



Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 28 February 2022

Title: Facilities Improvements

Purpose of the Report:

To provide Members with an update on the progress thus far in addressing accessibility to town council facilities.

Contact Officers:

Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk

Sarah Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s	LLTC Five Year Plan – Objectives 1 (To regularly review how we communicate and seek to embrace new technologies) & 2 (To continue to aim towards a paperless office).	
Implications:		
Financial	Yes	Within available earmarked reserve funds as set out in the report.
Human Resources	No	
Operational/Service delivery	Yes	To ensure the council can operate effectively.
Procedural/Legal	No	
Risk/Health and Safety	Yes	To mitigate Covid risks by facilitating remote meeting attendance.
Environmental Aims	Yes	To make better use of available office space given a lesser reliance on paper.

1 RECOMMENDATION

Should the Committee be minded, the proposals is:

1.1 To note the report

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting held 25 January 2021, Council adopted its equalities statement:

Leighton-Linslade Town Council is an equal opportunities employer.

Regardless of disability, race, age, religion, gender or sexual orientation all our events and facilities are open to everyone in the community. Ways to make our play equipment inclusive to all remains an on-going priority.

All of local government is wholly committed to equality, diversity and inclusion reflecting the communities we serve. The Town Council is in full agreement with this aim. We are all part of the much-needed conversation on how we can all confront and end racism for which there is no place within our society. The Town Council will support the aims of all groups who seek to eliminate prejudice in any form.

- 2.2 To underpin the Town Council's commitment to its equalities statement, the Policy and Finance Committee agreed at its meeting held 21 June 2021 that a Facilities Improvement earmarked reserve be created. The purpose of ring fencing the £137,754 budgetary outturn was to make a meaningful contribution towards improving working and operational conditions at the Council's main offices and owned assets, as well as improving environmental efficiency.

3 PROGRESS THUS FAR

- 3.1 Expenditure to date has included the purchase of equipment to help facilitate hybrid meetings. Since its installation, the ability to hold hybrid meetings with participants joining in person or remotely has been hugely successful. Until legislation is reviewed, councillors wishing to take part in any vote will have to be physically present.
- 3.2 At its meeting held 26 July 2021, the Committee received and endorsed a report in respect of increasing White House accommodation and to increase storage space. The annual rent of £8,250 has been met from the Facilities Improvements earmarked reserve. Going forward, this will be included within the annual revenue budget. A new lease reflecting the increase in floorspace has been signed. The additional floorspace has created a first-floor meeting room with the former ground floor meeting room being used for council wide storage.
- 3.3 The central services office has been reconfigured by increasing room capacity. This was achieved by replacing bulky ageing furniture with office furniture more representative of modern working. By doing this, the office capacity has risen from 4 to 8 members of staff. Other improvements include new office chairs, I.T. ports and power sockets.

- 3.4 As agreed by Council at its July 2021 meeting, new furniture and chairs have been ordered for the Council Chamber. The present furniture which is heavy and unwieldy does not allow the room to be reconfigured for wider council or community uses.
- 3.5 An accessibility audit has been carried out for the White House, the Hockliffe Street building which houses the Teenage Advice and Information Centre and the three sports and community facilities. The report has now been received and the recommendations are the subject of on-going officer consideration.

4 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 To better inform next steps, a Chartered Building Surveyor has been appointed to attend a yet to be arranged scoping meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to consolidate in a single project plan the various reports concerning town council owned building assets as well as the White House. The plan will prioritise work as well as identify with whom responsibility rests in terms of task delivery. The 10-year planned maintenance programme, accessibility audit as well as work around the environmental agenda will inform this.
- 4.2 Once the plan is complete, it will be presented to the Policy and Finance Committee for its consideration. Where possible, the plan will include indicative project costs, anticipated timescales and whether the task can be carried out in-house or otherwise. It is anticipated that the Facilities Improvement earmarked reserve will be used to address certain project outcomes identified from the accessibility audit.

End.