

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	20 September 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Refurbishment of Provost Skene's House
REPORT NUMBER	ECS\16\058
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to note the work undertaken to prepare the refurbishment brief, include the refurbishment of Provost Skene's House within the overall City Centre Masterplan and further to allocate capital funding from the City Centre Masterplan.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree:

- (i) To note the work undertaken to prepare the brief for the refurbishment of Provost Skene's House;
- To include the refurbishment of Provost Skene's House within the City Centre Masterplan;
- To allocate £1.5 million from the City Centre Masterplan resources to facilitate the refurbishment of Provost Skene's House; and
- Otherwise note the contents of this report.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The developers of Marischal Square had previously allocated £500,000 towards the refurbishment of Provost Skene's House. To date £125,000 has been spent to protect the House during the demolition of St Nicholas House and the construction of Marischal Square. This leaves £375,000 for the transformation of Provost Skene's House.

3.2 In order to deliver a museum which can incorporate interactive attractions within a modern and comfortable environment a further £1.5 million is required.

3.3 Should Committee agree to the funding allocation from the City Centre Masterplan, the total available funding of £1.875 million would be allocated as follows:

- Essential building works / professional fees      £875,000  
and contingency (5%)
- Interpretation works and design\*      £1,000,000

\*The interpretation and design works includes a number of display mechanism including digital interactive and audio features alongside more traditional museum displays, free wifi access and the fit out of a shop within Provost Skene's House.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Nil

#### **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

5.1 When the demolition of St Nicholas House took place, Provost Skene's House was vacated and boarded up for protection. It was always Council policy that the House would reopen as a museum and the further narrative in this section sets out the officer vision for the future of Provost Skene's House.

5.2 Market research and consultation work was carried out in May this year which engaged with both previous visitor and non-visitors. A total of 706 responses were gathered through public consultation, both on street and online. These comprised 482 previous visitors and 224 people who had not previously visited PSH. In general both groups were dominated by the local market with some representation from the day trip market (79%). There were fewer tourists (19%).

5.3 Specific findings were:

- Previous visitors can be considered active and engaged with all Aberdeen Gallery and Museum sites.
- A considerable proportion of current non-visitors are considered "within reach" as a result of their existing engagement with other Aberdeen Gallery and Museum sites and/or existing tendency to visit/interest in historic house / castle / property attractions. Awareness of Provost Skene's House is a key issue.

- There is useful opportunity for audience sharing and cross promotion of Provost Skene's House with the Maritime Museum and the Tolbooth.
  - Both visitors and non-visitors expressed a consistent and high level of interest in future plans.
- 5.4 The local, day trip and tourist market all form potential visitor markets for Provost Skene's House. Analysis was carried out to quantify the visitor market potential, the new development will not house a café, due to both space restrictions, operational costs and the close proximity of food and drink offers in the surrounding Marischal Square development. The visitor survey findings indicated that the café was the main driver for 20% of visits to Provost Skene's House in the past. There is however a real opportunity to widen the audience by engaging families and children at Provost Skene's House. Currently visitors with children to historic houses comprise only 13% of the audience, a relatively small proportion. The market research indicates a strong desire for a family-friendly experience within the redeveloped house. The quality of the visitor offer is paramount to maximise the market opportunity.
- 5.5 The redevelopment and transformation of Provost Skene House provides an opportunity to extend and enhance the cultural offer for local residents and visitors to Aberdeen and to extend its reach to new audiences including families and young adult audiences. It is therefore proposed that Provost Skene's House becomes a celebration of what Aberdeen as a city has given to the world, focusing on the important Aberdonians through history but also providing a chance for visitors to the House to see current iconic figures from the city. It is for these reasons and its central location that it is recommended that the redevelopment of Provost Skene's House becomes a project within the City Centre Masterplan.
- 5.6 It is proposed that the displays in the house become fully interactive, making best use of technology. This will also allow for displays to be updated at appropriate times and for new displays to be seamlessly integrated into Provost Skene's House. It is also intended that displays in Provost Skene's House would also point out other cultural attractions in the city to visitors.

### **Indicative Project Timeline**

- 5.7 The project timeline has the opening of the newly refurbished Provost Skene's House in July 2017, which coincides with the opening of Marischal Square. The detail below provides the key milestones against which progress will be monitored to ensure successful delivery within the

Design Phase  
Planning Approval

April 2016 – October 2016  
October 2016

Appointment of Contractor	November 2017
Start on Site	January 2017
Construction Completion	May 2017
Fit Out	May – June 2017
Opening	July 2017

## **6. IMPACT**

### **Corporate**

- 6.1 Provost Skene's House plays an important part of the cultural life of Aberdeen. This project aims to further enhance the cultural offering to city residents and visitors to Aberdeen by promoting and celebrating what Aberdeen and its residents have provided to the world. This will play a key role in delivering the objective of having Aberdeen as a place to live and visit.
- 6.2 The cultural policy of Aberdeen includes the redevelopment of Provost Skene's House and to highlight the contribution of culture in the city and its centre. The creation of an innovative and technologically driven museum at Provost Skene's House will stimulate visitor numbers and assist in the delivery of these objectives.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

- 7.1 The delivery of a refurbished Provost Skene's House is set against a very defined timeline, which is set out in paragraph 5.7 above. The project will be monitored through a variety of groups including:
  - Project Delivery Group: Led by the Estates Manager (ECS);
  - ECS Estates Group : Chaired by the Head of Policy, Performance and Resources;
  - City Centre Masterplan Board: Chaired by the City Centre Director
  - Strategic Asset and Capital Programme Board: Chaired by the Director of Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
- 7.2 In addition, the project features on the Dashboard report which is submitted for scrutiny by this Committee.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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