

VICTORIA HALL

Oakham's civic, community and cultural heart



VICTORIA HALL REMEDIATION & REFURBISHMENT

Briefing Notes

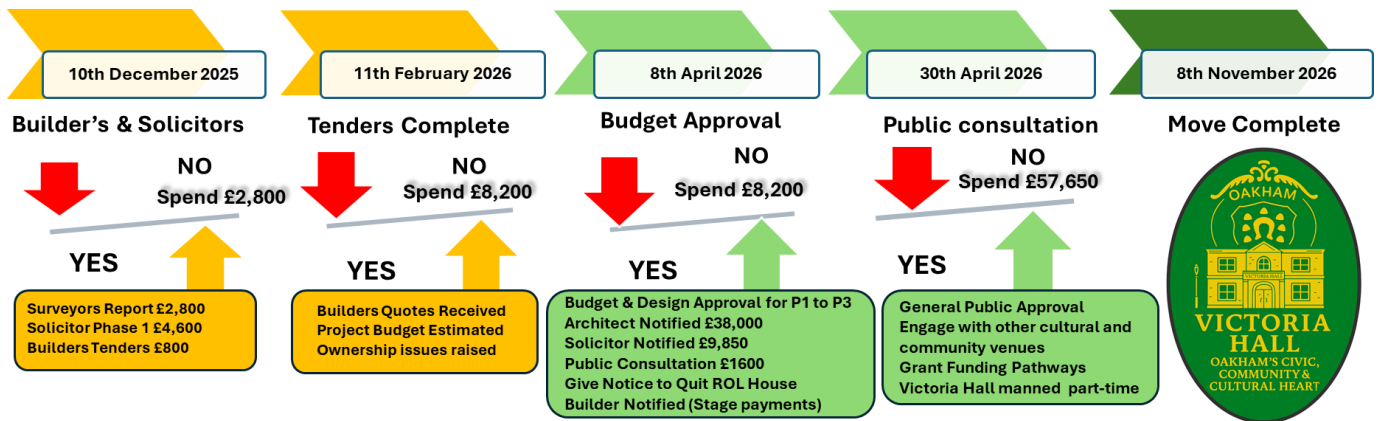
April 2026

Moving Victoria Hall forward: essential works, strong legal foundations, and confirmed CIL funding

Overview

The proposals are set out in the main agenda paper. These briefing notes provide supplementary context and clarification to support Members’ understanding of the proposals and to assist informed decision-making.

Executive Summary



This report sets out the decisions required to progress the next stages of the Victoria Hall project. The overarching aim is to restore the Hall as the council’s civic base and to re-establish it as a prominent community and cultural venue for Oakham.

Members are asked to approve the commencement of Phases 1 and 2 of the refurbishments, including two early priorities: the ground-floor WC reconfiguration and the refurbishment of the accessible first-floor WC. The proposed approach to phase 3 focuses initially on the council chamber, the main first floor hall space and the high street and north access lobbies, as these areas will shape the building’s functionality and public experience once reopened.

The tender process closed on 11 February, with five bids assessed on a like-for-like basis. Fylde Conservation submitted the most competitive quotation and provided notable added value, by conducting a drone roof survey which was shared with all bidders. With reference to the *Tender Comparison – April 2026* (agenda item 2.3), approval is sought to appoint a contractor, subject to satisfactory references, so to maintain project momentum.

At the meeting of the Victoria Hall Working Group on 29 February, Anthony Collins Solicitors advised that Phase 1 of the legal review identified that the hall’s land is unregistered and that the Charity holds no title documents. Current legal advice is that the most robust and sustainable solution is to replace the existing trustees with a structure in which Oakham Town Council becomes the sole corporate trustee, with ownership of the building transferred to the Council. The revised Stage 2 proposal reflects the additional legal work now required.

If Council approves the recommendations on 8 April, the move into Victoria Hall is anticipated to be completed by 8 November at the earliest. This timeline is dependent on the timely completion of the legal work and on the contractor’s ability to sequence their programme around the Council’s intention to occupy the building at the earliest opportunity.

The project will be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy. Confirmed April 2026 CIL payments will bring the available balance to £325,352. A 10% contingency is included within the contractor’s quotation, and continued professional oversight will be essential to safeguard the Council’s investment.

Members are also asked to note the planned public consultation, comprising 5,000 flyers, a QR-linked survey, and an in-person event at Victoria Hall. This consultation is scheduled to take place before the end of April 2026, with costs already authorised to support open and transparent engagement.

The detailed notes that follow provide further context and set out the full rationale for the proposals.

Proposal 1: Scope of Works

Reference: Kingsmead Design – Preliminary Scope of Works & Outline Specification

The scope of works sets out the Victoria Hall refurbishment programme, the prioritisation of activity across the three phases, the financial approach, and the decisions required from Full Council. It also underlines the critical importance of Phases 1 and 2 in safeguarding the future of this much-loved community asset.

Phase 1 and Phase 2: Essential Stabilisation Works

Phases 1 and 2 constitute the minimum essential works required to keep Victoria Hall viable as a public building. They address immediate risks to structural integrity, building safety and statutory accessibility—issues that must be resolved before the Hall can lawfully or safely reopen.

Evidence of Risk

- Surveys confirm active deterioration and escalating structural and safety concerns.
- The building remains non-compliant with core accessibility requirements.
- Continued closure, driven by the charity’s financial pressures, increases the risk of unmanaged decline.

Consequences of Non-Delivery

Failure to deliver Phases 1 and 2 will accelerate deterioration, increase future costs and may ultimately force the charity to sell the building, resulting in the permanent loss of a key heritage and civic asset in the centre of Oakham.

Strategic Rationale

Delivering Phases 1 and 2 is essential to safeguard a Grade II listed building, protect public value and ensure the Hall can be used effectively by both the Council and the community. These works are not enhancements; they are critical interventions required to secure the building’s survival and to enable future civic, community and cultural use.

Phase 3: Cosmetic and Community Enhancements

Phase 3 is generally of secondary priority; however, the reconfiguration of the WC areas (P3.5) is an essential component. Modernised and expanded Female and Male WC facilities, together with a compliant Accessible WC, are required to meet current standards of capacity, accessibility and operational suitability. Without this upgrade, the building cannot support the level of footfall, event activity or hirer expectations necessary for a sustainable operating model.

Adequate and compliant WC provision directly underpins the Hall’s future income-generating potential. It is a baseline requirement for commercial hires, community events and cultural programming. Retaining outdated, undersized or non-compliant facilities would restrict the Hall’s ability to attract users, suppress revenue and undermine the long-term financial stability that the refurbishment programme is intended to secure.

Selected Phase 3 Works

SELECTED PHASE 3 WORKS	
GROUND FLOOR	
P3.2 – G-02 & G-02A – ROOM 2	Council Chamber & Office
P3.5 – G-05; G.07; G-08 & G-09	Reconfiguration and refurbishment of ground floor WC
P3.9 – G-12 – LOBBY	Main Entrance Lobby
P3.12– G-15– NORTH ACCESS LOBBY	Disabled Access Lobby
DOORS IRONMONGERY G-01,03,04,05,07,08,09,10,14	Fireproofing Doors
FIRST FLOOR	
P3.16 – F-03 – ACCESS WC	Accessible First Floor WC
P3.14 – F-01 MAIN HALL SPACE	Main Space

Wider Purpose of Phase 3

The broader Phase 3 works aim to strengthen the Hall's long-term viability by improving functionality, enhancing public-facing areas and increasing its competitiveness as a venue. These improvements are designed to ensure that, once stabilised, the building can operate successfully and generate the income required to remain open and resilient.

Scope and Financial Approach

The Phase 3 scope prioritises the creation of a functional Council Chamber, adequate and compliant WC provision and the refurbishment of the building's entrance areas. Less visible areas, such as the store and staff kitchen were not included at this stage. This approach reduces the initial financial impact and aligns expenditure with projected future income, ensuring that investment is directed towards areas of greatest operational and civic benefit.

This phased and clearly prioritised structure also strengthens the Council's ability to pursue external grants and third-party financial support. Funders typically require a well-defined programme with clear sequencing and evidence that core safety and accessibility issues are being addressed first. Presenting Phase 3 as targeted enhancements built upon essential stabilisation works improves the Council's prospects for securing additional funding.

Procurement and Tendering

All potential contractors received identical documentation, including the Preliminary Scope of Works, the Outline Specification and drone photography of the external roof space. This ensured a fair and transparent procurement process, providing a level playing field and enabling direct comparability between tenders.

Decision Points for Full Council

Full Council is asked to:

1. Confirm Phases 1 and 2 as essential works requiring approval and progression and endorses P3.5 (WC reconfiguration) and P3.16 (Accessible First Floor WC) as essential elements of the initial works.
2. Approve the Phase 3 prioritisation approach, including the focus on the Council Chamber and entrance refurbishments as detailed in the Kingsmead Design Preliminary Scope of Works and Outline Specification.

Proposal 2: Legal Work to Protect the Council's Investment and Establish a Robust Legal Framework

Authorisation of Expenditure for the Revised Stage 2 Work by Anthony Collins Solicitors (£9,850)

Reference: Solicitors' Revised Fee Proposal (Anthony Collins)

The revised Stage 2 proposal from Anthony Collins Solicitors reflects the additional legal work now required to place the Victoria Hall project on a secure footing. The original Phase 2 estimate (£7,250) covered establishing a new organisation and preparing a new lease. However, Phase 1 identified that the Hall's land is unregistered and that the Charity holds no title documents. This means further work is necessary before any lease arrangement for the council to occupy part of the building can be made.

At the Victoria Hall Working Group meeting on 29 February, the Trustees and Working Group were advised that the most robust and sustainable solution is to replace the existing trustees with a structure in which Oakham Town Council becomes the sole corporate trustee, with ownership of the building transferred to the Council.

Should Oakham Town Council choose to become the sole corporate trustee of the Victoria Hall charity, it enters a curious legal paradox: the council is both the landlord (as trustee) and the tenant (as user). It must lease space from itself, but not in any informal or symbolic way. Charity law requires that this arrangement be treated as a genuine, arms-length transaction, with full transparency and proper safeguards. Clear legal guidance will be sought as the best way to manage this legal paradox.

This approach retains the Hall's charitable status and its associated financial and regulatory benefits, while addressing long-standing governance weaknesses and providing a more secure basis for future Council involvement.

Expanded Stage 2 work

- Completing the land registration process and submitting the required application.
- Preparing the supporting statements and documentation needed for registration.
- Updating the Charity's governing documents, including provisions relating to trustee benefits.
- Securing Charity Commission consent to revise the Charity's objects.
- Working closely with the trustees throughout the transition.

Revised charitable objects

The trustees have proposed the following:

"Our vision is for the Victoria Hall to provide a welcoming and inspiring community space for a diverse and accessible range of activities, including leisure, arts, performance, education and meetings, whilst seeking to promote social inclusion, interaction and engagement for all.

The Hall shall be used by any society, club or group, existing or to be formed, for the promotion or encouragement of culture, entertainment, education or health and fitness, to be approved by the trustees. The trustees may also let the Hall for other purposes as they consider appropriate. The yearly income shall be applied to the running costs and maintenance of the Hall and otherwise to supporting the Charity's Objects."

Revised fee quotation

The revised fee quotation for this expanded work is £9,850, an increase of £2,600 from the original estimate. Members are asked to note that £4,500 has already been committed for Stage 1.

Decision Points for Full Council

Full Council is asked to:

1. Authorise expenditure of £9,850 for the revised Stage 2 legal work by Anthony Collins Solicitors, as set out in Solicitors revised fee proposal - Anthony Collins, noting £4,500 already committed for Stage 1.

Proposal 3: Contract Management and Professional Oversight

Authorisation of Expenditure for the revised fee quotation from Kingsmead Design for Stages 1,2 and 4 (£35,000)

Reference: 2.9 Architect - Kingsmead Design revised fee quotation

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the revised fee quotation cover the preparation and submission of the listed building consent application and the building regulations application. These stages ensure that all statutory permissions are in place before any works can proceed.

The later phase of the work (Stage 4) will involve the formal appointment of a contractor on the Council's behalf, using a JCT Minor Works Contract, and ongoing liaison with the selected building contractor throughout the delivery of the project. This element of the commission is of particular importance. The drawing up of the contract, the management of its terms, and the day-to-day engagement with the contractor are critical to ensuring that the works are delivered to specification, on time, and within budget.

The Town Council does not have specialist expertise in construction contract management, and it is therefore essential that this responsibility sits with a qualified professional who can oversee the process, manage risk, and ensure that the contractor is held to the required standards. Securing this level of professional oversight is fundamental to protecting the Council's interests and ensuring the successful delivery of the Victoria Hall project.

Fee Quotation, in the sum of £38,000, noting that £800 has already been committed for Stage 3.

Decision Points for Full Council

Full Council is asked to:

1. Authorise expenditure of £38,000 for the revised Kingsmead Design fee quotation for Stages 1, 2 and 4, as set out in Specifications, Legal Advice and Quotations April 2026 (agenda item 2.2), noting £800 already committed for Stage 3.

Proposal 4: Appointment of a contractor

Reference: 2.2 *Victoria Hall Project Tender Comparison – March 2026*

The project will be financed through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), receipts due in April 26 have been confirmed by the Community Infrastructure and Planning Obligations Officer at RCC and will be paid on the 28 April 2026. the revised available balance will be £325,352.

The Victoria Hall refurbishment project was formally advertised on the Government's Contracts Finder portal on 7 January 2026, with the procurement window closing on 11 February 2026. The tender process was conducted in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and public procurement requirements to ensure transparency, fairness, and open competition.

A total of five tenders were received by the closing date. Initial compliance checks were undertaken, followed by structured clarification discussions with shortlisted bidders. Significant time was invested to ensure that all contractors were working from a consistent understanding of the project requirements as set out in the document; Specifications, Legal Advice and Quotations April 2026 (agenda item 2.2)

These discussions focused on confirming the scope of works, programme assumptions, and the treatment of provisional items. This thorough approach ensured that all submissions could be compared on a genuinely like-for-like basis, strengthening the reliability of the cost comparison and reducing the risk of misunderstandings later in the project.

Full design compliance checks will be undertaken by Kingsmead Architects with tender compliance checks forming part of the separate Tender Action process. The results of the tender assessment are detailed in the document; Tender Comparison - April 2026 (agenda item 2.3)

Fylde Conservation submitted the most competitive quotation and provided notable added value, by conducting a drone roof survey which was shared with all bidders.

As part of the Council's due diligence, references have been requested from the shortlisted bidders. These checks form an essential part of the evaluation process, providing assurance regarding past performance, quality of workmanship, and the capacity to deliver a heritage-sensitive project of this scale.

With reference to the Tender Comparison - April 2026 (agenda item 2.3) document, approval is sought to appoint a contractor, subject to satisfactory references, to maintain project momentum.

Decision Points for Full Council

Full Council is asked to:

1. Agree the preferred contractor (subject to suitable references) and authorise progression to contract award.

Proposal 5: Public Consultation (Planned Activity Subject to Council Approval)

Should Council agree to progress the Victoria Hall refurbishment, a public consultation will be undertaken to ensure residents have a meaningful opportunity to shape the future of this important community asset. The consultation is intended to gather views on how Victoria Hall can best serve Oakham in the years ahead and will form a key part of developing a refurbishment programme that reflects local priorities.

To support this engagement, over 5,000 A5 flyers will be distributed to households across Oakham, each containing a QR-linked survey to make participation straightforward and accessible. A consultation event will also be held at Victoria Hall before the end of April, at which councillors will be present to answer questions, listen to residents' views and provide further information on the proposals.

Associated printing and delivery costs of £1,600 for the flyers and publicity material were authorised under Minute 09/25 16 VICTORIA HALL.

This consultation is designed to ensure that the community's voice directly informs the next stage of planning. Victoria Hall is a much-loved building with a long civic and cultural history, and resident feedback will be essential in shaping a refurbishment that restores its civic presence, supports community activity and strengthens its role in Oakham's cultural life.



Decision Points for Full Council

Full Council is asked to:

1. Note the planned public consultation on the future of Victoria Hall, including the distribution of over 5,000 A5 flyers to Oakham residents, a QR-linked survey, and an in-person engagement event at Victoria Hall, with associated printing and delivery costs estimated at £1,600 authorised under Minute 09/25 16 VICTORIA HALL.

Victoria Hall – Financial Overview (March 2026)

1. Funding Position

The project is to be financed through the **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** current balance **£231,552**

April CIL payments have been confirmed by the Community Infrastructure and Planning Obligations Officer at RCC and will be paid on the 28 April 2026. the revised balance will be £325,352.

Expenditure and Receipts		
Date	Description	Amount
10-Dec-25	Solicitor - Anthony Collins	£ 4,600
10-Dec-25	Tenders	£ 800
10-Dec-25	Public Consultation	£ 1,600
28-Apr-26	Future receipts	£ 93,800

2. Summary of Future Project Expenditure

Total estimated projected expenditure (excluding consultation costs already authorised): £311,450

Total already committed: £8,200

Project Component	Supplier / Lead	Description	Cost	Committed to Date	Notes
Legal Work – Revised Stage 2	Anthony Collins Solicitors	Land registration, statutory documentation, updates to Charity governance	£9,850	£4,600 (Stage 1)	Additional work required following discovery of unregistered title
Architectural & Contract Management Services	Kingsmead Design	Listed building consent, building regulations, contractor appointment & oversight	£38,000	£800 (Stage 3)	Includes contract drafting and contractor liaison
Refurbishment Works (incl. 10% contingency)	TBN	Refurbishment of Victoria Hall	£255,000 Estimated Average	£0	Subject to receipt of CIL payments confirmed for payment on the 26 th April 2026
Public Consultation Materials	Various suppliers	A5 flyer design, printing, and distribution; QR-linked survey promotion	£1,600	Under Minute 09/25 16 VICTORIA HALL	Costs authorised separately; expenditure to support April consultation

Total Cost	Committed To Date	Total Project Cost
£304,450	£8,200	£312,650

3. Procurement and Value Assurance

1. The refurbishment contract was advertised on Contracts Finder (7 January–11 February 2026).
2. Five tenders were received and assessed in line with the Council's Financial Regulations.
3. Significant time and effort were invested to ensure all contractors worked from the same understanding of the specification, enabling a reliable like-for-like comparison.
4. Fylde Conservation demonstrated added value through proactive engagement, including a drone roof survey, which was shared to all contractors.

4. Financial Risk Considerations

- Progress is contingent on confirmed CIL income.
- Professional oversight (legal and architectural) is essential to manage risk, ensure compliance, and protect the Council's investment.
- A 10% contingency is included within the contractor quotation to mitigate unforeseen costs.
- Consultation expenditure has already been authorised and supports the Council's commitment to transparency and community engagement.

