

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Victoria Tower was completed in 1886 and stands 245 feet or 75 metres high. By comparison the Scott monument in Edinburgh is 200 feet or 61 metres high.

Access to the tower is gained from the balcony overlooking Cathcart Square on the fourth floor of the stair between Cathcart House and the Municipal Buildings. From here an enclosed concrete stair leads up the square section of the tower. It is narrow, has no handrail and is unlit but is in good condition. At each floor there is a room which is currently undeveloped but provides windows viewing each side of the tower. This continues for 5 floors and then opens out into an open area where the interior of the tower can be seen. This provides larger windows which give a better view. From here to the top of the tower a spiral staircase winds up. This was condemned as unsafe in approximately 2000 and has not been used since. A scaffolding tower has been built inside the tower to provide access for inspections and maintenance.

5.0 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is proposed to carry out works to allow access to the bottom of the circular tower section. The circular stair to the top will be retained but not made safe for access. The current scaffold tower is built on this floor and thus prevents access. This will be removed and a steel structure will be built above head height to support the scaffolding. As part of the design development consideration will be given to see if a less visually intrusive method of providing maintenance access to the top of the tower can be achieved.
- 5.2 The work will comprise the following elements:-
- Removal of scaffold, new steel support structure and new maintenance access tower;
 - Repairs to stairs and fitting of handrail;
 - Repairs to room floors;
 - New doors and windows;
 - Clean and decorate stairway and rooms;
 - New lighting and emergency lighting;
 - New fire and intruder alarms;
 - Power supply to rooms; and
 - Display materials in rooms.
- 5.3 The Museum Service will prepare display materials for the five rooms to provide an attractive visitor experience. Discussion over the form this will take will be undertaken place between now and the Tower opening next summer.
- 5.4 Access to the tower is restricted and therefore visitors can only be taken as part of an organised prebooked group. There is also no possibility of providing disabled access and visitors must be reasonably fit in order to tackle to considerable number of stairs. Organised groups are also required as it is not possible to make the tower comply with current Building Regulations therefore a management plan must be agreed with Building Standards in order to ensure appropriate evacuation procedures are in place.
- 5.5 It is necessary to provide a guide for the groups accessing the tower and this cannot be met from current resources. Consideration could be given to incorporating the Grand Corridor and Council Chambers in the tour. It is difficult to estimate the cost of an officer to fill this role as it would depend on demand. On the assumption that it averaged at 10 hours per week £5,000 would be required. A modest fee of £3 per person would allow costs to be recouped. VAT would require to levied on this. Alternatively if donations were made on a voluntary basis no VAT would be applicable however it would be up to the visitor whether to donate and how much. There would therefore be no guarantee that sufficient income would be received to cover costs.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial Implications - One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Earmarked Reserves	Victoria Tower	2013/14	£150,000	N/A	

Financial Implications - Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if applicable)	Other Comments
Office accommodation	Employee Costs	2014/15	£5,000	N/A	
Victoria tower	Income from tours	2014/15	(£5,000)	N/A	

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Head of Finance has been consulted and is in agreement with the proposals.

7.2 The Head of Organisational Development, HR and Communications has been consulted and is in agreement with the proposals.

7.3 The Head of Inclusive Education, Culture and Corporate Policy has been consulted and is in agreement with the proposals.

7.4 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been consulted and is in agreement with the proposals.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.