate at £40k to fund additional office furniture and IT/AV equipment will be funded from departmental local risk budgets.

Main Report

Background

1. Irish Chambers (highlighted on the location map in Appendix 1) has been occupied by the Open Spaces Department for a number of years.
2. Under the City's Target Operating Model, with effect from 1 April 2022, the former Open Spaces Department became the Natural Environment Division of the new Environment Department and plans were implemented to relocate the whole team from Irish Chambers to Guildhall North Wing.

Current Position

3. Open Spaces & City Gardens (OSCG) Committee approved the proposal that Irish Chambers be declared surplus to the Environment Department's operational requirements.
4. Once the Natural Environment Division have vacated Irish Chambers, anticipated to be end December 2022, the City Surveyor will take over the full management of the building and budget adjusted, until such time as a future occupier is identified.

Options

5. **Option 1** – To leave Irish Chambers vacant, pending the Operational Property Review. The City is about to undertake a review of all its operational property with a view to reducing its property footprint. The future use of Irish Chambers will be further considered as part of this review.

6. **Option 2** – To retain Irish Chambers for use by the Corporation – at present the City Surveyor is only aware of one suitable corporate requirement from the Innovation & Growth (IG) department.
7. **Option 3** - To consider seeking a third-party tenant for a short/medium/long-term letting of Irish Chambers and generation of income. Officers have considered this option of disposal to generate income. However, this option is not recommended due to Irish Chambers proximity to the Great Hall and Guildhall Yard where high level security events take place, and any external occupation would bring into question the ability to maintain a security sterile Guildhall Yard.

Proposals

8. Subject to Members approval of option 2, to retain Irish Chambers for use by the Corporation, it is proposed that the space is initially offered to Innovation and Growth (IG).
 - a. As a result of the increasing demands placed upon senior chairs, reflecting that there was a growing commensurate need to have suitable resources and facilities available to them in support of their roles; IG offered to release dedicated quiet office space on west wing mezzanine in which Members could conduct their City Corporation business.
 - b. However, as a result, IG need to find alternative office space.
 - c. IG have considered various options.
 - i. Locating staff from mezzanine and absorbing onto 1st floor departmental space. Due to hybrid working IG are unable to absorb staff and have had to ask certain teams to work from home until new space is found to prioritise desk space for those that need to work together in the office. Additionally, IG are recruiting to fulfil existing vacancies and when new staff join, this will amplify the desk shortage.
 - ii. Locating staff to 65a Basinghall. This building is currently vacant, having been previously used as a City Covid Testing centre and currently has no office furniture/IT.
 - iii. Locating staff to Irish Chambers meets the workplace needs of IG, subject to Member approval and approval in principle of funding being made available to repurpose the space.
9. Due to Irish Chambers proximity to the Great Hall and Guildhall Yard where high level security events take place, it is proposed that all options would require the support of the Remembrancer to ensure any security requirements are met, including the ability to keep Guildhall Yard security sterile.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

10. **Strategic implications** – Consolidating Irish Chambers into existing Guildhall accommodation rather than extending the footprint is a strategic objective.
11. **Financial implications** – The Cyclical Work Programme (CWP) can fund the cyclical forward building maintenance and security works at Irish Chambers, subject to the agreement of your committee. The City Surveyor estimate the cost of these works to be £55k. The estimated cost of £40k to fund additional office furniture and IT/AV equipment will be funded from departmental local risk

budgets. It should be noted that the City is about to undertake a review of all its operational property with a view to reducing its property footprint. The future use of Irish Chambers will be further considered as part of this review.

12. **Risk implications** – Irish Chambers is a Grade II Listed building, which means we have to be accommodating to its historic design and therefore there are no lift facilities and access is via steps.
13. **Equalities implications** – An Equality Analysis risk assessment will be carried out, to identify any positive impacts for a protected equality group.
14. **Security implications** - Due to Irish Chambers proximity to the Great Hall and Guildhall Yard where high level security events take place, all options would require the support of the Remembrancer to ensure any future tenant meet any security requirements.

Conclusion

15. Members are asked to consider the options proposed for the future occupation of Irish Chambers and to retain for future Corporation use and the space be offered to IG for occupation or, if not suitable, then another corporate use once identified.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Location map of Irish Chambers

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