

Response from St. Andrews Environmental Network to Appendix 8

St Marys Place, St Andrews.

Response to the Community Empowerment Act Review Committee's request for further information on the current use of the asset and future proposals including:-

- (i) decision making to date and whether the building was still to close;
- (ii) the cost of retaining and maintaining the asset; and
- (iii) the cost and consequences of relocation were the request to be approved.

(i) Decision making to date and whether the building was still to close

The Office Rationalisation Programme (2010 to 2016) reduced the number of council offices from 97- 31. Rationalisation of St Marys Place local office was considered as part of the programme but no formal decision was taken to close the building, which would ultimately be a decision for operational services. Some services however were relocated to other facilities in the town and discussions took place with colleagues from Fife Cultural Trust about the possibility of co-locating many of the remaining services at St Andrews library. Unfortunately, no agreement was reached and as a consequence the decision on closure was deferred.

As a consequence of Covid restrictions the property is currently mothballed, however changes to service delivery as a result of the epidemic has resulted in a reconsideration of accommodation requirements. Once determined, a decision will be made on the building's future.

Response from St. Andrews Environmental Network

This has been well covered in all our previous responses. St Andrews Environmental Network was never informed of the decision to defer closure until September 2020 when we received the letter from Fife Council advising us of the recommendations to the committee. If we had been aware of this prior to submitting our application, we would have discussed with Fife Council Services the possibility of them remaining in the building as we planned to let out some of the rooms. The building has been under used for several years as it was only open to the public 3 days a week, St Andrews Environmental Network wishes to open the building initially 5 days a week increasing to 7 days a week as the project progresses.

Should we be successful with this application and Fife Council wish to retain services at St Mary's Place we would make some rooms available to them.

(ii) Cost of retaining and maintaining the asset

Though not surveyed since 2015 the property is wind and watertight, and has a "B" condition rating, typical of the majority of Council operational assets. The building is in need of works to improve decoration and if to be utilised beyond the short term, replacement of components which are nearing the end of their useful life should be undertaken.

Response/

Response from St. Andrews Environmental Network

Unless repair work has been carried out on the roof since July 2020 then the building is not wind and waterproof as there is evidence of water ingress in the kitchen, the meeting room, and the hallways. There could be more in some other areas of the building that we did not have access to. There has been very little maintenance carried out over the ten years we had offices in the building. Repairs to the roof would allow the building to be used in the short term, substantial sums will be required allow for continued use in the long term. St Andrews Environmental Network has taken these into consideration when developing this project and many of the issues will be addressed as part environmental upgrades to the building – for example, the heating system which currently has two very old gas boilers in need of replacement.

(iii) Cost and consequences of relocation

In the event the activities were to be relocated, the fit-out costs are considered to lie in the range £50 000 - £100 000 for reprovision of some services within the Town Hall.

Should the CAT panel decision be upheld, and the appeal refused, and in the event the property is confirmed as surplus, it will be marketed and offered for sale. Depending on planning consent and associated conditions the receipts to the Council have been assessed by the District Valuer to lie in a range between £700 000 and over £2.4m if redeveloped, potentially over £3.7m if adjacent Council land ownerships are included in a redevelopment proposal. It should be noted that the market value figure of £500,000 provided by StAnden's survey was a restricted use valuation assuming the current use as office space.

With an offer of £100 000 from StAnden there is the potential for a significant loss of income to the Council, income that supports the capital plan and wider Council objectives.

Response from St. Andrews Environmental Network

St Andrews Environmental Network had the building valued by Shepherds and received two figures for the value of the building, £900,000 for the building and current site and £500,000 for the building and only the land to the rear of the building, leaving the front carpark with its considerable income in the ownership of Fife Council. Purchasing the building without the front carpark greatly reduced the potential for alternative uses. The application for the Community Asset Transfer is based on the second option, the building and back carpark only.

1. There is a shortage of parking spaces in St Andrews – “Parking in St Andrews is a mix of formal off and on-street parking, with off-street parking mainly found in the west of the town, and informal parking along the beach at West Sands. Fife Council regularly undertakes parking surveys across in the town, with a survey most recently completed during 2019. The survey measured parking occupancy across 2,141 parking spaces in St Andrews between 0900 and 1700. Due to the high number of car parks, surveys were undertaken on consecutive Fridays from 30 August 2019 through to 4 October 2019.” An extract from St Andrews Transport Study, STAG Appraisal, “Case for Change Report”

2. **At all meetings discussing the possible closure and disposal of St Mary's Place Fife Council's Transportation were against it because of the considerable loss of a regular annual income.**
3. **During our consultation, the potential loss of the carpark was the issue raised most often.**
4. **The valuations of 2.4 and 3.7 million quoted are based on the redevelopment of the site, this is a listed building in a conservation area which the residents of St Andrews do not want to see demolished. I am unsure what adjacent land is being referred to above, as it is unclear whether or not the figures quoted by Fife Council include the front carpark or not, although it is unlikely anyone would pay 2.3 million for a site accessed through a public car park.**