

MELKSHAM TC UPDATE REPORT

Repair & Refurbishment Projects – August 2023

Report By: Reg Williams, LCC Associate

1. Introduction:

1.1. I was instructed by MTC in April 2023 to undertake the oversight of a number of building repair and maintenance projects on behalf of the Council.

1.2. The projects were, in order of urgency:

1.2.1. KGV's Field Cricket Pavilion

1.2.2. Assembly Hall

1.2.3. Arts Café

1.2.4. Melksham News Office

1.2.5. Rear Office & Garage

1.2.6. Town Hall

1.3. Background info came by way of copies of the surveys of these properties in very early 2020 by Robson Building Surveying Ltd, based in Bristol. They undertook a comprehensive survey of each of the assets listed above and came up with a thorough set of recommendations to bring those assets up to standard, along with provisional costs.

1.4. These costs were based upon their in-house estimates at that time and not market tested quotations.

1.5. The work I have been tasked with overseeing was based upon elements of the more urgent works at each property, and not the whole set of recommendations.

1.6. All these properties are old, tired, and quite rundown, with the exception, in some ways, of the cricket pavilion at the KGV playing fields.

1.7. For the purposes of this short update report, I shall only be referring to the Assembly Hall project.

2. Process to Date – Assembly Hall

2.1. A quote has been obtained from a local general contractor in the sum of £115,789.00.

2.2. This figure includes £18,379.00 of vat which MTC can reclaim, and £5,514.00 of contingency.

2.3. The nett cost is therefore £91,896.00. It is likely that with some discussion and re-profiling that this cost could be brought down to around £85,000 in my view.

2.4. Whatever the figure, this is considerably higher than the original costings suggested by the surveyor back in early 2020. There are, in my view, a number of reasons for this:

2.4.1. The original costings were not market tested at that time and were for guidance only and of course are now over three years out of date. It is common knowledge that costs in all areas of life have risen very considerable since that time and in the building industry in particular.

2.4.2. Whilst an allowance was suggested for scaffolding to the property, the extent of work required is such that this was far too low.

2.4.3. The property has deteriorated quite a bit since that time and as such the costs for remedial works have risen.

- 2.5. It should be noted that the surveyors stated that the immediate works required do little more than offer up an opportunity to hold back the deterioration, they do not transform the building into one that is not going to require regular and constant remedial work of one form or another every year, with considerable costs entailed simply to maintain a status quo position.
- 2.6. They suggested that the Council needs to take a strategic view of this property for the long term, possibly considering it more cost effective to demolish and re-build with a purpose made, and designed facility.
- 2.7. Having been on the roof externally and seen the condition first hand, as well as seen many of the deficiencies inside as well, especially within the areas not seen by the public, there is a real danger here that MTC will end up spending very considerable sums each year simply to patch up these deficiencies and issues and never actually end up with a high quality, modern and fit for purpose asset.
- 2.8. In my view, MTC must give very serious, urgent consideration to engaging a suitable architect and other relevant professionals to offer up a comprehensive options appraisal in relation to moving forwards.

3. Other Considerations

- 3.1. In getting quotes for the Assembly Hall project, I have had considerable problems in obtaining quotations.
- 3.2. For the Assembly Hall, which is almost entirely a roofing project, I made contact with the three roofing contractors who registered an interest in doing this project when it was first mooted in mid 2022. Each were sent the specifications as to what was wanted and offers to set up site visits and so on. Despite three follow up calls to each, and a number of reminder emails, none submitted a quote. One did at least make contact to say that they were too busy on other projects but the other two have not responded at all, despite the reminders. As such the one quotation received has come from a local general contractor who retains access to roofing staff who could do the work.
- 3.3. It is far from ideal as this does not conform to MTC's Standing Orders but it seems that not only are costs escalating, that there are less contractors available, and those that are available are either extremely busy or not interested in these quite "bitty" projects. If MTC wishes to undertake these remedial works then unfortunately it may need to set aside its Standing Orders in order to get the work done in a timely manner.

Reg Williams – LCC Associate.