

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education & Children's Services
DATE	17 November 2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Redevelopment of Provost Skene's House
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/16/071
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members regarding the redevelopment of Provost Skene's House (PSH) following instruction at Finance Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 20 September 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee agree:
- (i) To note and agree the proposals for PSH and the important link role this project has in further enhancing the cultural offering to the city residents and visitors to Aberdeen; and
 - (ii) Otherwise note the content of this report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 At the Finance, Policy and resources Committee meeting of 20 September 2016, it was agreed that the City Centre Masterplan allocate £1.5m to facilitate the transformation of PSH. Additional funding of £500,000 was obtained from MUSE with £125,000 having already been invested in replacing the boiler and protecting the House during the demolition of St. Nicholas House and the construction of Marischal Square.

Therefore the overall available budget for refurbishment is £1.875m

4 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Nil.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 The Council has approved a City Centre Master Plan, which will be implemented over the next twenty-five years. Provost Skene's House (PSH) sits in the heart of the city centre.

5.2 It is proposed that the exhibition contained with PSH celebrate the achievements of locals who over the centuries have made major contributions to science, medicine, arts, entertainment, business, sport and other fields. In short, those who have transformed the world and contributed to the success of the City.

Further, the interpretation will explore Aberdeen as a city of creativity, culture and industry through people past and present and is designed to both enhance the house's role in historic Aberdeen and provide an opportunity to extend and enhance the cultural offer to city residents and visitors to Aberdeen.

5.3 The new displays will celebrate the story of locals and their contribution to Aberdeen's success which in turn has helped to create the city and region's rich and proud heritage. The proposal sits well with the Council's vision, "Aberdeen – the Smarter City" ; and in particular with supporting arts and culture in the city, through its heritage.

5.4 The interpretation will link closely to Provost Skene and the House but will expand the story bringing it up to the present day. The new displays will be designed to be highly participative, encouraging interaction and exploration. The displays will embrace digital technology allowing a wide range of audiences, including local residents, families, young people and tourists, to engage deeply with the exhibition. It is envisaged that the displays will draw on Aberdeen City Council's museum and gallery collections together with material from the City Archives, bringing together objects, artworks and documents, to bring aspects of the visitor experience to life.

5.5 The message would be consistent with that promoted by the Masterplan communications and engagement strategy: if we seize the opportunities before us – as these individuals did – we can transform our immediate world. The exhibition would also service a number of Masterplan objectives by providing a point of interest for residents and visitors; honouring the city's heritage; and helping to position Aberdeen as a city of global significance and influence.

- 5.6 The city's cultural strategy aims to make Aberdeen as a vibrant, creative and ambitious city. The exhibition would support that by showcasing world-class achievements in the art, for example in the fields of music or literature. These stories may well inspire exhibition visitors to take part in creative endeavours and to explore their own potential. The exhibition would also refer visitors to other museums and event space such as the Aberdeen Art Gallery, Music Hall or Maritime Museum and they in turn could highlight Provost Skene's House -- in effect creating a culture trail across the city.

THEMES - OVERVIEW

- 5.7 A key element of the displays as previously mentioned will involve featuring the stories of people, past and present, including Provost Skene, who have made outstanding contributions to Aberdeen and wider North East region. In order to define the criteria for selection and to gain a broad overview of candidates for inclusion, a steering group has been established to advise the design team. The steering group will include representation from the tourism, cultural, academic and business sectors.
- 5.8 The themes of Innovators, Creators, Inventors, Entertainers and Sportspeople will be presented throughout the House.
- 5.9 The ground floor will house an Access Gallery, for use by visitors with mobility issues. The Access Gallery will enable visitors to virtually explore the content presented on the upper levels which may be physically inaccessible to them. The Gallery will contain seating and resource material.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 5.10 The ground floor will provide an exciting feature area celebrating a number of the area's most remarkable and popular people – **Hall of Heroes**. It is hoped the initial line-up can be chosen by the public from the long list drawn up by the steering group. The Hall of Heroes could be refreshed regularly and new entrants selected by visitors to PSH, thereby giving the public an active role in curating the exhibition. Fortunately the region has a wealth of notable figures to choose from.
- 5.11 The Council's communication channels would be used to promote opportunities for participation and capture input from the community. It is anticipated that the media may also play a supporting role in this process. The Hall of Heroes may feature both historic and contemporary people and will deliver a definite wow factor.

ENABLING & ESSENTIAL WORKS

- 5.12 A full design team has been commissioned to ensure that the essential and enabling works required for the re-opening of PSH are commenced in line with the overall project programme. Works will include some remedial work to the roofing, recordation of windows and repairs to guttering. A comprehensive upgrade to the electrical and mechanical systems along with some building works (new toilets, shop and reception area) and the interpretation and design fit out will ensure that PSH is restored and enhanced prior to opening its doors to the citizens and visitors of Aberdeen City.

6. IMPACT

6.1 Improving Customer Experience

The reopening and redevelopment of PSH provides an opportunity to both extend and enhance the cultural offer to city residents and visitors to Aberdeen by promoting and celebrating what Aberdeen and its residents have contributed to the world.

6.2 Improving our use of Resources

The Council is currently working with Scottish Enterprise and Visit Aberdeenshire to establish metrics to measure the value of visitor attractions to the city's economy and there will be the opportunity for the renewed Provost Skene's House to be measured within this, with a focus on understanding return on investment, scope for repeat visits and impact on overnight stays and visitor spend.

6.3 Corporate

The city's cultural strategy aims to make Aberdeen as a vibrant, creative and ambitious city. The exhibition would support that by showcasing world-class achievements in the arts – for example, in the fields of music or literature. These stories may well inspire exhibition visitors to take part in creative endeavours and to explore their own potential. The exhibition would also refer visitors to other museums and event space such as the Aberdeen Art Gallery or Music Hall, and they in turn could highlight Provost Skene's House -- in effect creating a culture trail across the city.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

7.1 The delivery of the new redeveloped PSH project is set against a very defined timeline i.e. to re-open in parallel to the Marischal Square development and is therefore governed and monitored through the following 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 SIP Dashboard report which is submitted for scrutiny by Finance Policy and Resources Committee.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Finance, Policy and Resources Committee, 20 September 2016
(Agenda Item: 7.17 Refurbishment of Provost Skene's House)

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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