

# Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 30 April 2024

## City Chambers Quadrangle Operations

Executive/routine  
Wards

Executive  
11 – City Centre

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Finance and Resources Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Note this update in response to the motion approved by the Council in September 2023 on the operation of the City Chambers Quadrangle; and
  - 1.1.2 Approve the proposed operating procedure (Appendix 1).

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## City Chambers Quadrangle Operations

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report responds to an adjusted motion which was approved by the Council in September 2023 on the operation of the City Chambers Quadrangle.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 On 26 September 2023, the Council approved an [adjusted motion](#) in respect of the City Chambers Quadrangle Operations.
- 3.2 The Council requested a report on options to improve pedestrian safety and cycling parking at the City Chambers and surrounding area, including appropriate facilities, to be reported back to Finance and Resources Committee. The Council also requested that the report consider how a fully pedestrianised Quadrangle would:
- 3.2.1 Improve the experience of people walking, wheeling and cycling through the area;
  - 3.2.2 Improve and respect the heritage value of the area; and
  - 3.2.3 Maintain access for emergency services, emergency maintenance and those with accessibility requirements under the Equality Act (2010).
- 3.3 The motion of September 2023 also referred to a number of previous questions, motions and reports which had looked at the need to reduce throughfare traffic, time that drivers spent waiting in the Quadrangle and note the lack of a clear policy on what was 'legitimate and reasonable use'.
- 3.4 These are summarised in the background reading section below.

### 4. Main report

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#### City Chambers

- 4.1 The City Chambers is a multi-use building which supports the civic responsibilities of the Council and the ex officio role of the Lord Provost as Lord Lieutenant as well as providing rooms for Council meetings, office accommodation for Elected

Members and officers, Civil Ceremony rooms, function spaces and hosts the Council's Emergency Planning and CCTV Operations Centres.

- 4.2 The Quadrangle area at the front of the main entrance of the City Chambers is used for a variety of purposes, including vehicle parking, cycle parking, benches for people to stop and rest and is popular with walking tour groups learning about the history of the city and City Chambers building.

### **Parking in the Quadrangle**

- 4.3 As noted in paragraph 10.3, Finance and Resources Committee in 2019 noted that there was no agreed policy to control the use of the Quadrangle by vehicles. The policy approved was due to be implemented on 1 January 2020.
- 4.4 It is noted from the motion agreed in September 2023, and through observation of the operation of vehicular access to the Quadrangle, that the arrangements agreed in 2019 have not been fully implemented.
- 4.5 In addition to vehicular parking, a number of Sheffield stands for bicycles are also located at the main entrance to the City Chambers. The cycle racks are available on a first come, first served basis and are popular both with Council officers and Elected Members as well as members of the public visiting the area.

### **Improving Pedestrian Safety**

- 4.6 The Council has agreed a goal of reducing the number of car kilometres in the city by 30% by 2030 ([City Mobility Plan](#)) and has agreed changes to the city's streets ([Our Future Streets](#)), particularly in the city centre. An operational plan for the City Centre is currently being developed.
- 4.7 While the proposals in this report can support the delivery of the above, the primary focus of reviewing the current arrangements operating within the City Chambers Quadrangle has been on improving pedestrian safety both around and within the area.
- 4.8 The current arrangements, with vehicles accessing the Quadrangle throughout the day, means that there are a number of interactions and potential conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles in and around the Quadrangle area. As well as the potential risk to Elected Members and Council officers, this conflict also potentially increases when visitors are entering, dwelling in or leaving the Quadrangle (including Walking Tours).
- 4.9 The policy agreed by Committee in 2019 recognised that there would be circumstances where vehicles would need to enter the Quadrangle, and therefore it would be challenging to fully pedestrianise it.
- 4.10 Officers have, however, reviewed the operating arrangements agreed in 2019 and have set out the following options for future vehicle access to the Quadrangle:
- 4.10.1 Option 1 – Continue with the current arrangements;
- 4.10.2 Option 2 – Implement in full the policy agreed in 2019;

4.10.3 Option 3 – Implement a revised procedure for vehicle movements (draft attached in Appendix 1); or

4.10.4 Option 4 – Fully pedestrianise the Quadrangle.

- 4.11 Option 1 has been discounted on the basis that continuing with the status quo would not improve pedestrian safety in the area.
- 4.12 The main change proposed in the draft procedure set out in Appendix 1 (as opposed to the policy approved in 2019) is that it proposes to further restrict the vehicles which can enter the Quadrangle and also proposes to limit the time for vehicles to remain within the area. By doing so, it is anticipated that this would also improve pedestrian safety as well as improving the area visually.
- 4.13 As Committee noted in 2019 (and noted in paragraph 9.2 below), full pedestrianisation of the Quadrangle is challenging to do. Officers have also identified a small number of potential impacts which may arise if full pedestrianisation is agreed.

### **Accessibility Requirements**

- 4.14 The Equality Act 2010 requires providers of services to the public to make 'reasonable adjustments' to remove any barriers which may discriminate against disabled people. This includes ensuring that workers with disabilities are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their job.
- 4.15 However, the City Chambers Quadrangle is not designated as a car park and the Council is not legally obliged to provide parking facilities.
- 4.16 Alternative parking on presentation of a Blue Badge is available on nearby streets. In addition, taxi and private hire cars can drop off and collect from the High Street and Cockburn Street.
- 4.17 Pedestrian access will be maintained through the Quadrangle or through the Cockburn Street entrance.

### **Increased Cycle Parking**

- 4.18 There are currently 30 – 35 cycle spaces in Sheffield stands for cycle parking are located at the entrance to the City Chambers. As noted in September 2023, these are increasingly well used both by colleagues, Elected Members and cyclists in the city.
- 4.19 One of the reasons for their popularity is that there is a limited number of other cycle parking facilities in the immediate vicinity of the City Chambers.
- 4.20 At present, there are no plans for additional cycle hangers in the area as the High Street is particularly difficult to provide appropriate locations for these and there are no parking spaces available which could be repurposed.
- 4.21 Officers are currently reviewing the potential to make more cycle parking stands/hangers available around the City Chambers, and in particular investigating

the potential to use carriageway space on Cockburn Street to create additional cycle parking capacity.

- 4.22 In preparing the proposed operating arrangements for the Quadrangle, officers considered whether it would be possible use some of the central Quadrangle for cycle parking but have discounted this on the basis that it would require permanent infrastructure which could not be easily removed for civic events. Further, this infrastructure could detract from the heritage and visual improvements that removing vehicles will create.

#### **Experience of the City Chambers Quadrangle and surrounding area**

- 4.23 The area of the War Memorial, Arches at the entrance of the City Chambers and the pavement immediately outside the area (on the High Street) are extremely popular with visitors, street traders and performers.
- 4.24 Officers are currently working with Edinburgh World Heritage and a conservation architect to develop proposals for protecting the War Memorial. An update on the proposals will be presented to Committee when available.
- 4.25 To further improve access to the Quadrangle and City Chambers, it is proposed to further investigate potential licensing or street enforcement activities which could minimise the use of space immediately outside the Quadrangle (on the High Street). Officers will also consider whether this could be linked to the potential development of management rules.
- 4.26 The Quadrangle is also a popular stop for walking tours in and around the city centre, with between 20 and 30 groups visiting each day in the summer season. The area is also occasionally used as a festival venue.
- 4.27 It is proposed to work with walking tour group organisers to develop guidelines for the inclusion of the Quadrangle within tour programmes.
- 4.28 Early engagement will be undertaken to identify the tours which currently include the Quadrangle and to discuss the current arrangements.

#### **Facilities for Council Officers and Elected Members**

- 4.29 There is currently only one shower within the City Chambers complex. In preparing this report, officers have been unable to identify any suitable locations for further facilities to be developed within the building.
- 4.30 However, shower facilities are available in Waverley Court for officers and Elected Members.
- 4.31 Officers will continue to consider the potential to introduce further shower facilities within the City Chambers complex as any future redevelopments are planned.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Committee are asked to agree the proposed operating procedure for vehicle access to the Quadrangle (Appendix 1). If this is agreed, officers will work with contractors,

event organisers and others to put in place the necessary arrangements to implement these changes from 1 July 2024.

- 5.2 The exemptions requested and agreed will be reviewed quarterly, and the procedure will be reviewed annually. Any proposed changes to the procedure will be reported to Committee.
- 5.3 In addition, engagement with Tour Guides will be progressed to develop guidelines for the groups visiting the Quadrangle. Consideration of the potential to minimise activities immediately outside the Quadrangle will continue.
- 5.4 Officers will continue to progress the War Memorial project and will report back to Committee on this as soon as possible.
- 5.5 Consideration will also be given to providing additional facilities in the City Chambers if further developments are planned within the building.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no direct financial impacts arising from the introduction of the proposed procedure for the City Chambers Quadrangle.
- 6.2 However, officers have identified that these changes may reduce the attractiveness of the City Chambers as an event and wedding venue, which may have an adverse impact on the income achieved by the Council.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 In 2019, Committee agreed to remove all free car parking spaces from the Quadrangle and to restrict vehicle access to and use of the Quadrangle.
- 7.2 The proposed procedure reflects this agreement and provides greater clarity on the operating arrangements for the Quadrangle to improve pedestrian safety. No equality or poverty impacts have been identified in preparing this report. It also recognises that the Council is not legally obliged to provide car parking facilities and that there is alternative disabled parking available in the surrounding area on presentation of a Blue Badge.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

*“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”*

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

*“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”*

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

### **Environmental Impacts**

- 8.3 The aim of the City Mobility Plan is to reduce car kilometres in the city by 2030. Restricting vehicle access to the City Chambers Quadrangle and installing further cycle parking (if possible) will support this aim and will hopefully encourage further walking, wheeling and cycling.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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### **Possible Impacts of the Proposed Operating Guidelines**

- 9.1 An initial assessment of the proposed operating guidelines has identified the following potential impacts in addition to improved pedestrian safety:
- 9.1.1 Improved visual impact of the building - supporting the heritage and civic role of the building;
  - 9.1.2 Improved conditions for people to visit the City Chambers and to spend time in the Quadrangle;
  - 9.1.3 There may be a negative financial impact for the Council from events in the City Chambers if attendees are unable to park in the Quadrangle;
  - 9.1.4 There may be a negative operational impact for contractors working in the City Chambers as they will be required to park elsewhere in the area and pay the relevant parking charges. However, [Trades Parking Permits](#) are available; and
  - 9.1.5 Static demonstrations may be encouraged if the Quadrangle is not being used by vehicles.
- 9.2 In addition to the above, if the Council decides to fully pedestrianise the Quadrangle and not permit access for any vehicles, the following potential impacts have been identified:
- 9.2.1 Access by the emergency services should an incident occur could be impacted by the full closure of the Quadrangle to vehicles;
  - 9.2.2 There may be a security risk associated with dignitaries visiting the City Chambers, with the expectation that Police Scotland may request access be permitted in these circumstances (e.g. Royal Visits); and

9.2.3 There may be an increased health and safety and/or insurance cost if access to the City Chambers through the Quadrangle for the Lord Provost, the Deputy Provost or Bailies are not permitted access (due to the value of the [Civic Regalia](#)).

## 10. Background reading/external references

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### City Chambers Quadrangle Operations

- 10.1 On 22 September 2016, a [Council Question](#) was submitted in respect of the City Chambers Quadrangle. This highlighted a 'No Parking' rule in the Quadrangle area, with parking only allowed in the following circumstances, with parking during normal working hours controlled by the reception team within the City Chambers. Outwith normal working hours, the Security team covering the City Chambers monitored and ensured compliance with the arrangements.
- 10.1.1 The Lord Provost's car or civic cars when waiting to collect the Lord Provost or elected members;
  - 10.1.2 People with disabilities visiting the City Chambers and holding a valid disabled parking badge;
  - 10.1.3 Dropping off or collecting visitors, i.e. taxis, cars etc;
  - 10.1.4 Media vehicle with pre-authorized permission to park on the site; and
  - 10.1.5 Other parking is at the discretion of the City Chambers Facility Manager, e.g., charging point for electric vehicles etc
- 10.2 On 19 September 2019, the Council approved an [adjusted amendment](#) on Parking in the City Chambers Quadrangle.
- 10.3 On 6 December 2019, Finance and Resources Committee considered a [report](#) on Elected Member car parking. The report highlighted that there was no documented policy Committee for use of the Quadrangle by vehicles. Following engagement with Elected Members, Committee agreed that all vehicles should be banned from the Quadrangle and that legitimate and responsible use would be enforced from 1 January 2020. The following exceptions were agreed:
- 10.3.1 Emergency Services;
  - 10.3.2 Official Council, Lord Provost/Lord Lieutenancy, Depute Lord Provost and Bailies specific business;
  - 10.3.3 Wedding reception vehicles;
  - 10.3.4 Essential maintenance vehicle access;
  - 10.3.5 Essential operational business e.g. CCTV operations; and
  - 10.3.6 Any necessary parking to provide reasonable adjustments as part of the Council's accessibility requirements arising from the Equality Act.



- 10.4 Notwithstanding the above, the report highlighted that every effort would be made to ensure that these uses would be kept to a minimum, with the use of the Cockburn Street entrance encouraged.
- 10.5 Cockburn Street is now open to vehicular traffic between the hours of 6.30am and 10.30am (with access maintained for Blue Badge holders and residents holding a valid parking permit).

### **War Memorial**

- 10.6 On 21 November 2019, the Council approved an [adjusted motion](#) in respect of the War Memorial. Within this, the Council requested that a report to Culture and Communities Committee should set out any access issues to the War Memorial and to the entrance to the public Quadrangle in order to keep pavement space free for pedestrian movement and access to the City Chambers and Quadrangle.
- 10.7 On 15 September 2020, Culture and Communities Committee received an update [report](#) which outlined proposals to commission a design solution to protect the war memorial to ensure that it remained a place for remembrance and respect.

## **11. Appendices**

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### Appendix 1 City Chambers Quadrangle Operating Procedure

## Appendix 1 – City Chambers Quadrangle Operating Procedure

<b>Goal</b>	Improve Pedestrian Conditions in and around the City Chambers, including the Quadrangle
<b>Principle</b>	Vehicle movements in, out and around the Quadrangle will not be permitted (subject to the exceptions below). Parking will not be permitted.
<b>Exceptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Service access will be permitted at all times;</li> <li>• The Lord Provost’s car or civic cars on official business;</li> <li>• Official vehicles to support the Lord Lieutenant, including vehicles for visiting dignitaries;</li> <li>• Elections vehicles;</li> <li>• Official wedding cars, for the duration of the wedding ceremony and/or drop off/collection from wedding celebrations; and</li> <li>• Access to maintenance vehicles for emergency maintenance of the building (for material/tool drop off and collection only).</li> </ul>
<b>Operating Procedure</b>	With the exception of the Emergency Services and the Council’s civic cars, vehicle access to the City Chambers Quadrangle should be agreed in advance with the Locality Hub Team Leader for the City Chambers. This should be done by email.
<b>Monitoring</b>	A record of all permissions granted will be retained and reviewed by the appropriate Service on a quarterly basis.
<b>Escalation/Issue Resolution</b>	If any issues arise with the implementation of the procedure, these will be identified to the Head of Facilities Management for immediate resolution.
<b>Implementation</b>	This procedure will become effective on 1 July 2024.
<b>Review</b>	The procedure will be reviewed annually, and any proposed changes will be reported to Finance and Resources Committee.