

Rocket House Building, Cromer - repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works	
Executive Summary	<p>The Rocket House building is a multi-let property with community facilities on Cromer East Promenade that now requires substantial repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to ensure a sustainable future for the building.</p> <p>Officers have considered a range of options seeking to provide best value to the Council and to continue providing accommodation to the existing tenants, along with retention of the public toilets and lift.</p> <p>This public report places in the public domain the likely need for further investment in this building, but due to issues of commercial sensitivity relating to tenant leases, and the need to procure a programme of works in the building, much of the detail is included in an exempt appendix.</p>
Options considered	As listed in the exempt Appendix A
Consultation(s)	Coastal Team, Property Services/Car Parks, Eastlaw, Climate & Environmental Policy
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considers the options detailed in the exempt appendix A and advises officers as to which is the preferred option, or priority of options and 2. Requests a further report to be presented in due course on the preferred option or options.
Reasons for recommendations	To respond to the need for essential repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to the building.
Background papers	Background papers are exempt: Exempt Appendix

Wards affected	Cromer Town and Suffield Park
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr L Shires, Cllr H Blathwayt, Cllr A Varley, Cllr L Withington
Contact Officer	Renata Garfoot, Asset Strategy Manager Renata.garfoot@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:

Corporate Plan:	Our greener future Developing our communities Investing in our local economy and infrastructure A strong responsible and accountable Council
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	A capital budget of £1,000,000 has been allocated as part of the annual budget setting process to address the maintenance issues of this asset.
Council Policies & Strategies	Asset Management Plan 2018 - 22

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	Exempt information – commercially sensitive data. This report and appendices are to be treated as exempt for the following reason: Information in this report and appendices involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972. These paragraphs relate to: 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons: Paragraphs 3 The documents contain information relating to the business affairs of third parties and of the Council, and it is considered that those interests in withholding the information outweigh the public interest in disclosure.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	None

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider options for the Council in relation to the future asset management of the Rocket House Building, Cromer. This property which is located in an exposed location on the Cromer promenade requires significant investment in relation to repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to ensure there is a sustainable future for the property and its occupiers.

2. Introduction & Background

- 2.1 The Rocket House Building, Cromer is a mixed-use property with museum, café, public toilets and lift, which is situated on the East promenade. The

building which was constructed in 2005/6 is partially built into the cliff. A plan can be found in the Appendix.

- 2.2 The property is now approximately 16 years old has been subject to two storm surges with sea flooding in 2007 and 2013. It has been suffering with damp to the museum area and due to its age and its exposed location it has a number of other maintenance issues and key services that now need replacing, along with works to improve its energy performance to ensure the continued use of the building.
- 2.3 The building is occupied by The RNLI Museum and Rocket House Café both under leases. The Council provides public conveniences and a public lift that enables visitors easier access to the prom which would otherwise be accessed via steep ramps.
- 2.4 Under the lease arrangements, the Council is responsible for repairs and maintenance of the building and can recover some elements of this through the service charge.
- 2.5 Due to its exposed location on the promenade the building is vulnerable to higher levels of repairs and maintenance and is also suffering from damp/water ingress to the lower-level floors which is having an adverse effect on the building fabric and also the tenants own items and museum artefacts. The building is constructed using a galvanised steel frame and surveys have indicated that the parts of this frame that are accessible to inspect, are heavily corroding along with other metallic fittings within the building.
- 2.6 The Council has previously considered making a claim from the principal construction contractor over the damp defects, however, this has not been successful.
- 2.7 Alongside the damp issues there are a number of other maintenance issues:
 - The gas boilers are in need of replacement being at the end of their economic life and parts have been discontinued. There is opportunity to replace the boilers with an improved energy efficient heating system, in accordance with the Council's Net Zero objectives.
 - Radiators and associated pipe work which is encased in concrete are corroding, causing leaks and damage to other parts of the building. This may also be contributing to the damp.
 - Windows require replacement. Aluminium doors in the café area have recently been replaced at a cost of approximately £20K due to complete failure of frames and hinges. Urgent works have been undertaken to replace some to the café as they posed a Health and Safety risk.
 - The public lift is at the end of its economic life and requires replacement and some elements of redesigning to minimise the risk from day to day damage.
 - Balcony supports are corroding and the decking has gulleys that continues to become blocked requiring regular maintenance.

Arrangements for works to replace some decking boards are in progress.

- Additional works are required to improve the energy efficiency of the building and to reduce carbon emissions as much as possible, again in accordance with the Council's Net Zero objectives.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1 Officers have begun to assess the options open to the authority in seeking to address the issues detailed at section 2, above, the details of which are explored in the exempt appendix A.

4. Corporate Plan Priorities

- 4.1 The Council's Corporate Plan priorities that relate to this building are:
- 4.2 Our Greener Future - Continuing to invest in the Council's property portfolio to reduce carbon impact. Continuing our programme of investment in coastal and resort infrastructure and amenities, building on the progress made in recent years.
- 4.3 A Strong, Responsible and Accountable Council - Investing in projects and assets which deliver financial returns and/or contribute to our wider objectives around Net Zero, business and jobs, community facilities and infrastructure.
- 4.4 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy includes the Capital Programme. A budget of a £1,000,000 capital fund towards this project was agreed during the 2023/24 budget setting process to address the maintenance issues of the Rocket House building asset.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Please refer to the exempt appendices providing information on the options open to the Council.
- 5.2 Officer resources from a number of teams are involved in the management of the Rocket House building and adjoining areas of the East Prom.
- 5.3 Opportunities will be explored as to whether there are any sources of external funding open to the Council in considering options for the future repair and maintenance of the building.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The legal implications vary for each option and further legal advice is being sought.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section. They will outline any legal advice provided.

Depending on which option is chosen, and in addition to any legal information within the report/papers there may be legal considerations where additional legal advice may be sought and provided.

7. Risks

- 7.1 The Rocket House building is impacted from its exposed coastal location which results in the need for increased repairs and maintenance and facilities it offers. Even with a comprehensive repair programme the life cycle of the building components are likely to be shorter due to this vulnerable coastal location.
- 7.2 Whatever option is pursued, this building will continue to be at risk from tidal surges and adverse weather conditions and any on-going maintenance budgets will need to reflect this.
- 7.3 Each option considered in the exempt Appendix A has its own specific risks which have been identified under each option.

8. Net Zero Target

- 8.1 The Council's Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan requires that the Authority's property assets are designed to be Net Zero by 2030 and this has been considered in each of the options.
- 8.2 The building's current energy performance would be improved through a refurbishment as it would enable building fabric and systems to be installed which could reduce carbon emissions and improve energy performance.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1 The Rocket House building was designed to include a public lift to improve access for all between North Lodge Park and the East Promenade/ beach and due consideration would need to be given to the retention of this facility, along with public toilets, in the future options considered for the building in line with the Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy.

10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1 The Rocket House building has experienced some issues of anti-social behaviour particularly inappropriate use of the lift and public toilets and any

programme of future investment in the building should seek to minimise or mitigate against such behaviour in the future.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 11.1 The Rocket House building is a multi-let property with community facilities that requires substantial repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to ensure a sustainable future for the building.
- 11.2 Officers have considered a range of options seeking to provide best value to the Council and to continue providing accommodation to the existing tenants, along with retention of the public toilets and lift.
- 11.3 Having assessed each option, Officers recommend that Cabinet:
 1. Considers the options detailed in the exempt appendix A and advises officers as to which is the preferred option, or priority of options and
 2. Requests a further report to be presented in due course on the preferred option or options.