

Committee: Operational Property and Projects Sub Committee – For decision	Dated: 13/02/2023
Subject: IG Occupation of Irish Chamber	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?	£40k
What is the source of Funding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £20k IG Local Risk Budget • Est. £20k bid for Policy Contingency by Civic Affairs Sub-Committee
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of: Innovation & Growth and City Surveyor	For Decision
Report author: Omkar Chana, Strategic Operations Director, Innovation and Growth	

Summary

The Irish Chamber is currently vacant and available for internal corporate use. The space cannot be let for commercial purposes and so is currently an unused operational asset. The Innovation & Growth (IG) department, following the creation of the Destination City initiative and associated resourcing, requires additional space to house staff. It was originally intended to locate these staff on the Mezzanine floor; however, your Civic Affairs Sub-Committee is keen to progress a separate proposal to utilise this space to meet Member requirements.

Consideration has been given to absorbing staff within the existing provision on the 1st floor of the West Wing; however, due to high staff density levels, this is not possible (the ratio of desks to staff is 4:10 and net internal area 3.7 sqm per person – both are lower quartile measures for the Guildhall estate). Additional complexities arise from the requirement for IG to "host" third parties within the allocated space provision (i.e. Heart of the City and Central London Forward) whose desk requirements are not necessarily identical to the Corporation's own current hybrid working policy expectations. The City Surveyor has, therefore, identified the Irish Chamber as an unused asset which can be used to meet this need.

The space can be refurbished to allow occupation at a cost of approximately £55,000 which the cyclical works programme (CWP) has agreed to fund. Furniture and IT for the Irish Chamber is estimated to be an additional £40,000; IG has a budget of £20,000 set aside and the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee, to gain access to the space it seeks to meet Members' needs on the Mezzanine, is being asked to provide the remaining

£20,000 (which it intends to progress via a bid for Policy Contingency funds, given that Committee's support for enhanced Member facility provision).

Should the Operational Property & Projects Sub-Committee support the approach, the Corporation would, therefore, benefit from the refurbishment of both the Irish Chambers and the Mezzanine floor, utilising an unused asset whilst also creating improved Member facilities.

Recommendations

The recommendation is for Members to approve that the Irish Chamber be occupied by Innovation & Growth. This shift in staff member placement will enable Senior Members to fully access the space they requested in the Mezzanine Floor of West Wing, Guildhall.

Main Report

Background

1. The Irish Chamber is a Grade II listed building located in the Guildhall Courtyard within the City's estate. It was recently declared surplus by the Natural Environment Division of the new Environment Department; relocation of staff to the Guildhall North Wing is complete.
2. At the OPPSC meeting on 23rd November 2023, Members approved that Irish Chamber remain available for internal corporate use. It was noted that Irish Chamber has been offered to Innovation & Growth (IG). To complete the process, Committee requested a paper to confirm the IG move into the Chamber.
3. In preparation to occupy Irish Chamber, the City Surveyor's has identified a scope of works for refurbishment requiring a budget of £55,000. This can be funded by the cyclical works programme (CWP) and is due to complete by March 2023.
4. Innovation & Growth (IG) were asked to vacate offices on the Mezzanine floor (Guildhall West Wing) to make private space for Senior Members to conduct City Corporation business. IG were ready to vacate four (of seven) rooms on 27 June 2022 based on alternative space being found. IG vacated four rooms on 1 September 2022. As alternative space was not found for staff, IG was unable to complete the second phase of vacating three additional rooms in the Mezzanine, resulting in Members only having access to half of the space that was requested.

Current Position

5. The Irish Chamber is a suitable location for placing the displaced IG staff for the following reasons
 - a. The Irish Chamber cannot be commercially let for security reasons and will remain vacant for the foreseeable future unless put to operational use.

- b. The City Surveyor can confirm no other department is interested in using the space.
 - c. Funds for the refurbishment, move and new IT for Members and officers has been secured.
- 6. The mezzanine is ideally suited for Member workspace due to its' relative level of confidentiality. The proposed move also represents enables the Destination City team to be physically located together which will help to build their new identity and ways of working.
- 7. IG cannot absorb the displaced staff on the 1st floor of the West Wing due to current staff density levels.
- 8. Two metrics are used to assess how desks and space are divided amongst the workforce; IG ranks in the lowest quartile for both density metrics.
 - a. The ratio of desks to staff for IG is equal to 4:10. In comparison, using City Surveyor's high-level departmental occupation data for Guildhall North and West Wings, IG ranks in the lower quartile for the ratio of desks to staff. Some departments have ratios of desks to staff equal to 8:10 which is double the desk availability of IG.
 - b. The net internal area of IG space 1st floor west wing is 473 square meters (sqm) and this delivers 3.7 sqm per person. City Surveyors confirmed this to be very low. The average range in Guildhall for departments is around 7 to 10 sqm. These data indicate that IG has around half the area per person, resulting in a compacted working environment.
- 9. This is further complicated by new appointments for Destination City, including a new Director and approximately eight vacancies being filled.

Options

- 10. **Option 1** – To enable Innovation & Growth to occupy the Irish Chamber. In turn, this will enable Members to access all the space requested on the Mezzanine Floor. Funding is estimated to be £20,000 from IG budget and a bid for estimated £20,000 from Policy Contingency on application from Civic Affairs Sub-Committee to cover the Members contribution. This is the preferred option for both IG operationally and Members.
- 11. **Option 2** – To permit Innovation & Growth to remain in the east side of the Mezzanine floor (open plan area and two adjacent meeting rooms). This will limit Members to the current occupation of four rooms on the west side of the Mezzanine Floor. This is less ideal as it means the Destination City team will be split by floors and does not afford Members needed workspace.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

12. **Strategic implications** – Provision of this office space as a corporate requirement aligns with the Corporate Property Asset Management Strategy 2020/25 through better utilisation to ensure a more efficient, effective and sustainable asset base.
13. **Financial implications** – Fit out and kit out e.g. furniture and AV equipment will be funded from departmental local risk budgets and an estimated £20,000 bid to the Contingency Fund by the Civic Affairs Sub-Committee. The current uncommitted 2022/23 Contingency balance is £347,189 prior to any allocations being made for any other proposals on today's agenda.
14. **Resource implications** – None
15. **Legal implications** – None
16. **Risk implications** – Irish Chamber 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.
17. **Equalities implications** – IG propose working with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) team to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposed workspace.
18. **Climate implications** – None
19. **Security implications** – Due to Irish Chamber proximity to the Great Hall and Guildhall Yard where high level security events take place, all options would require the support of the Remembrancer and Police commissioner to ensure any future tenant meet any security requirements.

Conclusion

20. Having absorbed staff who vacated the Mezzanine floor on the First Floor of West Wing, it is not sustainable for IG to continue working with a reduced footprint.
21. Members are asked to either permit IG to occupy the Irish Chamber or provide reassurance that some teams are to remain in the Mezzanine which means Members will not be able to have all the space they requested.

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