

**Report of Head of Arts & Events**

**Report to Director of City Development**

**Date: 20 May 2021**

**Subject: Authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The organ at Leeds Town Hall has not undergone any major refurbishment work since 1973. It is now in significant disrepair, requiring more and more interventions to maintain it in working order. A significant scheme of work is necessary to preserve and improve this historic instrument. The loss of the instrument would place at risk the current and future artistic programme of the building and risk severe reputational damage to the Council.
- The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.

**2. Best Council Plan implications** (see the [latest version of the Best Council Plan](#))

- The proposed works support the Best Council Plan 2018/169-2020/21 in particular Culture and the enhancement of the image of Leeds through major events and attractions.
- The proposed works would support Leeds with its 2023 year of culture.

**3. Resource implications**

- If the organ is allowed to deteriorate to the point where it no longer functions the annual Lunchtime Organ series of 28 concerts would no longer be able to take place. This would have a detrimental effect on the Council's reputation and on the lives of the audience members who rely on the series for their health and wellbeing. Neither would it be available for other significant hires of the building such as Beckett University Graduation Ceremonies and other significant Civic events.
- Should the organ scheme be unable to complete in line with the agreed timelines it will require the Town Hall to close for a further 3 months to reinstall and 'Voice' the instrument. This is the skill of manipulating an organ pipe once reinstalled to make it correctly sound. Each of the 6,500 pipes must be made to play with the proper onset of sound (known as speech), sustained tone, and volume. This would affect the income generation of the Town Hall in its first year after reopening. Given that this opening year would be vital in recouping costs to off-set spend (prudential borrowing) this should be avoided at all costs. Current annual income from the Town Hall is circa £1.9m with prudential borrowing repayments factored in in 2023 the income target per year would be nearer £2.25m. Closing the Hall for a quarter of that time would cost the City over £500,000 in lost income.
- Following a Capital Invest to Save business case submission to FPG the group agreed to inject £1.8 million to support this scheme and this will be paid for with prudential borrowing and expected annual repayments being made from the income generated from the Town Hall fundraising events and the fundraising done through the Brodrick Trust – a special purpose vehicle set up to fundraise for the restoration.

## **Recommendations**

- a) The Director of City Development is recommended to approve the authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.

### **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to approve the authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.

### **2. Background information**

- 2.1 The Organ at Leeds Town Hall forms the central feature of the concert hall known since its opening by Her Majesty Queen Victoria as the Victoria Hall. One of the most famous instruments in Britain, the organ in the Victoria Hall was designed jointly by London organist Henry Smart (1813-1879) and by William Spark (1823-1897). The organ required major repair and rebuilding in 1898 and 1908 – work undertaken by the Leeds firm of Abbott & Smith. The received wisdom is that the brilliance and colour of the original fine pipework was spoilt and the instrument gave increasing trouble during the 20th Century.
- 2.2 In 1972, the organ was entirely re-built by the Leeds firm of Wood, Wordsworth & Co to a specification by Peter Wood and Donald Hunt (the Organist of Leeds Parish Church). It is now a three-manual organ (potentially the largest three-manual

instrument in Europe) and played from a console housed beneath the stage on a hydraulic platform.

- 2.3 The mechanism was almost entirely new, and Leeds Town Hall was among the very first instruments in Britain to be controlled by solid state transmission. The organ is heard in weekly recitals from autumn to Easter each year / season and much used for prize giving, degree ceremonies, concerts, religious services and social functions. The best of the Victorian pipework which is in good enough condition was retained and refurbished for use on the two principal manuals and the pedal department. The pipework of the third manual was, very largely, new – though the organ’s loudest stop, the famous Ophicleide at the top of the case, was saved.
- 2.4 The contractor Nicholson & Co Ltd carried out a Professional Services Contract from May 2020 to August 2020 to agree the scope of works for repairing the organ and a design in conjunction with specialist support of the Leeds City Council Organist to replace any components that need replacing. This led to a formal YORtender price being submitted in 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 for the Construction works required.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 Today the organ remains a central feature in LeedsTown Hall and is heard in free weekly recitals from Autumn to Easter each year and much used for prize giving, degree ceremonies, concerts, religious services and social functions. However, the organ is now in serious disrepair and requires regular interventions simply to keep it in working order. Without essential renovation works the instrument will eventually completely breakdown and the loss to both audiences and the council would be substantial.

### **4. Corporate considerations**

#### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 In line with CPR 3.1.4 Leeds Building Services (LBS) have been approached as the ISP to determine whether this element of work can be delivered through the service. This was discussed and LBS do not have the required skills to deliver this due to the specialist nature of the works and timelines required.
- 4.1.2 In line with CPR’s this scheme was initially shared via an Expression of Interest (EOI) with 7 specialist contractors, of who 4 responded with a positive interest in carrying out the works. However a further EOI with specific timeframes for the works was issued to all 4 and from this only one contractor has responded with the availability required to carry out the works. This led to the PSC contract being awarded to Nicholson & Co Ltd via CPR 9.5.

#### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 An initial equality, diversity, cohesion and integration assessment will be carried out before award of a works contract.

#### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The proposed works support the Best Council Plan 2018/19 – 2020/21 in particular Culture by enhancing the image of Leeds through major events and attractions.
- 4.3.2 The refurbishment of the Town Hall organ would support growing the cultural and creative sector by promoting a positive attitude towards culture, focusing on the contribution it can make to the City's confidence, profile and economy.

#### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 At Full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Leeds City Council passed a motion declaring a Climate Emergency. In addition, the Leeds Climate Commission have proposed a series of science based carbon reduction targets for the City so that Leeds can play its part in keeping global average surface temperature increases to no more than 1.5c.
- 4.3.4 The proposed refurbishment of the Town Hall Organ will not have a positive or negative impact on the climate emergency or emissions. However the climate emergency will form part of the tender requirements for contractors.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 4.4.1 An invest to save business case has been carried out and £1.8 million to support this scheme was injected by full council in February 2021 which will be paid for with prudential borrowing and expected annual repayments being made from the income generated from the Town Hall fundraising events and the fundraising done through the Brodrick Trust – a special purpose vehicle set up to fundraise for the restoration.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.5.1 Given the costs related to this contract this decision will be Key decision and will be eligible for call in. There are no grounds for keeping the contents of this report confidential under Access to Information Rules.
- 4.5.2 .In making the final decision, the Director of City Development should note the above comments and be satisfied that the course of action chosen represents best value for money.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 A contract management plan was put in place in line with CPR 20.1 by the Contract Manager and this should mitigate any risks in the contract period. The contract management plan will cover the risks, the main risks being outlined below and the actions taken to mitigate the risk.
- 4.6.2 Uncompetitive pricing, this has been mitigated through an in depth pricing process in the contract development phase.
- 4.6.3 Poor contract management, which will be mitigated through the use of a proportionate contract management plan and ensuring its use throughout the lifetime of the contract and works.
- 4.6.4 Procurement challenge, which will be mitigated to lower the risk through following the CPR's and ensuring clear justified reasons are given for using CPR 9.5.
- 4.6.5 Late delivery of the contract, which will be mitigated through the clearly structured timeline to support the service delivery and ownership of the project group and associated officers to ensure this is adhered to.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 In conclusion, the organ at the Town Hall has not undergone any major work since the 1970's. It is now in significant disrepair, requiring more and more interventions to maintain it in working order. A significant scheme of work is necessary to preserve and improve this historic instrument. The loss of the instrument would place at risk the current and future artistic programme of the building and risk severe reputational damage to the Council.
- 5.2 This report highlights that the Director of City Development is recommended to approve the authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Director of City Development is recommended to approve the authority to spend c£1.8m from the Town Hall Organ scheme 16996/THO/000 injected into the programme in February 2021.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.