

Rocket House Building, Cromer – Building repair investigations	
Executive Summary	<p>The Rocket House building is a multi-let property with community facilities on Cromer East Promenade that requires substantial repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to ensure a sustainable future for the building.</p> <p>Following the previous report to Cabinet 4th September 2023, a visit to the property and technical briefing was made available for members.</p> <p>To gain further clarity over the damp issues, it is proposed to commission detailed investigations into the fabric of the building to identify the cause of damp, establish remedial options and budget costings.</p>
Options considered	None.
Consultation(s)	Local Members
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delegate to Officers to commission detailed investigations into the fabric of the building in 2 phases to identify the cause of damp, establish remedial options and budget costings. 2. A further report back to Cabinet with the findings.
Reasons for recommendations	To respond to the need for essential repairs, maintenance and energy improvement works to the building.
Background papers	

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:	<p>Our greener future</p> <p>Developing our communities</p> <p>Investing in our local economy and infrastructure</p> <p>A strong responsible and accountable Council</p>

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	No
Has the public interest test been applied	N/A
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Cabinet - 4 th September 2023

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose to Cabinet that detailed investigations are undertaken into the fabric of the building to identify the cause of damp ingress at the Rocket House Building, Cromer, establish remediation options and budget costings for repairing the building.

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 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 visitor's easier access to the prom which would otherwise be accessed via steep ramps. Under the terms of these leases the Council as the Landlord, has a repairing obligation.
- 2.2 There are a number of repair and maintenance issues at the building as outlined in the 4th September 2023 Cabinet report. This report identified a number of options available to address the issues and a decision was made to advise officers as to which is the preferred option, or priority of options following a further confidential briefing on the technical issues affecting the site and building.
- 2.3 Following this meeting, in November, a visit to the property and technical briefing for Members was undertaken to provide greater clarity of the condition issues.
- 2.4 Funding opportunities have also been investigated. The Arts Council has closed its Museum Estate Development (MEND) funding round and at the current time anticipates that there will be no further funding rounds. The National Lottery has Project Grants available for heritage, including

museums. Medium projects up to £250,000 reopens in January 2024 and for projects above £250,000 an expression of interest could be submitted to establish likelihood of funding. The Council has been unsuccessful in Levelling up funding for Cromer.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1 To provide greater clarity of damp issues affecting the property, it proposed to undertake detailed investigations into the fabric of the building to identify the cause of damp, remedial options and budget costings for repairing the building.
- 3.2 It is likely that the investigation works would be undertaken as 2 phases. The first phase would be investigations to the Council's public toilets and stairs area so to minimise disruption to the tenants. A further phase, to the RNLI Museum area could also be investigated if phase 1 was inconclusive. Any proposal to undertake investigations in the museum area would be in consultation with the RNLI as tenant. The intention would again be to minimise disruption to them and these investigations are not expected to require the RNLI to vacate the building. The cost of the initial investigations would be in the region of £50,000 which will cover the costs of the intrusive works and also the expert advice on the probable cause if that can be established during the initial stage.
- 3.3 A further report presented back to Cabinet with this information to enable Cabinet to make an informed decision regarding the building condition issues identified.

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 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. There is a capital budget of a £1.0m included in the capital programme for this project as part the 2023/24 budget setting process to carry out the necessary repair works to the Rocket House building.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Funding opportunities have also been investigated following the previous Cabinet meeting. The Arts Council has closed its Museum Estate Development (MEND) funding round and at the current time anticipates that there will be no further funding rounds. The National Lottery has Project Grants available for heritage, including museums. Medium projects up to £250,000 reopens in January 2024 and for projects above £250,000 an expression of interest could be submitted to establish likelihood of funding.

- 5.2 Due to the condition of the property it is both financially and officer resource intensive when dealing with repair issues.
- 5.3 The Council operates service charge for the building and it annually contributes financial budget towards the repairs and maintenance.
- 5.4 There is a capital budget of £1.0m included in the capital programme to carry out the necessary repair works. The proposed initial investigation is the first stage in carrying out these works and are required to establish the full extent of the further work required. These works should reduce the ongoing revenue maintenance budget that has previously been needed for the building.
- 5.5 The initial investigations that can be carried out will be in the region of £50,000, to cover the intrusive works and specialist, expert analysis of the findings. If the cause can be established further investigation works in the RNLi museum may not be necessary, however this cannot be guaranteed.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

There is a need to carry out some essential repair and improvement works e.g. resolving a damp issue and installation of a new lift. This should all be covered by the capital budget of £1.0m. The works, once complete, should result in revenue savings relating to ongoing repairs and maintenance which should be significantly reduced.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The property is subject to various legal agreements and Eastlaw have been providing advice.

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

A lease is currently in place which we consider allows for preliminary investigations of the building providing reasonable notice is given and Eastlaw can provide such additional advice where required.

7. Risks

- 7.1 There are no significant risks identified with the investigation proposals.

8. Net Zero Target

- 8.1 Works to support the Council's Net Zero priorities form part of the repair option previously presented to members.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1 There are no equality, diversity and inclusion issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1 There are no community safety issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

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 Following the previous report to Cabinet 4th September 2023, a visit to the property and technical briefing was made available for members.
- 11.3 To gain further clarity over the damp issues, it is proposed to commission detailed investigations as 2 phases, into the fabric of the building to identify the cause of damp, establish remedial options and budget costings.