

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES**

**WILLIAMSON ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM  
PROPOSED INTERNAL REFURBISHMENT AND EXTENDED FACILITIES  
SCHEME AND ESTIMATE REPORT**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report describes proposals and sets out the estimated costs of a scheme to undertake improvements and necessary repairs to the facilities at the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum. Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the proposal within the budget agreed by Cabinet on 09 December 2009 within the Capital Programme for 2010-2013 (minute 225 refers), as qualified by Cabinet on 14 January 2010 (minute 279 refers).

This report is identified as item 39 on the Forward Plan for July – October 2010.

**1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Williamson Art Gallery and Museum was constructed in 1928 by Birkenhead Corporation as a purpose-built gallery, and the form and function of the building has changed little since that time. The building is Grade II listed.
- 1.2 The accommodation currently comprises of 14 individual public exhibition rooms and a sculpture hall at ground floor level, each with overhead lantern lights, with service accommodation and storage at basement and first floor levels. The plan configuration is a figure-of-eight, with a large and a small internal quadrangle, with the quadrangles only providing limited natural light to some of the service areas.
- 1.3 The building was designed on an open-plan basis with free-movement between galleries. The effect of this is that environmental control is very difficult, with no facility for varying temperature and humidity for individual exhibitions. To meet standard conditions for storage and display of museum collections there are minimum requirements, which include control of temperature and humidity and, in some cases, exclusion of harmful daylight.
- 1.4 The storage accommodation for the growing art collections was deemed inadequate in the early 1980s, when the original basement was extended. Even further storage has been deemed necessary over the last ten years, and currently 2 of the public galleries are closed and temporarily used for storage.
- 1.5 As well as providing a venue for both traveling and static exhibitions, the gallery staff work with a variety of adult and young person/school groups in developing education around the museum collections. There is no separate provision for accommodation of coats and bags or for consumption of food or drink. This creates problems for efficient collection management, care of collections and visitor expectations. Collection care is compromised by condensation created either by wet coats or steam from hot drinks, food crumbs attracting insects and the danger of spills.

- 1.6 Access and emergency egress provision do not meet current requirements under the Disabled Discrimination Act, current Fire Regulations or Licensing requirements, and public toilet accommodation within the Williamson is currently inadequate.
- 1.7 Visitor expectations also demand a level of additional provision for their comfort, including basic café facilities alongside retail opportunities, improved seating areas and toilet accommodation. These in turn raise the opportunity to increase income as well as enhancing the visitor experience.
- 1.8 Further difficulties experienced at the Williamson are that the only access into the galleries for the delivery of exhibitions is through the public entrance door, and the only route for the transfer of large objects between the public galleries and the basement storage and conservation studio is also through the public entrance door, via external ramps to basement level.
- 1.9 Moving collections between floors is a Health & Safety issue as staff are put at excessive risk from lifting and carrying heavy and large collection items. The provision of an adequate ground floor store room will avoid this and ensure that collections are not moved more than necessary and can be done in a safe and appropriate manner.
- 1.10 The existing heating system is oil-fired, with an oil-storage tank at basement level. Gas has recently been extended to the building, and the existing system is being replaced this Summer with new efficient gas-fired boilers, with considerably-reduced CO2 emissions.
- 1.11 In October 2009 the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum and Birkenhead Priory were awarded the status of Full Accreditation by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, application for which was approved by Cabinet in minute 419, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009. Accreditation is the national standard for museums in Britain.
- 1.12 The Williamson Art Gallery, having been identified as the Council's main exhibition facility, was listed in the Capital Programme for 2010 – 2013 (minute 225, Cabinet 09 December.2009), as the priority scheme within the programme of Investment in Cultural Services Assets.
- 1.13 In May 2010 the Williamson received 'The Industry's Favourite' award at the 2010 Museums & Heritage Awards for Excellence for the exhibition 'Arthur H Lee & Sons: A Textile Dynasty' and a High Commendation in the category 'Project on a Limited Budget' for the exhibition 'Above the Clouds – Mallory & Irvine and the Quest for Everest'.

## **2.0 PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 The proposals for the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum have been worked up in close co-operation with the Council's conservation section, and comprise:
  - Improvements to weather-tightness and energy efficiency of the existing roof and lantern lights,
  - Improvements to front access steps, railings and ramp,
  - New vehicular delivery ramp / emergency exit and doors to rear of galleries,
  - New trolley ramp / emergency exit and doors to side of galleries,
  - Zoning of galleries for improved environmental control by the installation of automatic full-height glazed doors between galleries,

- Construction of new ground floor repository store within the small quadrangle to allow the re-opening of 2 galleries currently used for storage purposes,
  - Conversion of the Central Gallery into a Visitor Centre and Café.
  - Construction of a two-storey extension into the large quadrangle with new improved toilet and kitchen provision at ground floor level and staff accommodation at first floor level.
  - Provision of a ground floor meeting room by transferring the Curator's Office to the new first floor accommodation
  - Development of a 'Changing Places' toilet with hoist and adjustable bed for those in need of assistance,
- 2.2 The development of improved environmental control means that not only will Wirral's own collections be correctly conserved and stored, but also that it will be possible to meet appropriate conditions to borrow items from other museum or private collections. The opportunity to offer these facilities opens the possibility of improving the range of items on display for visitors and increase visitor numbers.
- 2.3 Museum staff are working with 'Aiming Higher for Disabled Children' to increase and enhance the experience of visiting the Williamson Art Gallery across the widest possible range. The provision of a 'Changing Places' toilet will significantly enhance access.
- 2.4 The proposed re-roofing is being tendered in July 2010, with a view to having this work completed by September 2010.
- 2.5 It is intended that the remainder of the works above be tendered as a single contract of works to maximise procurement and operational efficiencies. The programme will be dependent on Listed Building Consent, but is anticipated to be able to start on site in January 2011, with a view to completion in June 2011.
- 2.6 No extended closure of the Williamson will be required to undertake the above works, although short-term closures of the building may be required between stages of development for public safety reasons. It is envisaged that work specific to an individual gallery will only require the temporary closure of that particular gallery.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Estimate for this work is set out below. All costs are estimated for the commencement of construction within the first quarter of 2011.

Building costs (excluding asbestos-removal, fixtures & fittings, IT equipment and loose furniture)	£1,081,617
Charges for the initial feasibility study for the development Of the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum	£ 13,000
Departmental Charges including: Professional Fees, Clerk of Works salary, CDM Coordinator, Planning & B Regs fees	£ 162,243
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,256,860</b>

3.2 The scheme will be funded from the Capital Programme which includes investment in Cultural Services assets with £2 million specifically for works to the Williamson Art Gallery and the Birkenhead Priory. Proposals for the development of the Priory will be subject to a later report.

3.3 It is anticipated that expenditure on this project will be phased as follows:  
£ 600,000 in 2010/11,  
£ 608,698 in 2011/12, and  
£ 48,162 in 2012/13.

**TOTAL                      £1,256,860**

3.4 It is anticipated that the main scheme will go out as a two stage selective competitive tender based on quality and price in October 2010 and the selected contractor will commence work on site in January 2011 with anticipated completion by August 2011. The proposed tender process has been approved by the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit.

#### **4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Professional Services for the scheme will be provided by staff within the Technical Services Department.

4.2 In accordance with the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations the Director of Technical Services is carrying out the role of CDM Coordinator.

4.3 There are no full-time staff implications for the Williamson Art Gallery arising from this report.

#### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Access will be provided for children and adults with disabilities to all public areas of the refurbished and extended building.

5.2 The scheme is designed to comply with the current recommendations for sensory impairment.

5.3 An accessible WC and a separate 'Changing Places' WC shall be available within the Entrance Foyer.

5.4 There are no implications in this report specifically for women, ethnic minorities or the elderly.

#### **6.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The design of this project will take account of best practice to reduce the risk of crime and the local Crime Reduction Officer will be consulted.

6.2 The scheme shall include electronic controls on appropriate inner doors to restrict unauthorized personnel from proceeding beyond the reception lobby.

#### **7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Thermal insulation is to be provided to meet the standards and guidelines in part L2 of the Building Regulations.

7.2 Low energy electrical fittings, heating controls and water saving devices will all be used as far as possible to help reduce the consumption of natural resources.

- 7.3 The use of biomass as a source of heating fuel was considered, but rejected due to the building's location within a built-up residential area.
- 7.4 All timber used will be from sustainable sources regulated by the Forestry Stewardship Council.
- 7.5 The successful contractor will be encouraged to employ local labour and source materials from local suppliers once construction commences

## **8.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Planning, Listed Building Consent and Building Control approval will be required for this project.

## **9.0 ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no specific anti poverty implications within this report.

## **10.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The building improvements will assist in providing an integrated approach to children's education, and open up cultural awareness for the entire community

## **11.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Williamson Art Gallery and Museum is in the Oxtou ward, but as the Council's premier Art Gallery it is of interest to all Members.

## **12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1 The information used in the preparation of this report is held by the Technical Services Department. No background papers have been used in the preparation of this report other than those contained in the Architects file B02266 and the Quantity Surveyors working papers.
- 12.2 Cabinet report dated 09 December 2009, Capital Programme 2010-13.

## **13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 That the Scheme and Estimate, as presented, be accepted,
- 13.2 That the Director of Technical Services be authorised to obtain all necessary statutory approvals for the project.
- 13.3 That the Director of Technical Services be authorised to seek tenders for the project, and report such tenders to a future meeting of Cabinet with a recommendation for acceptance of the most economically beneficial tender received.
- 13.4 That the Director of Technical Services use his delegated powers to accept the lowest bona-fide tender for the roof works and report his acceptance of the tender to Cabinet in due course in accordance with the Council's Procurement Policy.

**DAVID GREEN**  
**Director of Technical Services**

The initial draft of this report has been prepared by Andy Nash, Group Architect, who may be contacted on 606 2425