

Environment & Assets Committee

Title:	Town Hall – Upper Chamber Acoustics
Date:	15 July 2025
Contact Officer:	Andrea Oughton, Operations Manager

Purpose of the Report

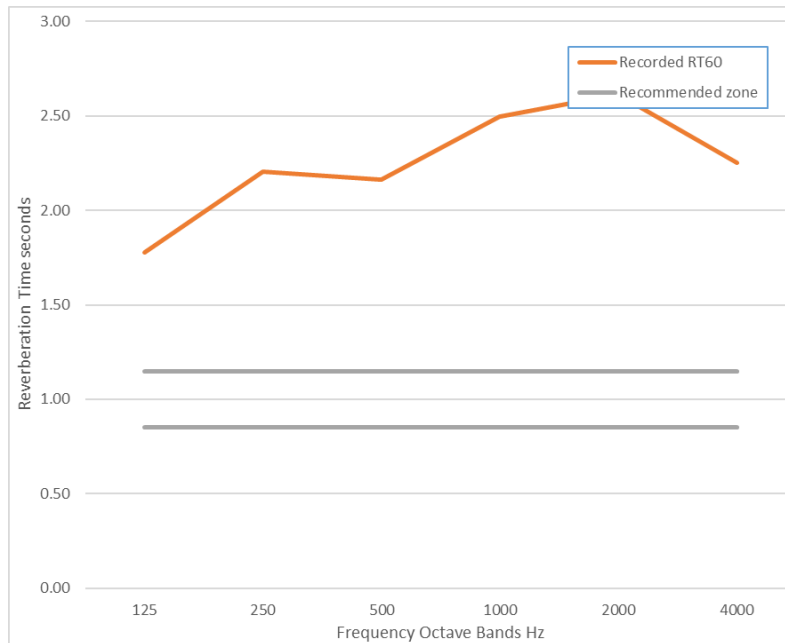
1. To agree to the installation of acoustic panels in the Upper Chamber.

Background

2. A report was commissioned in 2017 to look at issues related to speech intelligibility in the Upper Chamber. The Chamber has hard surfaces and, even with a microphone system, the reverberation in the Chamber is such that it is difficult to understand speech at distance from the person speaking.
3. The then Town Clerk and Asset Manager sought clarifications from the author of the report as the recommendations could be read in different ways i.e. is the introduction of carpet and curtains on their own sufficient, or wall mounted acoustic panels on their own or a combination of both?
4. An update was provided to the Policy & Resources Committee on 31 October 2017. It was agreed the option involving the least maintenance was the installation of acoustic panels to the ceiling and further calculations from a specialist fitter were being obtained on the number of panels required and expected impact. This, together with baize covering for the tables would be the cheapest long-term option.
5. For reasons unknown but could partly be attributed to a change in Officers and the Covid-19 pandemic, the project has not been progressed.

Action

6. In recent months, two companies have visited the Upper Chamber and provided quotations to install acoustic panels onto the ceiling and walls. (See Appendices 12a and 12b).
7. The chart and table below show the RT60 reverberation times of the hall and also highlight the recommended level of reverberation times Company A will aim to achieve with the recommended treatment.



Octave Band (Hz)	125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	Average
Actual recorded RT60:	1.78	2.21	2.16	2.49	2.62	2.25	2.25
Recommended RT60:	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Excess reverberation:	0.78	1.21	1.16	1.49	1.62	1.25	1.25

In summary, the current reverberation time is 2.25 seconds and the aim is to bring this down to 1.0 second.

Company B provided comparable reverberation times with the aim of bringing reverberation time down to 1.5 seconds.

Quotations

- Company A: To supply 40 wall panels, 15 ceiling panels and install - £8,457.98 excl vat
Company B: To supply 32 wall panels, 16 ceiling panels - £6,664.90 excl vat and installation.

Resource Appraisal

- Project to be funded from the Capital Rolling Fund.
- Installation will result in the reduction of reverberation times from 2.25 seconds to 1.0 second, significantly improving acoustics in the Upper Chamber.

Risk Assessment

- Poor acoustics impact negatively on council meetings, for officers, councillors and the public.
- Potential risk of discrimination.
- Poor acoustics impact negatively on hall hire income as the space is challenging for some activities.
- Improved acoustics will enable officers to progress the project to livestreaming meetings.

Legal Powers

- General Power of Competence
- Local Gov Act 1972 s133
- Equality Act 2010

Recommendation:

- i) To approve that Company A be awarded the contract to supply and install acoustic panels as per their proposal at a cost of £8,457.98 excluding vat, funded from the Capital Rolling Fund.***