



Agenda item 11

For information: **St Margaret's Hall**

Written by: Chris Stringer, Deputy Town Clerk

Background

St Margaret's Hall flooded in November 2024 – causing extensive damage throughout the ground floor of the building.



Since then, we've been working with Zurich (the council's insurance company) and Woodgate & Clark (loss adjusters) on our claim to repair and reinstate the hall.

As part of the claim process, we appointed a company called Synergy – construction and property consultants – to complete the following work on behalf of the council:

- Compiling a schedule of the necessary repairs and reinstatement works in the hall
- Overseeing a tendering exercise to identify a contractor or contractors to complete the repairs and reinstatement works in the building
- Overseeing the eventual contract or contracts for the reinstatement works



Work to date

Between November 2024 and spring 2025, works in the building focused on:

- Removing and disposing of items that were damaged beyond repair in the flood, including carpets
- Moving other items (that will return to St Margaret's Hall) into temporary storage
- Cataloguing and photographing the damage caused by the flood
- Assessing the damage to the mechanical and electrical elements in the building, including the boiler, the lighting system and the tiered seating system
- Using dehumidifiers to dry out the building

One of the main aims of drying out the building was to try to save the timber floor in the main hall.

Ultimately, this hasn't been possible because the water damage has caused the floor to warp and crack. As such, the floor in the main hall is going to be replaced as part of the upcoming reinstatement works.

Once it was decided that the floor in the main hall was damaged beyond repair, the ground floor was entirely stripped out.

This work finished in August 2025 – and has included removing damaged plasterboard, skirting boards and floors.





Tender

While the stripping out works were happening, Synergy completed the schedule of works for the tender package (for the reinstatement of the building)

The deadline for submitted tenders is Friday 12 September – after which we'll be working with Synergy, Woodgate & Clark and Zurich to appoint a contractor to reinstate the hall.

Flood risk going forward

St Margaret's Hall already has **flood resistance** measures in place i.e. measures that aim to keep floodwater out of the building.

These measures include the metal barriers that are put in place around the building when we receive flood alerts and warnings from the Environment Agency.



However, the reality of what happened last November – and what could happen again – is that it can be very difficult to protect buildings from flooding.

And in the case of buildings right next to a river – as St Margaret's Hall is - it can be almost impossible to prevent floodwater from getting inside in the event of a major flood.



As such, we've been thinking about **flood resilience** and **recoverability** measures since the flood happened i.e. building design measures and ideas that can reduce the impact and damage of floodwater – and can make recovering from a flood quicker and easier.

And although our insurance claim is essentially on a like-for-like basis, we are expecting to be able to include flood resilience and recoverability measures in the reinstatement works where the measures being put forward are either cost neutral or close to cost neutral.

The measures we're expecting to include are:

- Replacing previously carpeted floors with finishes like vinyl or linoleum
- Having easy to clean wall coverings in the toilets and kitchen
- Raising electrical sockets further up the walls
- Damp proof membranes
- Fitting stainless steel units and surfaces in the kitchen

Other changes outside of our like-for-like claim (that aren't cost neutral) may yet be possible if the council pays for them separately – as agreed additional costs. This includes the idea of a pump or pumps in the building.

We're exploring and costing ideas like this now since it will make sense to include them in the project, even if they're paid for outside of our insurance claim.