

Policy & Resources Committee

Report Title: Town Hall Office Air Quality Reports

Meeting Date: 1 November 2022

Contact Officer: Mandy Sturdy – Town Clerk

Purpose of the Report

To share the results and recommendations of air quality reports carried out in the Town Hall and seek Council approval for the proposed next steps.

Background

1. Following reports from council officers that they were experiencing uncomfortable working conditions, including itchy eyes, headaches and dry throats; In line with our duty of care we commissioned a specialist in workplace Air Monitoring, Envirocare to carry out an indoor air quality assessment.
2. Under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, we have a legal duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of our employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the Management Regulations) also require that we assess and control risks to protect our employees.
3. Two assessments were carried out, the first on 10 December 2021 and the second on 11 July 2022.
4. Whilst the results of the two reports were quite reassuring inasmuch that the air quality was classified as medium to moderate and there was no detection of Carbon Monoxide, VOCs¹, Oxides of Nitrogen nor Sulphur Dioxides; there are still improvements that can be made to the working environment; regarding regulating temperature (too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter) and improvements to air movement and humidity levels.
5. The recommendations include:
 1. Decrease temperature in the summer to between 22 & 25 degrees centigrade
 2. Increase humidity levels in the 2nd floor office (old clerk's office)
 3. Consider mechanical ventilation to reduce the build up of Carbon Dioxide during high levels of occupancy on the ground floor
 4. Consider air humidifier for the 2nd floor office
 5. Further monitoring (internal and external)
 6. Introduce plants within the office area these will have beneficial effects on air quality

¹ Volatile Organic Compounds

6. The next steps are to:

1. Purchase a selection of the recommended plants – suggested budget £200
2. Review the recommendations, seek specialist advice on the potential alternations to facilities including mechanical solutions options and return to Policy and Resources Committee with costing

7. Advice sought from independent specialist including members of Thame Green Living, HSE² guidance

Resources Appraisal

8. There is £3,750 in the current 21/22 Environment budget and £4750 in earmarked reserves giving a total of £8,500 available. Further monitoring will be required.

Risk Assessment

9. Risk of increased employee sickness and or reduced moral if issues not addressed. Control measure include current hybrid working model where appropriate for the role

10. Additional Staff resource to care for plants

Action Required

Recommendations

- i. **To approve the next steps**
- ii. **To approve a budget of £200 to purchase plants for the offices**

² [How to deal with SBS Sick Building Syndrome \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/sbs/)