

To the Members of the Protocol Committee

Report on heating & cooling in City Hall

At the June meeting of Protocol the Members requested a report on the temperature levels and controls (in situ) in City Hall and to examine the possibility of the introduction of minimum and maximum temperatures.

The following report details the position in relation to current controls in place, options examined and the current legislation in this area.

Council Chamber

Since the last meeting of protocol temperature readings have been taken in both the Chamber and other areas in City hall including the new bookable meeting pods for Councillors. A number of issues were identified by the Heating and ventilation unit including a spike in temperature in the Chamber on 4th September last (shown below)

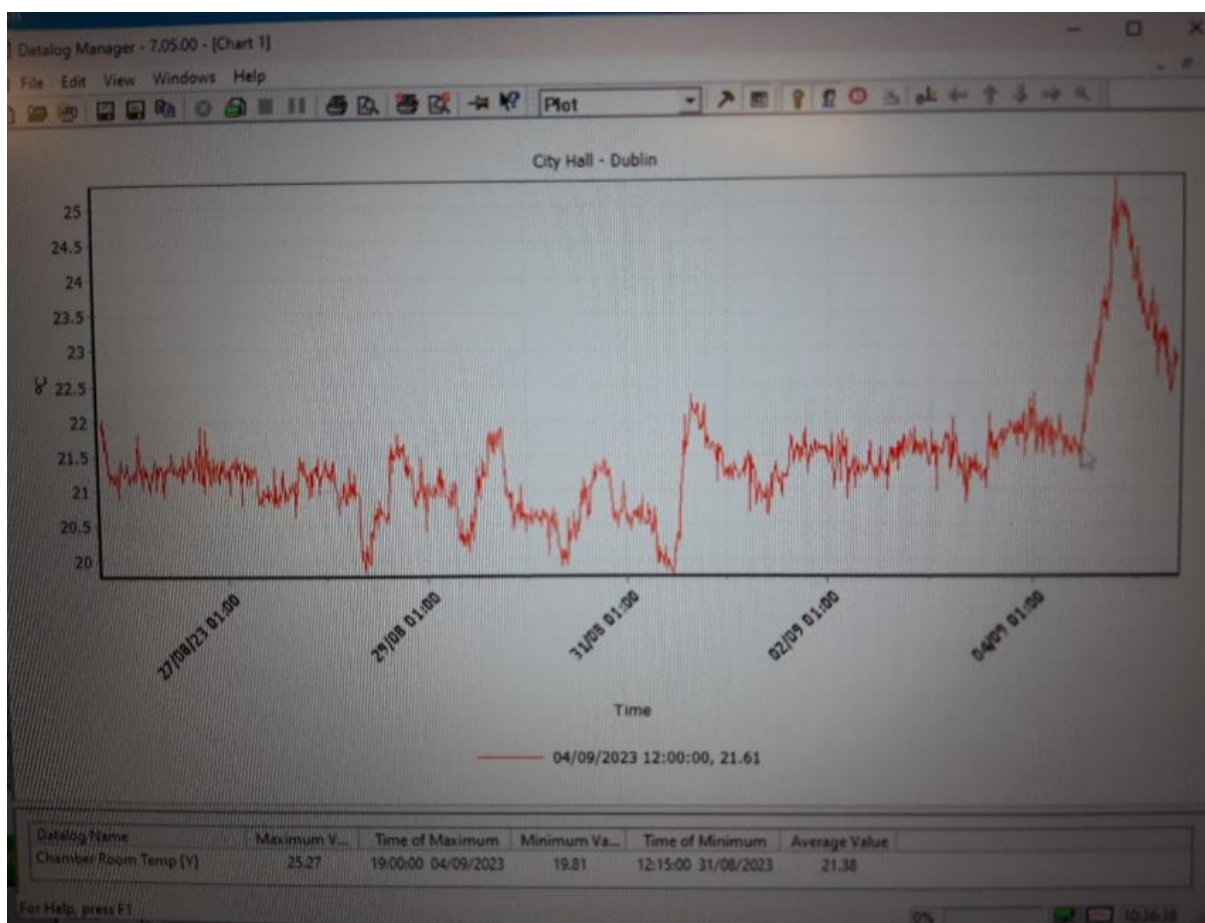


Figure 1 : Council Chamber temperatures.

Following further investigation this was as a result of opening windows and increasing the fan speed of the air handling unit which brought in hot summer air from outside (27 degrees outside) via the windows and AHU therefore increasing the temperature inside.

It is acknowledged that even with the windows closed and the AHU's fan speed subsequently reduced, concerns remain about the building's susceptibility to elevated temperatures during periods of high external temperatures.

HVAC has submitted a proposal to Chief Executives outlining the installation of cooling systems and associated controls within the AHU located on the rooftop, with a specific focus on regulating the climate in the council chamber. The estimated cost for this localized cooling solution for the Council Chamber is €64,985.

It will be important to consider all factors including cost of installation, increased energy usage and fit with overall climate policy in determining whether to proceed with this proposal.

Basement Area

As Members are aware, works have been carried out in the basement of City Hall to create two new party rooms and two small meeting rooms for Councillors. At present the basement and the ground floor temperatures are ranging from 21-24DegC approximately. HVAC have received complaints regarding overheating issues specifically related to the pods situated in the basement area.

Following investigation, the recently installed Air Handling Unit (AHU) by the contractor had experienced a controller lockout, rendering it incapable of adjusting temperature settings. The controller had been originally set at 25DegC and was inaccessible due to this lockout. This issue has now been resolved. However, there are continuing discussions with the contractor as there are a number of other issues with the basement AHU.

Regulations

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007, is the Irish legislation governing workplace conditions, including indoor air temperatures. The regulations underscore the importance of providing a safe and comfortable working environment for employees.

The regulations do not specify an exact numerical value for acceptable maximum indoor temperature, however, they do state that *'during working hours, the temperature in rooms containing workstations is appropriate for human beings, having regard to the working methods being used and the physical demands placed on the employees.*

For sedentary office work, a minimum temperature of 17.5° C, so far as is reasonably practicable, is achieved and maintained at every workstation after the first hour's work and for other sedentary work, at every workstation where a substantial proportion of the work is done sitting and does not involve serious physical effort, a minimum temperature of 16°C is, so far as is reasonably practicable, achieved and maintained after the first hour's work'.

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is Ireland's national body for occupational health and safety and provides further guidance on indoor temperatures in workplaces. The Health and Safety Authority have recently published a Code of Practice on Indoor Air Quality. The working temperatures within the Indoor Air Quality code of practice identifies a generally acceptable levels as between 18-23 degrees celsius with optimum relative humidity being between 40% and 70%. This document details a strategy of risk assessment and control of the many factors that make up Air Quality. It requires a Dublin City Council wide approach to the matter of Indoor Air Quality and it is recognised that it would have to encompass all Dublin City Council work locations, including City Hall.

Dublin City Council is committed to continue to provide good indoor air quality to its employees. A Dublin City Council working group has been established to practically look at the long term strategy of ventilation within its buildings, which includes heating and cooling of the working environment, and to suggest ways that we can ensure employees are working in optimal and comfortable temperatures both in the summer and winter months.

This group has representatives of Mechanical and Energy Efficiency Section, Facilities Management and Health, Safety & Wellbeing Unit and is placed to advise Dublin City Council management on the steps necessary to ensure the comfort and health of our employees going forward with regard to ventilation, heating and cooling.

Recommendation

It is recommended that temperatures will continue to be monitored within City Hall and that reports be available to Councillors. The Chief Executive's Office will continue to liaise with the newly established working group and will ensure that the input of Councillors is sought with regard to City Hall.

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13th September 2023.