

Old Court House Working Group Terms of Reference March 2026

Committee type	Working Group
Reports to	Full Council
Frequency of meeting	As required: task and complete
Minimum number of members	5
Quorum	3
Election of Chair	First annual meeting of Working Group
Presence of non-councillors	By invitation
Date ratified	March 2026

The Old Court House (OCH) Working Group is established by resolution of the Town Council as an advisory working group agenda item: 260218 Full Council February 2026.

It is not a committee constituted under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and has no delegated powers to make decisions or incur expenditure.

As an advisory working group, meetings are not required to comply with committee access-to-information provisions unless otherwise determined by Council.

In carrying out its review, the Working Group shall ensure due regard is given to the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

1. PURPOSE

The Working Group shall assess whether continued retention of the OCH represents best value and sound asset management for the Town Council and the community, and shall make recommendations to Full Council. The group established will have regard to:

- a) Financial costs/implications and best value
- b) Environmental performance and sustainability
- c) Accessibility, including disabled access and associated equality considerations.

2. SCOPE

In carrying out its purpose, the Working Group shall:

- a) Review maintenance, operational, and capital costs associated with the OCH.
- b) Assess environmental efficiency and potential improvement costs.
- c) Commission a professional valuation of the OCH
- d) Identify alternative accommodation options and evaluate viable alternative accommodation options, including accessibility compliance and financial implications.
- e) Consider statutory duties, including obligations under the Equality Act 2010, particularly: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149), requiring the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. And the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled persons.
- f) Consider whether an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is required to inform Council's decision-making.
- g) Prepare a written report with clear recommendations for consideration by Full Council.

- h) The Working Group shall not enter into negotiations for sale, commit Council funds without prior approval of Full Council.

3. MEETINGS

- a) Meetings shall be held as required to progress the work.
- b) Notes of meetings shall be submitted to Full Council.
- c) The Working Group may invite officers, professional advisers, or other relevant persons to provide information where appropriate.

4. REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- a) Recommendations shall be presented in writing.
- b) Where an individual member undertakes a specific task or piece of work on behalf of the Working Group, they shall report back to the next meeting either by written report or verbal update.
- c) No individual member has authority to act or speak on behalf of the Council unless formally authorised by Full Council.

5. CONFIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The Working Group may receive information that is confidential, legally privileged and/or commercially sensitive, particularly in relation to property valuation, potential sale negotiations, or alternative accommodation options.

Members shall:

- a) Treat such information as confidential and not disclose it to any third-party unless authorised to do so.
- b) Comply with relevant statutory provisions relating to exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972.
- c) Observe the Council's Code of Conduct and data protection obligations at all times.

6. DURATION

The Working Group shall remain in place until it has submitted its final report and recommendations to Full Council, or until dissolved by resolution of the Council.