## Appendix 5 - Timeline of key decisions

Shaded rows in table below are the main funding decisions and the next decision due.

| When | Decision | What it meant |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase 1: Setting the vision (2022 to early 2024)** | | |
| **March 2022** | Vision for Market Square agreed: an accessible, busy seven-day market with seating, eating and cultural events, by day and evening. | Set the design aim that later plans for the Square were built on. |
| **October 2022** Strategy and Resources | 'Future Office Accommodation Strategy' approved - detailed investigation approved including keeping the Guildhall as the main office and civic space; and exploring comparator alternatives locations in the city (7 votes to 1 in scrutiny). | Started the case for refurbishing the Guildhall in parallel with Market Square. |
| **27 March and 3 July 2023** Strategy and Resources Scrutiny | Asset Management Plan approved. Officers advise Guildhall would need refurbishing before staff returned to it. Scrutiny supported extra staffing for key projects, including office accommodation and Market Square. | The council expected a surplus of office space, needing about 40% of its former space, and began resourcing the project. Housing staff vacate 171 Arbury Road for lease to charities. |
| **29 January 2024** Strategy and Resources Scrutiny | Agreed to start design work, with £1.45m to reach concept design stage. A Guildhall-only refurbishment was estimated at £35m. Rented office and civic space option discounted by members. Recommendations proceed to Council. (7 votes, 1 abstention) | First design money committed. Officers' early case estimated a 9-year payback compared with doing nothing. Council borrowing rate via PWLB 4.5% to 5%. |
| **15 Feb 2024** Full Council | Council created the Civic Quarter Development Reserve and set aside £20m of general reserves in the 2024/25 budget. (25 votes, 11 abstentions) | Earmarked the council's own money to part-fund the scheme. |

| When | Decision | What it meant |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase 2: Concept design (2024 to early 2025)** | | |
| **21 and 28 November 2024** Scrutiny, then Full Council | Council noted a £55m indicative budget for CQ and approved £3m for detailed design (30 votes to 6). | Cost expectation rose from £35m (Guildhall only) to £55m for CQ. Design moved to the detailed stage, ahead of planning applications. |
| **24 Feb 2025** Full Council | The 2025/26 budget agreed that the 2024/25 underspend would go into the Reserve. (24 votes to 11, 1 abstention) | Reduced future borrowing needs. |
| **Phase 3: Detailed design and the whole-scheme decision (2025)** | | |
| **24 July 2025** Full Council | £3.762m underspend from 2024/25 transferred to the Reserve (23 votes to 3, 11 abstentions). | More of the council's own funding in the Reserve, so less to borrow. |
| **9 September 2025** Scrutiny (PAS) | Scrutiny supported moving to planning. Advised on cycling and bus access, market stalls, the council chamber, accessibility and civic history. | Advice passed to Cabinet before its decision. |
| **25 September 2025** Cabinet | Cabinet chose Option 4: planning applications for all three buildings. It recommended £4.4m for technical design and noted a total cost of up to £92.275m. | Committed to whole scheme. Officers advised that doing nothing would cost at least £60m. Council borrowing rate 5.5% |
| **9 October 2025** Full Council | Council approved the £4.4m (30 votes to 6, 2 abstentions). Cabinet was asked to seek a better ongoing return from the Guildhall and Corn Exchange before final approval. | Committed the council to the whole scheme. Final budget approval subject to more commercial business case. Public realm and Market Square need not make a surplus but should be value-engineered. |
| **27 Nov 2025 Full Council** | Motions: Guildhall to remain principal venue for local democracy despite plans for unitary (35 to 0, 3 abstentions). City-centre placemaking motion (34 to 3) noted the Civic Quarter plans 'expressed confidence in a centre that is for all'. | Strong political consensus to remain at Guildhall and consider detailed refurbishment options, and CQ plan being essential to city centre. |

| When | Decision | What it meant |
|---|---|---|
| **Phase 4: Budget and planning consents (2026)** | | |
| **26 February 2026**<br>Full Council | Council approved the 2026/27 budget, which included £1.0m for the Civic Quarter (22 votes to 1, 13 abstentions) | Further own funding set aside for the Civic Quarter. |
| **24 March 2026**<br>Cabinet | Cabinet agreed to progress a transition plan. The Guildhall and Corn Exchange to close from December 2026, and a temporary venue would go to planning. | Temporary venue expected to run at 50 to 60% of current programme. Final decision to be made with the main decision. |
| **25 March 2026**<br>Planning Committee | Planning and listed building consents granted for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange. Market Square decision deferred. | Consents in place for two of the three sites. |
| **2 September 2026**<br>Planning Committee | Market Square and public realm approved. | All three sites now approved by the Planning Committee. Council borrowing via PWLB around 6.5% during Sept. |
| **Phase 5: Delivery decision (autumn 2026)** | | |
| **3 November 2026**<br>Scrutiny (PAS) | Business case without recommendation. | Members to scrutinise proposals before the decision. |
| **November 2026 (due)**<br>Cabinet, then Full Council | Decision on the capital budget to deliver the project. Cabinet meeting scheduled for 16 and Full Council for 26 November. | Final decision on funding. Start on site is assumed for January 2027 (Market ~12 months, Corn Exchange ~18 months, Guildhall 24 months). |

## How many meetings have considered the project

Since January 2024, when the Civic Quarter name was first used, 26 formal meetings have decided, considered or noted the project.

| Type of meeting | Decision or main item | Referred to or noted | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Full Council** | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| **Cabinet (Executive before 2025)** | 6 | 0 | 6 |

| Type of meeting | Decision or main item | Referred to or noted | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Scrutiny committees** | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| **Planning** | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| **All meetings** | **21** | **5** | **26** |

Decision or main item means the project, its funding or its planning was itself a decision or agenda item. Referred to or noted means it was discussed within a wider item, such as a budget, climate or work programme report.

- **Full Council (7):** 15 Feb 2024, 28 Nov 2024, 24 Feb 2025, 24 Jul 2025, 9 Oct 2025, 27 Nov 2025, 26 Feb 2026.
- **Cabinet (6):** 5 Feb 2024 and 10 Feb 2025 (then called the Executive), 15 Jul 2025, 25 Sep 2025, 10 Feb 2026, 24 Mar 2026.
- **Scrutiny, decision or main item (5):** 15 Jan 2024, 29 Jan 2024, 21 Nov 2024, 9 Sep 2025, 6 Oct 2026.
- **Scrutiny, referred to or noted (5):** 26 Sep 2024, 20 Mar 2025, 2 Dec 2025, 27 Jan 2026, 3 Feb 2026.
- **Planning (3):** member briefing 16 Oct 2025; Planning Committee 25 Mar 2026 and 2 Sep 2026.

**About the count.** It is based on a search of the council's published agendas, reports and minutes for "Civic Quarter", plus the meetings reviewed for this timeline. Meetings that only approved earlier minutes were not counted. The two earlier steps in 2022 pre-date the project name and are not counted. Liaison group meetings and closed (exempt) discussions and are also not counted.

## Key sources

- Strategy and Resources Scrutiny, 29 January 2024
- Full Council, 15 February 2024
- Strategy and Resources Scrutiny, 21 November 2024
- Cabinet, 25 September 2025
- Cabinet report, 25 September 2025 (costs and funding)
- Full Council, 9 October 2025
- Full Council, 26 February 2026
- Cabinet, 24 March 2026
- Forward plan: delivery capital budget
- Council page: planning applications