

<b>Committee(s):</b> Civic Affairs Sub-Committee	<b>Date:</b> 7 February 2023
<b>Subject:</b> Parental / Guardian Room	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1, 2, 3, 4, 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	Y
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>£7,500</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>Committee Contingency Fund (provision exists)</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	Y
<b>Report of:</b> Town Clerk, City Surveyor	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Greg Moore, Town Clerk's; Dorian Price, City Surveyor's	

### Summary

As part of ongoing activity to ensure that the Guildhall Complex is a welcoming and accessible environment for prospective and current elected Members, the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee has given consideration to the creation of a Parental / Guardian Room. This would be intended to act as a dedicated and private space in which to undertake relevant caring responsibilities, including feeding.

A prospective location has been identified from within the existing Member-allocated space within the West Wing which could be re-purposed at minimal cost, namely, an under-utilised Members' IT Room on the Mezzanine floor. The Civic Affairs Sub-Committee's remit provides for it to "...consider and make recommendations on Members' facilities, excluding Guildhall Club" and permission is, therefore, being sought to take forward recommendations around the re-purposing of this element of operational property.

In support of this proposal, it is also intended to refurbish the nearby bathroom on the Mezzanine floor, which is in need of upgrade. This would provide facilities in support of the Parental / Guardian room (particularly baby change and hand-washing facilities).

The two rooms can be repurposed at a total cost of £7,500, a sum which can be met via the dedicated budgetary provision set aside by the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee for contingency matters including the provision of enhanced Member facilities.

### Recommendation(s)

That Members confirm whether they are happy to proceed with the creation of a Parental / Guardian Room at a cost of £7,500, to be met from the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee's contingency fund, and progress the proposal to use the Members' Computer Room on the Mezzanine floor for this purpose.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. As part of wider activity to define and enhance the provision of support to Members with parental or caring responsibilities, the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee has, in recent months, sought to draw together existing provision and identify areas for improvement.
2. One particular area that has been highlighted is the need for a private space, particularly in relation to feeding needs. At present, the Lady Members' Room is used but this is an unsatisfactory solution for several reasons, including inadequate space provision for necessary amenities, lack of privacy associated with mixed usage, and the obvious need to provide a space for parents or guardians of any gender identification.
3. Officers were, therefore, asked to explore the potential to repurpose any under-utilised existing spaces, mindful of cost pressures and the potential impact on wider plans to refurbish the Guildhall Complex which may be forthcoming.

### **Current Position**

4. The City Surveyor has identified the Members' Computer Room, a 10.5m<sup>2</sup> space on the Mezzanine level of the West Wing, as a suitable location and your Sub-Committee has previously given indicative support for the repurposing of this space to be examined.
5. The Room currently contains a confidential bin, two office desks and chairs with PC set-ups, a coat stand, and a number of lockers (28). It is used by a small number of Members and provides a quieter working space than the Members' Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor but, given the space constraints and location, is not generally used by the wider Court.
6. Members will recall that the City Surveyor is currently pursuing plans to install quiet working booths for Members, which will provide similar alternative quiet working space for those who currently use the Mezzanine room.
7. The provision of dedicated office space on the Mezzanine for senior Chairs who have, until now, used the dedicated "Chairmen's IT Room" on the second floor, creates the potential for the Chairmen's IT Room to also be opened up to the wider Court. This would provide a working space with four desks, in place of the current room on the Mezzanine, which has two.
8. To create a welcoming space for parents / guardians, the Mezzanine room would be furnished with furniture including comfortable armchair, table, fridge for storing milk and food, bottle warmer, microwave, kettle and water tank.
9. Whilst the installation of plumbing and a sink to this room was explored, unfortunately due to its location the supply of water would not be possible. However, there are WCs / running water within easy reach through nearby bathroom facilities, and the refurbishment of a bathroom to bring it to standard could be achieved at relatively low cost.

## **Options**

10. The following options present themselves:-
  - a. Should Members be content with the proposal to utilise the Member Computer Room on the Mezzanine for a Parental / Guardian Room and be willing to allocate funding of £7,500, the approval of the Policy & Resources Committee should be sought by way of recommendation from this Sub-Committee. Although well under project procedure thresholds, it may also be prudent to seek Operational Property & Projects Sub-Committee views on the use of space. Officers should also be instructed to commence detailed planning for the relocation of existing furniture within the room and communications to Members around the intended changes to the space.
  - b. Members may wish to instruct a consultation exercise with the Court prior to any decision-making or proceeding with option A, in order to confirm that the reallocation of space would not cause unintended difficulties to those who use existing spaces.
  - c. If Members consider that the space is not appropriate or that an alternative location should be sought, Officers should be instructed to identify and cost alternative solutions.

## **Proposals**

11. Members are asked to consider whether they wish to progress the repurposing of the Members' Computer Room on the Mezzanine floor for the purposes of providing a Parental / Guardian room, together with the refurbishment of a nearby bathroom to provide supporting facilities.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

- Financial implications – the costs of providing a Parental / Guardian Room, together with refurbished toilet facilities, can be contained within the contingency sum available to the Sub-Committee. Discounting monies earmarked for other purposes or already expended, a little over £30,000 remains, providing sufficient headroom for these works.
- Resource implications – none.
- Legal implications – none.
- Risk implications – none.
- Equalities implications – The proposal to create a dedicated space for parental / guardian responsibilities supports the City Corporation's offering to elected Members in respect of pregnancy and maternity provision.
- Climate implications – none.
- Security implications – none.

**Conclusion**

12. The Civic Affairs Sub-Committee has previously supported the exploration of a Parental / Guardian Room being created, to act as a dedicated and private space in which to undertake relevant caring responsibilities, including feeding, primarily for Members but with the potential to extend provision to officers in due course. A space having been identified by the City Surveyor, approval is now sought in respect of the allocation of funds and to take the proposals forward for final approvals.