

# LTC Community Centre

## Refurbishment opportunities

At the Finance & Governance meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024, under Item 20 (Draft Budget 2025/26) it was suggested that we pulled together a list of priority works to improve and maintain the state of the Community Centre. To this end Councillors Barber and Gilson conducted a walk around of the building with two of the caretakers to ensure their thoughts were included in this report. (The Caretakers had previously submitted a list to the Clerk of their thoughts, so these are now incorporated here)

### Top priority

There has been an ongoing issue of leaks and damp affecting various rooms caused by the flat roof over the main lobby where the leaded light skylight sits. This appears to be caused by a) roosting pigeons blocking downpipes and drains, which in turn lead to overflowing rain water penetrating the brickwork, and b) problems with the flat roof itself.

There are additional issues with the pigeons fouling the roof area and making it unfit for caretakers to get out on the roof area to undertake basic maintenance. Netting has been attempted to keep pigeons out, but this does not work. Access is further hampered by the fact there is no door and the caretakers need to climb through a window to access the roof area.



It is proposed that the LTC authorise the Clerk to obtain quotes to properly investigate and fix these issues, namely;

- a) Have the area professionally cleaned from bird mess
- b) Convert one of the windows to be a door  
(this is not only to help the caretakers long term, but also provide access to any builder/contractor required to work on the area)
- c) Have the brickwork inspected and repointed as required
- d) Have the flat roof inspected and repaired as required
- e) Obtain pest control advice on the best/most humane way to keep pigeons out of the area

### **Enhancement opportunity**

This last point could be a tricky one to resolve as the roof area is obviously a safe and popular place for the birds to roost overnight.

A possible solution could be to roof over the area, but retain some kind of large skylight to ensure light still gets through to the windows. This could even provide an additional room, although that may have a knock-on impact of other rooms that have windows into this space. This would be an expensive project but we have CIL money available for infrastructure projects and there would be some overlap with the remediation work required anyway.



A consideration for this would be the length of our lease left on the Community Centre, which I believe is around 20 years. Would we want to invest a lot of money on refurbishments that may not ultimately benefit the Leigh residents if we had to give the building back to Southend City Council at the end of the lease.

It is therefore suggested the Council consider that in parallel to starting the works mentioned above, we also ask the Clerk to;

- f) Contact Southend City Council to explore any opportunity for LTC to extend the lease, or even take ownership of the Community Centre building
- g) Explore if any government grants may be available for public office infrastructure
- h) If these enquires prove positive, then engage a couple of local architects to propose how this roof extension could be built

## Secondary priorities

These next tasks are also important and should be addressed as early as possible;

- a) The side ally outside the Lower Hall is a fire exit and should be kept clear. Although not currently blocked, there are some items that could impede an emergency evacuation so should be relocated
- b) General clear out and tidy up.

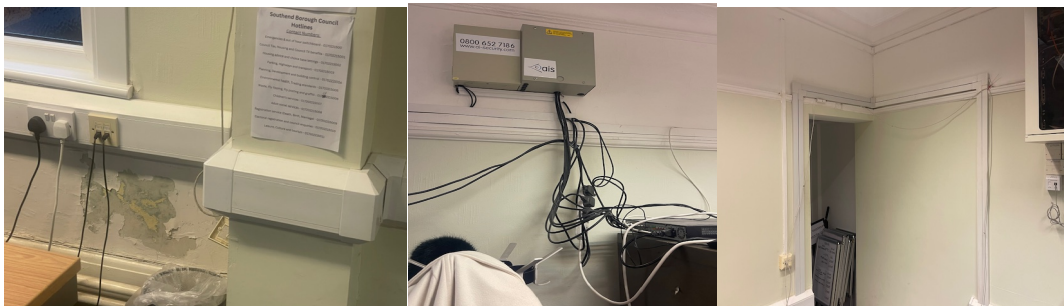
We noticed there seems to be a lot of 'stuff' that has accumulated in various storage areas that can probably be disposed of. As a minimum a skip should be hired and a concerted effort over a couple of days to throw out as much as possible (we would need to pre-assess how much could be recycled as opposed to general waste).

Attic, basement and the corridor behind rooms 4, 5 and 6 are the worst areas.



***NOTE: the attic and basement in particular are increasing fire risk***

- c) Asbestos inspection for the building is required to assess any risk as the last one was undertaken in 2009.
- d) Staff space – we need to ensure that the staff have the office space and equipment to enable them to do their job in comfort and safety. Currently the main office space needs some minor repairs;
  - 1) Possible damp wall, general decoration
  - 2) Non-standard wiring issues
  - 3) Floor/carpet needs repair/replacement



- e) Staff space – caretakers office needs additional racking

- f) At the moment we have one central heating system that means all areas in the building have to run at the same temperature. The thermostat controlling that temperature sits in the main lobby, so as the front door opens and closes (especially during cold spells) it triggers the heating to keep running when not necessarily needed. This leads to some rooms being too warm and also a larger than necessary heating bill. The Clerk has engaged a plumbing company to quote for replacing or fitting thermostatic valves across all radiators so that rooms can be controlled individually. Ideally this should be a digital system whereby the building can be controlled remotely/centrally.
- g) The boiler is no longer serviceable and if it breaks it may not be possible to repair. We need to have a strategy and plan in place if/when the boiler fails. As well as a standard gas boiler replacement option, we should explore what opportunities may exist for the use of solar panels and an electrically driven replacement system. Initially we could maybe have the roof inspected/assessed as to whether it could take the weight of solar panels, and also see if we can get advice on the suitability of our building. I think there must be several firms that specialise in this technology and have public sector case studies. A partial solar solution would be good for our sustainability/green objectives, although financially may not be the best solution.
- h) Velux windows in rooms 5 & 6 need repairs to the open/close motor/wiring
- i) Some of the Council's historic filing is currently stored in the attic. This would probably be more useful if moved to the rear storage room behind the Clerk's office
- j) Redundant water tank removed from attic
- k) Roof boarding in attic to be repaired
- l) General reassessment of storage strategy i.e. could the attic space be fully opened up as Artist in Residence space or similar community space
- m) Room 8, remove and dispose of the projector as no longer fit for purpose
- n) Room 3, remove projector screen

### **Longer term general maintenance schedule- proposal**

We should have in place a rolling multiyear schedule where each room in the Community Centre is redecorated and issues fixed (i.e. replacement windows/blinds/lights).

Consideration should be given to the impact redecorating may have on regular hirers. Maybe we can try and find someone who would work evenings/nights. Also, the impact dust and paint smells may have on some users. Suggestion;

#### **Year 1 (2025)**

Room 3 (***the most in need, particularly the flooring !!***)

Attic space

Staff office space

Rooms 8 & 9

Upstairs common space & toilets

#### **Year 2**

Rooms 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Downstairs lobby, stairs and toilets

#### **Year 3**

Lower hall, Café and kitchen

Outside



## Digital presentation facilities

The Community Centre used to have several projectors in the meeting rooms to provide additional capability to hirers, but over time these are becoming outdated and not fit for purpose. There are also a couple of TVs, either fixed to a wall and 1 that is on a stand and can be moved.

It would be a benefit for the Council and hirers if we invested in a 'smart' whiteboard. These can act as a simple display option for laptops, or as a touchscreen interactive tool for presentations, or as a simple whiteboard that can be written on and then digitally captured. Some also have cameras attached for Zoom type meetings which may be beneficial.

Prices vary widely from £1,500 - £20,000 for the latest Microsoft Surface Hub devices, but we don't need to go that far.

We could maybe ask our IT provider, ICE, to suggest some options and likely costs. It would need to be on a stand so that we can move it where needed.



### 1. Surface Hub Smart Camera

The AI-enabled camera's aperture and ultra-wide field of view of 136 degrees, renders everything in focus, near and far.

### 2. Palm rejection

Technology can distinguish between intentional touch inputs and unintentional inputs, for a natural writing experience.

### 3. Mobile battery for 50-inch

Unplug and take your ideas anywhere using the APC™ Charge Mobile Battery.

### 4. Digital inking

A natural writing and drawing experience helps you maintain focus and allows for multi-user inputs with dual-pen active inking.

### 5. One-touch join

Walk up and start a Whiteboard session or join a meeting with one touch.

### 6. Flexible ecosystem

Stands, mounts and mobile carts from Steelcase and Salamander, plus peripherals certified for Microsoft Teams Rooms.