

A THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE ALMONRY

Objective

The objective of the Strategic Plan is to meet the following needs:

1. the need to respect and enhance the heritage of the building and its environs,
2. the need to meet the current and future requirements of the Council and the community,
3. the need to cover the running costs of the building,

1. Heritage

The Council will respect the physical heritage of the Almonry by refraining from any activities that will damage the fabric or from making alterations that are out of keeping with the building. Together with its Conservation Architects it will put in place a maintenance plan that ensures the continued use of the building in years to come. The wider heritage of the building will be enhanced by opening the building to the public, explaining and showcasing heritage features and making them accessible to both residents and visitors.

2. Council and community needs

The need to meet the current and future requirements of the Council and the community will be met by regularly reviewing Council and community requirements for allocated space. Priority will be given to the accommodation needs of Battle Town Council and Rother District Council but every effort will be made to make a flexible use of space so that this can be available for community use.

3. Running costs

As a community building the Almonry should not be expected to make a profit, but the Council will make every effort to cover the running costs of the building by regularly reviewing costs, rents and hire fees so as to bring these into balance. To this end the agreement with Rother District Council will be renegotiated as and when necessary.

PLAN

2021/2022: Recommissioning of the Almonry

October 2021 – April 2022 will be spent bringing the Almonry back into use. This will involve allocating space, furnishing and equipping rooms, finding new tenants and reinstating the rear garden.

Space Allocation

Space will be allocated according to the following principles:

1. Wherever possible, space should be multi- functional.
2. Wherever possible toilet facilities should be uni-sex and accessible.
3. In order to be accessible to the public, the Council Reception should be on the ground floor.
4. In order to be accessible to the public, the Full Council should meet on the ground floor.
5. Ground floor rooms (including the Council Chamber) should be available for hire and open to the public at other times.
6. First floor rooms should be available as offices for rent and for use by BTC and RDC.

In accordance with these principles, it is proposed that the following allocations are made:

Ground Floor

1. Reception area/Tourist Information Point

This space will provide a reception area for BTC, RDC and tourist enquirers with readily accessible information available from staff, in hard copy (maps, brochures etc) and through a wifi-enabled public use computer. It will showcase the fireplace, panelling and stairs and exhibit photographs and other 2D items relating to the Almonry and the town in a way that is not detrimental to the fabric. It will be the starting point for self-guided tours of the Almonry.

2. New Council Chamber (old Council Office)

This panelled room will reflect the dignity of its civic function, being furnished with appropriate boardroom furniture and provided with a built-in screen for use at meetings. It may be hired by outside bodies and will also be available as a confidential meeting area. It will be available for viewing by the public as part of the self-guided tour when not in use.

3. Old Council Chamber

The Old Council Chamber will continue to be for hire for meetings, educational activities and exhibitions and as a Wedding Venue. It will be available for viewing by the public as part of the self-guided tour. There will be a large screen for use at meetings and to show films about the history of the Almonry and the town.

4. Kitchen

The kitchen will be for use by staff and participants in meetings. It will be well equipped with sufficient storage space and a dishwasher.

5. Toilets

The toilets are for the convenience of those using the building. The external toilet will be signposted for visitors to the Almonry Gardens.

First floor

1. Offices for rent

The three offices on the High Street wing will be offered for rent at a commercial rent. The upstairs toilet and kitchen will be for their exclusive use.

2. Council/Public Service

The two remaining rooms on the first floor will be retained for use by BTC, RDC etc as mixed-use office/meeting areas.

3. Kitchen and toilet

The first-floor kitchen and toilet will be for the use of tenants and Council staff

Furniture and Equipment

As cost is of paramount importance the Council will look for the most cost effective way of re-furnishing the Almonry that is compatible with the desired function, appearance and quality. The Council already has sufficient desks and office furniture in store to furnish the upstairs office(s) and reception area. The heritage areas of the Almonry which will be open to the public to view and to hire will be furnished according to the following requirements. Specific proposals are made in Appendix 1

'Old' Council Chamber

- Space for public circulation
- Meeting table and chairs
- AV screen

- A few examples of occasional domestic furniture

New' Council Chamber

- Space for public circulation
- Table and chairs to seat 15 members
- Public seating
- AV screen
- Curtains

Reception Area

- Space for public circulation
- Staff Desks and chairs
- Small easy chairs for public use.
- Leaflet display stand
- Table and chair for public use computer
- Display cabinet

Letting Policy

- Tenancies will be advertised, beginning in January 2022.
- F and GP will review rents and hire charges and set these at a level sufficient to cover the annual cost of heat, light, and water, plus VAT.
- The agreement with RDC will be renegotiated, beginning in January 2022.

Almonry Gardens

An agreement will be reached with Beautiful Battle for the reinstatement of the rear garden.

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSALS FOR FURNITURE

Because the building has evolved through time there is no one period of furniture that is 'right'. Good quality heritage furniture and curtains (as examples illustrated) are readily available at auctions and can be bought for modest prices, often below the auctioneer's estimate. It is also possible to obtain quality office and boardroom furniture at little or no cost from recycling charities such as 'Waste to Wonder'. The following proposals take advantage of these opportunities

'Old' Council Chamber

- Either refectory style table or extendable dining table and chairs to be placed at the far end for meetings. (Estimates £80 - £250)
- Carved oak coffer(s) under windows. (Estimates £150 - £250)
- Period or period style occasional chairs (Estimate £50 - £70)
- Leather wing chair (estimate £40 - £60)
- Full length curtains across entrance to kitchen and toilet. (Estimate £40 - £60)
- Wooden venetian blinds across partition.
- 43" AV screen (£584.99)

'New' Council Chamber

This should be a formal public room. It can be furnished with a high quality modern table and chairs. Stacking chairs for members of the public could be stored in the cupboard in the old council chamber so that there is circulation space for visitors to view the room. A boardroom table and chairs and public seating can be sourced at no cost and curtains sourced from auction.

Reception Area

The Council already has staff desks and chairs. Small easy chairs for public use are available at no cost from the recycling charity 'Waste to Wonder'. A display cabinet can be obtained at auction.

APPENDIX 2

ALMONRY USE PLAN 2021

Room	Use
New Council Chamber	Full Council Meetings Council Committee Meetings Non-Council Meetings (For hire) Private Consultations (RDC, MP) Part of Almonry Tour
Old Council Chamber	Non-Council Meetings (For hire) Part of Almonry Tour Wedding Venue
Reception Area	BTC Reception RDC Reception TIP Part of Almonry Tour
Downstairs kitchen	Staff Meetings Weddings
Present TC's Office	RDC/BTC office and meeting space
First Floor Right Front	TC DTC Council Committee Meetings
First Floor Left Front First Floor Middle First Floor Back	To Let

APPENDIX 3

Examples of furniture at auction



