

Cost of headquarters refit revealed as £12.6m

The cost of refurbishing Midlothian Council's head office in Dalkeith has been revealed as £12.6million.

Councillors met behind closed doors to agree work on the offices on Buccleuch Street in November last year after an investigation into falling masonry found problems with the building.

However the full cost agreed by members has only been confirmed this week after officers published the budget for the next three years which includes the costs.

It reveals that the full retrofit of Midlothian House, which was approved at the November 12 meeting will cost £12.590 million and will be 'fully funded' by 'prudential borrowing'.

The papers comes a month after a Freedom of Information request by a member of the public revealed scaffolding put up outside the building two years ago has cost the council £316,000 to date with no work carried out..

A council spokesperson said work was now scheduled to start in the summer with a temporary closure of the building.

It will also see the ground floor refurbished to move the library into the building.

At the time they said: "We've informed staff repairs are to be carried out on Midlothian House and the ground floor will be refurbished to incorporate the library as part of an open plan 'one stop' hub for council services.

“Midlothian House will close during the retrofit, which is due to begin in August. Further details will be available around final costs after the budget is set.”

A Freedom of Information response has revealed the cost of installing the scaffolding and maintaining has been over £316, 553.

And it revealed that while the scaffolding was initially put up to deal with the falling masonry other issues were discovered which led to lengthy investigations.

It said: “Engineers were engaged to review the building facade and highlighted a number of areas on all three facades of the building where the movement of the block was of concern.

“Further specialist advice was sought where it became clear that the repair would involve significant works involving removal of cladding and the internal infill walling between floor slabs as wall tiles were found to be failing, missing or now insufficiently tied into the inner leaf.”

It went on to say that changes to building standards since the building was constructed in 1991 meant further work would be needed.

It said the council instructed officers to “consider a number of options in respect of the future of Midlothian House and implication for the wider office and town centre estate.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter