

FROME TOWN HALL DESIGN BRIEF

Christchurch Street West
Frome

12.03.2015



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Introduction

Frome Town Council (FTC) wishes to contract a designer, quantity surveyor, facilities engineer and CDM professional to design and project manage the refurbishment of the former Social Services Offices at Christchurch Street West in Frome.

We are looking for a complete and costed design for the building. The designer will take the project from RIBA stages 0 – 3, and we expect the same designer to manage the project to RIBA stage 7, subject to Council approval at the end of stage 3.

The building is being purchased by FTC, on a freehold basis, with an anticipated completion date of mid-May 2015 and FTC expects to move in soon as possible thereafter.

The building will become the new Frome Town Hall and a detailed description of the how the building will be used and spaces required are included in this design brief.

We have carried out a number of initial surveys that are included as appendices to this brief. The structural survey in particular has identified that the building is in good condition, although there is some damp to the rear of the building and some of the ceilings are in need of stabilising.

The major design input is likely to be around interior design, making the best use of the space available, with a focus on the reception, café and meeting room spaces and the creation of an effective flow of movement throughout the building.

We do not expect to alter the exterior of the building and would rather not make significant alterations to the interior; removal and erection of studding walls, for example, notwithstanding.

FTC is a public sector body and we have to observe various restrictions and decision making processes. We therefore expect the successful contractor to understand the challenges of refurbishing an older public sector building in order to deliver a modern resource to be used by the community for at least a generation.

The implementation of the design will be phased as funding becomes available. The cost of the first phase should not exceed £345k plus professional fees. This phase should include as much of the more disruptive as possible and is to be completed prior to occupation.

FTC has an ethical decision making matrix that we expect all contractors and subcontractors to observe wherever possible (see appendix 1). We also expect serious observation of energy efficiency, energy use and wherever possible the re-use and upcycling of furniture and fittings. An inventory of office furniture will be made available to the successful designer.

Background

Christchurch Street's Public Offices were built in the late 1800s. The building was used by the Frome Rural District Council and then, following the local government reorganisation in 1974, was used by Somerset County Council for, amongst other functions, weddings, social services, and the registry office. As such the building evokes fond memories for many Frome residents. The current County Council has now decided that this building is surplus to requirements.

FTC is purchasing this building for Frome in order to provide a mixed use space. It will offer a range of fully serviced tenancy options for voluntary groups and third sector organisations, be home to FTC, offer formal and informal meeting spaces, a conference and formal venue. It will be a central point in the town for the provision of information for all members of the public.

This brief is designed to provide a specification that will enable the building to deliver these functions. It is the product of widespread engagement with the community and as such intends to highlight areas of specific interest but also provide an overarching sense of how the building will be accessible to all and create spaces suitable for community use as well as a variety of organisations.

Community Engagement

The engagement process has included the production of two short films. The first ([here](#)) was used to engage people and organisations in coming forward to contribute toward the process. As access to members of the public is currently limited by the County Council, a second film ([here](#)) was produced in order to enable residents and potential users to gain a sense of the space inside the building. The films are included here to help potential contractors understand the building and FTC's plans for it. A model of the building has also been a useful tool to facilitate the engagement process with the community.

The engagement process has enabled us to develop the initial specifications and emerging principles within this brief. However, we are keen to allow design freedom within this next stage for creative ideas and configurations.

Emerging Principles

These emerging principles should be used as a general guide to the design, management and running of the building as it develops.

Accessibility

The building should be accessible to all members of the community, and provide facilities which are easy to use, affordable and well equipped. Particular attention will be paid to providing seamless physical access and spaces which are designed to feel welcoming and inclusive. Accessibility is more than compliance with Disability Legislation; the design needs to create an environment where all visitors / users feel valued, welcome and can go about their business easily.

Appendix 3

Information Hub

The building will act as a central point of information and support for the town. Information will be provided in traditional leaflet and poster formats, on interactive screens, and verbally via the reception staff.

Reception and café area

This will be the point where all visitors enter the building. It must create an environment where everyone feels welcome, comfortable and can easily access information services. The central reception area will incorporate a café and will be available for casual use where the community can drop in, wait for appointments or have informal conversations.

Building Integrity

Alongside necessary modernisations, retaining the integrity and character of the building is necessary. This building has served the community for over 100 years and we want to restore and celebrate some of its original features including the clock, a mosaic floor and the Council Chamber. There is external stone work and existing sash windows that need to be repaired. There are also the remains of a passive stack ventilation system that we would like to explore bringing back in to operation.

Sustainability

Subject to financial limitations and the integrity of the building, the refurbishment project will aim to improve energy efficiency over.

Sustainability will also be an important consideration when specifying materials, furnishings, and fittings; with priority given to the re-use and up-cycling of existing resources. We hold a large stock of good quality office furniture that we would like to use throughout the building.

Specifications

Surveys and Assessments

The surveys and assessments we have completed to date are:

- Access Audit – August 2014
- Acquisition Survey Report – April 2014
- Valuation Report – April 2014
- Damp Assessment Report – June 2014
- Ceiling Assessment Report – June 2014
- Asbestos Survey – carried out by the County Council
- Energy Performance Assessment – **to be completed**

The structural survey

This identified the following works that need to be carried out:

- Flashing, gutter and downpipe repair, cleaning and vegetation removal.
- Pointing and other stone work, including urgent lintel work.
- Window repair and decorating.

- Damp proofing of the ground floor rear rooms and plant room, replacement of any floor timber in poor condition and assessing whether the damp is due to blocked silt traps in the car park.
- Works to be carried out on ceilings that are not structurally sound.
- Works to ensure the building is DDA, Fire and Building Regulation compliant
- Restoration of passive stack ventilation system if still suitable
- Refurbishment works to the Elliot Building
- All works for the heating system; including pipe insulation and expansion tank upgrade.
- Maximise solar gain by removing UV film from windows.
- Staff kitchenette and breakaway area in Zone three (see below)

Technological considerations

To ensure the building is fit for purpose now and in the future the following will be needed:

- Wifi and fast accessible broadband with ethernet connections
- Energy efficient lighting throughout the building, including LED and motion sensor lighting where suitable.
- A centrally controlled telephone system
- Hearing loops in all possible areas
- Multiple safe storage solutions
- CCTV – in corridors, reception area and perhaps the Council Chamber.

Access to the Building

- Ability to access the building 24/7, this might be in specific zones only depending on necessary security measures
- Installation of suitable security systems which ensure the functionality of the zones (as described below)
- Installation of a lift.
- Installation of an entrance ramp to the front of the building

Zoning and room requirements

The engagement process has guided us to consider the building in three zones. The allocation of spaces within each zone will dictate how people move through the building and how access will be controlled for safety and security purposes.

We have provided the room requirements within each zone and the functions and services which should be provided. While the location of each zone is left open for design interpretation the exceptions are the Council Chamber, the Elliot building and the main entrance and reception.

Zone 1

Unrestricted access to all members of the public. This area will include toilets and a shower.

a. Entrance

The intention is to have one main entrance to the building through which everyone can enter. This entrance should include a ramp from which to enter a bright and welcoming space that is easily navigated. Additional entrance doors will be used by office workers in accordance with the zoning configuration.

b. Reception

An area accessible to all visitors to the building that acts as the central information point for the town. Reception staff will be available, although people need to be able to access information independently through leaflets, posters and interactive IT. This space will include :

- Space to meet and greet with sofa's and chairs to wait.
- A place to use laptops and access free WIFI
- Space to advertise information such as volunteering & job opportunities, services etc.
- A confidential 'booking-in' system for the public when visiting the CAB or a counselling service, for example.
- Consideration needs to be given to noise travel as semi confidential discussions maybe carried out in this area.
- Some facility for children.

c. Cafe

As part of the reception area we require a café that includes a kitchen serving light lunches, snacks and baked goods with a minimum of 15 covers. The kitchen should also be suitable for outside caterers to heat food for events in the Council Chamber.

Zone 2

Limited / facilitated public access

a. Council Chamber

The Council Chamber is already an impressive room and we want to retain and enhance its grandeur. We will let this room for conferences, weddings, church services and council meetings and it will become a key revenue stream for the building. It will be well equipped, versatile and multi use. It will have wiring for amplification and recording, projectors, screen and video conferencing systems, there will be telephone points and interactive white boards. . Ideally it will be capable of being partitioned. There will need to be somewhere to store electric equipment, tables, chairs and any other function resources whilst not in use.

b. Meeting rooms

One meeting room is required that is light and airy and have the potential to be split down into two smaller meeting rooms. Requirements:

- Suitable for a minimum of 15 people seated at tables, or more in a theatre style seating arrangement
- audio visual equipment, video conferencing, and interactive white boards
- complimentary high speed internet access and telephone points

c. Individual meeting / counselling rooms

Four small rooms for use as individual counselling or private consultation meetings. These should be suitable for a range of organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Positive Action on Cancer. These rooms need telephone and internet points and to be sound proof to enable confidential discussion in a safe environment.

These rooms need to be situated near a discrete waiting area with entrances / exits that do not open immediately into any busy space. They do not need to be near each other.

Requirements:

- Three rooms equipped either with table and chairs
- One room contains sofa's and soft furnishings
- To be sound proof and create a 'safe' environment for staff and users.

d. Studio Space

Although additional funding would need to be sourced to establish this, we would like the design to include a community radio studio space. Requirements:

- a main studio – no less than 4.5m x 3m
- a small studio – no less than 2.5m x 3m
- a control room approx. 3m x 3.5m – ideally this would have a clear line of sight into the main desk in the main studio.

e. The Elliot Building

This building will offer a versatile, self-contained space. It will be flexible and easily maintained, offering facilities for uses such as: adult art classes, youth projects, breastfeeding groups, the Toy Library and food bank distribution. Requirements:

- A kitchen area
- A private break-out space which could be used as an office
- Accessible Toilet (with nappy changing facilities)
- Doors leading to a fenced garden area – ideal for children to play safely in (external landscaping could be funded separately and installed at a later stage if necessary).
- Storage solutions for different groups and services

Appendix 3

- Internet and telephone connection

Zone 3

Restricted Access. Spaces in zone three will be private offices. All are to be:

- Served with appropriate cabling, heating and lighting.
- Bright and airy
- Suitable for the re-use of our existing stock of office furniture.
- Served with fast broadband, WiFi, ethernet and telephone points which allow for flexibility over desk location
- Optimal use of space in order to maximise number of workstations
- Consider issues of noise travel
- Secure storage and filing for each desk space

a. Three offices

These are private office spaces for individual organisations to rent for sole use.

Requirements:

- Office 1 - 10 workstations and two desks
- Office 2 - six desks plus storage facilities
- Office 3 – two desks plus storage facilities

If there is space for any additional offices, these should have space to accommodate four desks.

b. Shared office space:

A space suitable for shared use by multiple organisations, with desks that can be either permanently rented or for occasionally and part-time use.

c. Town Council Office Space:

- Room for 14 workstations
- Storage room for filing and resources and equipment
- Two separate offices that can double as small meeting rooms for a max. of six people
- Room for printing, post and stationery
- Meeting room suitable for 20 people with the option of dividing it into two smaller meeting rooms or occasional office space

d. *Kitchen and social space for staff*

Suitable for the number of staff working in the building

Other

Attic Space

We would like the design to explore the conversion of the attic to office space. We may not be in a position to pay for this in the short run, but it might be cost effective in phase 1 to install the necessary roof lights and stair case, for example, and carry out any external works while the scaffolding is up. We assume that the attic will also need to be insulated and already has a lot of wiring.

Outside areas

a. Car Park

We want to optimise the use of the carpark. Requirements:

- car parking spaces for permanent tenants to rent
- one space for the car club (with electric charging point)
- two disabled car parking spaces
- a safe covered bike parking facility
- storage for larger items.

b. Garden Areas:

We are not wedded to the shrubs to the side or front of the building and want to explore better use of these spaces to provide small scale secure play area, visitors' bike racks at the front and a seating area linked to the café.