



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 17 July 2024

REPORT TITLE:	WALLASEY AND BIRKENHEAD TOWN HALL UPDATE AND PROPOSED NEXT STEPS
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

On 13 December 2023 the Policy and Resources Committee considered the status of Birkenhead and Wallasey Town Halls. It agreed that feasibility work should be undertaken and that once this work was complete that a report would be presented to the Committee with those findings, present options, and business cases in respect to their future uses.

Wallasey Town Hall was to remain stood down whilst this work was undertaken. Subsequently the Council would continue to use Birkenhead Town Hall for the meetings of Council and Committees on a temporary basis.

The position has changed since this decision has been taken, with Wallasey Town Hall been partially remobilised to facilitate better management of committee meetings. As a result, at the time of this paper, both buildings are now partially being used to deliver Council services.

The report proposal directly supports the Wirral Plan (2023-27) through the key theme of working together to deliver people focused regeneration.

This is a key decision. This has relevance to Birkenhead and Tranmere, and Seacombe wards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:

- (1) note the update as set out within this report, including the costs of both buildings whether or not they are occupied and the continuing journey of the council to rationalise property owned and operated by the Council.
- (2) note the relocation of democratic uses from Birkenhead Town Hall to Wallasey Town Hall and the temporary relocation of Licencing into Wallasey Town Hall from Solar Campus.

- (3) approve that a workshop of this Committee be convened to inform future options for Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls and review work to date and understand the implications of next steps as set out in paragraph 3.20
- (4) To note that following the member workshop a further report will be brought back for consideration to this committee.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Both Birkenhead and Wallasey Town Halls are owned by the Council and are Grade II* listed buildings. This means the Council has obligations to maintain them. Both Town Halls are currently underused, with Wallasey Town Hall vacant since Autumn 2023. It is not a good use of resources to retain two underused town halls. Birkenhead Town Hall does not currently offer the space needed to safely deliver Committee and Council meetings.
- 1.2 The Council has chosen to focus its main office accommodation in the Mallory Building, Birkenhead. This is currently not configured to deliver civic and democratic functions of the Council, principally Committee and Council meetings and the exercise of the office of Mayor.
- 1.3 The Council needs to invest in the assets to assure their condition over the long term, should it wish to retain them. Within its own masterplan area, investment in Wallasey Town Hall will support the long term plans the Council has for the Seacombe Regeneration Area and the wider regeneration of the locality.
- 1.4 Retaining only one town hall does offer the opportunity to significantly reduce revenue and capital costs, manage contingency risks giving an alternative significant location other than the Mallory Building, should that be needed.
- 1.5 Retaining, or releasing, buildings can generate opportunities to change the way the Council operates, giving it the potential to improve how it delivers services to residents. Due to its size, configuration for public access and democratic functions, there is a better opportunity to do this at Wallasey Town Hall.
- 1.6 The demands on Solar Campus are also increasing with 15 pupils needing to be accommodated at this former school by September 2024. This means that the licensing team also needs to temporarily relocate to Wallasey Town Hall to allow for the provision of additional educational places for young people in the Borough.
- 1.7 The Council has demolished the Wallasey Town Hall Annex sites and needs to progress with the sites' development. It also needs to provide certainty for a significant element of the Wallasey Town Hall Quarter Masterplan.
- 1.8 Taking this approach sets the conditions for the Council to continue to rationalise its operational asset portfolio.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 There are three broad alternative options that could be considered. These are to retain both Town Halls, release both Town Halls or retain one Town Hall.
- 2.2 There are several additional factors for the Committee to consider which include, treatment of civic artefacts linked to both buildings and the suitability of any future option to provide the space needed to deliver the democratic function. Members also need to consider the cost of retaining the assets as the Council seeks to balance its budget into the future. The Council as an owner of Grade II* listed assets has obligations to maintain them. There is a saving allocated to the mothballing of

Wallasey Town Hall of £400k. The operational use of Wallasey Town Hall would create a revenue pressure for the Council in addition to any remobilisation cost.

Retain both Town Halls

- 2.3 The principal reason for a Town Hall is to deliver the democratic and civic functions of a Council and there is only a need for one of these assets to deliver these functions. Whilst both assets are specifically configured to deliver these functions, Birkenhead Town Hall was configured to deal with a smaller number of members. Since the advent of Wirral Borough Council in 1974, Wallasey Town Hall has been the seat of democratic and civic functions for the borough. The civic elements of the buildings are challenging to be re-purposed for other Council uses. It would be sensible and best value for money to retain only one of these assets, releasing the other to its future use and relieving the Council of the burden of maintaining an asset it does not have a need for.
- 2.4 The Council would have to fund works to both assets to keep them in condition whilst it retains them. The Council would also have to identify the funding for any adaptations for its future use. If only using one asset, it would be appropriate to mothball the other to minimise cost whilst the Committee decides what to do with the asset which it is not using. If they were both retained the Council would need to find a use for both.

Dispose of Both Assets

- 2.5 Disposal of both assets is another option, releasing them for a future economic use and releasing the Council of the future long-term costs and liabilities of the operation of both Grade II* buildings. Shrinking the Council estate is a principle that Council officers are currently delivering. Other reasons may include seeking more modern accommodation which would be purpose built for current needs to deliver the democratic or civic functions of the Council. The Council would have to consider what to do with both assets be this simply dispose of them or find alternative uses for them.
- 2.6 Should this option be chosen, the most obvious alternative would be that services are currently delivered in the Town Halls would be placed into the Mallory Building, although there are other options available. The Mallory building has the space needed to deliver all the services currently delivered in the Town Halls, although it is not currently configured to be a front facing office. Although this would be an opportunity to design bespoke space, careful design would be needed to create effective and efficient space to allow the exercise of the democratic and civic functions of the Council in front of the public. Care would also need to be taken to ensure any design of the facility would have the relevant gravitas to deliver these functions. One of the reasons to invest in the Mallory Building was to drive footfall in Birkenhead. Although democratic and civic spaces would generate footfall, this would not necessarily be as intensive as more traditional office uses, and most committees meet in the evening.
- 2.7 The Council has previously delivered Committee and Council meetings in the Floral Pavilion and therefore this specific option needs to be considered in this report. This could generate opportunities for the Council to invest in the Floral Pavilion. Although it is front facing, it is a place of entertainment, which is not an ideal combination for formal Committee and Council meetings. Timings of normal Floral events would

often conflict with Council and Committee meetings, leading to competing priorities, which would be difficult to resolve. Additional back-office space would be needed as well as adaptation to the entrance of the Floral. Taking this approach would also restrict the venue's ability to continue to develop and therefore this option has been discounted. Some Councils also hire spaces to hold larger meetings, investing in the local community through venue hire, however this would mean that the Council would have neither the space nor associated costs in its control and therefore that option has also been discounted. It may also impact on accessibility of meetings for members of the public and would require the council to invest in mobile technology to support webcasting etc of meetings in public.

Dispose of one Town Hall

- 2.8 Already mothballed until recently, members could conclude that Wallasey Town Hall should be released, with delivery of services happening out of Birkenhead or another asset.
- 2.8 Birkenhead Town Hall is not as effective a venue to deliver the democratic function as Wallasey Town Hall is, but it is better located in terms of transport. Wallasey Town Hall offers better opportunities and more room to deliver, providing better solutions for issues like public and member safety. It has a dedicated meeting chamber with space for the public to effectively view proceedings. Birkenhead Town Hall has limited options to deliver more services out of the building, given it is a much smaller building than Wallasey Town Hall. Wallasey Town Hall offers greater opportunities, due to its size and layout to deliver more Council services than Birkenhead does.
- 2.9 Delivery of regeneration and investment in Birkenhead is a key plank of the Council's plans to regenerate the Borough. Choosing an option where public facing offices and their associated functions are delivered outside Birkenhead does generate the opportunity to spread the investment that the Council is making more widely across the Borough.

Investment in retained assets

- 2.10 Any proposal to retain or divest of a Town Hall is a long-term strategic decision. The buildings need to be invested in to assure their long-term future. Further investment would be required to configure the accommodation if other uses were brought into one of the town halls which would be in addition to any work needed to address the condition of the buildings. The Council has obligations towards its assets to keep them safe, and in the case of listed buildings has additional obligations. Should the investment needed, not be undertaken then the Council will incur more cost in the future as individual components of the building fail. Therefore, if assets are retained, they need to be invested in. However, where a building is not used for a period of time, then it is appropriate to mothball it. Should the Council need to prudentially borrow to deliver capital works then there would be a revenue cost associated with any borrowing.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Wallasey Town Hall has been recently remobilised to deliver democratic functions due to concerns about public, member and staff safety whilst holding meetings at

Birkenhead Town Hall. Until this point Wallasey Town Hall has been held vacant and Birkenhead, was underused. Licensing which also delivers the Licencing Panel and other services out of the solar campus has also been identified as needing to relocate. The reason for this is that there is a need to use the building to provide education for 15 young people, starting in September, which would be a more appropriate use for the building. In addition to this the accommodation for delivering the Licensing panel is not ideal.

- 3.2 Following the previous committee report regarding Town Halls dated 13 December 2023, several strands of activity have been undertaken, including seeking advice on condition, commercial advice about future uses, accessibility, and potential solutions for delivery of democratic meetings.

Building status and context

- 3.3 Both Birkenhead and Wallasey Town Halls are Grade II* listed buildings. The buildings, their use and contents form an important part of the heritage of the Borough. Birkenhead Town Hall sits within the iconic Hamilton Square, which forms the largest group of Grade I listed buildings in the UK outside London. The best approach to protect any listed building is to ensure it has a stable long term economic use. Should the Council not have a use for either building releasing them to a future use would be the best course of action from an asset management and listed building approach.
- 3.4 The vicinities of both Town Halls benefit from master planning work. Wallasey Town Hall forms part of the Wallasey Town Hall Quarter masterplan area and Birkenhead Town Hall lies near the Woodside masterplan area. Both masterplans have been subject to public consultation and are due to be considered by Committee later this year. Although both masterplans propose regenerative effects around both buildings the approaches taken are different, with the immediate vicinity of Wallasey Town Hall seeing opportunities for housing development, whereas proposals in the vicinity of Birkenhead Town Hall would see improvements to the connectivity with the town centre and the Woodside waterfront, with opportunities for enhanced place making.

Accommodation

- 3.5 The Gross Internal Area (GIA) of Wallasey Town Hall is 7,804 sqm and Birkenhead Town Hall is 4,551sqm. These are the whole floor areas including rooms, incidental and circulation space. Both Town Halls are set over three floors and basement areas. Wallasey Town Hall is the noticeably larger building with a significantly larger basement and office accommodation. Birkenhead Town Hall has very limited outside areas and although Wallasey Town Hall does have outside areas this is generally set out as open spaces. It does benefit from the nearby public 85 space car park on Brighton Street. The surplus Wallasey Town Hall Annexes have now been demolished and are being prepared to deliver housing, in line with the emerging local plan. Birkenhead benefits from its setting in the Grade 1 listed Hamilton Square. Wallasey Town Hall benefits from an iconic view of the river Mersey. The distance between both Town Halls is only two miles. Birkenhead Town Hall is closest to the Mallory Building and has better public transport links.
- 3.6 The Council needs accommodation to be able to deliver its Civic and Democratic functions. This includes activity associated with the Mayor, Committee and Council meetings and spaces ancillary to those activities. Both Town Halls use similar floor

areas to deliver these functions. The areas used to deliver in Birkenhead Town Hall is 1,059sqm which is broadly comparable to the spaces in Wallasey Town Hall that deliver the same function, 1,172sqm, although more space is consumed in both buildings to provide circulation and incidental space than this. It is noted that the Ball room in Birkenhead Town Hall is included in this number.

3.7 The Registrar service, based in Birkenhead Town Hall, requires approximately 644 sqm of space, including its circulation areas. Comparing like for like and just considering democratic and civic functions, Wallasey Town Hall has more surplus space than Birkenhead Town Hall, this is principally office accommodation and basement areas.

3.8 From a risk and contingency planning perspective, Wallasey Town Hall offers the opportunity to provide space for the Council to continue to operate should Mallory not be available for some reason. Birkenhead Town Hall has less space to do this. Since the introduction of flexible working this is less of a factor than it would once have been.

Condition

3.9 Both buildings, due to their age, have time expired building components and need significant investment, should the Council wish to retain them. This is in line with similar buildings of a similar age. A condition survey of both buildings has been undertaken by consultants that have appropriate experience with this category of asset. This has indicated that the external fabric (for example roof, walls and windows) and a range of other elements need to be invested in. Additional work, including an Equality Act and fire risk assessment has also been undertaken. It is estimated that Wallasey Town Hall needs £5.99m and Birkenhead Town Hall needs £3.73m over a 15-year period, with Birkenhead needing £567k in the first year and Wallasey Town Hall needing £149k in the same period. Over the lifetime of the planned 15 year period this is £54 per square metre for Birkenhead Town Hall and £48 per square metre for Wallasey Town Hall.

3.10 These figures have a range of normal exclusions, such as preliminaries and construction cost inflation over the period of 15 years. As a result, a condition survey will not provide the whole cost of bringing an asset into good condition. Therefore, the costs from a condition survey should be considered as a base level of cost. The cost of delivery of these works, when preliminaries, surveys, and design, permissions and other fees and contingency is considered could be as much as twice the number stated in the surveys, if not more. This factor does not consider the revenue cost of borrowing, in order to deliver capital works. In addition, any adaptations the Council does to the building, for example improving the fit out beyond the detail in the condition survey or changing the method of conditioning the building would have additional costs. In the case of conditioning this could mean replacing the whole heating system, and undertaking works for insulation and on power systems, which would be a significant piece of work which could cost in the region of £4m for Wallasey and £2m for Birkenhead, although the Council may be able to offset these costs through accessing future rounds of grant funding.

3.11 A decision to retain either asset is also, from a property management perspective, a decision to invest in the building so its condition can be maintained. This makes retaining either asset a long-term strategic decision. Should the Council seek to

retain but not enable the investment needed this would have a detrimental effect if continued beyond the short term. This could risk development, investment and opportunity identified in the emerging masterplans as well. Underusing an asset and simply retaining, it would also present a long-term risk to the Council and would waste the limited resources of the Council in the long term.

Delivery of the civic and democratic function

- 3.12 When this matter was before the Committee previously, the Council had mothballed Wallasey Town Hall. Civic and Democratic functions have been delivered out of Birkenhead Town Hall on a temporary basis, along with other complementary services, including registrars and supporting functions. Most months approximately 20 formal Committee or Council meetings are held. It is right that members have access to a suitable workspace, where they can deliver this vital Council function. These meetings in public also need to have appropriate arrangements so the public, members and staff are all safe. Wallasey Town Hall does have a dedicated Chamber, which addresses these issues. Its committee rooms also provide for a clearer separation of the public from members and staff.
- 3.13 The Council has experienced some disruptive public behaviour during formal committee meetings recently. This has highlighted the weaknesses of providing public meetings at Birkenhead Town Hall and exposing members of the public, members, and officers to risk. Therefore, a decision has been taken to relocate public meetings to Wallasey Town Hall where these can be better managed, particularly from a safety and security aspect. The first of these meetings happened in June 2024. To remobilise the building, in part, several activities needed to be undertaken. This has meant rebalancing the Council's Facilities Management team so the building can be properly resourced, undertaking a series of minor works and identifying other works that are needed in the future and updating risk assessments. Most of the cost of these works have been contained within the Asset Management service, consuming officer time, which would be otherwise focused on other activity, however direct costs related to the move are anticipated not to be above £100,000. The majority of this work had to be delivered on a very tight turn around. It is noted that any further costs associated with moving other services has not yet been considered and would be accounted for in any business cases associated with those moves.
- 3.14 An alternative location could be selected to deliver these functions. Mallory is not currently a front facing building and not designed for the purposes of holding public meetings and to adapt the building to achieve this would require careful redesign. An indicative cost of c£3m has been outlined for the purposes of this report but would be subject to further due diligence and detailed design. The option of delivery in the Floral Pavilion has also been considered and discounted as has using other non-council owned buildings to deliver.
- 3.15 Members of the public book their weddings at Birkenhead Town Hall. In considering the future use of Birkenhead Town Hall this will need to be carefully considered so those that have a live booking have certainty around their specific circumstances and can plan their special day with confidence.

Potential future uses of the Town Halls

- 3.16 The Council has employed a consultant to review the commercial opportunities for both buildings, should the Committee wish to dispose of either Town Hall. In summary they found that Birkenhead was too small for a major Hotel conversion and challenging for office conversion, although it is thought to have potential for enhanced leisure use, which may create additional vibrancy in Hamilton Square. Wallasey's context was one of regeneration and viability challenges, and the building was considered too large for a single use conversion. It would likely be better placed to support civic uses, including the Council chamber and offers opportunities for front of house delivery. Like Birkenhead it has opportunities around leisure uses.
- 3.17 Should the Committee choose an option that would mean the release of an asset it would need to ensure that the assets are released as effectively and efficiently as possible. This would allow any future owner or occupier to deliver an economically sustainable solution in the asset. Should the Committee overly restrict the use of the asset this may hinder the asset having an economically sustainable future.
- 3.18 Council officers have also considered what Council uses the assets could be put to, in particular what services could be placed in Wallasey Town Hall. The hub for office accommodation for the Council is the Mallory building and this is the default location for the delivery of back of house office accommodation. Wallasey Town Hall in particular presents opportunities for the delivery of services that support the democratic and civic functions.
- 3.19 Further work with directorates needs to be undertaken to develop specific cases, which will be reviewed by members at a future workshop. It is anticipated that there are sufficient opportunities to populate one Town Hall, making the Council more efficient. Registrars and Electoral services also deliver out of Birkenhead Town Hall and as part of taking the next steps with this building those services would have to be engaged with.
- 3.20 The outputs from the workshop with members will underpin a future report to the Committee on the future of the Town Halls. The workshop, will need to consider, amongst other issues;
- the cost and operational implications of undertaking works at the Town Halls:
 - long term use for the purpose of the Council's civic and democratic function,
 - a costed occupation strategy for varying council functions and services; and
 - Transport strategy to support future use of the Town Halls.

In order to support this work, members are asked to note that officers anticipate a budget of circa £400k will be required.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is estimated that Wallasey Town Hall needs £5.99m and Birkenhead Town Hall needs £3.73m over a 15 year period, with Birkenhead needing £567k in the first year and Wallasey Town Hall needing £149k in the same period. These figures have a range of normal exclusions, such as preliminaries and construction cost inflation over the period of 15 years. The cost of delivery of these works, when preliminaries, surveys, and design, permissions and other fees and contingency is considered

could be more than twice the number stated in the surveys and would be a capital investment in the asset. In addition, any adaptations the Council does to the building, for example improving the fit out beyond the detail in the condition survey or changing the method of conditioning the building would have additional costs. The cost of prudentially borrowing capital to undertake these works would range from 7% to 12% of the cost per year as revenue, depending on the life span of the works, although some works may benefit from grant funding, for example accessing grant funding to decarbonise the building. Varying the programme of works set out in the condition survey could also flex the sum required each year of the programme. Therefore, a further piece of work would be required to bid for capital funding and understand the profile of costs.

- 4.2 There are revenue costs associated with the remobilisation of Wallasey Town Hall. These are not budgeted. It is currently estimated that these will not exceed £100k. In addition, savings identified with the mothballing of Wallasey will be impacted and valued at £400k per annum will now not be achieved, although this may be offset by changes to the status of Birkenhead Town Hall if the Committee chooses to do this in the future. This gap is currently unfunded and will continue to impact the Council's finances whilst both assets remain operational. A cost of c£400k would be required to build up the costs and develop business cases needed to provide the information needed to bring a report back to committee.
- 4.3 A considerable sum has been identified in year one of the condition work for Birkenhead. Should the Council look to release the asset the Council would not incur that cost.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The status of Wallasey Town Hall and Birkenhead Town Hall as Grade II* listed places a responsibility of the Council to maintain them in accordance with the listed status.
- 5.2 Any contract award for surveys and building work would be made on most economically advantageous tender basis or through an approved Framework route. The Council's Contract Procedure rules set out how contracts are to be awarded by the Council in accordance with its Procurement Strategy requirements.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are a number of staff that operate out of Birkenhead Town Hall, should at a later date, the Council consider discontinuing use of the building, these staff will need to be engaged with. In addition to this the Council's workforce in the building is resident facing and therefore the Council should also engage with the public about any changes to that service. The Council would also need to consider any contractual obligations it has for use of the building as part of the plan, should the committee agree to change the way this building is used.

- 6.2 Should the Council choose to remobilise or demobilise an asset, there may be IT implications which would require testing for remobilisation or removing of IT assets to demobilise an asset.
- 6.3 It is very clear that the Council has an oversupply of this category of asset. It only needs one of this type of asset and not two, and one of these assets have been mothballed for a considerable period of time, proving this point. The spaces for democratic and civic functions do not necessarily lend themselves to normal operations, grander than needed for routine use of a Council asset. The configuration of Wallasey Town Hall better lends itself to assure the safety of the public, members and officers: Birkenhead Town Hall is suitable where the level of risk is lower. It is noted that the cost per square foot of managing Birkenhead Town Hall is greater over the next 15 years to Wallasey Town Hall. Also, Wallasey offers the opportunity for more services to be introduced into the building.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Condition

- 7.1 The general approach to repair in local authorities (similar with other asset owners) is to focus on minor works and Health and Safety matters. This approach is logical and optimises the amount of investment in a building. However, as a building matures components of that building will naturally reach the end of their useful lives, potentially creating a cascade of issues, and does not offer the best technical solution in the long term. For example, patch repairing a roof may be a good solution initially but becomes a poor solution as the roof reaches the end of its useful life. With many components in both buildings this point has been reached, where further repairs, without addressing the need for longer term investment will not deliver the best outcome. As examples the basement of Wallasey is damp due to a known and significant building defect, and the Green Room in Birkenhead is affected by a roof defect which is difficult to address without replacement.
- 7.2 Inflation continues to be a critical risk on any build costs. Should an option that would see investment or repair of the buildings be instigated this will be a risk and as that progresses through design stages, costs will be assessed and tracked on a regular basis and design adjusted where possible to provide value for money. This is managed by appropriate cost consultancy and risk management.
- 7.3 Delivery of any construction project presents a set of unique risks. These are mitigated by the proposal to appoint the appropriate design team and other professionals to deliver the scheme. However, any works based on a visual inspection risks finding issues once works commenced.

Civic Artefacts and other issues

- 7.4 There are a number of civic artefacts that are associated with both Town Halls. This includes a range of materials including but not exclusive to rolls of honour, paintings pictures, plaques and statues. Should the Council choose to dispose of either building some sensitive consideration of how these assets would be treated would need to be carefully considered.

- 7.5 Wallasey Town Hall has a listed Council Chamber designed and set out for that purpose. Although this does have accessibility issues, it does provide members with a venue with the appropriate level of gravitas to deliver their civic function. Birkenhead Town Hall's chamber was set out in a different way and is currently presented as a multi function meeting room. Should a solution other than Wallasey be chosen for this purpose consideration to the delivery of that space would need to be undertaken.
- 7.6 The act of remembrance takes place in front of Birkenhead Town Hall. Careful arrangements around management of this and other issues would be needed in the future if members choose to change the operational status of Birkenhead Town Hall.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Should the services offered in Birkenhead Town Hall change then there may be a requirement for consultation. If services relocate to Wallasey Town Hall then other consultation exercises may need to be undertaken, but this would be addressed as each decision regarding relocation of services was undertaken on a case by case basis.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Both Town Halls are Grade II* listed buildings and of historic importance to Residents the Borough, and Council. Therefore, seeing them in economic use is important as this will ultimately protect the assets in the long term. This is also important from an environmental stand point as reusing the buildings ensures that the carbon embedded in their construction is not released or carbon invested in new buildings where existing buildings can be used for the same purpose.
- 10.2 Active travel / travel by public transport is an important factor in reduction of organisational and personal carbon foot prints. The main office of the Council from April 2024 will now be the Mallory Building, Birkenhead, where the majority of the Council's workforce will operate from. Both New Brighton and Birkenhead are well serviced by public transport, but Birkenhead does benefit from the bus station and several Rail Stations on two lines. Wallasey Town Hall is serviced by bus, and although only a short distance away from Birkenhead it does not have the same availability of public transport. It is therefore appropriate for a review of transport to be undertaken.
- 10.3 Condition surveys will not consider issues of betterment but will only consider a like for like replacement. The cost of changing the conditioning system for both assets

to a carbon neutral alternative are not included in the survey. The Council does benefit from understanding the costs of undertaking this work for both assets, for a particular type of conditioning. There may be other options that the Council can explore for both assets, for example district heating systems as part of any wider work the Council is considering.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Taking this decision means the Council will place services and the seat of democratic function outside Birkenhead, where the vast majority of the Council's investment is taking place. This will help give certainty for the Wallasey Town Hall master plan area, but also allow the Council to directly invest into the building and immediate area and this would also include potential delivery of services directly to that community and the wider borough.
- 11.2 This report sets the conditions to achieve a long term solution for both Town Halls. This would address a long standing issue for the Borough and should ultimately see both assets been brought back into an economic use to the benefit of the borough in general and the immediate areas of both town halls.

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APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Initial review of transport times
Floor areas of Birkenhead Town Hall and Wallasey Town Hall
Condition Survey Wallasey Town Hall
Condition Survey Birkenhead Town Hall
Building level heat and decarbonisation and energy efficiency report – Wallasey Town Hall
Building level heat and decarbonisation and energy efficiency report – Birkenhead Town Hall
Reimagining Birkenhead and Wallasey Town Halls

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the P&R Committee in accordance with sections a, b and f of its Terms of Reference

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
P&R Committee	13 December 2023
ER&H	18 September 2023
P&R Committee	15 February 2023
Council	11 July 2022
P&R Committee	16 March 2022
Council	06 December 2021
P&R Committee	07 October 2021